

The Elsworth Chronicle



Holy Trinity Church

Issue No. 22

December 2007



ELSWORTH SCHOOL WELCOME TO MRS THORNTON

A new chapter in the history of Elsworth School will commence in January with the appointment of Mrs Teresa Thornton to succeed Nicholas Smith as Headteacher.

Mrs Thornton is at present Acting Head at Eynesbury C of E Primary School and is familiar with the locality and the workings of the Cambridgeshire Education Authority. We wish her every success and congratulations on coming to a thriving, happy and caring school.

Nicholas Smith leaves after 3 years at the helm to become Head of Burwell Village College, a primary school of some 430 pupils. We wish him every success in this new venture.

ELSWORTH POST OFFICE

If asked where is the heart of Elsworth, many would answer that it is in the Causeway, particularly in the mornings from Monday to Saturday when many visit and congregate in the post office. On Sunday it is also the road to the church.

Elsworth post office provides not only the facilities of a post office, newsagent and confectioner but is an invaluable meeting place for many. It is the venue where mutual interests are exchanged, where needs are expressed and perhaps met by others. Julie and Sheena are as the ears and eyes for our people and to my knowledge alone have assisted people in need of help.

And now there is a threat of closure. We cannot afford to lose our last shop and the service it provides. A visiting postal vehicle as a substitute could not provide for our needs. Can anything be done or are we in the hands of officials far removed from the village and its requirements? The answer is that we would seem to have a fair chance of averting closure, but only if a concerted effort is made by us all. Our case must be lodged before next April. The time sequence set is as follows

1. In this area, by April 2008 Post Office Ltd will have to reveal to Post Watch which post offices in this area they recommend for closure.
2. A ten week consultation period with sub-postmasters whose business is threatened and Post Watch is scheduled, to be followed by one week consultation with the local M.P.
3. A six week period of public consultation.

A Defence for Elsworth

It seems to the writer that there are positive factors which should assist in the retention of the post office in Elsworth.

[1] Public Transport Provision

If the Elsworth post office was to close and reliance had to be placed on any of the existing nearby post offices if retained, the people of Elsworth would be markedly disadvantaged. Access would be a problem, as noted below.

Papworth: One bus a day on Monday – Friday but the one return bus does not allow sufficient time to allow a fair chance for the transaction of business. In reality, then, there is not a return bus and therefore Papworth must be disregarded. Fenstanton: one bus and return on Monday and Friday only. Fen Drayton: no bus connection. Hilton: no bus connection. Cambourne: [if opened] - no bus connection.

[2] Age Profile

You may not have noticed it but the population of Elsworth and Boxworth shows a slight but definite percentage increase of those of pensionable age in the last six years (county stastics). This is relevant as age may be taken to be a measure of difficulty likely to be experienced with closure – failing health; no other reason to leave the village, such as journeys to work; increasing reluctance or ability to drive. If the trend to an ageing population continues, the need for a post office in Elsworth, clearly important at the present, will become even more vital.

In the immediate catchment area of our post office there 120 people over 65 years of age – in Elsworth 80 [12.3% of its population]; in Boxworth 30 [12.5%], in Knapwell 10 [10%].

The outcome could be in our hands – suggested action [well before April 2008]

- [1] Appraise Andrew Lansley of the special circumstances of Elsworth and seek his active support.
- [2] Contact Nick Wright [District Councillor] as the District Council is to present a case.
- [3] Contact Mandy Smith [County Councillor].

- [4] Write to: Post Office at Freepost, Network Change.
- [5] Use the post office as much as possible and encourage others to do so..

If we sit back and wait without taking action it is likely the post office could close. Petitions will not carry weight, we are told by Post Office Ltd. What is needed is that those in authority and influence should be made aware of its importance to Elsworth and of particular hardships and inconvenience closure would bring. It is up to us all to take action.

AWF

JUBILEE CLUB

The club is open to everyone in Elsworth and surrounding villages. Most meetings take place on the first Thursday in the month in Elsworth School Hall from 2.30pm to 4.30pm. We have a speaker or entertainment, afternoon tea and a raffle.

During the year we have had interesting talks, including a history of Robert Sayle up to the present day; the countryside of France; and many stories from around the world. We had trips to Walton-on-the Naze and Sutton Hoo, and a New Year Lunch at the George and Dragon.

Events for the coming year include a lunch at the George & Dragon on January 7th; A story of Gorillas! - on February 7th; A Cycle Holiday in Norway on March 6th; Birds in the Garden on April 10th; New Zealand – South Island on May 1st.

Please come along. You will be most welcome and, who knows, you may want to come again! For more details contact Betty Simcock – telephone 01954 267470

Betty Simcock

THANK YOU FROM PENNY

As many in the village will know, Penny Bell of The Causeway recently completed a sponsored walk in aid of hip replacement surgery. She is most grateful for the generous support she received and asks that as so many contributed, her thanks be conveyed by means of this magazine.

The event took place in the grounds of Hinchingbrooke House in good weather, with many people participating in the walk. Although only but some nine months after her operation, Penny succeeded in completing her set target and received a certificate to mark her achievement. A magnificent feat, which raised £266 for the cause

ELSWORTH SPORTS CLUB

After rocketing through the divisions of the Cambs. BIS league and last season gaining promotion from Division 3A to 2A, Elsworth's football team continues on its winning way. At the time of writing it has played seven games of which six have been won and one drawn. Similarly in cup and shield competitions the team has been most successful, having played and won two games in the Cambridgeshire Junior Cup, thus reaching the third round, and won through into the second round of the Creake Shield.

All in the team deserve our heartiest congratulations, as does the manager Mark Brading. There would seem to be an excellent team spirit – as would be expected of such a successful team – which is reinforced at The Poacher, where refreshment is generously provided after home matches.

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**ELSWORTH PARISH COUNCIL
A VIEW FROM THE “BACK BENCH”**

Few members of the public occupy the visitors chairs at parish council meetings. This is a pity, but understandable. The first impression might seem like entering a schoolroom of old – the chairman and clerk being rather like a teacher and head girl at a table at the front, with the others [the councillors] like pupils in a horseshoe before them. Power resides at that table, or so it would seem – the chairman, like a teacher, has the role of determining who may speak and when, while the head girl seems to have much influence on the matters on which people may speak.

By regulation, councillors – those on chairs of the horseshoe facing the table – have a right to have items placed on the agenda, but it might take much persistence if the item is not to the liking of the two at the front at their table. The Elsworth Chronicle fits this category – it was denied a place on the agenda time and time again. When this happens perseverance of the proposer is all important, and possibly poor eyes not to notice ensuing scowls.

In November, though, the Chronicle was on the agenda, firstly for reimbursement of expenses incurred in production. For this support was not forthcoming, but reasons were not given. One member – quite new but in authority – seemed confused, or perhaps misinformed, over the existing stance of the council from which it should proceed, quoting a superseded decision. Not surprising, perhaps, as when the council was last asked to consider a proposal to fund the Chronicle or not, its verdict was one of marked indecision – when asked to fund as over the previous 14 years, support was not forthcoming; nor was a proposal to make a grant as to an independent body such as the Play School. But incongruously, a proposal not to support the magazine financially was not supported.

An onlooker might have been perplexed by the lack of decision, but heart could be taken that not to fund was not supported and therefore funding in itself was possible. Time was at an essence as advertisers and contributors had waited for many months for the council's authorisation and could not be asked to wait indefinitely. Publication went ahead, with details of the relevant accounts noting the excess of expenditure over income prepared for presentation to the parish council. All to no avail – after seemingly endless delay, the reimbursement request was, as noted above, turned down with barely a comment.

There is little point in dwelling on disappointments. Perhaps the next item - a request for funding future editions - would be viewed more positively. Regretfully the request fared no better. Again why this should be so was not forthcoming. A statement was made from the direction of the table in the front that the application did not meet all the stipulations drawn up the previous year, but as so many had been ignored in the case of the new Elsworth Times, which had been enthusiastically accepted, the logic was not apparent.

No money, then, to defray the financial loss of publication, no words of thanks for a magazine produced over 14 years. Those at the table in the front and possibly on the horseshoe, wish not even to countenance two editions a year. The proposal that the Chronicle should be published twice a year – to include a parish council section - with the Times four times, thereby allowing for a magazine in the home every two months, fell on deaf ears and was dismissed without comment, apart from that noted above, in spite of the production of a demanded detailed written proposal. The amount asked for the Chronicle was £65 an issue, whereas the new Times – a commercial enterprise from Papworth - was receiving a contribution of £75 an issue [now

six times a year] from the council to add to its considerable income from advertisers.

Why now the lack of council support after so many years of partnership? Certainly successive obstacles have been imposed, new ones emerging as soon as earlier ones failed. Most noteworthy perhaps was the claim some two or three years back from the afore-mentioned table in the front that the Chronicle could no longer be a council publication as advertisement constituted trading which was illegal for a council. This was accepted by the council until it was shown to be quite erroneous. To return to the question posed at the beginning of this paragraph, a suggestion of a personality clash is a possibility, or perhaps resentment at an article seeking that consultants' reports on flood protection measures at variance with the proposed parish council scheme should not be ignored, but at least considered.

So be it then – most situations have a positive side if we care to look. In this case it could be that now the Chronicle can relate matters which otherwise might be coated with official gloss or passed over. Maybe greater care will be taken over decisions if possibly open to public scrutiny. And all villagers have a new magazine, in colour too. Perhaps all benefit – save the editor who has to meet costs!

AWF

After thought. If any readers have ideas over reducing the cost of publishing, or could help in any way, please contact the editor – telephone number and e-mail address on the back cover.

FLOOD PROTECTION

The season of heavy rainfall will, no doubt, soon be with us and it has been a matter of concern that the stream in Brook Street had been allowed to degenerate into a tangled mass of overgrown vegetation prior to the November parish council meeting. Because of the vulnerability of residents to flash floods, proposals for action were put at the November meeting. Regretfully the matter was not discussed, but sidelined.

Although much overgrown at the time of the meeting, the weed has now been cut. But we clearly need to put in train measures to prevent the tangled mass of vegetation from developing. Flash floods, of course, are realities of autumn/winter – we fortunately have had only one to date. When they occur, some of the weed mass, if not cleared, will be broken and swept down towards the culverts to cause blockage at the culverts – bundles from the last overflow remained high on a foot bridge for some time. On this aspect of flood control it seemed urgent that the council should review the problem so as to improve the present and prevent a repetition of this neglect, with the folly of a previous year not repeated when cut vegetation was left on the bank only to be swept downstream subsequently to block the culverts. Last year this could have been repeated but was averted by James Witherow removing the cut vegetation. However some progress has been made through an alternative route – at a subsequent finance meeting it was agreed that a sum should be set aside for additional weed cuts.

The need for a weedscreen where the stream enters the village at the kissing gate so as to gather debris swept down from the land upstream remains out of favour with the parish council and not, it seems, to be discussed in spite of recommendations for placement there from consultant engineers and the Environment Agency. Our responsibility to be guided by professional advice is vital – not one on the council is an engineer – and despite rebuffs one councillor at least will press for this.

AWF

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ELSWORTH KNAPWELL & CONNINGTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Christopher South [Cambridge Evening News feature writer] and his wife Janet entertained the W.I. recently. They are intrepid travellers and great entertainers – we heard about “Going to the lavatory with a Maharajah” and “The dreadful thing we did in Moscow”. This was a popular return visit. They present everybody with a list of topics and we choose at random. The donations for their talks go to a family - victims of the tsunami - which they support in Sri Lanka.

We have many interesting speakers – in January coming we are to hear about the East Anglian Air Ambulance Service and in February Mike Petty is to talk about Pickwick's Cambridge. At a recent Group Meeting Lady Archer's subject was the poet Rupert Brooke.

We are a friendly group, meeting on the second Wednesday of each month in the school hall at 7.30pm and we warmly welcome visitors who may come just to see what it's like at a W.I. meeting! No one is pressed to join!

If you would like to come along or have more information please contact Isobel Farrow at 01954 267472

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OBITUARY

BRENDA BARRETT-HARLEY

Brenda was born in Ely where she was educated at Ely High Grammar School for Girls. On leaving school she worked in Lloyd's Bank and after a few years met Donald, who at that time worked on his father's farm. Both enjoyed amateur dramatics. After marriage in Ely they moved to Elsworth so as to be half-way between Cambridge – where Brenda then worked – and Huntingdon, where Don worked as he didn't wish to stay in farming. Brenda's career was at Robert Sayle, where she was to become manager of soft furnishings.

Don recalls they were welcomed into Elsworth Church on coming to the village and made good friends. Brenda was to become Church Treasurer for some 18 years and Church Warden for four. They sang carols with church members along the village lanes for many years at Christmas. Brenda loved that time of year – going to church at midnight; her Christmas trees; seeing her friends; getting the beef cooked for Christmas supper [it had to be well cooked as Don didn't like to see any red meat!]. She was an excellent cook and loved entertaining.

Brenda and Don enjoyed holidays, visiting with friends Italy, Canada, Austria, the Lake District. She loved in particular Vancouver Island - being on the water and then going back to the hotel to dress for dinner. Brenda liked to dress well and was noted for her fine hats. Don's words ring so true: "she was a great hat gal" – more "she was a great gal".

OBITUARY



JOHN JAMES MARTIN
4th July 1944 – 26th July 2007

John came to Elsworth in 1981 with his two children Jason and Colette, having moved from Colchester. He soon became known as “the man up The Drift”, a single father bringing up two children. Not being a good cook, John had many meals in the George & Dragon and before long the pub became his second home.

In 1982 in this “second home” John met Sheena, a divorced lady working there some evenings, and they soon became “an item”. They married and it was fitting that their wedding reception should be at the George & Dragon, the “second home” and their meeting place. John’s children, Jason and Colette duly married and John became the grandfather of three, whom he adored.

During 2001 John became ill with angiodysplasia, and the internal bleeding necessitated endless blood transfusions, about which he never complained. Later leukaemia and pleural plaque were diagnosed, and in 2007 lung cancer. Knowing his life expectancy was short, his family took John to Euro Disney in Paris, where he was able to see his beloved grandchildren enjoy the magic one last time. It was a dying wish in every sense – John died at Hinchingsbooke Hospital three weeks after returning, with Sheena, Jason and Colette at his side. At John’s request his funeral wake was held at the George & Dragon, where Sheena and John met – and where they said “Goodbye”.

OBITUARY



IRENE GRACE KING
Aged 89 years

Irene was born and brought up in North London. She excelled in sport at school, especially netball and tennis.

During the Second World War Irene told the family and friends that she worked for the Home Office in a very secret government department. It was not until very recently that the family knew anything about it, when they were amazed to discover that it was in fact “Station X”, Bletchley Park where she was a decoder.

Irene and Dennis married after the war ended and his return from Burma. London life was exchanged for life in Cambridgeshire – first of all on Alec Witherow’s farm at Bourn and then on his farm here in Elsworth, where they lived for over fifty years. She settled well into country living and looked after chickens in the garden, occasionally a few pigs and even at one time an orphan lamb. She will be remembered by many for her superb skills in sewing, knitting and cooking.

For many years she made cakes for the Jubilee Club teas and won many prizes at the Elsworth & District Show for her needlework and cooking. At one time there was a decorated cake category, which she won regularly. One memorable cake depicted a greengrocer's stall for which Irene had made each individual fruit and vegetable out of marzipan and coloured them.

After Dennis's death nearly two years ago Irene struggled to maintain her independence at home with the help and support people of local people. She missed Dennis very much and her health was deteriorating. Fortunately she spent the last weeks of her life very comfortably in the Hardwick Dene home in Buckden, where she received care described by relatives in very warm terms.

ELSWORTH NWR

Elsworth NWR (National Women's Register) has its final meeting of this year on Thursday, 13th December, when we are having a Book Review.

After Christmas, the first meeting of the New Year is on Wednesday, 9th January – 'Call My Bluff' – based on the original TV /radio show.

The following events have been arranged for subsequent months –
Friday, 25th January – 'Burns Night'
Monday, 18th February – Planning meeting
Tuesday, 11th March – 'What the Papers Say'

Meetings usually start at 8.00 pm. New members are always welcome – for more details of meetings and venues please contact Local Organisers – either Aileen Murch (01480 830625) or Jen Milns (01480 830864).

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