

WETHERSFIELD NEWS

BLACKMORE END, BEAZLEY END

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1993

NEWSLINE: 0371 850092

Anyone for tennis?

NOT exactly strawberries and cream weather, but you could be enjoying an invigorating game of tennis before Christmas – on the village's own public tennis court.

Thanks to some tireless work by Bill Norman and his team of helpers, including John Pearce, Joe Johnson, Peter Granger, Paul Jerram and Dave Clements (most of whom are pictured here, along with supporting wives Dorothy Norman and Sheila Clements), the old dilapidated court on the playing fields has been resurfaced and re-fenced.

The work started back in August and is now nearly complete. The total cost of the job is around £2,500, which has seriously depleted the coffers of the Playing Fields Association but it would have been about £2,000 more if they hadn't bought secondhand chainlink fencing and put it up themselves.

Cost of hiring the court for an hour will be £2 (£1.20 for under-17s) on a pay and play basis. Family annual season tickets will cost £30, running from 1st



March each year. Bookings for the court will be taken at Vic Law's DIY shop, during opening hours, and a deposit will be required for the key.

Volleyball and basketball sessions may also be possible on the court, but these would have to be supervised by adults, since the court is very near the road and youngsters could be hurt chasing a stray ball. The appropriate nets and equipment would also have to be obtained, which may mean fund-raising events.

The Playing Fields Association AGM is on November 18, in the pavilion at 8.30pm., refreshments provided. Take a fund-raising idea along if you can.

The provision of the court has been the work of relatively few people but it is the village's court, paid for by things like fun day and the 100 Club. It is hoped that parents will see that it is not damaged; particularly they are asked to prevent children using the fence as a football net.

Village to lose a shop

AFTER over 80 years, the butcher's shop in Silver Street, Wethersfield, run by Brian Langford for 21 of them, is to close.

Rising overheads, changing public buying habits, exacerbated by scares over BSE and salmonella, have finally made Brian call it a day. He is taking a butchery job at Silver End but he and his wife Grace will stay at Willow Cottage. Brian thanks all those customers who have supported the business over so many years.

EVEN FIGHTING FIRES HAS ITS FUNNIER SIDE

THERE you are, in your smart uniform with a well-polished fire appliance behind you for everyone on a sunny afternoon at the village fair to admire. What could be more pleasant?

What could be more *unpleasant* than being called from your bed in the middle of the night, to run or drive down to the fire station, struggle into 60lb of fireman's suit, leap aboard the appliance, and roar off to tackle flames, fumes and dangerously damaged buildings?

Wethersfield is lucky to have a fire station right on its doorstep and a full team of retained firefighters to man it under Sub-officer Harry Ellis of New Parkside, Wethersfield, 21 years in the service.

But why do they do it? Not for the money. "You will never get rich at a station like this," says Harry. "We get a retaining fee and you get an amount for a turnout." These are less



Fun Day flashback: Wethersfield firefighters display the fire appliance frequent at Wethersfield than at bigger stations so turnout payments are lower.

Leading Fireman Michael Pilgrim gave a clue to why they turn out at all hours when their "alerter" – pager to you and me – sounds off in the small hours. "The adrenalin goes. It is trying to put your underpants on while running down the stairs that is the problem."

Howard Wright might be in the middle of a field on his tractor when the call to a fire comes. "We have a spare bleeper which father has and if I am combining he knows I have gone."

Terry Saunders, a builder from Old Mill Chase, has been a fireman for over two years. "You can't have any fear of heights at all," he said.

"If a fireman stays for three

years or so he is likely to stay for along time," says Harry, who was interviewing new men on the night I called at their training session. Vince Taylor of Saffron Gardens had been keen to join the fire service and now lived near enough to be a retained man.

Alan Whiteside, operations manager at Stansted airfield, was a fireman for 11 years in Northern Ireland. He had the urge to come back part time.

Baby of the team is Damion Barber, 19. He lives in Great Yeldham and is only required to turn out in daytime. Robert Cameron of Beazley End works at the Ministry of Defence Police base but if the call comes when he is at home he sometimes gets left behind.

Fire fighting has its amusing side: "We were called to Shalford one night when the Americans were on the base," said Michael Pilgrim. "A young American woman who had just flown in that day answered the door. 'Could the firemen get her boiler to work?' she asked. She had looked in yellow pages, saw 'Fire Service' and dialled the number, expecting a plumber."

Another call to a hedge fire revealed a tramp sitting under it, brewing up his breakfast.

Council Clipboard

A PLAN for a footpath along Wethersfield High Street between Tillbrook's Garage and Dog Chase is to be re-submitted to the Highway Authority for inclusion in future estimates.

IT was decided to accept the design for a Village Sign to be erected in memory of the late "Bill" Wyatt.

THE Parish Council is to ask for more signs pointing to the Ministry of Defence Police establishment, formerly Wethersfield airbase, since heavy lorries frequently get lost in the village while looking for it and find nowhere safe to turn round.

A PLAN to convert the characterful building beside The Dog car park into a dwelling house has been approved provided a brick screen wall is erected. The approval stipulates that it gives no right of access over adjoining property.

COUNCILLORS are to take a look at the bank adjoining 31 Saffron Gardens which Mr and Mrs Smith wish to purchase and incorporate into their garden with a boundary hedge.

IT was proposed that a member of the Wethersfield Village Hall Committee should attend a seminar on 20th November at Braintree on village halls and village life.

A FESTIVAL of the Countryside is proposed by the Tourism Section of the County Council. Members of the council were asked to supply details of regular events in the parish which could be included in the Festival.

ONE-WAY signs and markings in Dog Chase are to be replaced and the One-Way arrow on the village green is to be turned round to face the traffic after it had been moved by vandals.

DISTRICT Councillor John Finbow is to look into a complaint by Mr S.R. Greenwood of September Cottage, Blackmore End concerning the noise and exhaust from a new grain drier recently permitted at Pattens Farm.

SPEED TRAPS in Silver Street, Wethersfield have resulted in four people being reported for excessive speed and 19 cautioned, PC Richard Buckland reported.

BRAINTREE District Council had sent the parish a copy of its District Reference Map and booklet containing maps and street indexes to Halstead and Braintree. Copies may be obtained through the Parish Clerk.

A SUGGESTION for an illuminated Christmas Tree to be placed on Wethersfield Village Green is to be investigated by Jack Tillbrook and Allan Frost.

Clerk to Council: ALLAN FROST, 0371 851146

Spread the word

CLERK to the Parish Council, Allan Frost, would like the various groups and societies in the parish to make themselves better known.

"Anything that is beneficial to the parish can be posted up on the three parish notice boards - at Wethersfield, Blackmore End and Beazley End," he says.

He would be grateful, too, if each group could send a note of its secretary and chairman, with their addresses and telephone numbers to him at 23 Hereward Way, Wethersfield (851146).

"Newcomers often ask me what is available in the parish and I can't put them in touch unless I have a name for them to contact."

Share luck

SHARES for the 1993/94 PTA 100 Club are now on sale. Contact Kathy Andrews on 851384 if you'd like to join.

WHAT'S HAPPENING . . .

NEWS FOR NEXT ISSUE:
BEFORE DECEMBER 25th

ANYONE who has been to the Blackmore End Bonfire Night knows what a splendid show they put on in aid of the Village Hall. Apart from the rockets, sparklers and other fireworks, the bangers they put into the hot-dogs are pretty tasty too. Saturday, 6th November is the date, at 6.30pm. Admission is £2 for adults and 50p for children.

WETHERSFIELD and Shalford Branch, Royal British Legion will be attending the annual Remembrance Service at St Mary Magdalene, Wethersfield Parish church on November 14. Members are asked to assemble outside the church at 10.30am. The Branch Standard will be in attendance.

Do drop in!

WETHERSFIELD Local History Group's December 9th meeting: is bound to be a wet night: the subject is ...Water. Where it comes from, the mills that used it, how Wethersfield might have become a spa are points of discussion. On November 11th the group will hear a talk by a speaker from the Essex Record Office. Meetings are at 8pm in Wethersfield Village Hall, 75p. Contact: Charlotte Holliday (851376)

AGM's are sometimes a bit of a turn-off. Not so the Annual General Meeting of Wethersfield Cricket Club at the Dog on November 26 at 8pm. There's a free pint for all players and members attending to get the tongues wagging and the ideas flowing. The club had one of its better seasons this year: won 7, drawn 7, lost 9 was the final tally. Contact: Paul Jerram, 851354.

Fare choice

STOCK up the Christmas freezer on November 20th when Wethersfield Garden Club has a sale of festive food and bring and buy stall. From 2pm to 4pm in the URC Hall. November's club meeting is on the 19th when Mr Fisher will talk on house plants.

WILL it be a vintage year? Wethersfield Wine Club has its annual home-wine competition event on November 12th, at 8pm in the Village Hall. This year it has added interest with a class for cooks to enter an item of food which they consider would complement the home wines. In the Inter-Club quiz at Halstead Wethersfield failed to retain the trophy, coming third behind winners Sudbury. Contact: Reg Mostyn, 851047.

Travel Guide

IT was a busy night when the Editor dropped in on First Wethersfield Guides. Half of them were getting the lowdown on fire-fighting from Sub Officer Harry Ellis and Leading Fireman Michael Pilgrim, ready for their firefighter badges; the other half were busy in the Parish Church with mops and dusters gaining their Service flashes. I was there to test Claire French of Jaspers Green for her photographers' badge. With a portfolio of pictures taken in France, Devon, Cadbury's chocolate factory and in Warwick, she easily made the grade.

BOXING DAY DATE:

10.30am on Wethersfield Village Green for a walk with the Wethersfield Pathfinders - and a drink at the end.

Table d'hope

HAVE you an unused table-tennis table in your loft you would be willing to sell? Brenda Sheldrake (851004) at Blackmore End wants to get a few like-minded people together for a bit of healthy ping-pong during the long winter afternoons. But they need a table. There was one at Blackmore End Village Hall but it was sold when the game became less popular.

THE United Reformed Church, Wethersfield, will be holding a Gift Service for the former Yugoslavia on December 12. Start collecting now, they ask, for a family gift box of food and personal items. It is hoped Mr George Mills, who visits the war-torn country each month to take aid, will be home and able to talk at the 11am service. September's Harvest Flower Festival raised £34 for the Chelmsford Hospice.

New team

WETHERSFIELD school PTA has a new committee. Chris Nightingale is the chairperson, Kathy Andrews the treasurer, Garry Coppin the secretary and Lorraine Coppin is social secretary. Coffee mornings are arranged for Thursday November 4, when there will be secondhand toy and cake stalls and December 14 when they'll be enjoying mincepies. Teams of up to eight people are invited to take part in the Christmas Quiz on Saturday, December 4 in Wethersfield Village Hall at 8pm. Contact Chris on 850013.

'CHRISTMAS and the Danish Connection' is the title of the demonstration Alan Smith will give to Wethersfield Floral Art Club at their Open Meeting on November 24 at 7.30. There will be a Buffet Supper. Contact: Dorothy Norman (851094)

They don't give a hoot

"OWLS are rather stupid birds," says Beverley Baxter of Rotten End. Then in the next breath: "Owls are brilliant!" From this you gather that, while owls may need a lot of help from their friends, Bev is totally captivated by them.

The love affair with Barn Owls started some six years ago when he and his wife acquired a pair of them and installed them in their barn. The female laid eggs and then disappeared, leaving the father to rear the brood. He is still there with a new mate, and over the years Bev has bred a dozen or more Barn Owls and released them into the wild. For their own protection this pair live, fly and feed inside the barn.

"Owls are very lazy birds; they are very well known for starving to death because they can't be bothered to hunt."

On the other side of the barn a wild Barn Owl "comes and goes of her own free will, which is lovely", says Bev. "The frustrating thing is that she has laid two sets of eggs this year which cannot be fertilised because I

do not know of another male in the area.

"What we try to do is pop some eggs from the breeding pair under her, but this has been a bad year and they haven't taken anyway."

Outside the barn, Ollie, a Little Owl, surveyed the visiting journalist, and stretched to his full height of about seven inches. He wasn't too much annoyed at the intrusion or he would have started bobbing up and down on his perch.

"He can't stand my daughter Janice," said Bev. "He's not worried by you. We found him in the lane, abandoned by his parents. I feed him by hand. If he is in a really good mood I can scratch his chest with my thumb; if he is in a bad mood he gives me a quick peck on the finger and says 'go away!'"

Little Owls are the ones that make the screeching sound. And in general they are not sweet-tempered. Males and



Barn owls are easily tamed, says Bev Baxter

females never mix except at breeding season. At other times one will attempt to kill the other.

Even so, Ollie has a lot of friends. Unfortunately five or six of them will gather on the roof of his aviary in the dark and hold a screeching contest. Overnight visitors to the Baxters' home sometimes look a bit wan at breakfast time!

Barn Owls, conversely, are extremely silent birds. They are 90% feathers and so glide silently onto their prey. A Barn Owl does make a sort of a hiss and coughing noise but it is very rare. Tawny Owls make the too-whit too-woo sound.

"They are beautiful things, it is a privilege to keep them really. I only do it for release to the wild because I feel I would like to actually put something back. Because people know we are keen on owls we get phone calls. I had one from

a local landowner. An owl had ended up in the face of one of his gundogs.

"He brought this Tawny Owl, a pretty thing, a baby. We got it going on chopped dog food, we put it in the outside barn just a wee bit too soon and we think it died of cold."

"I think it was still suffering from shock," said his son Nick. "It used to sit on my lap while I was watching TV. It used to flap about and squawk a bit."

Bev: "We were very upset about losing it, it was so nearly right. Owls get so panicky that they can just drop on you."

"We had a Little Owl that we rescued from a grain chute. It had one eye and we called it Nelson. Little Owls are the only daytime flying owl. You will see them on the top of gateposts."

"Years ago they were persecuted by farmers who thought that owls took game, chicks. But they don't. We only feed them on dead chicks because it is convenient."

"They have got to have fur, bone, feather, flesh. Barn Owls drink water. Little Owls don't drink at all. They get all their water from their prey."

Nick: "They are such erratic feeders that it may be two or three days before they eat anything and then it may be a baby rabbit or something. Barn Owls are the most dopest owls."

Bev: "They are brilliant birds in the sense that they are lovely creatures but they are really bad at looking after themselves. They are an endangered species and I would ask people to watch out for them, particularly drivers who could find one sitting in the road."

The owls are a bit of a relaxation from Bev's normal working life which starts with an early morning run to the City and ends late in the evening.

"But I don't have to do a lot for them. The thing about a barn owl is that he becomes imprinted - tame, very, very quickly."

Ollie too. "He thinks he is a human being."

Keeping the banks bonnie

TWO stout posts bearing the letters N.R. have recently been erected at either end of a curved shallow bank opposite the junction of Oak Hill and the road from Blackmore End Church to the B1053.

This means that the bank has been designated a Road Verge Nature Reserve by the Essex Wildlife Trust because of the wild flowers it contains.

The Highways Dept and Parish Council, who are responsible for mowing the road verges, cut it at a

different time to avoid mowing down flowers before they have set seed.

This particular bank contains sulphur clover, which is nationally rare, as well as violets, cowslips, birdsfoot trefoil, knapweed and various vetches.

It is very sad that most of the road verges in our countryside are lacking the large variety of wild flowers that used to bloom in profusion during the summer.

One of the reasons for this is that when cutting takes place, the cut grass lies in a thick mat over

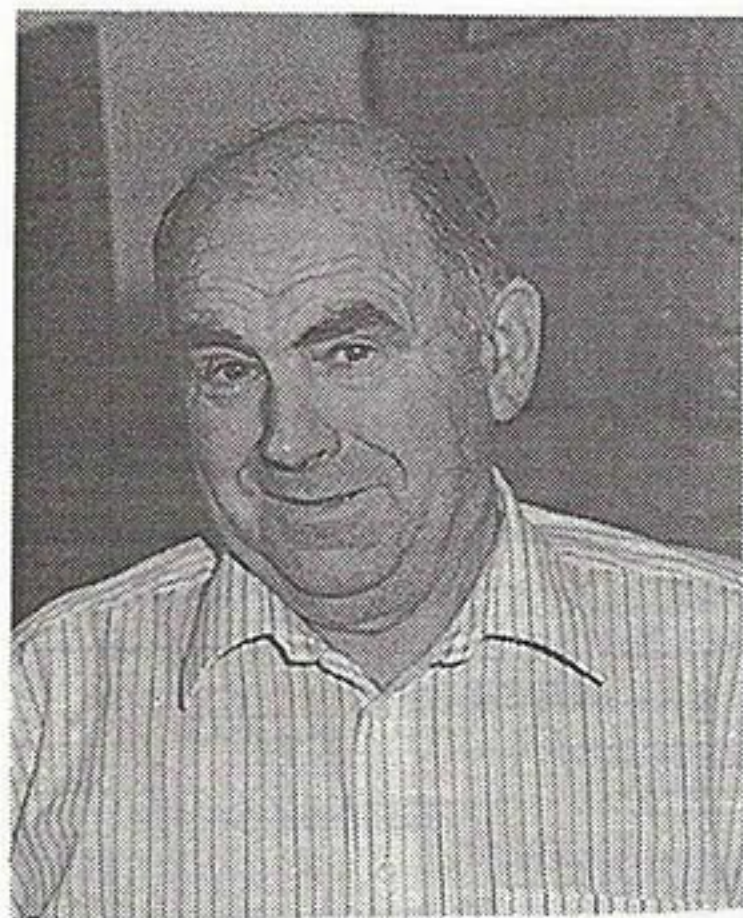
the verge and takes some months to rot down, during which time only the coarser plants, such as hogweed, cow parsley and nettles can push through, leaving the small plants to perish.

Anyone who is interested can help, merely by raking off and removing cut grass from a nearby verge. Anyone who knows of a verge with interesting plants should contact the Essex Wildlife Trust. You can ring me (0371 850412) and I will put you in touch with our Road Verge Representative.

JEAN DAVIS

BIN IT, BY LAW

A BYELAW has been made by Wethersfield Local Council under Section 164 of the Public Health Act concerning dog fouling of Blackmore End Playing Field. A full text is published on parish notice boards and at the entrance to the field, or may be obtained from Allan Frost, Clerk to the Council (851146) Under the byelaw people in charge of dogs must remove any faeces the dog deposits into the bins provided.



JOHN FINBOW

Stout fellow, in every way

FOOTBALL set John Finbow of Fairy Farm, Wethersfield, on the road to public service as a parish and district councillor.

"I helped start the Wethersfield Ambers Football Club. I became secretary, then I had to serve on the Playing Field Committee and that gave me a seat on the Village Hall Committee," he says. When a parish councillor at Beazley End died in 1966, John took his place on the parish council.

"I am now in my seventh year on the District Council. I stood twice as an independent and did reasonably well. Then I was asked to stand as a Conservative." He stood for the County Council for the first time this year, but was defeated by the Labour candidate.

With nine committee and council meetings each month,

People

John might have been thought to be doing his bit already.

He is a great defender of the cause of small villages and serves on the District Council's area planning committee. He is on the Environmental Services Committee, dealing with public and animal health, the Licensing Committee and the committee that deals with District Council staff.

And, of course, there is the Wethersfield Men's Club. "I have been connected with it since I was 22. In my younger days I just went down for the enjoyment and the drinks. I am not a snooker player, only cards. Then I got involved in the entertainments."

Then there was a bit of controversy over where the bar should be sited and John found himself secretary. The controversy was solved by John and other stalwarts physically digging out the underfloor of the far end of the basement club and making it a full-height room to take the bar. "It was the only time we have had free beer!"

"I feel Wethersfield Men's Club should be run by Wethersfield people," says John stoutly. He is now chairman of the club.

Stout, he certainly is, but his strength has come in useful both in tug-o-war, probably his favourite sport, and in football where he played left back.

"I met someone who played against me 38 years ago," said John. "He was a forward. He said about me: 'I used to find it was a long way round him!'"

John is married to Margaret, has a daughter and three sons.



Artists all: Les Turner, Ivy Tye, Carole and David Pullen

Painters by the Pant

"WETHERSFIELD is the best place in the world. I really do think people under-estimate what a beautiful part of the world it is. We are so lucky to live in this area."

David Pullen of Blackmore End not only loves the countryside — he puts it on canvas. Both he and his wife Carole are founder members of the Pant Valley Art Group which grew out of an art class held by Ashley Bryant of Wethersfield Art Centre. The Group of about 15 regular members puts on some astonishing shows, both in quality and diversity.

Apart from the landscapers, who include Kathy O'Neill from Beazley End, Gordon Carter, Les Turner and Joy Frost of Wethersfield, there are flower painters like Jean Peverett, pencil portraitists like newly-joined Peter Granger and specialists like Georgie Roy-Clark of Gosfield,

who paints with hot wax, and ceramicist Ivy Tye of Cherry Gardens.

David and Carole met through painting at a group in Barking, but, says Carole, I didn't ever finish a picture. I used to have a terrible habit of working from top to bottom instead of laying washes over the paper. Now I do water colour, pastel and oils.

David: "I am an avid reader of art magazines and read about different mediums or combinations. I will always have a bash."

He admits that Carole is the braver painter of the two, particularly when beautiful Wethersfield becomes wet Wethersfield.

"I think it takes a really dedicated artist to go out in the rain and paint, or on a cold frosty morning. I'll be frank I'm not one of them."

"But even if it is teeming down with rain Carole will sit in the car and paint. I have to turn on the windscreen wipers."

YOUNG People

Shall we ever see a Dinosaur?

Youth Correspondent Elizabeth Allan has been to see *Jurassic Park*. She writes:

FOR those who haven't seen it yet, this film is a must. It has many frightening scenes which keep you on the edge of your seat.

The film is about a man who has discovered how to breed dinosaurs from blood taken from fossilized mosquitoes. An eccentric millionaire has a crazy idea of mating this project with some sort of theme park.

Most of the dinosaurs you see are life-size replicas but some are state of the art computer graphics. A team of 50 computer experts took 18 months and £10 million to produce just six minutes of footage.

The idea for the film came from a book called *Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton. The film follows the same basic storyline but is less detailed than the book. It has a much more exciting ending — a recommended read.

Could there ever be a real Jurassic Park? Scientists have calculated that it would take a computer the size of a large village hall to find the correct dinosaur blood samples among the fossilized mosquitoes that sucked the dinosaur's blood. It would take at least another 20 years to put the idea into practice.

So, shall we ever see dinosaurs?

■ Hope to see you at the Blackmore End firework display.

A walk, at snail's pace



Julie and friend: Stripey has no worries about going for a walk around her hand.

LITTLE boys used to be 'made of slugs and snails and puppy-dog's tails', but it is 10-year-old Julie Benfield (left) of Saffron Gardens who is snail mad in Wethersfield.

She introduced me to Stripey, Twinkle, Stretchy, Shine, Blackie, Lee and Brownie, all very elegantly shelled individuals whom she had collected, mainly on the Playing Field.

They now live in a fish tank outside the kitchen window but frequently go for walks on Julie's hands and arms.

Up the road at Hereward Way Julie's friend Katharine Chappell, 9, is into spiders. Her favourite is called Boris. I didn't seek an interview!