

VILLAGE VOICE

NEWS FROM WEST WICKHAM & STREETLY END

FEBRUARY 2011

ISSUE 95

VILLAGE DIARY

- Tue 1 Blue & green wheeled bin collection
Wed 2 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall
Sat 5 **FARMERS MARKET. 9.30 – 12.30**
Linton Village College
Sun 6 Holy Communion. 9.15, St Mary's Church
Tue 8 Black wheeled bin collection
Wed 9 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall

Fri 11 Pre-School Valentine's Day Quiz Night.
8pm, Village Hall. Teams of up to 6
people. Entrance fee £3.00 per person.
Bar will opens at 7.30pm.

- Sun 13 Holy Communion. 9.15, St Mary's Church
Mon 14 **Local History Club. Talk by Janet**
Morris. 'Not many neglect all public
worship': Religion in 19th century West
Wickham, part 2. 7.30pm, Village Hall
Tue 15 Blue & green wheeled bin collection
Wed 16 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall
Sun 20 Holy Communion. 9.15, St Mary's Church
Withersfield Youth Football Club v
Cherry Hinton Lions. 11.00, West
Wickham playing field
Mon 21 **Gardening Club. The A – Z of Roses.**
Talk by Simon White from Peter Beales
Roses. 7.30pm, Village Hall
Tue 22 Black wheeled bin collection
Wed 23 Carpet Bowls Club. 7pm, Village Hall
Sun 27 Family Service. 9.30, St Mary's Church

The Pre-School meets Monday to Friday
9.30 – 12.30 in the Village Hall

THE VILLAGE HALL

is available to hire at the rates below, it also offers the following equipment: **Badminton, Short Tennis and 3 Table Tennis tables.**

Village Hall rates (for Village use):

Sport Hire	day or evening £4.00 per hour.
Meeting Room	day (9.00 – 19.00) £4.00 per hour. evening £6.00 per hour.
Main Room	day (9.00 – 19.00) £6.00 per hour evening £9.00 per hour.
Complete Hall	day (9.00 – 19.00) £10.00 per hour evening £15.00 per hour
Children's party	£25.00 daytime £36.00 evening
Adult's party/disco	£50.00
Wedding reception	£120.00

To book the Village Hall contact Kathy Pelling
T: 01223 290505

The Village Voice is sponsored by West
Wickham Parish Council and delivered free
to all households in West Wickham and
Streetly End. The views expressed herein
are those of the contributors.

CAROL SINGING

Thank you to all carol singers who braved the cold and sang their hearts out and all those who contributed. We made £141.52 towards our community warden scheme and a cheque has been sent to Age UK. (Help the Aged and Age Concern have joined forces and are now Age UK.). A big thank you to John and Lynne Kimble and John and Kathy Pelling for inviting us into their houses to give us wonderful refreshments, both stops were greatly appreciated by us all.

Nicky Cornish

BALSHAM SINGERS CONCERTS

Our Christmas concert (18 December), cancelled with great disappointment, due to snow, has been rescheduled for **Saturday 5 March**. Those who purchased tickets will be able to use them for this concert. If you have any queries please phone me on 290420. Well known pieces will replace the carols and add to the selection of beautiful music already prepared.

Our summer concert will be on **Saturday 4 June**. This will include Songs from the Shows and Opera choruses.
Thank you for your patience. We hope to see you at both concerts.

Marion Bryant. Secretary. Balsham Singers

PETER AND RUTH LLOYD TRUST

Would be applicants are reminded that further information and application form is available by contacting:
peterandruthlloydtrust@fsmail.net

Applicants are also reminded that the closing date for receipt of applications is the 31 March 2011.

The Trust was established in 2008 in memory of Peter and Ruth Lloyd who both met and served at the wartime airfield of RAF Wrattling Common. Due to their love of the Wrattling Common area and the many friends that they made over the years, their surviving children decided to set up the Trust to aid young people going to University for the first time. Students from the parishes of Carlton cum Willingham, Great Thurlow, Little Thurlow, **West Wickham**, West Wrattling, Weston Colville and Withersfield are eligible to apply for consideration.

2011 DIRECTORY

This year the Directory has sections about your local representatives, who to contact in an emergency, community, leisure & some local services and clubs and societies. As I warned in the December issue, I have not included "Recommended Services & Deliveries" as I am rarely updated on changes or given recommendations so did not want it to contain incorrect information or be unrepresentational of local services in the area. If you are wishing to use local businesses though, I recommend having a look on the Linton and Haverhill websites detailed at the bottom of the sheet if you have access to the internet. However if there is anyone living or working in West Wickham or Streetly End who has their own business and would like to promote it, please e-mail me your details and we will include a list hopefully in the March edition.

Sue Thurston

FROM THE VICARAGE

This year is the 400th anniversary of the Authorized (or King James) Bible. The idea for this revised English translation emerged at a conference set up by King James I in 1604 to try to resolve a dispute in the Church of England. He wanted to prevent sedition.

A thousand Puritan ministers were supposed to have supported the Millenary Petition (1603) which set out elements of liturgy and practice which they felt were unnecessary and un-Biblical. The Bishops accepted that there were some shortcomings in the Church, but they resisted the specific demands of the petitioners. In his adjudication of the conference, King James I wanted to contain the arguments, but not to concede to the specific Puritan reforms.

The vision of a revised translation was a creative solution. It pleased the Puritans by focusing on the Bible. It saved the Bishops from more biting reforms. It drew together different groups in a collaborative venture. Work began in earnest in 1608 and it was published in 1611. The result is a work that continues to move us with its poetry and sometimes confound us with its obscurity. And it keeps us curious to explore the language of faith.

Like King James I, it would be good if we could find creative ways to resolve conflicts, both in our lives and in the world wide Church. And we need reminding that working for reconciliation takes time.

Closer to home, the churches in the cluster (the Abingtons, Hildersham, Balsham, West Wrattling, West Wickham and Weston Colville) are trying to support each other where we can. It is great when we are all given encouragement. To this end, Bishop David is coming to West Wrattling on 13th February at 10.45am, to a Uniting Service and we are all invited.

Julie Norris

CHURCH NEWS

Looking back to the carol service.

A big thank you to all the readers. Each one was easy to hear and a delight to listen to. Lots of people enjoyed the Woollaston letter and the poem and hearing jingle bells in Greek was a lovely surprise. Please make sure to tell me if you want to read next year.

Jane Scheuer, Church Warden.

OUR HOUSE MEETING

Two items were discussed:

Village welcome. We agreed that our excellent Village Voice and the annual update of local services gives people all the information they could need. We all felt that joining in local clubs, even despite total lack of skills, had given each of us a great way to meet and belong. Also coming to church here has long been comfortably friendly, including not only non-Anglicans but even non-Christians.

Church and charity. We are proud of our record of giving from West Wickham but we are increasingly aware of the necessity of keeping the village's oldest building in good repair and the mounting costs of staffing. So if we have any excess we feel the need to invest carefully.

Jane Scheuer

OIL ORDERING

For some years Kathy Pelling has been coordinating regular oil deliveries from Shelford Energy for people in the village; making a bulk order results in a lower price per litre for those ordering.

She has asked us to print the following:

After many weeks of deliberating I have decided not to do the oil order anymore, the reasons being as follows:

Some people have advised me that when they have had to get a single delivery Shelford's is not the cheapest. That might be the case on a single delivery but the price is still better when we put an order in for about 250,000 ltrs. We could get a better price if everyone was a customer of, say Goff, as well as Shelford because then we could play them off against each other, but for a first delivery from another company everyone would have to pay up front or at the time of delivery, I am not prepared to take that amount of coordinating on.

Len has helped me for as long as I have been doing the order - actually checking peoples tanks for them - but it is not his fault when the delivery takes a bit longer than normal or when Shelford had a problem with their System and the invoices were not sent and then people got demands for payment. This was beyond our control and anyone could have phoned Shelford at any time if they were worried that they had got their oil but not had a bill.

I appreciate that I am going to be letting a lot of people down who have never complained once and have only ever been grateful for the effort that Len and I have gone to: so I apologise to you.

If anyone is interested in taking this over please feel free to contact me.

Kathy Pelling. T: 290505.

Email: kptopfield@btinternet.com

As someone who has benefited from Kathy's efforts, I would like to thank her & Len for the time and effort they have given in organising the oil deliveries.

Sue Thurston

A FAMILY WALK IN WEST WICKHAM

My family and I went for a dog walk over the Christmas Break. We walked along the footpath beside the field at the back of the playing field and then turned left to go beside the next field. We wanted to go on a Nature Trail, we succeeded in doing this but it was not a very pleasant one. This was down to the minefield of dog faeces. The children counted how many "mines" had been left along that stretch of path....12!

Obviously there are some negligent dog owners out there that have no regard for other users of the path. When I walk our dog I am armed with so many poo bags that I put them in a bum bag!

To the dog owners that do clear up... Thank you .
To the ones that don't....think of your fellow villagers.

Jo Newton

TREE PLANTING IN WEST WICKHAM

A number of the people in the village have bought trees and had them planted in the memorial plantation in our fields opposite the farm. We are intending to open the memorial plantation to new Spring planting during the month of February.

We are happy to extend the existing planting, in a block, up to Sewer Road (the footpath nearly opposite the Village Hall), as and when people require the space. We would like to invite anyone in the village to purchase a suitable tree, or to request us to purchase one on their behalf. We have a plan of the trees already planted and who the trees belong to and would continue in this way. We will advise you when the trees will be planted and you are welcome to take part, if you wish. Anyone who has purchased a tree is free to tend it and to put a plaque at the base with the details of the memorial on it. We can help in this respect, if required.

Please speak to Nip, Bryn, or me to do this, or phone the farm on 01223 290875, if you are interested.

Denny Pearson

SAVE OUR TREES PETITION

The Government is drawing up plans to sell off publicly owned forests in a move that could see private developers allowed to clear ancient trees to make way for holiday resorts, golf courses and adventure playgrounds.

The plan is designed to raise funds to help to pay off the Budget deficit, but has been met by opposition from some of Britain's highest-profile nature lovers.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs plans to dispose of about half the land looked after by the Forestry Commission, raising fears that the trees will disappear to be replaced by amusement parks and other ventures. The Forestry Commission holds about 1.85 million acres of woodland, about a third of which may be sold off, in one the biggest land sales in British history.

The more of us that take part, the stronger the message will be. So far 166255 people have signed. Please sign the petition now. Go to www.38degrees.org.uk/save-our-forests

HORSEHEATH REUNION SATURDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2010

We had a very successful reunion with 40 people attending. Thank you all for making the effort to attend, in particular to Valerie who drove up from Devon. Most of us were fairly local and although it was a freezing cold night. Horseheath Village Hall was very cosy. Dave (phone number 07969 370855, should you wish to book him) provided us with an excellent disco which included Whiter Shade of Pale, one of only 3 records we had at the Village Youth Club in the late sixties!!

A special thanks to Mike & Carol Kettridge, Steve Licence, Jo Lyons and Caroline Lyons for helping us set up, prepare food and finally clear up afterwards. The village hall was an excellent venue and very well equipped for our needs. Also thanks to Christine & Paul Banks, Colin Crissall and Jane Ruse for purchasing tickets even though they had prior engagements that evening. I am very pleased to say that we are able to give Horseheath Village Hall Community Association a cheque for £200.00.

Sue Orwell & Di Licence

WEST WICKHAM & DISTRICT GARDENING CLUB

The Christmas meeting of West Wickham and District Gardening Club was cancelled due to snow so the wine and mince pies were enjoyed instead on Monday 17th January when Tim Fuller from "The Plantsman's Preference" at Diss came to talk to us on "Rare and Unusual Perennials" Tim's slides of many lovely plants lifted our spirits in the depths of winter's damp and cold and encouraged us to plant a greater variety of perennials. The annual draw for Chelsea Flower Show tickets was won by Andrew and Janet Morris.

Our next meeting is on February 21st at 7-30 in West Wickham Village Hall when Simon White from Peter Beales Roses will talk on the "A-Z of Roses". This is a popular subject and we are, as always happy to welcome visitors.

Rosemary Yallop, (speaker's secretary)

1ST HORSEHEATH BROWNIES

At the beginning of December we gave over 50 guests their Christmas Luncheon and Entertainment. I would like to say a big 'thank you' to Pat, Christine, Stella, Sarah, Toni-ann, Sophie, Joyce, Grace, Gloria and Audrie for all their help in preparing the luncheon, helping with the washing up and generally being a great help. Without them I'm sure it wouldn't have been such a success. We are already being asked 'when's the next one?'

On the last meeting of term we enrolled Milly and Alannah into the Pack as Brownies plus we said 'goodbye' to Caitlin, but at the beginning of this term we said 'hello' to Millie, Georgia, Holly, Poppy, Frances, Olivia, Katie and Cleo who have all just started with us.

We are now making plans for our Thinking Day Celebrations in February, with 1st Linton Guides, and organising our Pack Holiday to the Jarman Centre in March. Also this term we hope to have a visit from our County Commissioner, Sue Carpenter and some Spring adventures now that the nights are drawing out.

Although our numbers have grown to 30 we are always interested to hear from any 7-10 year olds who would be interested in joining Horseheath Brownies plus any adults who would like to share a skill or just have a fun evening by volunteering to help. Please get in touch. We are a friendly bunch.

Barney aka Pauline. T: 01223 891086

NATURE QUIZ

Here are the answers for the Christmas Quiz:

1 Kestrel, 2 Badger, (not weasel) 3 Muntjac, 4 Bluebell
5 Brimstone (Not Dragonfly), 6 Newt, 7 Blackcap
8 Dandelion, 9 Mistletoe, 10 Toad.

Thanks to all four of you who put in entries. The two correct ones were from Caroline and Kevin Newey, who were first out of the hat and won the prize, and Chris Magin. The other two entrants got just one answer wrong.

Peter Grieve

WEST WICKHAM & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY CLUB

Many thanks must go to Pam Jolly and Peter Pearson who have managed to rescue a number of school group photographs from the 1920s and 30s, most of which we did not have in our collection. These have now been scanned and we are trying to identify the individual children. Coincidentally, I have just been given a copy of a family group photograph taken at the school in 1927. This is the first of this type I have seen. There must be more out there so if you have one, I would love to see it. We have no school photos from the 1940s to the closure of the school in 1971. Again, can anyone help there?

The Friends of the Roman Road & Fleam Dyke are celebrating their 10th anniversary with a special fundraising illustrated talk on:

The Staffordshire Hoard

by Dr Kevin Leahy, National Finds Advisor on early medieval metalwork

8pm (drinks from 7pm), Thursday 14 April
Perse Upper School Hall

Tickets: £10 of £5 if a member of the Friends

I have some tickets to sell. Please contact me if you are interested:

Janet Morris, 21 High Street

T: 290863. Email: jmmorris@jmmorris.plus.com

WESTON COLVILLE CRICKET CLUB

The cCub would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to help the club in any capacity. While we are always keen to welcome new players into any of our teams (senior/junior/weekend/midweek), we would also like to hear from those who might be interested in helping in other ways. We always need help to maintain the ground and pavilion, to assist on match days with teas, scoring, team management issue, cleaning and tidying the pavilion and a number of roles with the junior sides, which might include coaching or welfare issues. The phrase 'many hands make light work' really applies to any sports club and the more individuals that get involved, the easier it will be for all. If you would like to become involved with the cricket club and volunteer a small amount of your time then we would be very pleased to meet and have an initial, informal, no commitment chat. Please contact either Steve Potter, Club Chairman on 10440 763765 or myself on 0123 290 267. We are starting indoor nets for senior players on Thursday evenings at the Leys School Cambridge from 3 February 7.15 – 8.15 p.m. for 10 weeks. We hope you will join us for some pre-season training.

John Garrod. Secretary.

LOOKING FOR A LOCAL BABY CLASS?

Just wanted to let you know about the TinyTalk baby signing classes I run in the area. They take place in Little Walden village hall during term time on Thursdays and Fridays at 10-11am. The classes not only teach you to sign with your baby in order to encourage early communication but are also a fun music class and include social time too so you can get to know other families. For more information, contact Phillippa Lawson on 290059 or 07815 124848 or email piplawson@yahoo.com. For all babies aged 0-2.

AIRCRAFT NOISE REPORTING

While Stansted Airport's passenger and aircraft numbers continue to fall, concerns about noise appear to be on the rise. You may like to know that there's a way of reporting these concerns to BAA in a way that enables Stop Stansted Expansion to monitor and follow up on these complaints. This way, your reports will help SSE's work towards improvements to noise management and better track keeping in the future. In some cases they could also lead to fines being imposed on airlines where they break noise and track keeping rules. To take advantage of the service, log onto SSE's website at www.stopstanstedexpansion.com and click on the 'complain about noise' link or call the Campaign Office on 01279 870558 for a copy of its 'Concerned About Noise' leaflet which explains more (this is also reproduced online). SSE follows up every complaint made to BAA via the SSE website and in around a fifth of cases this yields something useful in terms of the campaign group's work to press the airport to improve its system of noise and track keeping. People are, however, urged to complain responsibly to avoid compromising the overall noise picture statistics.

SAY NO TO HIGH PRESSURE SALES

Police and Trading Standards are issuing advice to homeowners following a number of reports of cold calling by a security company.

Concerned residents have said the company offer a home alarm system but employ high pressure sales techniques. In the past few months there have been reports from South Cambridgeshire villages. In some cases a salesperson has visited a householder, even though they have cancelled the appointment and asked them not to visit. High pressure sales techniques include:

- Offering a system for free or discounted following a call to the manager.
- Pressure to sign up straight away in order to get a good deal.
- Remaining in a person's home for two to three hours in order to wear them down.

The police advise if during a visit to your property, a trader refuses to leave, contact the police immediately and make a note of the time of the request and the time the trader leaves. Initial costs outlined are misleading and do not reflect the true cost of owning a system, when yearly maintenance and monitoring are included. When buying an alarm system it is always advisable to get at least 3 quotes, and look for companies that are accredited by NSI (National Security Inspectorate) or SSIAB (Security Systems & Alarm Inspection Board).

Independent inspectorates are not-for-profit approval bodies, which carry out inspection services for the security industry in order to protect customer interests. They are governed by UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service), the sole accreditation service recognised by the government.

If you have been contacted by the company and feel concerned contact the police or Cambridgeshire Trading Standards for assistance. Anyone with information should contact police on 0345 4564564, or Trading Standards on 08454 040506.

HEATING OIL THEFTS

There has been another theft of heating oil in the Village. The Police have issued the following advice.

Tanks can contain many thousands of pounds worth of oil and it therefore makes good sense to take a few precautions to protect them. OFTEC or the 'Oil Firing Technical Association for the petroleum industry' offers advice and guidance for those who use and store oil at their premises. There are certain rules and regulations that may apply to you and OFTEC will help clarify these for you. They can be reached at www.oftec.org or by calling 0845 6585 080. They also produce an 'easy guide to domestic oil storage'.

SITTING YOUR OIL TANK. The position of the tank can have a significant effect on how hard a target it is in the eyes of the thief. If the tank is close to the house, with one or more windows capable of giving a view of it, then the thief may consider the chances of being seen too high. If the tank is close to a road, path, drive or alleyway then it will be a far easier target. Hiding the tank behind the garage, shed or some other type of outbuilding is fairly commonplace, but it does give the thief the advantage.

While it may not be desirable, or legal, to have the tank close to the house some sort of compromise location would be sensible. Of course this will not only be a major consideration when a new tank is to be installed but may be necessary if the tank has been targeted before. They do need to be within a reasonable distance of the road otherwise the oil supply company may not be able to refill it for you.

CONTROL SWITCHES that control the flow of oil should be turned off and the electricity supply isolated when the tank is not in use.

PADLOCKS. A thief will usually come equipped with a limited range of tools to attack your tank so it's worth spending a little more on good quality locks. Close shackle padlocks are the best as they offer most resistance to the most popular of burglar tools; the bolt cropper! Due to their design, close shackle padlocks have very little of the metal hoop (shackle) exposed and bolt croppers cannot get a good grip. Remember that buying a padlock is like buying a car. The more you pay the better the quality and the longer it will last.

OIL LEVEL GAUGES. Remote electronic oil level gauges are now available which will set off an audible alarm if the oil level in the tank suddenly drops or falls below a quarter full. These gauges can be located in the kitchen or perhaps a utility room to warn of any potential problem. There are two or three different versions on the market at the moment and cost between £70 and £100. Get into the habit of regularly checking oil levels so that you will know if you have lost any.

SECURITY LIGHTS. Security lights can have a very positive effect and make any property a much harder target to the thief. It's not always necessary to floodlight the area with high power beams, as a more subtle level of lighting may be all that is needed. Low energy 'dusk till dawn' lights positioned close to the tank should, in most cases, provide sufficient light to illuminate any suspicious activity. This type of light can be both effective and inexpensive. High powered lights can be used but care should be taken not to cause any nuisance to neighbours or road users.

DEFENSIVE PLANTING. Defensive planting is nature's way of helping to reduce crime. Thieves will not wish to force their way through or over a prickly hedge. The

smallest trace of blood or shred of ripped clothing could help the police identify the offender. These shrubs can, if planted around your tank, provide an effective and decorative thief proof barrier. If you would like more information about defensive plants to protect your property contact your local community safety team on 0345 456 456 4.

SECURING YOUR OIL TANK . Following on from the defensive plant tactic, fences and walls can also make life difficult for the thief. A wooden or metal fence, trellis or wall can give significant protection to the tank, but it must be remembered that the oil tanker driver will need access to fill the tank! A metal or grill cage with a lockable access point across the top of this wall or fence can further improve security. The wall or fence should be as close to the tank and as high as possible. Of course a trellis could also be decorated with defensive planting. A product called 'Tank Guard' surrounds the existing storage tank with a metal enclosure. This sheet metal enclosure has lockable access doors to allow filling and maintenance and has internal anchorage points to fix it to the concrete base. A tank guard costs less than one tank full of oil and will last many years.

CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV). The use of CCTV as crime prevention and a crime detection tool has grown massively in recent years. It could play a part in the protection of oil tanks, but before you spend lots of money on equipment make an assessment of your needs.

The object of this information has been to illustrate ways in which we can make it more difficult for a thief to steal heating oil. Nothing mentioned here will make it impossible for them to achieve their goal, but if some of the suggestions made are followed it just may make a difference.

GETTING IN TOUCH. It is important to report any loss of fuel to the police or any attempt to steal. Telephone 0345 456 456 4. If it is an emergency dial 999.

If you require any further information regarding any of the above, please contact your local community safety team on telephone number 0345 456 456 4.

ONLINE. Visit the Cambridgeshire Constabulary Website. www.cambs.police.uk

CRIMESTOPPERS. To give information anonymously about any crime in your area telephone:- 0800 555 111.

ALARM SYSTEMS

Alison Formstone has given us details of 2 companies that produce alarm systems for oil tanks:

The Watchman is relatively cheap. It sends a signal to a device in the house, which shows the fuel level as a number of bars. When the fuel level reaches a low level a flashing signal is activated. If the fuel level drops at an abnormally fast rate then audible alarm is activated too. Details at www.sensor-systems.com

The other option is an Oil Secure alarm (T: 08712 100104). This product detects movement and sounds an alarm if the filler or vent caps are removed. The company is willing to modify the standard product to fit old metal tanks . Details at www.oilsecure.com/html/solutionmore.html

NATURE NOTES

“If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” Shelley’s message to anyone who is feeling low has been in my mind during the big freeze, but things are looking up now. Of course there was a good side to the coldest December on record and here are Di’s winter encounters with the natural world:

“Throughout the snowy weather, I, along with many others have fed the wild birds in the garden and what a pleasure it has been watching them all, too many to list, but I have to mention the beautiful cock pheasant who strolls up the garden sedately to feast on the seed, but will run very fast if the cat appears, the green woodpecker (pointed out by my neighbours) that has cleared the snow away from a patch of ground in front of their house searching for food, the aggressive mistle thrushes fighting over the berries, the feisty robins defending their crust of bread, two wood pigeons enjoying the water in the birdbath, and lastly the magpie stabbing a poor frog repeatedly before flying off with him.

And then there is the grey squirrel. I know he’s a pest, but none the less, a delight to watch. He appears from nowhere (as soon as the nuts have been replenished) bounding along the top of the fence, swishing that magnificent tail around, hanging, swinging, on the nut holder, trying to get some out, usually not succeeding, but sometimes managing to knock the entire thing to the ground, where he stuffs himself quickly.

Walking around the parish, we have seen large flocks of fieldfares, and many redwings, certainly more than in previous years, feasting on our hedgerow berries. We have also seen a huge flock, we estimate at 200 birds, of skylarks feeding on the ground in the fields, easy to spot against the white background, flocking together for security this time of the year, like many small birds and already, nature is gearing itself up for the coming year, the alder and hazel trees have small tightly furled catkins waiting to burst as the days get longer, the cock pheasants are sparring in readiness for the breeding season, and the rooks, already at their nest sites are to be seen displaying to each other, throwing their heads back and cawing loudly, and tiny snowdrops are pushing themselves through the lawn.”

The snowy conditions certainly bring plenty of birds to our feeders, but I’d also like to give a mention to the creatures we don’t actually see but who are definitely still active. The number of rabbit, hare and fox prints in the snow just shows the level of activity that goes on when we’re not looking. But I’d like to award a special prize to the mole, who, even when the ground was at its most deeply frozen, still managed to push up a pile of nicely processed soil to remind us that his way of life is going to carry on whatever the weather. Returning to the birds, two buzzards were seen circling and successively rising above each other near Cadge’s Wood – is this a display of affection, and if can we expect a brood in the spring?. I was also very excited to see a Little Egret in Hildersham last week. These beautiful pure white heron-like birds have been spreading northwards in Britain for some time, but mainly they are seen near the coast or in marshy areas. However this one has apparently been seen since just before Christmas. I wonder if he will stay?

Peter Grieve. T: 290503.

NEWS FROM LINTON VILLAGE COLLEGE

As I often explain to visitors who come to our college, LVC isn’t just a school. When it was opened in 1937, its founder Henry Morris described it in this way: “*The Village College is designed to serve as a community centre of education, recreation and social life for a group of eleven villages*”. Central to this function was the provision of sporting facilities for the use of local people and our Community Sports Centre, with its extensive outdoor and indoor playing areas.

The recession has hit the leisure industry hard and like other local business concerns we have struggled in the last couple of years to compete with what the bigger, less community-minded outfits have been able to offer to users. Our new community business manager has come in with some exciting ideas, however and you will already have been seeing positive improvements to the experience you get when you use the Sports Centre.

2011 has started off on a positive note for us here at Linton Community Sports Centre. Over the Christmas period all of the sports centre staff pulled together for a deep clean of the Sports Centre facility. The fitness suite especially received a much needed scrub and we feel has come up looking, smelling and feeling much fresher.

January has seen us throw out a couple of offers to entice the good people of our surrounding villages to come and try out what we have on offer here at LCSC.

We have delivered 1500 leaflets door to door; each of these could have been exchanged for a free 3 day pass that could be used in the fitness suite or to attend one of our studio classes. Available classes included Circuits, Zumba, CardioTone or Boxercise.

Throughout January we offered a no *pro rata* fee for those who joined before January 31st – in English, that means anyone who purchased a monthly membership in January doesn’t pay the difference between when they join and when their first Direct Debit instalment is due.

From Friday 28 January, the last Friday of every month will become known as ‘Bring a Friend Friday’. This is the opportunity for those who are already members at Linton Community Sports Centre to bring along a friend for absolutely free. They need only attend a short gym induction on their initial visit and can then attend every last Friday of the month after that at no cost.

We are looking forward here at Linton Village College and have some exciting offers and initiatives planned for the coming months so please do continue to watch this space.

Caroline Derbyshire, Principal

PRESS DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 16 February

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