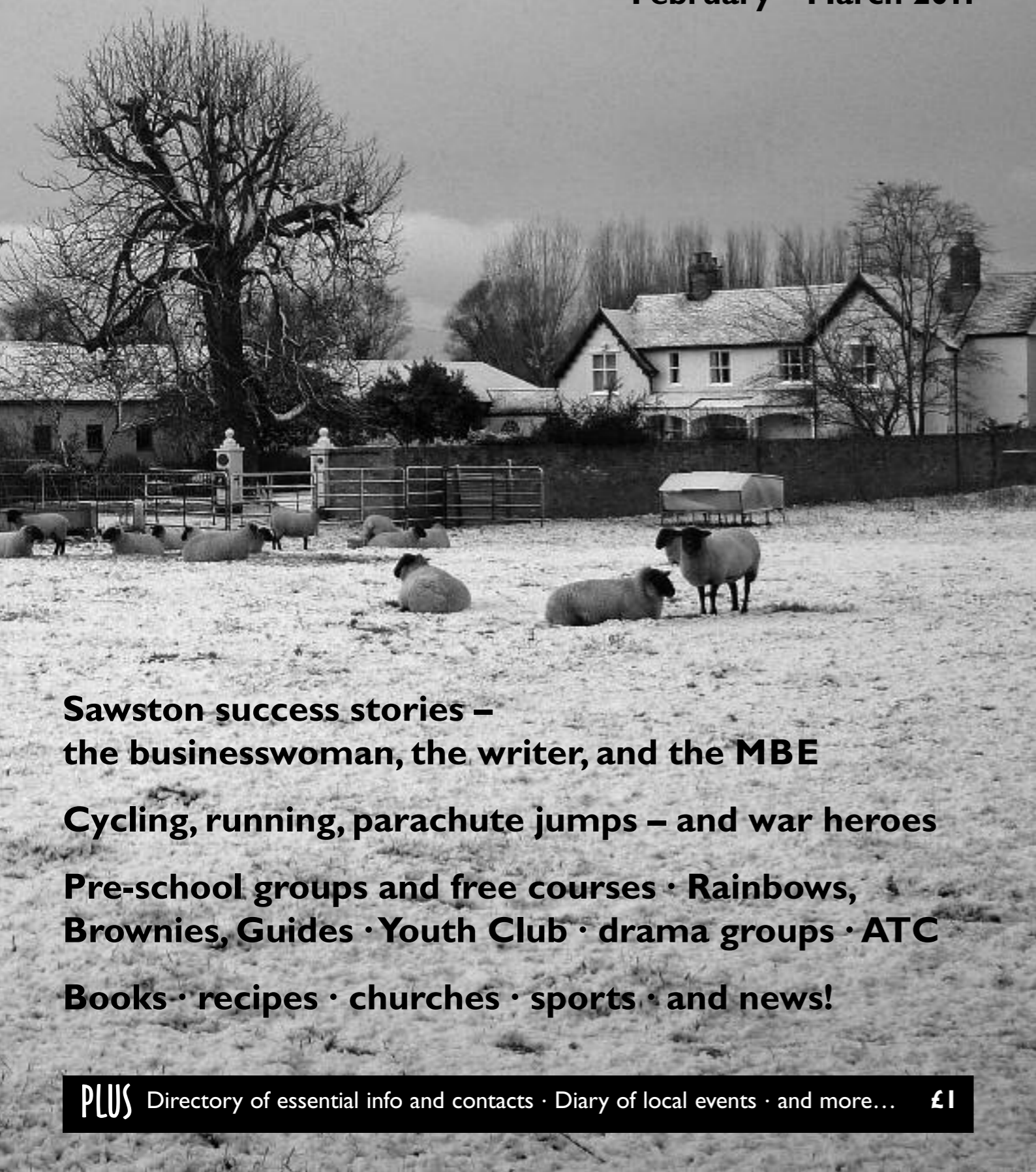


Sawston Scene

February – March 2011



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Sawston Scene

VOLUME 41 ISSUE 6 February - March 2011

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If you bought your copy of the Scene in a shop, you may have noticed that the cover price has doubled. Outrageous!

Or is it? The Scene had begun to seem rather underpriced compared with other magazines – and we've been steadily increasing the number of pages and adding extra features, so we hope you'll agree that it's worth it – plus it has to be an amount that's convenient for our sales boxes! We do want to reward the loyalty of existing subscribers and encourage more people to subscribe, so you can still get a year's worth of issues delivered to your door for a measly £3: you'll find a form tucked inside this issue.

Why have we done away with the pensioners' rate? Well, times are hard but we weren't sure that pensioners as a group are worse off than others. I'm not the only Sawstonian to have lost my job in the recession, and there are plenty of people in the village on low incomes. We decided we'd rather keep the subs rate low for everyone than favour one group and risk being unfair – hmm, would means-tested subscriptions be a step too far?...

The cost of printing the magazine is almost exactly £1 per copy so, like commercial magazines, this one is subsidised by advertising. We've changed how we sell ads, and added more, as we didn't want new businesses to have to wait as much as a year before they could have a space. But we hope you agree we've kept the balance right.

If you'd like to let us know what you think, or you're interested in joining our production or distribution teams, or you have ideas for articles or pictures, do come to our annual public meeting! This year's will be on Wednesday 2nd March at 7.30 for 8pm in Spicers Pavilion. Come and see the new building and meet us all over a glass of wine – we look forward to seeing you there...

Beck Laxton
EDITOR

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COVER: Sheep on the field behind the Black Bull pub in the High Street, facing south-west to Huntingdon's Farm, photographed by Ann Redshaw

Sawston Scene

EDITOR

Beck Laxton
95 High Street, Sawston
editor@sawstonscene.org

FEATURES

Yasmin Emerson
features@sawstonscene.org

DIARY

Denise Adams
01223 565096
diary@sawstonscene.org

PICTURES

Ann Redshaw
01223 834511
pictures@sawstonscene.org

REPORTS

Reg Cullum
01223 833724
reports@sawstonscene.org

SPORT

Alan Chamley
01223 836890
sport@sawstonscene.org

ACCOUNTS

Rod Webb
01223 832601
accounts@sawstonscene.org

DISTRIBUTION & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Jean Osborne
01223 832472
subs@sawstonscene.org

ADVERTISING

Lorraine Smith
ads@sawstonscene.org

Designed and typeset by
Beck Laxton

Printed by
Altone Ltd, Sawston

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NEXT CLOSING DATE

4th March 2011
for April–May 2011 issue

For more information and guidelines for contributors, please see

www.sawstonscene.org

News

SPICERS PAVILION

Sunday 9th January was a lovely sunny morning for villagers to visit the nearly completed Spicers Pavilion (the official opening will be on Sunday 6th March). The winter weather meant that the paving slabs in front of the building hadn't yet been laid – that was being done a week later – but inside it was looking wonderful. There's lots of space for changing, separate facilities for match officials, and easy access for anyone in a wheelchair. The community room is particularly lovely, with windows looking out over the field.

The architect was Simon Ward Architectural Design, and DTF Building Services took over the building work after Inspire Contracting went into receivership. Chair Eugene Murray kept a close eye on things, and many consider that it's thanks to him that the demise of the original builders didn't have a more dire effect. Vice-chair Samantha Clarke and clerk Jo Keeler were also closely involved.

Huge thanks are due to David Ellis of Sawston Cricket Club, who worked to get a lot of the funding. £150,000 was given by the English and Welsh Cricket Board and £110,000 by the Football Foundation, £50,000 by SCDC, £30,000 by WREN recycling, and £20,000 by Donarbon; the balance of £173,000 was paid by the Parish Council. The sports clubs also raised £5,000 for white goods, and the Fun Run contributed £2,000 to buy tables and chairs. Congratulations all round on a splendid result! *Beck Laxton*

From top: old pavilion by Jean Osborne; work in progress by David Flynn; new pavilion outside, showers, community room, Eugene Murray, by Beck Laxton



HELPING CHILDREN AND THE ELDERLY

A big thank you to Adams Harrison, who donated a cheque to JHC just before Christmas. It is great to have this kind of support from local businesses.

We will be able to use the money to help local children who live in poorer families in Sawston, and to help very frail elderly people who will be finding this winter a struggle.

The picture shows, from the left, Virginia Richmond and Christine Gee from Adams Harrison, JHC Chair Reg Cullum, and Jill Hayden who is now responsible for all the JHC Business operations. We wish Jill well in her new role. *Mary Irish*

Susan Lawton of Adams Harrison, who took the photo, tells the Scene that the £200 donation was made rather than sending out Christmas cards to business associates and clients. "We feel as a practice that this is a far better way to spread the season of goodwill. Mencap in Saffron Walden and the Food Bank in Haverhill also received donations."

ROYAL SOCIETY GRANT FOR SVC SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Huge congratulations to the Science Department at Sawston Village College on winning a grant of £950 from the Royal Society! James Brown, a science teacher at SVC, applied for the grant, which will enable SVC students to work on an extended project investigating algal biofuels alongside research



scientists from Cambridge University. The Science Club students are looking forward to collecting and growing different types of algae, and carrying out experiments to discover how they respond to different conditions and food – before finding out how to turn the algae into biofuels.

In other Science department news, SVC has been selected to enter the finals of the UK Space Design Challenge – and is one of only thirteen schools from across the UK to be invited to the final competition in London at the end of March.

Closer to home, you can look forward to seeing SVC students from the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) club in the Schools zone at the Cambridge Science Festival, which runs from 14th to 27th March. Primary school pupils may also have the chance to get involved in other events as part of National Science and Engineering Week.

Congratulations to scientists at SVC from all at the Scene – we look forward to hearing how you get on! *Yasmin Emerson*

NEW CHARITY SHOP

Chernobyl Children's Life Line – a charity that helps the children still suffering from the world's biggest nuclear disaster – tell us they're hoping to open their first charity shop, in the building at 60 High Street, where Russells the estate agent used to be. Their contract with the Challis Trust is being finalised, but they plan to open their doors on Saturday 19th February 2011.

Stop press!

Just found out a bit of news? Let us know!

Contact the Features Editor, Yasmin Emerson, at features@sawstonscene.org

If you're able to spare a few hours to help with the running of the shop – whether it's every week, every fortnight or even every month, please contact Regan Neaves to find out more on 01223 290956.

Have you any unwanted gifts? Do you need to de-clutter your home? The charity welcomes any donations, and collection can be arranged. Your help is much appreciated. *Beck Laxton*

Find out more about the charity at www.ccll-cen.org.uk.

TREES DOWN

As we go to press, we're saying goodbye to the two sycamores that were in the old Queen's Head car park, right



opposite Sawston Scene Towers. The new owners say the roots were undermining both the pub and the Redfort Garden building, so they've got permission to remove them and will replace them with specimen trees.

FAULTY SCENE?

If your copy of the Scene has missing pages or hasn't been printed right, do let us know: we'll be happy to deliver a replacement. Ask any member of the team!

QUEEN'S HEAD

I read with interest the news about the Queen's Head in your October issue, and am pleased to fill in a few further facts you may not know.

We have always been under the impression that the Queen's Head was a coaching inn on the route to London, but were never entirely sure. The pub is not only a grade two listed property but listed with a star – the reason for this being a magnificent thick iron bar which runs through the ceiling upstairs and is quite visible.

The Queen's Head was purchased in 1996 by my son as an investment, and he subsequently became 'The Landlord': later he put in managers.

After the drink-driving ban came into force, the car park fronting Common Lane was hardly used except by adjacent properties and attracted broken glass and litter. After opposition from the parish, the council gave us permission to build the cottages and we believe that they have been an enhancement to Common Lane: we were given an award for their design. SCDC asked us to re-develop the garden to accommodate cars. The large play area had to be changed for a smaller one: the equipment was donated to the local council and was installed in one of the play areas in the village.

After my son moved from the area we tenanted it out to an Inn Company for several years. When the smoking ban was introduced and a serious incident occurred at the premises some two years ago, they decided not to renew the lease as it was becoming a less attractive business proposition. This was a perfect opportunity to

Letters



ask the council for permission to let us change the pub into a dwelling, although this was not met with too much enthusiasm by a lot of our customers – justifiably so as many had been loyal customers for years and wished to continue to have the pub as a pleasant meeting place.

SCDC allowed us change of use at a council meeting attended by my son and representatives of the parish. We employed our original architects to draw up plans to restore the public house to its original form and do away with the ugly flat roof extensions.

Five sets of drawings were presented to the council before they were satisfied with the plans. This took almost a year and considerable expense, not only for the plans but also to secure the premises.

The Queen's Head has not been sold twice: an interest was expressed by the previous owner of Sawston Hall but never pursued. We are now delighted that Mr Boswell, with whom we have had acquaintance over the years, has become the new owner, and look forward to seeing it all when completed. *Patricia Bloomfield*

ON THE TILES

I was surprised to see in the Parish Council reports that some councillors were unhappy with the tiles used on the roof of the Queen's Head. I had thought what

a super job they have made of re-roofing it, and particularly how they had managed to use the original tiles on the sides of the roof which are seen, and only used new, but the original type of tile on the sides which cannot easily be seen from the road.

I look forward to seeing the finished job. They should be given some credit for restoring what had become a very shabby building.

Did I once dream it, or do I remember many years ago seeing the remains of a very old petrol pump at the right-hand side of the pub? Was this the site of the first petrol filling station in Sawston? *Roger Lucke*



PUZZLING PAVEMENTS

When the cold spell first began to bite, and even a light dusting of snow froze to turn the pavements into a lethal skating rink, a safe route could be negotiated by following the ice free strips on the tarmac above the optic fibre cables. Can anyone explain the physics behind this phenomenon? Apart from being slightly raised, the tarmac surface seems to be made of a similar material. Surely the cables themselves are not generating enough heat? Does anyone know? *Ann Redshaw*

AN ODE TO SAWSTON MEDICAL CENTRE

(how to win friends and influence people)
If it's patients you wish to reach, don't preach, teach.
The patient's responsibilities are

very clear cut, (i)
Though the Centre have the escape clause "but...". (ii)
Your feature includes a lot of statistics
But what use are these for healing and diagnostics?
The missed appointments, just 5%, get double attention
But 95% attendees don't warrant a mention.
For those who appreciate the staff to date,
Think the care is great,
Never turn up late –
When next you need to communicate,
Don't berate and alienate,
Engage and educate!

(For those who did not see the article in the December-January issue, the Medical Centre said (i) "One aspect that will not go away is the responsibility of individuals to look after themselves," and (ii) "We do not want to put off anyone coming to the surgery but...") *Tony Pletts*

PARK & DON'T RIDE

Yesterday we went on the Trumpington Park & Ride hoping to go to the Grafton Centre to the cinema. No-one told us that it doesn't go there anymore – we found out when the bus headed back to Trumpington! The first stop was the Botanical Gardens so we had to get another bus back to John Lewis and decide whether to walk or get the shuttle bus. The Babraham Road Park & Ride still goes to the Grafton. *Jean Osborne*

Park & Ride Operations Manager Campbell Ross-Bain replies:

The change to the route was released to the *Evening News* before Christmas. We also had A1 posters in the Grafton Centre bus shelter and at Trumpington, plus

smaller posters warning passengers of the change on every P&R bus stop between Trumpington and the city, and on board the bus. The change took place on Sunday 2nd January.

Passengers are able to use the free City shuttle service which leaves from Downing Street: this will drop them at Fair Street. Or they can walk round to Drummer Street and get the P&R bus to Newmarket Road or Milton at no extra cost.



THE PARISH CLOCK

I was pleased to read your editorial in the last *Sawston Scene* and in particular your comments about Church Lane and checking your watch by the church clock. I hope that as you are a parish councillor, you are aware that the clock in the church tower is the property of the village and is maintained by the Parish Council. *[Editor: Yes, of course – it was poetic licence!]* The church has no responsibility for the clock but permits use of the church bells to provide the quarter and hour chimes.

I carry out the day-to-day running of the clock, making adjustments to keep it striking as closely to standard time as is possible with a 120-year-old mechanism, and hope that it is sufficiently accurate to keep your watch telling you the right time.

I have only been a Sawstonian for 37 years. Perhaps readers with

Write to the Editor,
Beck Laxton, at 95 High Street, Sawston, CB22 3HJ
or editor@sawstonscene.org.
Letters may be edited.

longer memories about the clock than I have might have interesting information to share? *Stuart Abercrombie.*

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The Remembrance Service at the Sawston War Memorial on Sunday 14th November was once again so well attended that it was difficult to fit everyone around the Cross.

Many thanks to all who attended and contributed, particularly the Reverends Alan Partridge and Bruce Waldron who conducted the

service at the Cross and held services at St Mary's Church and the Village College respectively. Thanks also to members of Christ Church South Cambs, who provided and staffed the public address system.

Thanks to the Parish Council for ensuring that the Memorial and the surrounding area were free of rubbish and leaves.

Lastly, many thanks to the ladies at Mary's, the vegetable shop, who provided the poppy sellers outside Budgens with hot drinks and the use of their toilets on two consecutive Saturdays.

I am certain I have missed out other important people – my apologies to them.
Paul Mann, Chair, Sawston and Pampisford Royal British Legion

CYCLE RACKS

Cycling to be fit and green seems to be very topical at the moment

so I wondered how many people feel that the High Street could do with better bike parking facilities? I know that money has been given to the Parish Council to erect bike racks on the playing fields, but the centre of the village is very badly served: I like to shop with my bike but struggle to park it conveniently and safely as the only racks belong to Budgens. While this is central, they have only a few spaces, which get in the way of their trollies and display racks. A few more places on the High Street so

you can shop your way along would be really handy. I realise there may be problems with ownership of free spaces but might I suggest that outside the card shop or newsagents, outside the new JHC building (Unwins) and on the DIY shop site would be really convenient for shoppers.
Ann Redshaw

Parish Clerk Jo Keeler responds: We've been having cycle racks put in at Orchard Park, Spicers, Lynton Way and Mill Lane: this was arranged through the County

Council, which had been given some money from central government – so they haven't cost the parish anything at all.

The council advised us that there were no suitable areas in the high street as most areas were either private property or the pathways were too narrow. Sorry!

Editor Beck Laxton adds: There are slots in the ground for cycles outside the Select & Save, but they're clogged up with leaves. Would anyone like to help me clear them out? ☺

SAWSTON SUCCESSES

We start the year by celebrating three Sawstonians who've achieved success in very different ways

The businesswoman

BECK LAXTON spoke with award-winning entrepreneur Liz Weston...

When I first met Liz Weston several years ago, we were both volunteers working on the local National Childbirth Trust magazine. I was the designer and Liz was the ad manager, and she was dynamic, well organised, and great fun to be around. Later she organised a huge Baby Show at Sawston Sports Centre to raise funds for the NCT, and it was a roaring success. After that she had an idea for a new business, and I worked for her briefly when I was between jobs. The documents she gave me explaining what I had to do were so fantastically well thought through, and her business model so obviously built on fairness and honesty, that the only question in my mind was just how far this dynamo of a woman might go.

Well, she's still on an upward trajectory, and at the end of last year she won the award for the Future 100 Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2010 (organised by Striding Out and sponsored by NatWest) for her business, Weston Communications. So what's the secret of her success?

Not surprisingly, a lot of it comes down to sheer hard work. "Having taken redundancy and given up a 75-minute commute each way, I have worked more hours for less money in 2010 than I used to generate in my old role," says Liz. "There have been lots of non-financial benefits, but I still need to make a profit to pay my bills. And I'm now the main source of income in our house, which is a double-edged sword of pride and fear!"

Being flexible about who does what in the household is part of the key. "I'm married to Richard and we have two lovely boys – Elliott, who's four in February, and William, who



is two and a half. I work full time and Richard does the daycare, and when the boys are at preschool together two mornings a week, he works locally as he's a qualified electrician." Liz moved to Sawston in December 2004, having met Richard in the September. "It was very strange at first. Having lived in London for several years and then in Biggleswade, which was

"It's nigh on impossible to 'have it all', all day long, every day."

fairly busy, I found it weird that we would go in the Jade and people would know all about me when I didn't even know who they were! In twenty years, I'll not be quite such a newcomer..."

Liz is someone who speaks her mind and eschews polite half-truths: "An established business does not come easily," she emphasises, "and that's not something that people like to hear. If you are going into business to make money that will make a difference to your family, you need to accept that you won't be going to as many coffee groups or social things for at least eighteen months. It's nigh on impossible to 'have it all', all day long, every day. I'm able to find a bit more of a middle ground now, which is great, but I did have to shut myself away and work every single day and night for months on end to get things going."

The first business project for Liz's new company, Weston Communications, was to launch the New Baby Guides – publications for maternity units to hand out to new parents. The idea arose when Liz got



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chatting with a local Head of Midwifery. New legislation meant that the midwifery unit was obliged to rethink the format of the information: traditionally this had been a bundle of photocopied sheets; it now needed to be higher quality but the problem was how to



fund the cost of printing it. Liz's idea was to produce a booklet that included information written by the unit but also had advertising from local businesses that would be of interest to new parents – the revenue from which would pay for the work involved and the printing, and leave enough for a donation back to the maternity unit.

Yes, you read that right. Giving something back is core to Liz's business philosophy. It's something that many businesses pay lip service to, but in the case of Weston Communications it's not just talk: it's hard cash. To date, £16,000 of the income from the guides has been donated straight back to the maternity units they've been working with. "The Future 100 Award," says Liz, "was for running a business which is socially aware and makes a positive contribution to society, the planet and my own bottom line."

The success of the guides is also based on making sure they meet the needs of everyone involved: "I contacted businesses and asked them what they wanted from their relationships with maternity units," explains Liz, "and I talked to maternity units about what they wanted and what would be most helpful to

them." Liz's experience as a parent has also been useful, both in establishing rapport with her clients and in knowing what she as a parent would want from the New Baby Guides – she's been strict about only accepting advertising from local businesses, nothing from national brands, and only from businesses that are UNICEF

Baby Friendly and World Health Organisation compliant. Maternity units across the country have been thrilled with their New Baby Guides, and their enthusiastic recommendations have generated more guides, and more work – "They've generated opportunities I never thought possible," says Liz. "I've now got the Young Families Bump, Baby and Toddler Shows, and Weston Communications is providing marketing, PR and support services to a wide range of small and not so small businesses – it's great to be able to help them grow." This success means that Liz is able to employ a team of salespeople, and she supports flexible working so can employ parents who want to work part-time and evenings.

Down to earth to the last, though, Liz isn't in a hurry to make it big. "We have other projects which are growing organically from what we already do. It's a case of scaling up for them and making sure we maintain quality – our biggest challenge is finding ways to increase capacity within the business without compromising on quality of output. We know that businesses that grow quickly are more likely to fail, so we want to grow as slowly and incrementally as possible." ☺

The MBE

YASMIN EMERSON went to congratulate Janice Nightingale...

The name Janice Nightingale may well be familiar to many readers; aside from her day job at Nightingale's garage in Pampisford, an active social life though the WI and her machine knitting club in Cambridge, Janice has taught many residents to cycle safely. She has been a Safer Cycling Instructor for nearly thirty years, and in that time has taught over a thousand children how to cycle safely on the road – an astonishing achievement, which was recognised in this New Year's Honours List.

It all started in the 1980s at Janice's daughter's school, Icknield – where Janice was one of the first volunteers with the Cambridgeshire County Council Safer Cycling scheme. Having volunteered to help, she soon went on to become an instructor herself,



and later an examiner. Her enthusiasm for cycling – and cycling with safety and confidence – is truly inspiring. She was able to tell me all about the

Photos supplied by Liz Weston

Photo by Ann Redshaw

background to CCC's Safer Cycling scheme, which started in the 1970s and became a benchmark nationally (it is quite separate from the old Cycling Proficiency test and a more recent national scheme, Bikeability, which many schools also take part in). Safer Cycling is run in partnership with schools during the school day, led by enthusiastic volunteers like Janice. Children aged ten and over are taught how to cycle on the road; where to ride, how to indicate their intentions to other road-users, how to look out for potential dangers, and so on. This is not about learning how to ride a bike, but learning how to ride safely on roads.

These days, Janice also volunteers for the Pedal Power scheme at her granddaughter's former school, Ditton Lodge First School, in Newmarket. Pedal Power is also a CCC scheme, in which seven-

"She has taught over a thousand children how to cycle safely on the road."

nine-year-olds learn safer cycling away from public roads. When running a course in a school, Janice insists on two adult helpers – not just to help her keep an eye on the ten children cycling on the road, but also so that those adults can go back to the school with renewed confidence and enthusiasm for cycling. I wonder how many such activists Janice has inspired over the years?

The pleasure Janice gets from enabling children to cycle safely is evident, but she also aims to "provide life-long road safety skills" – so pupils are equipped to cycle in real-life road situations safely, and will remember these lessons if they learn to drive a car. Janice was in the garage recently when she heard someone exclaim "Mrs Nightingale!" – and looked up to see a young man who, having not long passed his driving test, remembered her teaching him to look behind over his shoulder before turning.

Like every other cycling enthusiast, Janice has a few terrible motorist stories. Recently, I'd nearly come a cropper when someone overtook me while I was indicating to turn right (perhaps

I was camouflaged by my high-visibility jacket?), but I was shocked to learn from Janice that motorists do this to children too – what kind of person would take risks when overtaking a child? She's also been surprised by the number of bicycles she's seen brought in by children that were not road-worthy, were the wrong size or were poorly adjusted for the child – she realises that cycles can be costly to obtain and maintain, but it's clear that for her, safety is paramount. In nearly thirty years of volunteering, she's seen cycle helmets become almost universally used by children, with some PTAs recently offering to buy helmets.

How does she feel about getting an MBE? "Excited and overwhelmed," says Janice – As far as we know, this is the first such award to someone from Safer Cycling, and she's had cards and messages of goodwill from friends, family and all sorts of unexpected people – including the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire and even the Department for

Transport. But clearly the most welcome message was one which began, "Nanna MBE!!!"

Janice's greatest joy has been seeing children progress from being a bit wobbly to being able to give good clear signals and travel safely within the space of just a week. She's seen children who are born leaders, some show-offs, and some more shy – but her aim has always been to be fair with all of them, and make sure they end up able to cycle confidently. Let's all give Sawston cyclists due respect on the roads – and three cheers for Janice! ☺

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Live music last Saturday of every month

Valentine's Dinner Dance
Saturday 12th February

Limited availability so book now!

Sawston Beer Festival
Friday 29th April to Monday 2nd May

Phone 01223 835726 or www.blackbullsawston.com

The writer

BECK LAXTON interviewed local author Vernon Robinson...

Our December-January issue mentioned a Sawston author who'd had a rather racy romance novel published as an e-book. Diana Hunt, the protagonist, is described by the publishers as "an ambitious, unscrupulous bisexual predator, with brains and beauty, who uses both to achieve her goals." The novel is published as a first-person narrative written by Diana herself, who's still in her early twenties as the novel ends.

The man behind the pseudonym is Vernon Robinson, an elderly gentleman whom some may know as the voluntary tree warden for the Parish Council for many years. His heroine is rather different from him – are there any similarities?

"There is bound to be something of me in Diana," says Vernon. "What we have in common is that she is a judo player. I was a judo coach and mat referee; and I have been studying art history for about thirty years, so the character of Max [Max Gilbert, a distinguished artist] is partly based on me." Max paints birds because Vernon is fond of Thomas Bewick, the engraver, whose *History of British Birds* was published in the late eighteenth century. "I was brought up in a tradition of craftsmanship and went into the printing trade. I worked for the *Daily Mail* in Manchester and eventually got promoted to proof-reader, then ended up at the University Press – that's why I came to Cambridge. Then I worked as a freelance for American, German and Dutch publishers."

Does he have any connection with Kings Lynn, where much of the novel is set? "I just picked it out of the sky! I wanted it because it's both seaside and industrial; I could have picked Yarmouth..." Did he visit the place to research it? "No, if I had any doubts I just Googled – that's the lazy

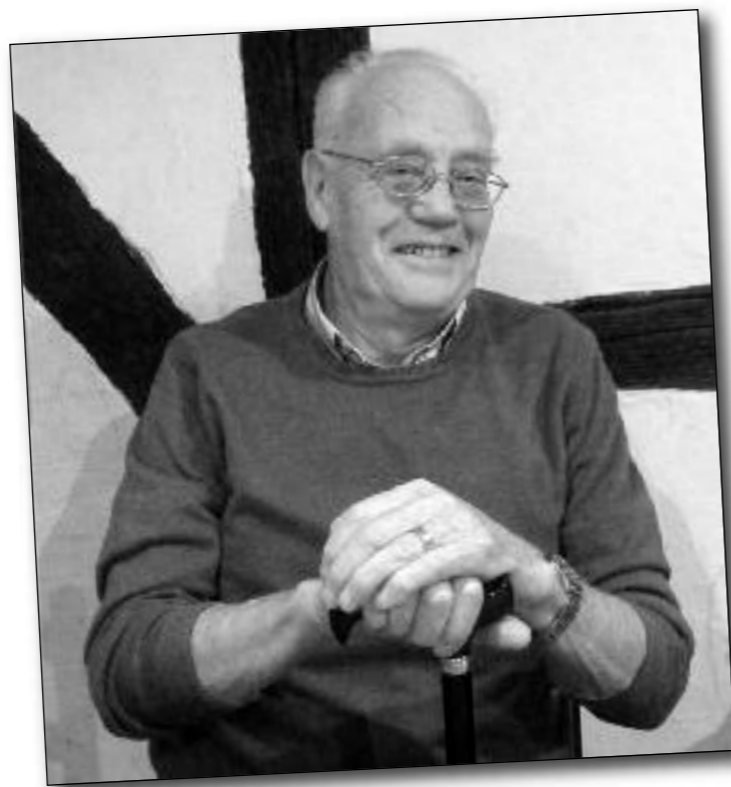


Photo by Beck Laxton

writer's tool these days! I rebelled against the computer at first – I was so used to working with a pen in my hand – but of course writing on a computer is child's play these days. I was brought up as a boy setting moveable lead type..."

Yes, it's quite a leap from hot metal to an e-book. E-publishing is a pretty new field, and Vernon is candid about its advantages for him. "I worked on

"Getting your first novel published is about as difficult as getting a meeting with the Pope."

non-fiction at CUP, but fiction is a different kettle of fish. Putting it bluntly, getting your first novel published is about as difficult as getting a meeting with the Pope. All over the country, everybody's finding it much easier now they don't have the laborious task of writing by hand. Fifty thousand, sixty thousand words, and bung it off to a publisher – and that's when reality sets in. It's terribly difficult to get a first novel published: you have to be either exceptionally good, or very lucky." So e-publishing presented an easy alternative. "You find a firm that will take your disk – when you've typed the darn thing – and you just send it to them, and they will distribute it to people like Amazon. So you can go to Amazon and find my book. And that hasn't cost me anything. If there are any profits from sales, they take half. So if I've made £500 from royalties, they take £250 – which I think is a fair deal.

"If I'd been thirty, forty years younger and decided on a writing career, it would have been different – I'd have gone for it more. But now I'm retired – in a couple of years I'll be eighty – and it was just fun to write. I've done a series of short stories as well, which I haven't finished yet. I can only write if I've got two projects on at the same time – whether that's all about concentration, I don't know! I used to work on two pictures at once: I might be, with delusions of grandeur, copying a Turner in watercolour and doing a portrait in pastels.

"When I started painting it was a form of escapism, because my first wife had MS for many, many years and then died of cancer. I had to have some sort of therapeutic escape, and that's how I got started: I sold half a dozen paintings, and it was a form of therapy."

Was *Room Service* his first novel? "I seem to have been writing for ages – mainly for my own amusement. Twenty years ago I wrote a monthly column on food and drink. I've tried writing a couple of novels before, but I dumped them: they weren't very good." How long did this one take him to complete? "On and off, about twelve months. I would go in spurts, whereby I would sit down in front of the computer and just go at it for hours and hours, and then I'd dry up and come to a stop. I'm not really very well disciplined – but I don't have the incentive of having to earn a living at it!

"When I finished a chapter I'd scroll back and go back to my original profession and start editing for grammar and so on. I'm very pedantic with English – not that it's always as good as I'd like."

My experience is that you can't edit something you've written yourself – does Vernon not find it tricky to edit his own work? "Truthfully, no. That sounds a bit arrogant, but what I do is leave it for a few days, a week. They do say one should never proof-read one's own work, but I don't think my wife would let anything out of the house till she'd given it a once-over. Avril looks at it all. That first novel, *Room Service*, was completely disorganised: even the page numbers were haywire. She was the one who put it in order, because she's got a logical mind, which I haven't. So it went off in a respectable condition."

Did he plan his plot in detail before he started? "No, it was very, very

vague – I didn't really know what was going to happen in the next chapter! The easiest way with characters is to put a certain number of people within a small area – it's like the old Agatha Christie country-house murder."

"I can only write if I've got two projects on at the same time."

Vernon names detective stories as the books he most likes to read, with Raymond Chandler and PD James as his favourite authors. "Though James can be a bit plodding at times – she's determined to give you all the details. Anthony Trollope and Anita Brookner I like very much – Brookner is beautifully written. Was it Oscar Wilde who said 'There are no good books or bad books, only well-written books and badly written books'? My favourite non-fiction is Carl Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. And I've just been reading Peter Ackroyd's book about the Thames, and it's lovely – what a clever man he is."

So is he planning further novels? "I'm writing the sequel, and Diana and husband are in that, but the main character is another linguist, a young woman who comes from a professional family, who falls for an Italian billionaire. There's a bit of a mystery, and it's based in Venice and Norfolk."

He obviously has a fondness for Diana Hunt. "Much to my surprise, she got under my skin, because she's feisty and strong and not too scrupulous – that comes across, I hope. And also exceptionally competent, and doesn't have much patience with those who aren't. But she never loses her sense of the ridiculous.

"The poor background Diana has was based on my own – the stifling living that economics force upon particular families. They're not adventurous, they've got a niche in life: they don't have the courage to break away. Diana doesn't give a toss what the neighbours think – and I'm like that myself." Is there an element of wish-fulfilment in her adventures? "No, I've done things with my life! When I've seen an opportunity, I've stuck my neck out. It didn't always work out, but I did break away from things."

Room Service by Diana Hunt is available as an e-book, priced £6.01, from www.waterstones.com



Pippins Preschool has enjoyed a very busy autumn term; our new children settled in very quickly, making friends and discovering the fun to be had. We had a visit from the Raptor Foundation and all the children had the opportunity to stroke an owl, often making him fall asleep! We had fun during our country theme week on Mexico, and during the Divali celebrations, we made sweets and clay candle holders. Of course, we finished the term with a Christmas party and entertainment from Mr Marvel – and even an appearance from Father Christmas who came with gifts for all the children.

Pippins

sample food from the Jade Fountain; then we dress up and wear our red noses for Comic Relief day. Spring is the time for families with children due to start preschool in September to consider where they would like their child to go. Pippins accept children from the age of two years nine months, and you may use all or part of your entitlement of fifteen hours per week nursery education funding from the term after your child turns three. If you are considering Pippins as an early years setting for your child, please contact us on 01223 833248 and arrange to pop in for a visit. Your details must be on our waiting list at the earliest opportunity to have the best chance of a place from September.

The spring term promises to be just as much fun. For Chinese New Year, as we have done for many years now, we will

for Comic Relief day. Spring is the time for families with children due to start preschool in September to consider where they would like their child to go. Pippins accept children from the age of two years nine months, and you may use all or part of your entitlement of fifteen hours per week nursery education funding from the term after your child turns three. If you are considering Pippins as an early years setting for your child, please contact us on 01223 833248 and arrange to pop in for a visit. Your details must be on our waiting list at the earliest opportunity to have the best chance of a place from September.

Sawston Children's Centre FREE COURSE

FIRST AID

Increase your first-aid knowledge for the safety of your child.

Monday 7th March 6–7.30pm
Wednesday 23rd March 9.30–11am
Sawston Free Church

Book a place now: see below for details

Sawston Children's Centre

Contact Lynne Howorth Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm 01223 706373 or 07765 211859 or sawstonchildrenscentre@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

YASMIN EMERSON does her regular round-up of...

PRE-SCHOOL GROUPS

MONDAYS

SEEDLINGS GROUP 9.30–11.30am, fortnightly from 31st January in the Children's Centre at Bellbird. Free. For under fives with additional needs, their family and siblings. Safe and stimulating, with support from professionals for development or health needs. Users say "It's a fantastic support"; "More toys than you can imagine for children to play with!" and "People understand you and can offer tips on many things."

Contact Sawston Children's Centre (left).

WARBLERS 10–11am in St Mary's Hall. Songs, actions and rhythms for babies and toddlers. £2 per family including refreshments. Term and holidays. Contact Eleanor Clapp on 837387 or eleanor@clappsbaskets.co.uk or Beck Laxton on 562871 or becklaxton@yahoo.com

PLAY & STAY 1–3pm in the Sunshine Room at Duxford Primary School. Drop-in session, term only. For parents and children up to age 2½: play activities to enjoy together. Contact Sawston Children's Centre.

TUESDAYS

TOY LIBRARY 9.30–11am in St Mary's Hall. Toys for all ages; tea, coffee, juice and biscuits available. £2 a year to join; 50p a week to borrow any toy. Term only. Contact Trudy Hill on 833684 or toylibrary@thehillclan.org

YOUNG PARENT GROUP for parents under 21. 1pm–2pm at Bellbird on second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Share experiences and ideas with other parents; no need to book. Contact Sawston Children's Centre.

PLAY TOGETHER 1.15–2.45pm at Icknield (Community Room in the mobile) on 1, 8, 15 Feb. Free course to help you and your child get ready for pre-school, developing learning through messy play and craft, fun with food and avoiding fussy eating.

ADDRESSES

Bellbird: The Children's Centre, Bellbird School, Link Road, Sawston, CB22 3GB

Duxford Primary School: St John's Street, Duxford, CB22 4RA

Free Church: Sawston Free Church, 3 High Street, Sawston, CB22 3BG

Icknield: Icknield Primary School, Lynton Way, Sawston, CB22 3EA

Johnson Hall: Johnson Memorial Hall, Stapleford, CB22 5SY

Memorial Hall: Memorial Hall, Mill Lane, Whittlesford, CB22 4NE

St Mary's Hall: St Mary's Community Hall, Church Lane, Sawston, CB22 3JR

Refreshments provided, babies welcome. Book at Icknield or call them on 508750.

WEDNESDAYS

PEEK-A-BOO 10am–12 noon in Memorial Hall. 0–6m free, 7–12m £1, 1–4y £3, two siblings £5. Huge hall, loads of play equipment. Term only. Contact Kerry on 07966 599816 or peekaboo-whittlesford@hotmail.com

THURSDAYS

TIME FOR TOTS 10.30am–12 noon in the Free Church. Donations

welcome, refreshments included. Toys for all ages, and a craft activity. Term only. Contact Margaret Williams on 560690.

NEW BEGINNINGS (& HAPPY TUMMIES) 10.30am–12 noon at the Bellbird. Free. Drop in and meet other new parents or get advice from a nursery nurse on breastfeeding or weaning. Contact Sawston Children's Centre.

FUN AT ONE 1–2.30pm in the Free Church. Free. One-year-olds can discover play while their carers discuss routines, playing and exploring. Contact Sawston Children's Centre.

FRIDAYS

LITTLE QUAVERS 10–11am, Johnson Hall, Stapleford. Sing along to a range of old and new songs. £2 per family, including refreshments.

MESSY PLAY 1.45–2.30pm in the FLASH room at Bellbird on 4, 11 Feb, 4, 18 Mar. For children four and under, £2 per family. Water, sand, painting, sticking, collage, playdough, squidgy play, crayons, chalk! Contact the Bellbird on 833216.

SATURDAYS

SATURDADS 10.30am–12 noon, University Centre, Cambridge, CB2 1RU. Free group for dads and kids up to about three, usually on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month. Contact Andy Shaw on saturdaydads@googlemail.com

A visit to Peek-a-boo, Whittlesford

One icy December morning, says YASMIN EMERSON, Neri (aged two) and I turned off the heating and set off for Whittlesford to check out Peek-a-boo, a play session for under fives. We've been before, but not regularly – I'm too stingy to use the car, so in the winter it's cold enough to justify staying at home, and in the summer it seems silly to go and play indoors. However, I hadn't reckoned on just how lovely the new cycle path to Whittlesford is, glorious in the winter sun (and only my lighter child in the trailer!), and how marvellous the underfloor heating is in the Whittlesford Memorial Hall.



The range of equipment available in this enormous hall is just astonishing. Most of the area is taken up by large bouncy and spongy climbing equipment for walkers and upwards, with a smaller (but still pretty vast) area of amusements for babies and those who fancy something a bit quieter. Both areas are on bouncy mats, which makes it much more comfortable to sit down with the children (as well as being friendly to accident-prone children, I suppose). A track is left around the edge for racing about with toy buggies and that all-time favourite of adult shins across the land, the Cozy Coupé car. On top of all that (the hall is really big), there are tables at the back for carers and their cups of tea, as well as chairs around the edge for those whose toes are made of stronger stuff. Neri spent the first twenty minutes boinging on a zebra ("Bouncy horsey, Mummy, up an'



down!"), and then I didn't see her for another twenty minutes as she raced from toy to toy.

When I've taken the children to Peek-a-boo previously, I've found the other mums a bit cliquey, and that's probably my only criticism – not that there's anything the organiser could do about it. So this time, I was more bold about talking to people – and ended up chatting

with another mum who, it turned out, I'd met five years ago when she gave me some tie-dyed baby clothes through Freecycle. What with that and helping Neri on the slide (good job my daughter's a thrill-seeker – polyester fleece trousers give you a lot of speed on the plastic slide), I ran out of time to get tea and a cake!

All in all, a good morning out. The prices might seem a bit steep compared with other groups (nought to six months free, seven to twelve months £1, one to four years £3, two siblings £5) especially since refreshments are extra, but considering how much play equipment is available, and how much it would cost to stay at home with the heating on, it's pretty good value really. On top of that, you'll get fit on the way there and back through gorgeous countryside – what more could you ask for?

Peek-a-boo, every Wednesday in term time, 10am to 12 noon in Whittlesford Memorial Hall. 0–6m free, 7–12m £1, 1–4y £3, two siblings £5. Contact Kerry on 07966 599816 or peekaboo-whittlesford@hotmail.com

Steph Basham reports on the Autumn Term at the club...

In December we had an ice skating trip (below) as well as a discussion on how young people can keep themselves safe this festive season. We also got their input on next year's events at the club.



ACIS

In school, a group called ACIS (Active Citizens in School) made hampers for families in the community.

They will all receive a youth award for their involvement as did the group that did the PowerPoint for Anti Bullying and the design of the cards. ☺



They held a cake stall in November and with the money raised plus donations, they made five hampers and brought presents for five families in the locality.

Sawston Drama Festival

Entries have only just closed so we can't set the programme until we have finished reading the scripts, writes Julie Petrucci. However, I can tell you that we have three new plays competing for the best new play prize, which is good: Dramawise, Sky Blue Theatre (both from Sawston), last year's winner, Bawds (from Cambridge), Waterbeach

Community Players, Swavesey Radsoc, Swavesey Village College, and Clavering Players. The adjudicator will be Arthur Rochester, a member of the Guild of Drama Adjudicators. Dates are 24th, 25th and 26th March at Sawston Youth Centre, New Road, Sawston at 7.30pm Tickets from 01223 880023 or at the door.

Bellbird

Our Friday assembly time is to change this term, beginning Friday 14th January. This is our weekly celebration assembly when all parents and carers are invited to join us. Our new time will be 2.30pm with parents invited to stay and have refreshments and share what has been happening in their children's classes that week.

SYD Seniors will be presenting *Fiddler on the Roof* at Sawston Youth Centre nightly from 7.30pm from 16th to 19th February 2011. Tickets are £8 and £9 from boxoffice@sawstonyouthdrama.com. Advance ticket sales are going very well.

SYD Juniors will be presenting a well-known rock musical on 5th to 7th May at 7.30pm at Sawston Youth Centre. Due to licence restrictions we are unable to advertise this production externally, but posters will be displayed outside Sawston Youth Centre from 16th February.

To find out about tickets, contact boxoffice@sawstonyouthdrama.com – tickets will go very quickly for this production.



SYD 7s will be presenting Disney's *Mulan* at 7.30pm on 8th and 9th July at Sawston Youth Centre. To find out about tickets, contact boxoffice@sawstonyouthdrama.com

SYD Leaders are also heavily involved in a Vital Communities project involving year 6 students from Bellbird and Icknield Schools. They are working with 35 young people after school once a week and will be presenting a production of Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* at the Bellbird and Sawston Youth Centre on 7th and 8th April.

Admission is free to members of the community but by ticket only; tickets will be available from 1st March from the Bellbird. ☺

DRAMA WISE

Sawston's Performing Arts School runs on Friday evenings in the Free Church from 4.20pm to 7.20pm. for ages ten to eighteen years. After Christmas a new class for five- to eight-year-olds will be running too.

Dramawise students won numerous trophies in Haverhill Festival. In the solo acting and poetry sections for 10- to 11-year-olds, Dramawise students had first, second and third places in both sections. One of our older students, Philip Chapman, won the Senior Championship trophy for achieving the highest marks in Acting, Poetry and Shakespeare.

On 6th February, three of our older students will be appearing with the cast of *Aladdin* at St Mary's Hall. This is a panto that is suitable for all the family.

To find out more about classes or the panto, contact Frances on 832288 or frances.wyse@btinternet.com.

Opticians' dilemma

The staff of Billson Opticians got more than a hundred entries in their Christmas colouring competition this year, giving them a beautiful festive window display.

"It was wonderful to see so many different interpretations of Christmas, and how it can be portrayed," said Caroline Catchpole, who chose the winners with Kirsten Vyse. The first prizes of £10 vouchers for the Cambridge Toy Shop went to Ryan Hammonds (aged 8) and Hannah Prescott (aged 10) while art activity sets were received by the runners up, Joseph Gilmore, Ellie Puddifoot, Rachel Bentley and Hannah Nightingale.

"We were keen to do something different with our Christmas window," said Tom Ogden of Billson's, "and encouraging local creativity seemed a great option. The response was overwhelming: it was a real challenge to exhibit them all in the practice!" ☺



Back left to front right: Hannah Prescott, Hannah Nightingale, Rachel Bentley, Ellie Puddifoot, Joseph Gilmore, Ryan Hammonds

Sawston and Duxford Rainbows, Brownies and Guides

The past few months have been busy ones. The end of the summer term saw pack holidays and camps. One Brownie pack went to the Jarman Centre in Newmarket for a weekend of fun and games. One pack went to Essex and had activities and fun on their pack holiday, and Sawston Guides went to the Scout Headquarters at Gilwell Park for their annual camp. They swung high on the Giant Swing, zipped down the Zip Wire, bounced up and down in Aeroball, and swam in a cold swimming pool – where two Guides made their promise (shiver, shiver). Not to be outdone, the Rainbows held a sleepover at Houghton Mill in September. They enjoyed making crafts and visiting the mill.

At 2010 on 20th October 2010, thirty-nine Brownies, Guides and Guiders renewed their promises in Ely Cathedral alongside hundreds of other girls and adults, to help celebrate the end of Girlguiding UK's Centenary year of events. It was a moving experience in a magnificent building.

At the beginning of half term, fourteen Guides and three adults spent the day at Chessington World of Adventures. Everyone enjoyed the day with rides a-plenty and lots of screams.

Following previous successful day trips to London, this year 3rd Sawston Brownies decided to go one better and have an I-Spy-London sleepover weekend, staying overnight at one of the Girlguiding centres. So, on the first Saturday in December, twenty-four excited Brownies and six leaders left Cambridge on a train bound for London. There they saw

Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben, the Tower of London and Tower Bridge. They took a red London bus to Trafalgar Square where they saw the Christmas tree and crib scene, and had dinner nearby at Garfunkel's. On the Sunday they went to visit the Natural History Museum before catching a train home. Everyone had a really good time and is looking forward to the next overnight event, Pack Holiday in the summer!

In November, we joined in with the village's Remembrance Sunday parade and service.

Christinas saw Brownies and Guides making Christmas crafts, and Rainbows going to see Santa at Audley End. The Guides held an evening of fun challenges and raised £100 for Wood Green Animal Shelter.

Many thanks for all the adults who gave their time to let the girls have all these adventures. As you can see we pack a lot in and are always looking for more adults to help us provide these adventures. If you would like to know more about us, please contact Jane Woodstock at ray.woodstock@ntlworld.com or 01223 565674.

Do you have any old mobile phones or used ink cartridges?

Did you know that Sawston Rainbows, Brownies and Guides raise funds by recycling old mobile phones and, with Sawston Scout Group, ink cartridges?

There are collection boxes in Cambridge Building Society and phones and cartridges can also be taken along to any meeting. Over the last few years this has raised several hundred pounds – all of which have been spent for the benefit of our local groups of youngsters. It doesn't matter if the phones don't work; we are still able to recycle them! Small ink cartridges are also useful to us, especially the ones from home computers.

2461 Sawston Squadron Air Training Corps

On 5th February 2011 the Air Training Corps celebrates its 70th Anniversary; Sawston Squadron, along with the six other Squadrons in our Sector, will be going along to the Imperial War Museum Duxford on Sunday 6th February for a parade and short service.

The Air Training Corps in Sawston has its Squadron Headquarters in Hayfield Avenue and meets on Monday and Thursday evenings between 7pm and 9.30pm. It is open for young people aged from thirteen to eighteen who would like a chance to go flying and gliding and have an opportunity at sixteen to go for a gliding scholarship and be able to solo. We also take part in a wide variety of sports with the opportunity of not only representing the Squadron but maybe even the Wing, Region or Corps. We have Adventure Training Camps at RAF stations both here and overseas. There is an opportunity for all cadets to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme at Bronze level: the Award books are provided free of charge. For those over sixteen, there is an opportunity as part of Cadet Training to gain BTEC certificates in Aviation Studies and Public Services.

We are a small squadron at the moment but it is our intention to grow during 2011 – the more cadets we have, the more we can do.

So if you feel that you are up for a challenge, please come along and see us on a Monday or Thursday evening or give us a call during parade nights on 01223 834585. We are holding taster sessions at Hayfield Avenue on 14th February and 14th March from 7pm to 9.30pm.
Flight Lieutenant M Watson RAFVR(T)
Officer Commanding 2461 Sawston Squadron



Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern England and Help the Aged.

Age UK Cambridgeshire is seeking volunteer visitors to visit isolated and lonely older people for an hour per week in the Sawston, Great Shelford and Stapleford areas.

We'll need to ask you for two references and a CRB check. To find out more about this rewarding voluntary work, contact our team assistant Dee Potter on 08455 213481 or dee.potter@ageukcambridgeshire.org.uk

MIDLIFE CRISIS

I need help. I'm 46 and I need to put a band together. I haven't played in a band for 12 years but it's still a big warty itch that needs scratching and I want to find some like-minded 40-pluses in the village who would like to get together and make some noise and generally embarrass their children – oh, and record a million-selling CD on the way.

Don't give a monkey's about what's left of your hearing? Want to get old disgracefully? Prepared to make a fool of yourself in public? Give me a call: Richard Weller on 07905 409911.

Jump to it!

Last summer I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go on a parachute course at RAF Weston-on-the-Green, writes CPL S LONG of 2461 Sawston Squadron ATC.

This involved finding my own way to the course and meeting up with seventy-two other cadets from all over the country. The minibus I caught from Bicester station had cadets from Scotland, Wales, Norfolk and London; by the time we reached the camp friendships had already started to form.

Training started at 0800 at Weston-on-the-Green: we were split into four separate syndicates for training. We started by being shown the type of parachute we would be using and then moved on to exit procedures and how to deal with nuisance factors and malfunctions. Needless to say the drills were drummed into us – so much so that when during lunch an instructor shouted 'JUMP!', we all jumped up into our 'arched' exit posture and began to shout our chute opening count!

At 1100, halfway through our training, the man introduced to us by the Commanding Officer (CO) as in charge of the jump school walked into our lesson to inform our instructor that everyone was to jump today as the weather for the next two days was to be 'inclement'. Naturally everyone became a bit jittery but this was soon replaced by excitement. By 1500 the first people had completed all their training and done their exam (pass mark 100%) and were preparing to jump out of a perfectly good aeroplane. The jump was a static line jump from 3500 ft, which allows four to five seconds of free fall before the parachute opens, after which you fall at a rate of 700ft per minute, travelling forward at 22 mph.

I can't remember being scared at all. I can remember being really excited; I was going with my new friends to do something that I have always wanted to do. Two people jumped every time we passed the drop zone; I was number six of ten. So I was second of my pair to jump; the first was my training partner from London. A nod and a fist: bump he went and thirty seconds later I jumped. It is the most amazing thing that I have done in my cadet career, and I admit that I have done quite a bit with cadets.

Our course broke all the jump school records for the most people trained in one day and the most people jumped in one day, so the CO of the jump school treated everyone to a pizza and a drink as a reward. After which I returned to my barracks for some sleep (not much) before returning home to tell everyone what an amazing time I'd had. ☺

Fun Run 2011



Fourteen lucky local charities heard in January that they were to be the beneficiaries of this year's Sawston Fun Run on Sunday 15th May. As well as the Rosie Maternity Hospital and the local Marie Cancer Care and MS branches, seven Sawston-based organisations will benefit, plus youth groups in Shelford/Stapleford and Whittlesford/Duxford.

The Rotary Club of Sawston District aim to raise at least £17,000 to help local charities and organisations. Please put the date in your diary, be ready to enter the run or walk, and get as many sponsors as possible as soon as you enter!

President Vic Starkey says "We're hoping that more people than ever will enter so we can beat last year's record turnout of just over 1,200. If we are to help all the charities as we wish, then of course it's dependent on the number of entrants and how much sponsorship they raise too."

The event has raised over £336,000 since it started in 1986 and has become the largest community event in the area.

The major beneficiaries will be:

- Rosie Maternity Hospital
- Marie Curie Cancer Care
- South Cambs Riding for Disabled, Sawston
- MS Society, Cambridge branch

Other groups to benefit are:

Sawston Youth Centre; Friday Night Club, Sawston; Sawston Toy Library; Sawston Scouts; Sawston Guides; Sawston Cinema Club; Shelford & Stapleford Youth Group; Cambridge Joint Playschemes; Fledglings of Wendens Ambo, and Whittlesford & Duxford Scouts.

Entries will be accepted from February at www.sawstonfunrun.co.uk, branches of Cambridge Building Society, and the reception at Sawston Village College. There are advertising and promotional opportunities too: contact Tony Collett on 893447 or tony.collett@virgin.net

RUN 4 HEALTH

Running is a safe and enjoyable way to health and fitness. Joining a running group is an excellent way to meet people and get fit while enjoying the local environment. So come along and join a weekly running group at Sawston Sports Centre!

BEGINNERS GROUP

MONDAY 6.30PM TO 7.30PM

For complete beginners and anyone who has done some running. Sessions include a mixture of walking and running, working towards continuous running over a variety of distances.

IMPROVERS GROUP

WEDNESDAYS 6.30PM TO 7.30PM

Join if you can already run continuously for thirty minutes and you want to up your training. The runs include interval training and speed work on various gradients.

Sessions are led by qualified running coaches and include an appropriate warm up and cool down.

£20 for ten sessions – come and join us for a free trial session!

Find out more from Vikki Green on victoriagreen@btinternet.com or phone Sawston Sports Centre on 712555

SAWSTON ADULT EDUCATION

So, 2011 has arrived and you've made your resolutions and are full of good intentions – this year WILL be different! Sawston Adult Education is here to help you achieve what you've promised yourself. With a wide range of weekly term-time courses on offer and one- and two-day weekend workshops, what are you waiting for? Get started on those new skills now! Book today – we're waiting to hear from you.

ONE-DAY WORKSHOPS ON

SATURDAY 19TH MARCH	TIME	COST
Bellydancing	10am to 1pm	£20
Photoshop	9.30am to 2.30pm	£30
Food Hygiene	9.30am to 5pm	£85
Illustration	10am to 4pm	£40
Indian Head Massage	9.30am to 1.30pm	£25
Interior Design	10am to 1pm	£25
MOT for Muscles	10am to 11.30am	£10
Calligraphy	10am to 1pm	£25
Controlling Stress through NLP	10am to 4pm	£40

TWO-DAY WORKSHOPS

Bricklaying: 19 and 20 March, 9.30am to 3.30pm, £85
First Aid for Child Carers, 19 & 26 March, 10am to 4pm, £130

To book your place or find out more, contact Sawston Adult Education on 712424 or adulthood@sawstonvc.org or drop into Sawston Village College, New Road, Sawston, CB22 3BP. The Adult Education office is opposite the main school reception. More courses and workshops at www.sawstonadulthood.org

Heroes return to central Italy

Last September, Ken and Jackie Chinnick toured the battlefields of Italy – KENNETH CHINNICK, 2666340 RASC, Fifth British Division, Vet no. AVR/1/010338597, describes their experience...

A grant was made to individuals of the armed forces by the Lottery Fund, and tours arranged by the Royal British Legion to visit the battlefields of World War II.

Our tour was to central Italy; our group flew out of Heathrow to Pisa in Italy, then by coach to Castiglion Fiorentino. We arrived at the hotel in the early evening having travelled through lovely scenery. The hotel has a nice location, pleasant staff, and good company. Plus a swimming pool on the rooftop, surrounded by flower beds and palm trees – all very nice (hope we have time to use it!).

We started our battlefield tours, covering quite a bit of ground through the Tuscan scenery, hills and mountains. Our first visit of the day was to Assisi War Cemetery, where members of our group had comrades buried. What a wonderful place (if it ever happened to you) to be laid to rest. Very beautiful. The next was Arrezzo: like Assisi this was perfectly kept. We met some of the very friendly gardeners who tend these cemeteries; they are really dedicated to their job. They were busy removing all summer flowers and cleaning up for winter. They were very pleased to meet us, and it was handshakes all round as we left (*Arrivederci!*).

Now I think it's time to introduce our tour guide, a very distinguished gentleman, an ex-Marine of thirty years: Lt Col Anthony Langdon. A very likeable person, with a wealth of knowledge of the Italian campaign, a real sense of humour, and bags of good old camaraderie. He and I soon got on very well, especially after he said to me, "What about a good old army song? Looking at the records of the Fifth Division, it would seem to me that you are one of the D Day dodgers from sunny Italy?" "Yes, sir, that's correct." "So let's join together and do the honours."

So the Lt Col and myself sang the song with great gusto, and won a round of applause from all on the



Ken and Jackie in Florence War Cemetery. The Commonwealth lost almost 50,000 dead in Italy in the Second World War

coach. (Some information for you: Fifth Division were withdrawn from combat after the Anzio battles to go as quickly as possible to the Middle East (again) as a serious situation was developing, so we were branded the D Day dodgers, as we could not be available for D day in Normandy. We did arrive back in Europe at a later date, and finished up in Berlin, then down to Brunswick. But that's another story. Now back to our tours...)

The next cemetery to visit was Forli, where a service was held, and the reading of the exhortation was performed by Anthony, a very touching moment. After the laying of crosses, the whole cemetery was

a blaze of colour, and pure white crosses.

Now came a light-hearted break as we carried on to Sanmarino, tucked away in the hills. This is a small principality with its own customs, a unique place. Its narrow steep streets, splashes of colour at every turn, climb still higher until they reach the main square and the tower. We stopped here to admire the view, and also a packed lunch – very enjoyable, with lots of goodies. Then we enjoyed a walk round the town, which has many stiff ups and downs everywhere. And many surprises: flower-covered courtyards, polished cobbles, quaint alleys, really remarkable. Approaching the main square, we could see marching soldiers in army dress with rifles, looking very smart, being drilled by an RSM. They paraded at the approach to the tower, very smart. Couldn't have done better myself. Then! They did the ceremony of changing of the guard, very correct, and very regimental. Jackie had a photo taken near the guard commander, all good stuff.

Before making our way back to Fiorentino, we had one more cemetery to visit, and this was at Florence. It was a large cemetery, beautifully kept, surrounded by tall slender conifers and flowerbeds.

The main cross was also surrounded by these delicate trees and flowerbeds, and that was where, with much respect, I laid my plaque, which read 'From Sawston & Pampisford R.B.L.'

Then back to our hotel. With a free day on the Sunday, we were looking forward to new adventures. After all our visits with our splendid coach driver,

"My ears were still ringing from the bells chiming all over the town."

nothing was too much trouble for him. More to come, wait and see. The sun was still shining every day. In Fiorentino it was up to the tower and up to the very top. We had been warned by other friends of our group that it was a tough climb, but we had to be at the top by 11am as that's when it all happens.

Dead on 11am the bells rang out all over Fiorentino, in churches and bell towers. We just made the top in time, opening the trap door to be met by a blaze of sunshine and the bells ringing, quite an experience.

We sat there for a while to enjoy the sound and scenery. Then we had to focus on descending: no easy task, but we made it in the end, handhold after handhold. And out into the sunshine to enjoy lunch in the town square, with views of Tuscany countryside, which we never tired of. Then a look around the colourful street markets, always there on Sundays; then time for a delicious Italian ice-cream. *Stupendo! Grazie.*

Arriving back at our hotel in the evening we wandered to the bar and were welcomed by our

friends, with a loud cheer and to say well done you made it. My ears were still ringing from the bells chiming all over the town.

On our last day, our flight from Pisa to Heathrow didn't take off till 7pm so we had the day to spend in Fiorentino. We had a chat with Anthony and it was arranged that we could spend

the whole day in Pisa. That was great news, as it was still great weather: a very good arrangement all round, thanks to our superb coach driver, who

didn't mind a bit. So it was off on the sixty miles to Pisa at 7am; we arrived at 10 am, and took the shuttle bus to the town centre.

What a great end to our tour! We had a stroll around the town and enjoyed a nice lunch, under the sunshades, with accordions playing. After this it was on to the Piazza del Duomo (also known as the Miracle Square). As you enter a blaze of dazzling white hits you: churches, museums, and of course the leaning tower. This is open to the public again now the structural faults have been repaired, and we were going to climb it come hell or high water. Only 45 people are allowed to climb it at a time, and we were lucky to get a slot at 3pm.

It was an amazing climb: the tower leaning makes it very demanding, there are no hand rails and it's just wide enough to reach the sides, so it's quite a sensation – hard to explain but it's difficult to rotate the few hundred steps up and down.

That was the jewel in the crown. Then it was off to the airport and home, both of us completely shattered, but very satisfied. ☺

Cam Sight

working with visually impaired people in Cambridgeshire

Cam Sight aims to provide services and ongoing support to anyone with a visual impairment, and their families, friends and carers.

The Sawston Visually Impaired Group meets at Bircham House, High Street, Sawston on the third Thursday of the month between 10.30am and 12.30pm.

The group provides advice, information, equipment and support for people with sight problems. Their programme offers speakers, events, and new equipment demonstrations along with at least one trip a year. Some wonderful friendships have grown from the meetings and there is always a warm welcome.

To find out more, contact Julie on 01223 420033 or julie@camsight.org.uk

An advertisement for Russells Estate Agents. It features a black and white photograph of a two-story house with a gabled roof and a chimney. In the foreground, there are two estate agent signs. The sign on the left is black with white text and says "SOLD". The sign on the right is also black with white text and says "LET". In the center, there is a white banner with the Russells logo and contact information: "Russells", "Woolpack House", "Sawston, Cambs CB22 3HJ", and the phone number "01223 837473". The Russells logo includes the text "Russells Estate Agents" and "Excellent through Experience" with the website "russellres.co.uk".



after a sharp frost), and you soon come to the end of the path by the church.

Turn left and walk bikes through the churchyard – if the gate at the far end of the churchyard is closed, you can turn round and follow the path in the opposite direction, turning left when you get to the main road (North Road). If the church gate is open, carry on pushing bikes straight ahead and over the small bit of grass between some houses. Back on bikes, and to the right on The Lawn – seems a funny

A cycle ride Sawston to Whittlesford

CHRIS & YASMIN EMERSON loaded the trailer with children and set off...

name for a tarmac road! Follow the road around and you'll soon see the playground on your right. If everyone's ready to give up at this point, you can turn around and go home the same way you came, or turn left down Mill Lane and past the primary school. The Mill Lane footpath crosses the river, the railway and the A1301 before reaching Sawston territory – once you're on the Sawston side, take the path to the right to come out in Catley's Walk.

To carry on towards Duxford, you'll need to stay on the main roads for a bit. Turn right out of The Lawn and into Mill Lane, with the Memorial Hall on your left. Turn left onto Duxford Road, and follow the road down the hill towards Duxford – do be careful, as the cars race along this road. Some of the houses on this stretch are quite interesting: we always like looking out for an old garage barely visible under all the ivy on the right, and a super view towards Sawston and Pampisford on the left.

Our ageing tandem rarely goes out these days, but I really enjoy being the stoker when there are gorgeous views across the countryside; it's so much easier to look closely, without having to concentrate on direction of travel.

Photos by Yasmin Emerson

Did Santa bring you a shiny new bicycle for Christmas? Feeling inspired by the thought of nice weather? (Wishful thinking as I write this in cold, damp January!) Here's an idea for a bicycle ride, using one of our new cycle paths and coming home on another which is part of National Cycle Route 11. We planned this to include playground stops (although there are items of interest for the older cyclist too), and a point to bail out if need be!

We often do this as a quick morning out in the summer, but on a sunny winter's day it's just long enough to get some exercise without getting too cold. The route is a bit over seven miles in total, and should take around fifty minutes at a leisurely pace (excluding playground or pub breaks).

Starting out from Mill Lane by the Post Office, cycle past the recreation ground, out of Sawston and towards the bypass. Cross over the bypass towards the level crossing and the Spicers site – it's an unpleasant crossing, but if you bump up onto the kerb near the 30 sign, you can cross onto the traffic island. We find this is impossible with the trailer or tandem, so we usually cross as a car would. After the inevitable train or two, go over the level crossing and turn immediately left through some dotted lines into a wide path – then you're onto safer territory, as this new cyclepath snakes through the fields away from the traffic to Whittlesford. The crossings over the river are now level and wide, and you can admire the river on one side, and the enormous Spicers site on the other. Watch out for some slightly sharp bends, through the arches of trees (particularly beautiful



Sawston Scene PULL OUT AND KEEP DIRECTOR

ESSENTIALS

Sawston Medical Centre
Reception Mon 8am–8pm, Tue–Thu 8am–6pm, Fri 7am–6pm · 01223 727 555

Boots the chemist
Mon–Fri 8.30am–6pm, Sat 9am–5pm

Police crimes 0345 456 4564
community 07740 7349 76

Citizens Advice Bureau Wed and Fri 9.30am–12.30pm at JHC, Tannery Road, Sawston, CB22 3UW · 01223 492 492

BIN collections

7th February
Green bin · Blue bin

14th February
Black bin

21st February
Green bin · Blue bin

28th February
Black bin

7th March
Green bin · Blue bin

14th March
Black bin

21st March
Green bin · Blue bin

28th March
Black bin

4th April
Green bin · Blue bin

Take larger items (household waste only) to Thriplow Recycling Centre, Gravel Pit Hill, Thriplow, SG8 7HZ · 01223 839001
Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm from October

SCHOOLS

Bellbird 01223 833216
Icknield 01223 508750
Village College 01223 712777

COUNCILS

Sawston Parish Council Link Road, Sawston, CB22 3GB · www.sawston.org.uk · Parish Clerk: Jo Keeler on 01223 832470 or jo.keeler@sawston.org.uk

Pat Awbery-Maskell, David Bard, Samantha Clarke (Vice Chair), Kieran Cooper, Tony Fell, Sally Hatton, Beck Laxton, Mike Mallows, Eugene Murray (Chair), Tony Orgee, Ian Read, Neil Reid, John Reynolds, Roger Richmond, David Roberts, Jackie Smith, Nik Thomas.

Anyone can come to any meeting, but non-councillors may speak only during public participation, which is at 7.15pm at Full Council meetings, on the second Tuesday of every month.

South Cambridgeshire District Council

0345 045 0500 · www.scambs.gov.uk
For Sawston: David Bard, Sally Hatton, Raymond Matthews

Cambridgeshire County Council

0345 045 5200 · www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk
For Sawston: Gail Kenney, Tony Orgee

TRAVEL

Buses Citi 7 to Cottenham through Stapleford, Shelford, Trumpington, Addenbrooke's, Cambridge, Histon every ten minutes; after 6pm and Sundays, every hour.

Citi 7 to Pampisford, Duxford, Hinxton, Saffron Walden.
Details: 01223 423578 or www.stagecoachbus.com

Coaches 010 to and from London through Stratford, Aldgate, Blackfriars, Victoria from Sawston War Memorial three times a day.
Details: 08717 818178 or www.nationalexpress.com/coach

Trains Whittlesford to Cambridge or London Liverpool Street every half an hour. Details: 0845 7484950 or www.nationalrail.co.uk

Taxis local Jim's Cars 01223 691164 · Pampas Cars 01223 830509 local and long distance A & M Carriages 01223 513703 · Mid-Anglia 01223 836000 · South Cambs 01223 834858

OPENING TIMES

Post Office 50 High Street, Sawston, CB22 3BG · 01223 833101
Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9am–5.30pm, Wed 9am–4pm, Sat 9am–1pm
Last collection from postbox Mon–Fri 5pm, Sat 11.30am, 5.30pm

Sawston Library New Road, Sawston, CB22 3BP · 0345 045 5225
Mon 10am–12.30pm 6pm–8pm
Tue 3pm–5pm 6pm–8pm
Wed and Fri 10am–12.30pm 3pm–5pm 6pm–8pm
Thu closed; Sat 10am–12.30pm

Budgens Mon to Fri 7am–10pm, Sat 7am–9pm, Sun 10am–4pm

Londis Falkner Road: Mon to Sat 5am–9pm, Sun 6am–9pm

Select & Save Mon to Sat 6.30am–7pm, Sun 10am–2pm

Common Lane Farm Shop Thur and Fri 9am–5pm, Sat 9am–4pm, closed for lunch 1–2pm

EAT AND DRINK

Balaban
Kebab Van
07798
717444

Black Bull
835726

Deep Blue
832230

Chequers,
Pampisford
833220

Greyhound
832260

Jade
Fountain
836100

King's
Head
833541

Lotus
House
835165

Masa
711711

Redfort
Garden
837025

White Lion
565580

Sawston Village History Society

The speaker at our November meeting was Carolyn Wingfield, Curator of the Saffron Walden Museum, reports BRUCE MILNER. This popular museum celebrated its 175th birthday in May 2010. It was built on the site of the Saffron Walden Castle, and opened in May 1835, making it one of the oldest purpose-built museums in the country. The founding fathers were Jabey Gibson, one of the Quaker Gibsons, John Player (of the cigarette family) and Richard Griffin, third Lord Braybrooke of Audley End. Their aim was to “illustrate the arts, manufactures and habits of the different nations”.

As the founders were very influential, artefacts from all over the world were quickly obtained. These included aboriginal objects from Australia and vast quantities of natural history specimens and stuffed birds and animals, including a hippopotamus. One of the most famous of the early exhibits was a lion, known as Wallace. He was born in Edinburgh in 1812, the first African lion to be born in captivity, and was exhibited up and down the country. When he died in about 1837 his owner had him stuffed and donated him to the museum, where he has been by the entrance ever since!

A Queen Emma from Hawaii, as a result of a visit from Lord Harvey, an early Victorian missionary, had donated some highly decorated barkcloth textiles. Some fine Mandarin Chinese ceramics were also among the earlier exhibits, one of which featured the ancient swastika motif (which is in an anticlockwise orientation, unlike the hateful twentieth-century version).

One unusual earlier exhibit was a stuffed elephant, donated by Robert Dunn after forming one of the prized exhibits of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Sadly it slowly deteriorated; it was removed to a new home after about 1960 where it was kept outside and rapidly disintegrated.

Now the museum has eight galleries covering archaeology, ancient Egypt, animals and plants, ceramics and glass, costumes, geology and world cultures. Among the more notable exhibits is a stuffed bittern from America, blown across the Atlantic in the 1820s, a rare Viking necklace, which now forms the logo of the Museum, a 1948 TV that cost £99, and a horse-drawn carriage. There is also a superb collection of fossils, rare

minerals and precious stones. Because of limited space many objects are in storage, but hopefully, within a year, the new Saffron Walden Heritage Quest Centre in Thaxted Road will be open and many more objects will be displayed.

The museum and exhibits are owned by the Saffron Walden Museum Society, and managed in partnership with Uttlesford District Council. The Museum is open from Monday to Saturday from 10am, and Sundays and Bank Holidays from 2pm, closing at 4.30pm from November to February, and 5pm from March to October. It's well worth a visit!

Our December meeting was scheduled to feature Amanda Tuck's unique Magic Lantern show as a prelude to the Christmas buffet provided by the members. Sadly, Amanda was unwell so unable to make her presentation, which we hope will be rescheduled in next year's programme. So, at five minutes' notice (or perhaps ten), Eric Jacobs gave a slide presentation from his considerable collection of Sawston postcards. Some especially notable slides included a Sawston celebratory street procession dated 1910 (the celebration remains unknown), various views of the high street from 1907 until 1970, and the Fire Station shed, now replaced by a house to the left of the Black Bull. There was also a wonderful picture of an open-topped double-decker bus in the High Street outside Coulthards Pharmacy, dated 1910. After Eric's fascinating show we were able to indulge in the traditional pre-Christmas buffet.

I have now received confirmation by email, from Carol Miller, that a famous Chinese poet, Xu Zhimo, stayed in Sawston for some months in 1922, while studying at King's College, Cambridge, where a marble stone commemorating him was installed in 2008, showing a verse from his poem 'Saying Goodbye to Cambridge again'. His fame was such that the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, after his controversial visit to Cambridge in February 2009, wanted to stop at the Jade House Restaurant in order to visit the village where Xu Zhimo was living. Can any reader confirm this or throw any light on where Xu Zhimo stayed in Sawston?

Archivists Bryan Howe and Andrew Little are in the Sawston Archive room at the Parish Council Office in Link Road on Monday mornings. Just pop in if you have any queries relating to Sawston past and present. ☺

THE CHALLIS GARDEN

SHEILA BLACKWELL has the latest news from the house and garden at 68 High Street...

Our Christmas-themed fun morning was on 11th December. So many excited children, so many unusual activities to take part in – it was the format of a very successful day. At the end of the session, Sue Reeve had organised carols for everybody in the large barn accompanied by Abby Wollston on her cello with bells, whistles and other hand instruments being operated by the children. Such a creative morning on a very cold day!

Three Rowan trees have been planted in the wild flower patch and the paths are being completed round the raised beds. An application has been made to the Royal Horticultural Society Orchard Scheme for a free Community Tree Pack and information on trees which are native to our area. The adaptation of the



inside of the vine house is almost complete. Notices will be placed around the village when the snowdrops are at their best; the winter walk in the garden is also worth a visit.

The back of the Mary Challis House is nearly completed: the upstairs windows have been replaced and the walls re-rendered with limewash. The House will be open to the public with conducted parties on Saturdays 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th March from 10am to 2pm. Visitors can then see for themselves the problems we are encountering. It is not a hard-hat area but very dusty! There will be teas and coffees available in the garden. We will launch a major appeal for funds in April–May. ☺

Photos by Ann Redshaw

Sauceton



In which we cast a satirical eye over recent events...

Sauceton is still reeling in shock at a visitation over the Christmas holidays. Not *chez Sauceton*, but at a more public location, on a damp New Year's Eve afternoon. Heavenly music in Link Road? The strains of a Hammond organ? A quick detour revealed the greatest revelry ever seen: Chapelfield Way Communal Room's New Year's Eve Party, with a visitor: no less than The King himself. Not the King of Kings, but a reincarnation of Elvis – singing in full regalia to a packed audience. Mistaking an Elvis impersonator for the choir of angels was somewhat embarrassing, but Sauceton was consoled with the thought that Elvis's assistant might have been more embarrassed. A-huh-huh.

Having recovered from New Year's Eve excitement, Sauceton spent an evening with the South Cambs website at plan.scambs.gov.uk – a first-class source if ever there was. Plenty of dull

applications – until Sauceton found one relating to Spring Close, the wooden house in Church Lane. Replacement dwelling refused on 24th November – for being nearly double the size of the existing dwelling. And after the previous application had been refused for being too large as well – oops! Sauceton was further intrigued when the minutes for the December Parish Council meeting went up – “Spring Close: the question was asked if the council had recently received any planning applications for this location. Clerk to check.” So South Cambs refused the application, and the PC hadn't seen it at all? A South Cambs scam or just dodgy postal connections?

The only other marginally interesting application was from the owners of the former public lavatory building on Link Road, who want to turn the adjacent waste land (the shrubbery by the kebab van) into a nice area for serving tea and cake. Various sources had been wondering whether said new building would be a tea-room, as suggested at one point, and it would seem so. Sauceton thinks it would be more appropriate to make a change of use to a convenience store. Ahem. ☺

BOOK CLUB

What happens when someone recommends their favourite book?

VINCENT ZDZITOWIECKI reports...

Nominating a much-loved tome as the monthly object of scrutiny and hopefully enjoyment for others in the Book Club is fraught with danger. What if the others don't like it? *Fire and Hemlock* by Diana Wynne Jones was such a proposition. And, true to form, the eight of us who had read it had markedly mixed opinions about its merits. It wasn't that we didn't like it: most of us really wanted to. It was more the feeling of frustration at not being able to understand it fully that rankled.

Our irritation was compounded by the fact that this was not a difficult read, telling the story as it does through the eyes of a nineteen-year-old girl in simple language, recounting events in her life from the age of ten to young adulthood. Young adult Polly discovers that below her memories, in which she led an entirely normal and unremarkable life, there exists a second set of memories, which are rather unusual. These seem to involve a friendship with an adult called Tom Lynn and much of *Fire and Hemlock* is told in flashback, as Polly attempts to recover her lost memories of Tom and their times together.

Though the language may be simple, the plot is incredibly complicated as Polly sifts through the layers of childhood memory, through real life and 'fantasy', to get at the truth – only to realise that they co-exist, culminating in a final chapter which takes the reader into the realms of a world that many of us found very difficult to comprehend.

An issue that we raised early on was target readership. Who was this book written for? A passionate argument was made for the irrelevance of the question: books should not be categorised for reader age groups and marketed and sold as such; *Fire and Hemlock* should be enjoyed by adult and child alike. However, the majority of our group felt that either author or publisher had definitely marketed this as a children's book. And if the book was written for young adults, this led to the main point of many of our members' dissatisfaction with it: as older readers, reading it as a children's book, we were confused by the change in style. For the first three-quarters of the book this was a child's fantasy mystery story which would have been explained away in the final chapter by the adult Polly. All

would be revealed as the fantasy world merged with the real world. Instead, if we weren't already baffled by the recollections of a child culminating in the 'Where Now?' section, we were totally bewildered by the adult denouement of 'Nowhere'.

And this appears to be the stumbling block between those few who enjoyed it very much, those who respected some of its qualities and those who didn't like it at all – our expectations of a fantasy tale. As the boundaries between reality and fantasy were not delineated sufficiently, some of us read it too literally by default and were governed more by our individual inherent feelings of cynicism, pragmatism and realism than was intended. And it was this which I believe defined whether we enjoyed *Fire and Hemlock* as a novel. Most of the members veered towards the reality and did not allow themselves to be sucked into the fantasy at the end because they weren't expressly directed to. Whether this was the fault of the author for not making it clear enough or the adult readers for being too blinkered is debatable. Perhaps the author did not feel it necessary to spoon-feed more open-minded

“Though the language may be simple, the plot is incredibly complicated.”

young readers, but it confused a number of us!

On a much more positive note, there were also good things said about the book. Seeing the world through a child's eyes, it was well written. The author does not stint on the pains of adolescence and there are subtleties that we admired, such as Polly's gradual realisation that her mother Ivy's poor track record with her partners is almost entirely the fault of Ivy and not the men about whom she complains. Some of us enjoyed the characterisations more than others. Some complained there were too many coincidences – or was that part of the magic...?

Overall our discussion never reached a definite conclusion. Most of us seemed very frustrated about not 'getting it' and those who enjoyed it were equally frustrated by the others missing the point. Although this is a rare occurrence in our meetings, the book seemed to polarise opinions and our marks ranged from 3 to 10, with an average of 5.5. ☺



Nature Notes

CATHERINE GRAY celebrates the changing seasons in words and pictures...

As I write this, the snow (lovely snow!) has just melted and we have been plunged in to a dank greyness. I struggle to imagine spring, so I am going to celebrate winter for a bit longer. One of my favourite winter walks is through the beechwoods at Wandlebury Country Park. The smooth grey beech trunks contrast with the rich brown fallen leaves, which even on the soggiest of days



manage to stay crisp and crinkly.

This has been a good winter for beech nuts, and indeed for many other fruits and nuts, so the woods are a great place to observe winter wildlife. Finches, especially chaffinches, gather on the woodland floor in search of beech nuts. In spring and summer, woodland birds are strongly territorial, but in winter this is forgotten as they form large flocks; sometimes of the same species but often mixed.

An excited twitter of long-tailed tits bouncing around the treetops is followed by blue tits and coal tits. Being in a flock means a better chance of finding food and reduces an individual's risk of being eaten. Some of the smallest birds also huddle together to stay warm at night – the record roost is sixty-one wrens in a single nestbox.

Around the New Year, waxwings were spotted in Sawston. I was sorry not to see them, because they are absolutely stunning. They look incredibly exotic. For a start, they are pink. Yes, it's a dusky brownish pink, but still pink. They have a crest, a great quiff sweeping back from the forehead. The wax in their

name refers to tiny red beads on the tips of the wing feathers. Waxwings become so absorbed in their winter feast of hawthorn and rowan berries that they seem oblivious to humans, so it is possible to get a very close view without disturbing them. Waxwings breed in Scandinavia and sometimes make their way here in winter, occasionally in large and sudden influxes called irruptions which tend to be triggered by poor food supply in their northern habitat. They may still be here in February, so look out for

flamboyant starling-sized birds feasting on red berries.

But enough of winter. By the time you read this there will be signs of spring everywhere. Snowdrops and aconites are among the first flowers to appear: the Challis Garden has a beautiful display, as do the verges in Stapleford and Great Shelford, and Wandlebury has an amazing yellow and white carpet of flowers in February. Hazel and alder catkins appear as tight buds in winter and open in early February. Insects are starting to emerge from hibernation. The earliest bumble bees are the queens, which are noticeably bigger than the bumble bees we see in summer. The worker bees die in autumn but the queen overwinters in a small burrow. In spring she builds a nest, lays her eggs and establishes a new colony.

The brimstone butterfly is another hibernator which emerges in February and March, bringing a flash of sulphur yellow to spring gardens, and other butterflies will appear soon after. The days are getting longer, and there is even some warmth in the sun. Happy Spring! ☺

JHC ON THE WWW

JHC now has a Facebook page, writes ELEANOR CLAPP. You just need to search for 'John Huntingdon's Charity' to find the page. It has details of what the charity is up and recent news. If you 'like' the page, you will receive details of new information as and when it is posted. JHC would



love people to comment on the page, or discuss relevant topics, because we are interested in what people in the village (whether our clients or not) have to say about us and what we can do to improve our services. NB Yasmin says – if you're a fan of Facebook, do come and find Sawston Scene there too!

Sports

Sports Editor ALAN CHAMLEY has little to report...



Shock horror! One sportsman in Sten has been selected by lot and killed, by a wilful betrayal of fidelity, confidence or trust. Well, not quite – but the sport has been decimated by the treacherous wintry weather. At the time of writing, the last football league matches for the two teams from the village that compete in the Cambridgeshire FA County League had been played on 11th December.

So here is a brief summary of the sports teams' current league positions. Sawston United first team currently lie second from bottom in the Senior A Division, while Sawston Rovers hover in mid table in Division 1A. United's reserve team are currently top of Division 3A, while Rovers' second string are second from bottom in Division 4A.

Sawston Rugby Club has so far played six league matches, winning one of their Greene King Super Premiere League matches. I have dodgy vision and had to look long and hard at the league table to figure out the points conceded for the bottom team Honington Hornets. At the time of writing it showed **Played 2, points against 421**. I figured it's really 42. But as Honington was the place where *Dad's Army* was filmed I did wonder if they'd got some of the cast guesting for them – "I say, do you think I might be excused?" Stupid boy... ☹

SAWSTON CC HOSTS SCOTLAND!

With the fantastic new facilities now at Spicers Sports Ground, Sawston Cricket Club is looking forward to the summer more than ever, the club's Chair DAVID ELLIS reports. In recognition of the quality of the new facilities, the club has been asked to host some prestigious fixtures including:

- 26th June Cambs under 15s v Leicestershire
- 11–12th July Cambs under 17s v Scotland
- 31st July Cambs Women v Northants
- 7th August Sawston v MCC
- 4th September Cambs Women v Herts

It is fantastic to be asked to stage such high-profile games and we hope that with the approval of the Parish Council we can do it. This should be a stepping stone to seeing full county cricket back in Sawston in the not too distant future.

CRICKET TRAINING

Winter training for junior and senior members starts at the Village College at the beginning of February.

The club is particularly keen to welcome new members. Maybe you played as a youngster or you have moved to the area? Whatever your standard you will be assured a warm welcome at one of Cambridgeshire's friendliest clubs.

SUMMER VILLAGE BALL

To help the village celebrate the opening of the new pavilion at Spicers Sports Ground, there will be a Grand Village Charity Ball held in a marquee on the Sports Ground on Saturday 28th May 2011.

For more details about the cricket club or the summer ball, contact David Ellis on 01223 833813 or davidellis365@btinternet.com ☹

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Pampisford

In November Chris Benson, a nurse with responsibilities to patients recovering from heart problems, spoke to us on how to maintain a healthy heart.

Chris also takes classes at Sawston Sports Centre to encourage the continuation of exercise when patients have been discharged from hospital.

There were plenty of questions from members and everyone went home with good intentions to take note of the messages!

In December we held our Christmas Party and everyone brought splendid food for us to share. There was wine and soft drinks for all. Members very kindly brought wrapped Christmas presents which were taken to the Women's Refuge in Cambridge. After the first course one of our members gave an excellent reading of a Benjamin Zephaniah poem. Then another of our members recited a comical

JEAN OSBORNE reports on recent meetings

monologue. Both had us all laughing.

We were pleased to have the company of representatives of several other WIs in our group. After an excellent raffle everyone joined in clearing up and all

went home in very festive mood.

Our next meeting is our AGM on 17th January and on 21st February at 7.30pm we have Faye Steer giving us a talk on 'Seeing the third world first hand – a visit to Nicaragua 2010'. This was a Cambridge Young People trip with St Andrew's Street Baptist Church.

Pampisford Women's Institute meets in Pampisford Village Hall on the third Monday in the month. To find out more about us, call Jean Osborne on 832472.

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CHRIST CHURCH SOUTH CAMBS

How would you cope serving a hot turkey dinner with all the trimmings for eighty people? Without a kitchen? Such a stunt was carried off by the church family and friends at Christ Church South Cambs on the Sunday before Christmas.

It took a fair bit of planning... We enjoyed our normal morning service in the Lower School Hall at the Village College and after some refreshment and mince pies we took the forty children to play games in the sports hall for an hour. The adults headed home to over twenty houses to put the finishing touches to the eight turkeys, trays of baked potatoes, piles of peas, and dishes of carrots. Another team of helpers set out the room with table cloths, crackers and beautiful decorations, and mixed up the bread sauce and gravy on site. And then, co-ordinated almost to perfection at 12.30pm, the children came back in with freshly washed hands, and the food, packed in insulated boxes, arrived and was served to tables around the room. The Christmas pudding and some amazing chocolate brownies rounded off a fabulous meal.

This was the first time we'd tried it, and all concluded it was a great success. Here was a church being an extended family, with a number of guests, making the most of the Christmas season and sharing in the joy of working together to do something none of us could have done on our own.

Christ Church is a church that exists for people who don't go to church. Part of our purpose is to create a warm supportive community with Christ at the centre. We'd love to share what we have. Visit us at www.christchurchsouthcambs.org or in person any Sunday (9.30am at Sawston Village College, Lower School Hall). You will be warmly welcomed.

TIM CHAPMAN



Churches

CHRISTMAS SHOP

Did you get around to visiting the Christmas shop in the High Street? If you did I hope you found what you were looking for – and perhaps a number of things you were not!

The shop tried hard from its front window display inwards to help everyone who entered to find or to rediscover the heart of Christmas. It was complemented by carol singing around the village and on the High Street in the weeks leading up to Christmas Day itself.

All the churches of Sawston got involved together, helping to select the stock, organise its display, learn how to work the till, and help you make a good choice of present.

The profit we raised will be divided between the John Huntington Charity and Tearfund projects aimed at helping the developing world.

If you did call in, thank you very much for your support, if not – well, who knows what we might do next year?! Alan Partridge



the dragon and the kangaroo – great entertainment and some fantastic dancing games. A bring and share refuelled the kids for a round of magic tricks. Alas, it was all over too quickly but some really happy children dragged their parents back home.

Look out for details of our St Patrick's Day Dance later this year! NICK ASH

Masses at 8.45am and 11.15am on Sunday; 9.30am on Monday, Thursday and first Friday of month; Eucharist at 9.30am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. See www.olosawston.com

ST MARY'S

Another Christmas has come and gone but the season leaves us with many good memories at St Mary's. There was Christingle in early December; carol services for our Junior Schools and for Sawston Youth Group were great fun with drama and stories and songs. The high point for many this year was our Christmas Eve Crib Service with a nativity play dramatically set in and around Sawston itself! Many thanks are due to all who took part, who decorated the church with wonderful flowers, who risked life and limb to put

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

Our Christmas Bazaar was held on Saturday 27th November. We had a great time and raised over £1,400 towards parish activities for the year. Thanks to all who came to support us despite a few clashes with other events in the village.

Some fifty parishioners celebrated a fantastic Christmas dinner on Saturday 4th December, courtesy of OWL and their wonderful catering skills. We are pleased to support this local charity and they always put on such a wonderful spread of food. Great!

Mr Rainbow entertained forty-three children at our Children's Christmas Party on Sunday 12th December, with appearances from

the angel on top of our giant tree and who played to support our singing.

Now we turn towards Lent and Easter following our Candlemass celebration at the end of January. Wonderful as Christmas celebrations are, the truth and hope of Easter are at the very heart of what we believe and live out! There is much to look forward to as the spring arrives... ALAN PARTRIDGE

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday: Morning Prayer at 8am, Evening Prayer at 5pm. Thursday: Eucharist at 9.30am; Evening Prayer at 5pm. Friday: Evening Prayer at 6pm. Sunday: Eucharist at 9.15am; Open Door at 10.45am; Evening Prayer at 6pm; St Mary's@7 at 7pm. See www.stmaryssawston.org.uk

SAWSTON FREE CHURCH

CELEBRATING 200 YEARS OF SFC

The first non-conformist chapel in Sawston was built in 1811 at the back of the current Sawston Free Church site (and was later known as the Lecture Hall). When the congregation outgrew this, a new chapel was built in 1879 (the current

building). Over the years, there have been several changes and additions, the most recent of which was the OWL Café and the new concourse.

To celebrate our 200th anniversary in 2011, there will be events throughout the year. On 20 March we are inviting all our friends to join us for a 'Back to Sawston Free Church Sunday' at 10.30am. It will be a service of celebration and thanksgiving for the life of the church over the past two hundred years and for all the people who have come through its doors. All those who have been involved in Sawston Free Church in any way – as members, at baptisms, weddings or funerals, or through the many church organisations – are especially invited.

On Saturday 12th February at 7.30pm we have "I can't believe it's not Elvis" – an evening of music, dancing, quiz and refreshments. See below left for details. Further events will be advertised in *Sawston Scene* during 2011. PAM MOSS

Morning Worship on Sundays at 10.30am. Quiet Time at 6pm on first Sunday of month; Communion at 6pm on third Sunday; Go4th gospel service at 6pm on fourth Sunday. See www.sawstonfreechurch.org.uk

I can't believe it's not

A great night out!

ELVIS

A tribute evening to the King of Rock 'n Roll

Saturday 12th February 2011

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Sawston Scene Public Meeting

- Meet the team •
- Share your feedback •
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- Find out about volunteering for production or distribution •

Wednesday 2nd March
at 7.30 for 8pm in Spicers Pavilion
FREE wine and nibbles!

My favourite places

My favourite place is not a single location but a walk between two: High Street Sawston to Whittlesford Parkway Station, undertaken at ridiculous o'clock in the morning, Monday to Friday. The very thought of this regular yomp may fill you with horror but I've got to say that – unless the weather is filthy – it's a good, if a tad anti-social, time to clear one's head and see close up local features one might miss during busier, later times of the day.

I am lucky: my befuddledness, having been roused at a time contrary to most other body clocks, quickly clears and in the stillness of the early morning my imagination enters hyper-drive. The number of lottery wins I've celebrated, magnificent speeches I've delivered, witty verbal sparring matches I've engaged in (and won), splendid work presentations I've delivered during my morning perambulations! All in my head, of course, but isn't it great to be a hero, if only in one's own little world?

And if I'm not exercising the flabby grey cells further by seeing myself winning the London Marathon or saving the country from unimaginable evil, I might reflect on things closer to home. Seemingly insurmountable problems are chipped away at during the half-hour stroll until solutions appear or the magnitude of the original stumbling block is reduced. When I can't be bothered to do any thinking at all, I might don earphones and flood my head with popular radio music broken up by innocuous DJ chatter and the latest news.

And when not plugged into studio-generated noise, I may instead marvel at all around me: the sights and the sounds of the seasons. In the best (and worst) of winter, I can enjoy the satisfying crunch of snow underfoot, the meringue-topped fields and foliage dipped in icing sugar creating backdrops that vye confidently as contenders for traditional Christmas-card vistas of which



Hallmark might be proud. Never mind the cold and interminable darkness, what light there is displays nature in much of its glory without even trying and one can almost forget and forgive the borrowed Siberian climes.

The days gradually become longer and a diffused light returns to permeate my journey. The weather is mixed, but the natural world does not rest. Spring buds appear on the trees, long-forgotten snowdrops, crocuses, then daffodils break their way valiantly through the ground, and suddenly colour is restored to the world again. The longer-appearing summer sun makes being out at a time when others still slumber more palatable and its occasional warmth plays tricks on the mind and makes me question how perishing the cold actually was in less clement times.

The brilliance of floral colours on display all around Sawston often gives keen competition to the more sensational hues that Attenborough tries to impress us with in his hush-toned documentaries.

The spectacular birdsong concerts put on seemingly just for my benefit are only momentarily broken up by the doughty old 010 bus thundering past in its effort to get to London Victoria on time.

But as the summer months wane someone applies the dimmer switch to my morning strolls. Yet even that can be a blessing as I witness the day breaking

VINCENT ZDZITOWIECKI describes the places on his favourite journey; BO ZDZITOWIECKA took the pictures...

against an incredible and unlikely palette of colours, producing a brilliant blood-red sun at dawn that sets the rest of the sky on fire. Over the coming weeks, paint pots of crimson, gold and russet of every shade are tipped over the trees to add to or replace summer's verdant hues, effortlessly overshadowing all our own

modest attempts to create beauty from nature. The branches eventually release their foliage and I may have to battle cross winds at unnatural angles to get to the McDonalds roundabout. But when the weather is turned off, there can also be much charm in the stillness of autumn, the swish of dry autumn leaves underfoot, the eerie puddle reflections in the indifferently lit stretches of pavement and paths, the crispness of the morning air when wrapped up warm. Before I know it I'm one year closer to retirement as the circle closes and winter is upon us again.

Is that a goldfinch I've just seen? Surely that wasn't an owl? Was that a muntjak deer crashing through the hedgerow upon my distant heavy-footed approach? And there goes handsome old Reynard slinking around, probably up to no good. No, there are no herds of wildebeest stampeding across the veldt, tigers gliding through the undergrowth, nothing that exotic – but for a city boy like me, glimpses of wild birds that aren't pigeons or magpies and animals that aren't cats or dogs are a thrill every time: it's surprising how much wildlife there is to be seen at ridiculous o'clock in the Sawston area.

The familiar landmarks en route mark time for me. The red pillar box by the bus layby close to the grand houses I may consider buying with my lottery win; Nightingales' garage that presages the hourly news intoned into my ears; the industrial estates populated only by security vans and sleeping lorry drivers; the palette depot where I would like to think the Rottweilers



are saying hello but who in fact would probably dearly love to eat me if I got close enough. Passing the vet's often necessitates a nervous look up at the skies during the unsettled seasons. This

is the last outpost before the intrepid walker ventures onto the 'common', open land where driving rain and howling winds can suddenly turn a stroll into a treacherous expedition, onwards to the BP garage. If the weather is bad the service station offers a brief respite from such squally weather before the last leg is undertaken along the cycle path leading to Station Road. Armed with a copy of the *The Thunderer* (or should that be *Witterer*?) I brave this practically light-free stretch of public

carriageway – Cambridgeshire County Council please note! – and head towards the luminosity of Station Road, hoping to avoid the more malicious of lorry drivers who rejoice at driving through kerbside puddles at 200mph to leave me wetter than nature intended.

The distant sight of an occasionally on-time twenty-one minutes past to Cambridge may prompt me into an accelerated spurt if I am to catch the twenty-five past to London Liverpool Street. Tardy fellow commuters now whizz past me in their cars in desperate attempts to do handbrake turns into the car park, gather up their belongings and race to platform one to catch the express. Traffic police officers and council workers drive more sedately in the opposite direction from their depots to commence their daily duties and hopefully validate our tax contributions towards their employment. My

private little world is becoming increasingly invaded by bustling intrusions I can do little about now. It is time to don my commuter face and enter a different routine – until tomorrow when I can enjoy another half-hour's retreat on this most unlikely of favourite Sawston walks. ☺

PARISH COUNCIL REPORTS

REG CULLUM reports from Link Road on local matters...

FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: 14 DECEMBER 2010

Chair Eugene Murray brought the meeting to order promptly at 7.15pm with full attendance by the council members.

BOWLS CLUB WATER

The first item of the evening was a discussion on the use of the water supply to the Sawston Bowls Club's premises. Historically, the metered single supply to all of the buildings on the sports field was paid for by the Parish Council. Although the Bowls Club had its own meter on a spur, there had never been any financial contribution by them to the council's expenditure. It was agreed to request a contribution for past usage and to introduce two separate meter readings with the objective of recording usage leading to approved payments by both the Bowls Club and the Parish Council together.

LOCALISM BILL

Under the heading of County Council update, members were advised on the publication of the Localism Bill. Although in draft form, the bill sets out proposals for future responsibilities for parish councils and the mechanism for linking services. It is understood that South Cambridgeshire District Council will attempt to set its own budget during February 2011 in response to the complex grant directives from central government.

OTHER MATTERS

During the confirmation and signing of previous full council meeting minutes held on 9th and 23rd November, members discussed:

- the future installation of the notice board donated by Budgens
- the reappearance of a car-wash facility in Common Lane and whether the premises were authorised to off such a service and
- the use of the Babraham footpath by mounted horses with the resultant mess left behind.

During the report and acceptance of the Celebratory Events committee minutes, members were advised that the Best Window Display competition was won by the newly opened sweet

shop, 'Indulgence'.

Presentation of reports by the Recreation and Open Spaces, Planning and Environment, Staff Management, and Finance and General Purposes Committees

were accepted. Matters discussed included:

- approval for the dates of 22nd to 29th May for a visiting circus
- an alternative suggestion to that of the County Council Highways Authority for a speed review of the Sawston bypass (A1301)
- a contribution of £500 to the Sawston Rovers football club towards the completed repair of the Mill Lane floodlights
- the setting of 9th January 2011 between 10am and 12 noon for an open day for everyone in the village to view the new sports pavilion on Spicers sports field
- agreement on Saturday 2nd July for a Classic Car Show, subject to certain conditions, on either Mill Lane or Lynton Way recreation grounds.

The meeting drew to a close with the Chair requesting agenda items for the next Full Parish Council meeting.

FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: 11 JANUARY 2011

In bringing the meeting to order, the Chair alerted council members that the office boiler had failed and would refer this matter as an item for discussion later on in the agenda.

Under the heading of Public Participation Time, a member of the public sought information on the sale and disposal of the John Falkner school together with Butler's Green. The meeting was advised that Cambridgeshire County Council had received tenders, of which one company seemingly met the criteria set out by the council. At the moment, the financial security of this company was being assessed. However, there had, as yet, been no decision made on the future of the green.

An update from County Councillor Tony Orgee

NEXT MEETINGS

The full Parish Council will meet again in the Parish Council office in Link Road at 7.15pm on

• **Tuesday 8th February**

• **Tuesday 8th March**

To ask for an agenda, contact the Parish Clerk, Jo Keeler, on 01223 832470 or info@sawston.org.uk, or call at the office.

indicated that the county's Area Joint Committee would be meeting consider the options for speed restrictions along designated parts of the A1301. The proposal was for a 50mph speed limit from the Mill Lane junction to the roundabout on the A505. The rest of the bypass would continue with the present national speed. Councillor Orgee then went on to advise that the county's winter gritting schedule had been amended to include further roads in the immediate area; however, people need to be mindful that salt and grit are only effective down to temperatures of minus eight degrees. Council members expressed concern on the visible condition of some roads. Councillor

Orgee advised the meeting that everyone could play their part by reporting potholes to the county's depot at Whittlesford.

The minutes of the full council meeting held on 14th December were approved as a true record. During matters arising, members were advised that the installation of the noticeboard donated by Budgens was coming to a positive conclusion and it should be available for community use by the end of January.

As reported in the December meeting, a car wash facility in Common Lane was still in place. Discussions on this issue were continuing and an update would be presented to the Parish Council in due course.

The report of the Finance & General Purposes committee provided information to the meeting that a donation was being sought by the Youth Activities

AN APOLOGY

We'd like to apologise to David Flynn, proprietor of DTF Building Services, for a mistake in the write-up of October 2010's Parish Council meeting. The *Sawston Scene* report managed to imply that the company had fitted the wrong kind of tiles on the pavilion roof.

In fact, what happened was that DTF asked the roofing contractor to re-fix several of the slates which had already been laid by the previous roofers; the roofing contractor suggested using a clip system on the front elevation rather than a nailed system to make it easier to replace individual slates that might be broken by footballs or cricket balls. The architect and PC Chair Eugene Murray agreed that this was a good idea, and this was then reported at the Parish Council meeting, with the note that no extra cost had been incurred and in fact the method would make future repairs more economical – good news all round! Apologies again for the misunderstanding.

group, which had lost the funding it needed to run the Youth Club at Mill Lane pavilion. The donation was approved as part of a revised figure for the precept.

Some planning applications had come in too late for members to have looked at them before the meeting; the decision was made to defer consideration of these until the next Planning committee meeting.

The Chair then reported on the failure of the office boiler. Three contractors had inspected the unit, each indicating that it would be more expensive to repair the appliance than to install a new boiler. The view of the members was that a new boiler would be

more efficient. The quotations by the contractors were considered and a decision made to engage Sawston Plumbing and Heating.

The Chair continued his report by indicating the success of the Sawston Pavilion open day, during which members of the public had been able to view the new sports facility. It just remained for a risk assessment to be completed as a preliminary step to obtaining a certificate from the Fire Authority, at which point the building would be ready for use.

Finally, the Chair hoped members will have now noticed the installation of cycle racks around the village.

If you'd like to know more about any of these issues, ask the Parish Clerk, Jo Keeler, for a copy of the full minutes of the meeting: phone 01223 832470, email jo.keeler@sawston.org.uk, or call at the Parish Council Office in Link Road. ☎

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DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor DAVID BARD reports from South Cambridgeshire District Council...

LOCALISM BILL

The Localism Bill was published on 13th December, 2010 and I attended a ministerial briefing on 22nd December hosted by Greg Clarke, Minister of State (Decentralisation), Communities and Local Government. The Localism Bill covers a huge range of issues, but the main emphasis in the briefing session was on its planning aspects.

One of the provisions of the bill is to abolish Regional Structure Plans, such as the East of England Plan, which laid out strategic planning policies for the whole region. We thought that these had been abolished in June, but a series of legal challenges from Cala Homes has resulted in a High Court ruling that regional plans will remain in place until removed by primary legislation, which is one of the provisions in the Localism Bill.

There was some concern that strategic planning would fall to the Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs). In my view this would be a retrograde step as the LEPs are set up to be business-led and will hence be even less democratically accountable than the former regional assemblies, which at least had a majority of council representatives on them. One of the provisions of the bill is, however, a 'duty to co-operate' between neighbouring authorities, and in my view and the view of most of those present, cross-boundary planning issues can be dealt with satisfactorily by this mechanism.

Another provision of the Localism Bill is to give local communities a greater say, through parish plans, in what development takes place in villages. On questioning, however, Greg Clarke indicated that these parish plans will still have to conform to the district-wide local plans which in turn have to provide enough development to support growth in the local economy. Exactly how any conflict between parish and district aspirations will be resolved remained unclear. The official view was that the New Homes Bonus will make communities more eager to accept development: it augments, from central funds, the council tax on new properties for six years after occupation. The way in which this bonus would be divided between county, district and parish is still under discussion. It is important to note also that after the first year, the

bonus will be funded from the existing local government grant pot and so authorities which have low rates of development will lose out. There is a stick as well as a carrot.

The Localism Bill can be accessed at:
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/126/11126.i-v.html
 and a summary at:
services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism.html

RECYCLING

Early statistics for recycling rates suggest that since the introduction of the blue bins in October, collection of the recyclable waste which goes in the blue bin (and formerly went mainly in the green boxes) has increased by around 25%. It will be difficult, though, to assess the total increase in recycling until a year's figures are available – these are necessary to take into account seasonal fluctuations. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the refuse teams, who did not miss any collection rounds during the very cold and icy weather before and during the Christmas period. There were a few instances of frozen lids which made it difficult to empty some individual bins, but on the whole, the service was unaffected by the weather.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PANEL

The last neighbourhood panel took place on 4th January at Sawston Free Church. Crime figures for Sawston for the three months from September to November 2010 showed an increase from 39 to 61 over the preceding three months, but a reduction from 82 compared with the same period in 2009. Anti-social behaviour continues to reduce: there were 34 incidents in the period September to November 2010 compared with 63 incidents in the period June to August 2010 and 57 in the period September to November 2009.

Priorities selected for the next period (January to April 2011) are again:

- Road safety issues across the neighbourhood to include, obstructive road and pavement parking.
- To implement preventative measures to reduce the number and impact of incidents of rogue trading and bogus callers across the

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neighbourhood. This will include prompt attendance to reported incidents as is appropriate. The dates of the next neighbourhood panel meetings are Monday 4th April 2011, Monday 4th

July, and Monday 3rd October, all at Sawston Village College. All meetings will start at 7:00 for 7:30pm. They are open to all members of the public and everyone can have a say. ☎

COUNCILS ONLINE: Sawston Parish Council's website is at www.sawston.org.uk; South Cambridgeshire District Council's website is at www.scambs.gov.uk; Cambridgeshire County Council's website is at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillors TONY ORGEE and GAIL KENNEY report from Cambridgeshire County Council...

COUNTY BUDGET

We have mentioned this before but it is really going to mean big changes in the way that the County Council delivers its services: we have to save £160.6 million over five years and this will not happen if we just cut little parts of the services. We are therefore planning to transform the way we deliver care making all our services slimmer and more efficient.

The workforce will be reduced by 450 people, but while there will be some redundancies, we will also freeze the posts of those leaving or retiring. Some services will change and some will cease. The care we give will not now be universal but we will focus on the most vulnerable, and very importantly we will devolve decision-making.

Fewer bus services will be subsidised but there will be a more integrated approach involving local people more, and value for money is crucial.

For social care we will increase direct payments and directed support to those in need of help, giving these people more choice and control. We will intervene earlier when people do need care, and we will give a package of reablement which will provide better outcomes.

We need your views, so please send your suggestions and comments to gail.kenney@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or tony.orgee@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

GOVERNMENT GRANT

This is as expected. The formula grant for 2011-12 is down by 14.3% but the new Social Care Grant is increased slightly.

OUR SERVICES ARE IMPROVING

Cambridgeshire County Council services are performing well according to OFSTED: the vast majority of our services are good or better.

- Local authority fostering and adoption was judged good: five out of the eight local authority children's homes were good or better.
- More than 50% of our children got five A to C grades at GCSE which is better than most other counties, and this is increasing year on year.
- Three of our Pupil Referral Units are praised, but the fourth is still finding it difficult.
- There is general satisfaction with the health services.
- Pregnancies in our teenage population are decreasing year on year.
- Adult Social Care has an annual inspection by the Care Quality Commission and they say we have a clear vision, we are tackling inequalities across the county, and we are rated good.

BUSWAY

Bam Nuttall have failed to deliver again on their promise that they would deliver a finished busway before they closed down for Christmas. Only 11 out of the 44 mandatory certificates have been delivered. All six major defects in the busway in the north of the county are still outstanding, in spite of promises that they would be rectified. However, CCC is delivering an ultimatum that these problems must be rectified in 28 days; Bam Nuttall have a right of reply, but if they are then not done CCC can find another firm to put the problems right and charge Bam Nuttall out of the 5% retention fee. We are also charging them nearly £14,000 a day for late delivery.

RECYCLING

The nine recycling centres in the county now have a special media banks to recycle CDs, DVDs, PC programmes, soft and hard covered books, and board games. Wilcox Reprocessors will collect them and reuse them. ☎

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Cultural rewards

recognised for their efforts, just send in your nomination by 25th February 2011. To ask for a form, contact Andy O'Hanlon at SCDC on 01954 713343 or andy.ohanlon@scambs.gov.uk.

Awards will be presented by the chair of the council at a gala evening at Swavesey Village

College on Wednesday 30th

March 2011. Andy O'Hanlon
For information about stART and to see The List Live, a free online directory bursting with information about artists, venues, festivals and feasts, and professional and amateur groups across Cambridgeshire, go to www.start-arts.org.uk



Andy's Allotment

It hasn't been a very good winter so far for working in the allotment, says ANDY JACKSON.

I managed to get a few onions and garlic in before the weather turned nasty, but have started the rest in the greenhouse. I'll be browsing through my seed catalogues to decide what to try this year, and I've set up little diagrams on my computer to show where I need to plant things in the spring, to make sure I rotate stuff properly. I was advised by a colleague that my poor potato crop was partly because of a lack of potash, so I've dug in a couple of barrow-loads of ash from the bonfire into the area where the spuds will go.

I've also built a new compost box next to the old one. I used four old pallets tied together with old electrical flex, and then forked the top stuff from the old heap into the bottom of the new box. The composted stuff from the rest of the old heap will go under the potatoes.

You can compost virtually any vegetable matter, including old cabbage stalks (provided they haven't got clubroot): you need to chop them all up with a spade and mix in plenty of other stuff. I'd even include potato haulms and blighted tomato plants (which is absolutely taboo to many gardeners!) – so long as you leave it all to compost thoroughly. I know a lot of people will disagree, but the debate on the internet is very inconclusive. I also add in bits of shredded paper and cardboard – but I save the cardboard centres of loo rolls to plant seeds in. Then

when you plant them out, you don't have to try to get the seedling out of the container – just plant the whole thing, and the cardboard will disintegrate.

Meanwhile, I hope that the pigeons have not wiped out my calabrese this year, though they have really been attacking it. If I can get enough, I shall make a tasty soup I discovered last year:

CALABRESE AND STILTON SOUP

1lb calabrese or broccoli – including stalks cut into small pieces

¾ pint vegetable stock

1oz vegetable oil

One onion, finely chopped

2oz Stilton, crumbled

100ml/3½fl oz crème fraîche

salt and black pepper to taste

pinch freshly grated nutmeg

FOR THE CROÛTONS

Four slices of French baguette bread

¼lb Stilton, sliced

Serves four

1. Heat the onions in the vegetable oil in the bottom of the saucepan until soft
2. Add the chopped calabrese (or broccoli) and stock and cook till tender.
3. Transfer the cooked broccoli (or calabrese) and stock to a food processor.

4. Add the Stilton and crème fraîche and blend until smooth.
5. Transfer the blended mixture back to the saucepan and bring gently to a simmer.
6. Meanwhile, for the croûtons, toast the slices of French bread until golden-brown.

7. Top the grilled bread with the slices of Stilton and grill until golden and bubbling.
8. Season the soup with salt, black pepper and a pinch of nutmeg.
9. Put into bowls and top each with a Stilton croûton. ☺

Chrissie's Kitchen

I've thought for a long time about becoming a vegetarian, and, in the end, decided against it. The thought process, though, affected the way I cook in many ways. I like to use as much of the animal as possible, out of respect. Making stock plays an important part in this. When you buy a whole chicken you get the succulent meat, but you also get another gift: the carcass, which, when boiled, carries more chicken flavour than the meat ever did! If you boil a joint of ham, it feels wasteful to throw away the flavoursome liquor it was boiled in. If I buy shrimp from the fish van, I put the shells into a pan; boil them for about 20 minutes and have the basis of tomorrow's lunch.

If I don't have time to make the stock immediately, I freeze the bones and make the stock when I have time; I just use the bones from frozen in the recipes below. You can also freeze stock in portions for when you need it.

CHICKEN OR MEAT STOCK

After roasting a whole chicken or joint of meat, strip the meat from the bones; place all the bones in a pan, cover with water and boil for two to three hours (less for chicken, more for meat). Some people like to add onions, carrots, celery, peppercorns or parsley to the boiling water, but I don't, as I find chicken stock so versatile that I like the pure flavour to which then I can add other flavours when it's used in recipes.

Some recipes call for skimming the stock, but this just prevents it from becoming cloudy and, quite frankly, I don't care if it's cloudy (I'm not Heston Blumenthal). When it's finished boiling, I strain the stock, discarding the bones and saving the liquid.

FISH STOCK

Put fish bones, prawn shells or shrimp shells into a pan and cover with water. Don't boil for longer than half an hour or the stock will be bitter.

CHRISSIE MAWSON is taking stock...

HAM STOCK

I just save the water when I boil a ham and use this as I would other stock.

I mainly use stock in soup, though it can also be used in risottos and gravies. Here is my favourite soup recipe and another recipe which works really well with ham stock...

TOM YAM SOUP

This is my idea of heaven, and it's a very quick lunch. It's also very adaptable as you can pretty much use what you have in the larder. You need about half a bowlful of chicken, meat or fish/shellfish stock per person, and spicy Tom Yam paste which can be purchased in most large supermarkets, but I buy mine from one of the Asian stores on Mill Road in Cambridge. Put the stock in a small saucepan; add a teaspoon of Tom Yam paste. Bring to the boil with noodles, leftover meat, prawns, finely shredded veggies, and optionally a tablespoon of goji berries. Serve in a large bowl with fresh coriander and finely sliced spring onions. I mostly eat this when I have a cold as it contains lots of things that help me to heal.

BARBECUE BEANS

Sauté some finely chopped onions, celery and peppers. Add chopped carrots and whatever tinned beans you have in (I like black beans). Add ham stock, a teaspoon of treacle, a tin of tomatoes and some spices (cinnamon, cumin, coriander, cayenne maybe?). Boil until it's nice and thick, then serve with rice or in a jacket potato. You can top it with soured cream and a spoonful of salsa, if you like. ☺



A day in the life

YASMIN EMERSON talks to Funeral Director Richard Pepper...

Not many people can say that their day starts at one or two o'clock in the morning, but Richard Pepper's funeral service really is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. "After the doctor has come out to certify the death," says Richard, "I can be there within an hour or two – and people do often call in the middle of the night."



Having arrived at a home where a family member has died, Richard will give a brief explanation of the processes to come, ensure that Mum or Dad is taken to the company's mortuary in Sawston, and phone the family again in the morning. He does say "Mum or Dad"; does he always use that kind of language? Yes, he says: he finds the term 'deceased' too cold and impersonal – and he's known people to find the word upsetting.

The average funeral costs around £2,500, although an economical package can be less than £1,000. "I like to establish all the main requirements for the person's funeral first," says Richard. Then there's the choice of coffin: the display, in a separate room, is quite something – the majority are wood veneer (with a variety of mouldings, finishes and ironmongery available), but some are solid oak. The ecologically friendly options include a woven coffin made of bamboo, as well as cardboard, seagrass, and even recycled newspaper – and yes, people do choose all of these. I had assumed that coffins came in small, medium, or large, but Richard explained that he takes measurements and the coffin is made to order by a joinery company in Haverhill. The headstone, if required, is also made to order by the firm's own mason, in natural stone or granite, and this is a large factor in the price, costing from £650 to £1,200.

Richard's premises in Morley's Place have a mortuary – so there is no need to preserve bodies artificially. The mortuary room, with space for up to six bodies, is kept at four degrees centigrade. After the body has been collected from the hospital or home, it is dressed and prepared so that the face looks natural and peaceful, as though the person was asleep. Men may need a shave, and moisturiser is

applied to prevent the skin becoming blotchy. Once this is done, the family may see their relative in the chapel, making as many appointments as they wish. Some families choose not to visit, and Richard doesn't force the issue – although he does find that visiting can help the bereavement process, giving families a positive image to remember.

Does he have plans for his own funeral? Not really, he says, other than he'd prefer to be cremated. "For me, the land is for the living," he says. "Once you're gone, you're gone."

Richard and his wife Mandy have run the family firm since 1988. What changes have they seen, in nearly thirty years in the business? Mainly differing fashions for services: these days, most people ask for their relative to be buried in their own clothes, rather than a special dressing robe, as used to be the norm. Service sheets were not very common; now most people ask for one to be provided either by Richard or the church. "It's nice for people to have something to take home," Richard explains. He used to be asked to supply a hearse plus three or four cars; these days families want to travel in their own cars, and usually ask for just one car in addition to the hearse. Richard obviously prefers it when families choose to all travel in limousines – not because of his profit margins, but because it means there are no worries about family members getting lost in traffic. "The funeral service has to be spot on," he says: "there's only one chance to get it right."

And that seems to sum up Richard's whole attitude to his business – his passion for 'getting it right' and the necessity for attention to detail. Whatever is right will vary from person to person: all beliefs and needs are respected. Richard tries to make all the changes to the service he's asked for, as long as time allows. How tired he must be at the end of a long day of talking to some very distressed people. He agrees, recalling a lonely man suddenly widowed recently, who he phoned every couple of days to check up on. "But it's all about care and looking after people in the community," he says, "being there when they need you." ☺



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