

WETHERSFIELD

BLACKMORE END & BEAZLEY END

NEWS

February/March 2004

news@ChurchHillHouse.co.uk

Adversity Brings Out The Best

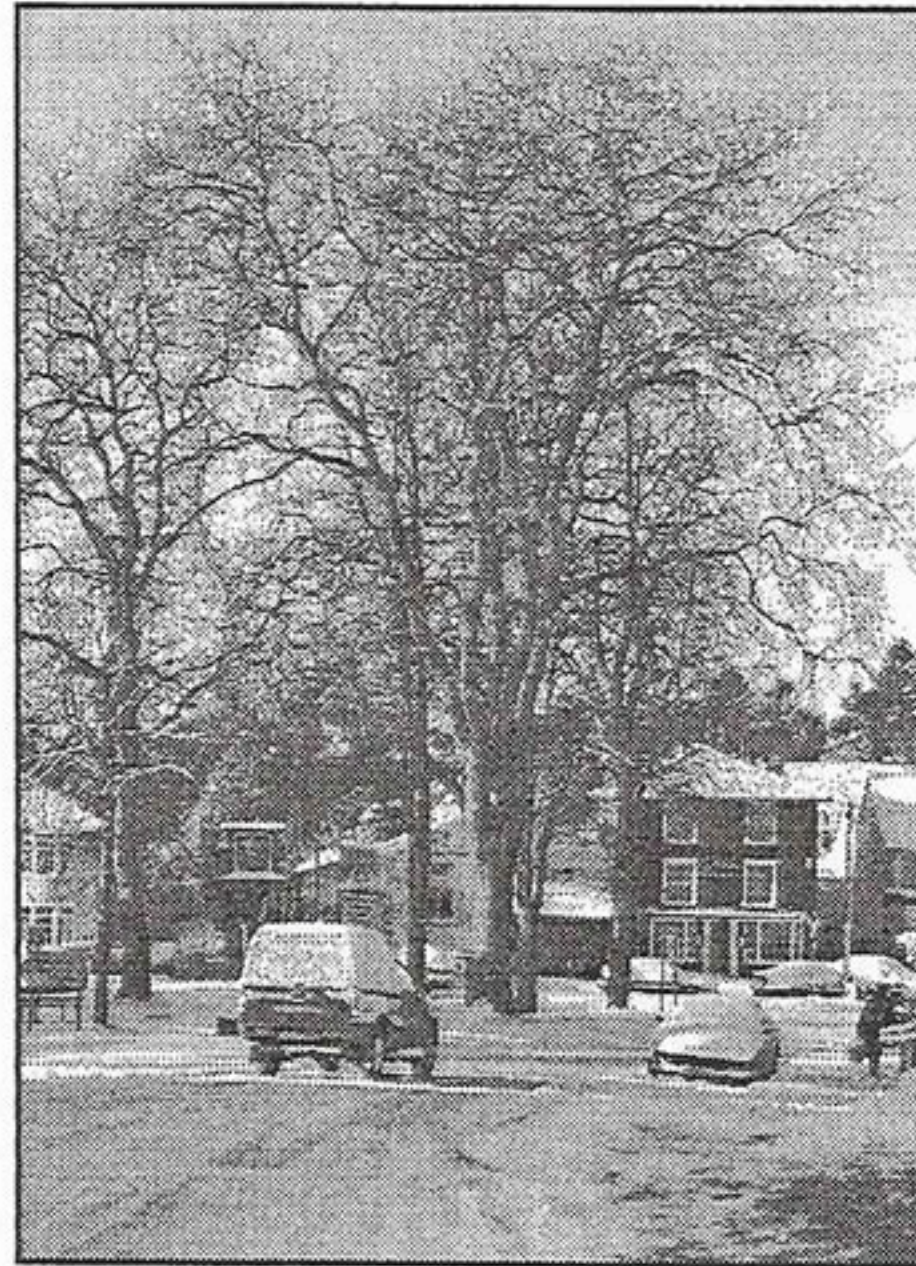
From time to time the Parish gets its fair share of vandalism, caused by those who seem determined to be bad. See the letter on the back page for an example of this.

There also seems to be an ongoing problem with litter caused by an attitude that it's the job of 'someone else' to clear it up. Perhaps a general lowering of standards and lack of local pride can lead to apathy? However there is no doubt that litter - bottles, cans and cartons discarded in the village cause eyesores in an otherwise attractive village.

On a more positive note, there have been some recent examples where the young people of Wethersfield have shown that they can work together for the common good.

The recent snowfall provided some fun times, with school closed and the rare opportunity to enjoy snowball fights, sledging and so on. Not so much fun for traffic on the roads.

On the last day of the cold snap, a sudden heavy fall of snow, on roads that had been washed clear of salt by earlier rain, caused sheet ice to form. The hill up from Wethersfield Green towards the Parish Church became almost impassible for traffic and there was a danger of a backlog of vehicles building up. However a bunch of brave youngsters turned out and spent two hours pushing and helping cars up the hill. A bus tried it and the back end was slipping sideways. The trusty helpers pushed it back on line and helped it to make the incline. Curious village observers were most impressed! As Ann Harris, of The Green, commented "They put their energies to good use and I am sure many drivers praised



them that night for their assistance. Thank you lads, you did an excellent job. Us 'oldies' are proud of you."

Back to the fun side of snow: an unfortunate aim with a heavy snowball smashed on of the large windows at the front of Tillbrook's Garage. However, the embarrassed culprit immediately came forward, owned up and offered to pay for the repair. It's refreshing to hear of some positive news when newspapers are filled with the very opposite.

Please Petition BT

We could have broadband in Shalford, Wethersfield and the surrounding area. If sufficient registrations are gathered in the area BT will 'enable' the telephone exchange for ADSL (broadband over a BT phone line). Over a hundred people have done this already but we still need more. The registration scheme is like an electronic petition where your phone number and postcode are used instead of your signature.

What can you do?

To get broadband in our area we need YOU to register if you are interested in having broadband - it's free, with no commitment to buy. PLEASE register by sending an e-mail with your name, telephone number and postcode to:

register@broadband4shalfordgreen.co.uk, or by clicking the 'Register Now' link at www.broadband4shalfordgreen.co.uk.

If there is even a chance you might want broadband in the future please ACT NOW and send us your details. If you have already registered then please try to get two other people in your area to register with the campaign as well - the more we have the more likely we all are to get broadband soon!

Why should I want broadband?

- It's high speed internet access, you get to websites up to 10 times more quickly*.
- You can still talk on the phone when using the computer!

- It costs from about £16 per month*.
- If you have a second phone line (or ISDN) for computer use you can cancel it and use ADSL broadband on one line instead, providing you are 'in-range'. To check your number, follow the 'Availability Checker' link at www.broadband4shalfordgreen.co.uk.

- No more call charges to pay for internet use. If you pay £15 per month for your free phone dial-up access you could cancel it once you have broadband - faster always on access could cost you from just £5 per month more.
- No more dialling up - the monthly fee covers you for 'always on' internet access. If you need further clarification phone Mark Gardner 07733 306677 email: mark@broadband4shalfordgreen.co.uk

*The speed and cost vary according to which service you subscribe, generally the more you pay the faster it gets.

The leaflet enclosed in this paper is to remind you to act now.

Dates for your Diaries

Separate open meetings have been arranged in the Wethersfield and Blackmore End village halls for you to air your views on matters to be covered in the Parish-wide questionnaire-based survey which will be used to build up the Parish Plan

How often do you hear complaints about traffic through villages of the Parish, or parking problems, litter, lack of facilities for the youth or the elderly in the villages, lack of bus services and so on?

Well, there are plans to allow all parishioners to have their say in the development of a Parish Plan. It is Government policy to increase individual participation in public life and for local councils and other public bodies to consult communities about the delivery of services and rural planning matters.

Wethersfield Parish Council have come to realise that the Plan would greatly ease the ability to get grants, for example for such items as the recently improved basketball pad, funded from efforts by the Playing Field Committee. A Parish Plan could be used to influence the thinking of Braintree District Council on planning and funding issues.

As well as containing the views of parishioners, the plan would contain useful information such as traffic/road usage, what numbers of people commute and where, how many work locally, number of dwellings, local businesses and so on.

So please turn up to air your views. The Open Meetings are at:

Blackmore End Village Hall Wednesday 28th April 7.30 - 9pm

Wethersfield Village Hall on Wednesday 5th May 7.30 - 9pm

Jan Cole, from the Rural Community Council of Essex will be on hand to explain the benefits of Parish Plans, facilitate the meeting and answer any questions.

Explanatory leaflets may be picked up from Wethersfield Post Office.

Wethersfield Club

An excellent venue to meet with friends. New members welcome. Membership £12pa Available for private functions

Entertainment 2004

28th Feb	Club Golf Society Presentation evening
13th March	Watch the posters
27th March	Live music
10th April	Karaoke night (Greg)
24th April	St George's day Talent Show
8th May	Bulls-eye Quiz night (teams of 2)
29th May	Tarts, Vicars, Punks & Nuns Fancy Dress Night)

Tales From The River Bank

Much work has been carried out on the River Pant in the past few months. Workers from the Environment Agency have been carrying out major bank clearance work between Petches Bridge and Shalford. The last time such work was done was over 20 years ago.

The meandering river erodes the banks and mud deposits form on the insides of the bend. Overhanging trees and vegetation collect debris and these gradually impede the water flow. So workers have been using chainsaws to tidy up trees and a JCB to scoop out the banks. However, great care has been taken to minimise any impact on wildlife. Work to improve the flow has been carried out in stretches over 16 km of the Pant below Sampford.

The Environment Agency working practices insist that disturbance to the river bed is avoided. Fish lay eggs in the pebbles here. Cut off tree limbs have been placed in piles to provide shelter for insects and food for, and shelter, for wildlife. Spurs have been left in trimmed trees to provide perches for kingfishers and other birds.

The JCB driver reported that he saw kingfishers flying along the river almost every day and they did not seem to be disturbed by the noise from the digger.

John Claydon, our local Flood Defence Officer, provided some interesting background to the work on the river. "Forty years ago the emphasis was on land drainage, farmers put in land drains and the river was in effect a canal to get the water away. The government wanted Essex to grow lots of lovely wheat so we did not have to import it from the States"

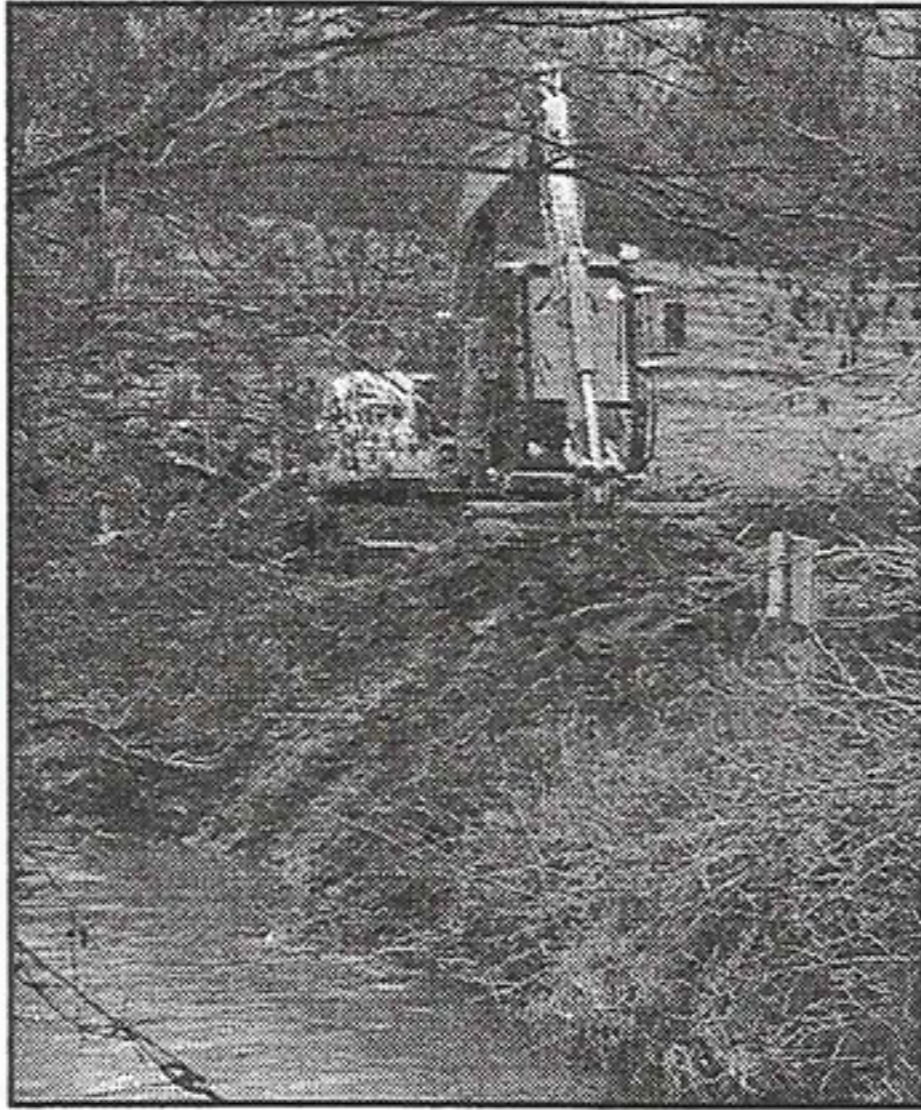
"Now the emphasis is really on good house-keeping, maintaining a good flow and a fish spawning environment." During dry periods water is pumped from the Ely Ouse, via the Stour and then via a pipe with outfall just below the bridge at Sampford into the Pant. This water is used to help fill the reservoir at West Hanningfield, travelling a total of 150km. Of course, downstream of Bocking the Pant becomes the Blackwater." John added that water is also pumped if there is a danger of river flow falling to a level where fish stocks are threatened, or to dilute any pollution threat.

Folks may have also noticed large rocks being placed under the bridge near Wethersfield Mill by the Highways department. John explained that the lowering of the river bed resulting from the clearing of the river downstream of the bridge in 2002 had resulted in some scouring away of the foundations by the improved water flow. The rocks will help to stabilise things prior to a more permanent

solution. But, as John pointed out "the rocks will provide a great place for the tiddlers to breed!"

On the negative side John felt that mink were a threat to some wildlife on the river and were probably the cause of the near extinction of water voles- "the problem is, mink can swim after them"

The Branch of Environment Agency which covers this area is based in Ipswich and may be contacted on 01473 727712.



F...eel-good factor

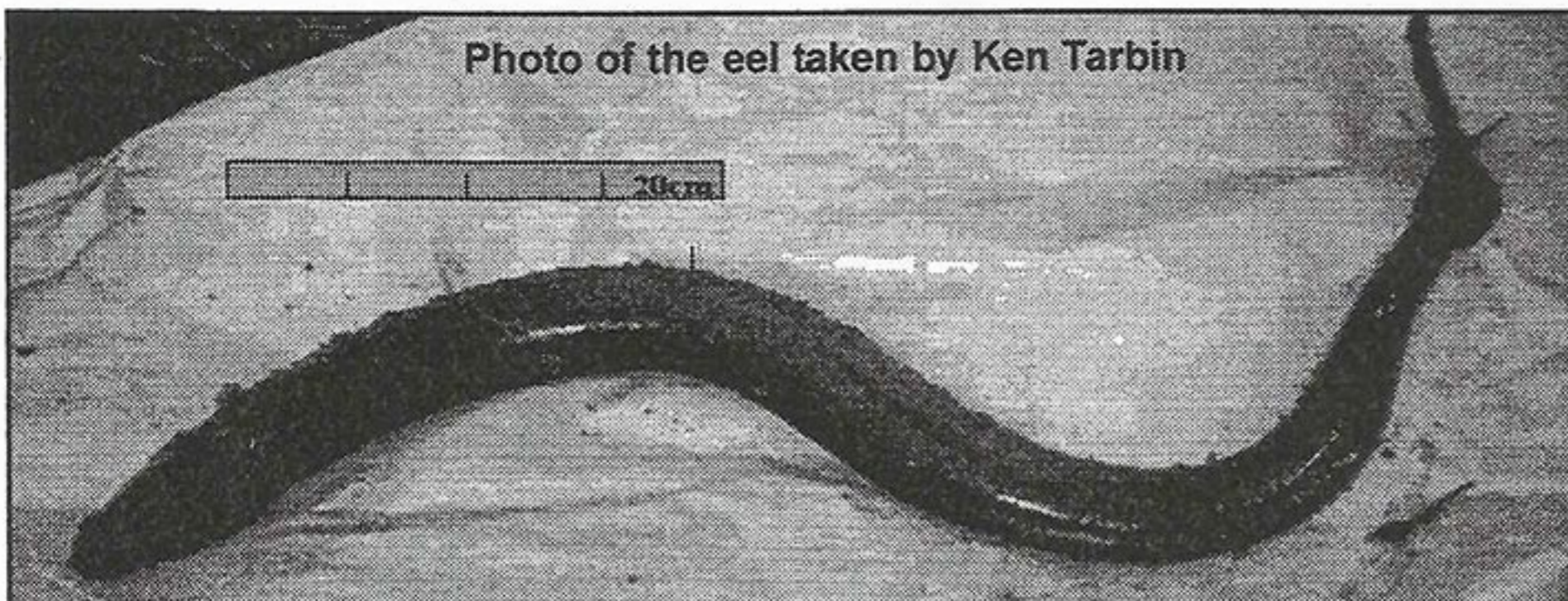
Jim Thomson of Russells Farm will be 65 in February, but of all the experiences over his years in farming, one that will stay for him forever happened during a day in December. His son David related the tale:-

"Whilst walking his beloved dogs, Jim spotted a large eel lying motionless on the river bank, which he guessed had been dredged up during the work on the river. He had never before seen an eel in the river, although otters and cormorants had been spotted. Being a man never to give up hope, he carried the creature, over 2 foot long, on a fertiliser sack, back to the farm and put it in a water trough.

Imagine his surprise when the eel suddenly sprung back to life and started wriggling around in the trough. Without further delay, he caught it and transferred it back to the river, watching with pride and admiration as it swam away as if nothing had happened."

"Jim's love of the countryside and nature has led him to keep his farm viable, but also ecology-friendly. Russells is involved in the R.S.P.B. Volunteer and Farmer Alliance: and works closely with the farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

Photo of the eel taken by Ken Tarbin



A Property View by Bev Baxter of Gray & Co

Well, at last we know what to many seemed inevitable; a second runway at Stansted. My view is that should this go through then the second runway will change our lives.....but not yet. The more immediate impact will surely be felt by the new A120. At the end of last summer a well known local gardener and I cycled the entire length (had to walk in some places) of the new A120. I have to say it is a most impressive piece of engineering and will access the M11 and the airport in minutes. House prices will rise as a result because of the accessibility. Then, as I said, if Stansted passes the planning stages there will be winners and losers in the housing market. I have rather thought that we are, in a sense, too close to be badly affected. It's a bit like a car and its turning circle, we being well inside the circle. Hopefully this is the case. However, as I said only time will tell.

In the meantime because there is a dearth of property coming onto the market at the moment, prices are holding firm and it is, to some extent, a seller's market. Therefore in twelve months we have gone from a seller's market, to a neutral market and back to a seller's market. It is as Jimmy Greaves would say 'a funny old world'.

What's On?

Floral Art Club

- Feb 25 AGM + Janet Rayner
Cheese & Wine
- Mar 31 Paulette - Ideas for Easter
Dried & Silk Flowers
- Apr 28 Yolande - theme TBA
- May 26 Garden Visit & Meal Out

Tennis Club

We still have tubes of 4 Wilson Championship Hard Court tennis balls for sale at just £3.50 per tube. These balls are suitable for all playing levels and last very well. Contact Peter or Jan on 01371 850937.

Wethersfield History Group

- Mar 11 Snippets from the Halstead Gazette by Kesley Nicks & Keith Sutton
- May 13 Straw plaiting by Jean Peveritt

Wethersfield Pathfinders

Depart for 2 hour guided walk from Wethersfield Village Green at 10.30am on Sundays 28th March and 15th April.

Garden Club

- Mar 20 - Annual Dinner Green Man, Gosfield 7.30 for 8pm
- Apr 16 - Garden Alpines and Bulbs by Roy Leeds, an expert on the subject

Welcome Group

- Mar 1 - History of British Bank Notes
Steve Schorah + Bring & Buy Stall
- Apr 1 - "Life Beneath the Waves" by Rev. Ken Ellis
- May 6 - Braintree Museum Visit
Please advise if you wish to go as early as possible

Wethersfield Parish Council

Edited Highlights from recent Meetings.

November

A letter was received from Mr and Mrs D. Sexton expressing concern at the speed of traffic through the village and suggesting a number of possible improvements. After discussion the meeting was reminded of a number of past discussion with the ECC highways and Essex Police on this issue and of improvements to signage on approach roads in recent years.

Jenny Dunster, Deputy Head of Wethersfield Primary School and Healthy Schools Coordinator, gave a presentation to the meeting to highlight the County's Safer to School Initiative, which has been applied for by the school from the LEA. If the bid is accepted, Road Safety Officers from the LEA will conduct a risk audit and proceed with steps to reduce the hazards identified. The Parish Council were happy to lend their support to this scheme.

Other road safety matters were discussed - including the volume and speed of MOD vehicles through the village in the early morning.

Correspondence from BDC invited Parish Council views on the impact of anti-social behaviour in their area, specifically in rela-

tion to the Act, which allows Local authorities to restrict consumption of alcohol in certain public areas. The Parish Council agreed that a letter be sent pointing out Wethersfield's problems with litter from motor vehicles and litter bin vandalism, but that it was not felt that a 'no alcohol' area was needed.

January

BDC Community and Leisure Services - an invitation to participate in activity days in the Spring and Summer has been received. District Councillors have decided that these cannot be run at a loss and that a nominal charge per child will be levied.

DEFRA - a letter was received which covered the requirement for passports for horses. Further information is provided on www.defra.gov.uk/rural/horses

Finance - after thorough discussion, the Council resolved to precept for £15,000 in the 2004/5 year, an increase of £1000 on the current year.

Other matters - The siting of the traffic lights on Braintree Road, necessitated due to the unsafe wall has been advised by ECC Highways. The West Drive Councillor agreed that it was now possible for them to see the light indication.

Tree surgery work on the Green has been completed.

Subsidence and holes in Silver Street and Finchingfield Road is being reported to ECC Highways Dept.

Contact Jean Murphy 851147

What's On? .. cont.....

Wethersfield Wine Club

Mar 12 - Wines of Italy, talk and tasting by Robin Greatorix.

Apr 9 - Blind tasting - a wild evening!

Creamer Fund

Having taken delivery of an excellent ultra sound scanner with several probes, to which the Creamer Fund were able to donate £25,000, we are now saving for one more probe, this one to cost approximately £10,000.

By the time you read this we shall have on sale a quiz sheet costing £1. There will be several outlets, but if you are unable to find one just ring Jean. Please join in the fun - first prize £75, plus runners up prizes.

The Easter raffle at the Health Centre will take place from Monday 29th March until Tuesday 6th April, when the draw will take place. If you would like to donate a prize, this can be handed in at the Health Centre near the date, or Jean is happy to take it

The A.G.M. will be on Monday 22nd March at 7p.m. in The Health Centre Waiting Room, and is open to all.

Your continued support for this Community Fund is very valued.

Contact Jean Murphy 851147

Parish Church

Regular weekday service recommenced Wednesdays at 9.30am.

Mar 7 - 8am Holy communion

Mar 14 - 11am Family Service

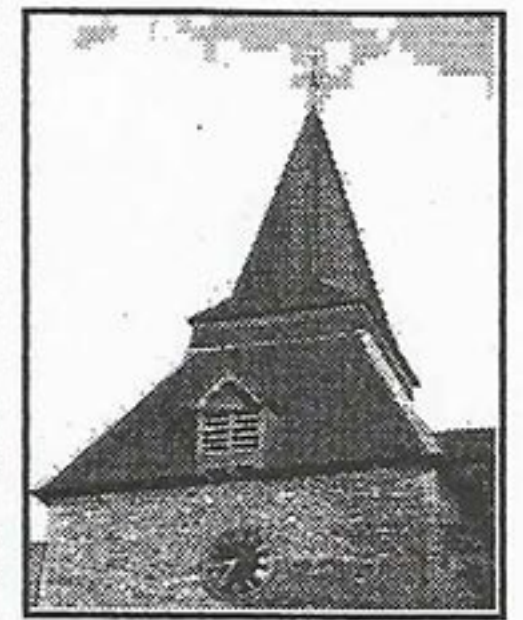
Mar 21 - 11am Mothering Sunday
Family Eucharist

Mar 28 - 6.30pm Evensong

Sunday School - every Sun except when Family Service 9.45-

Contact Elaine Ambrose 850244 or Sarah Pilgrim 850781

The restoration work on the Parish Church was finally completed in January. The south aisle has been completely re-roofed and the dangerous parapets on that side and also the north porch parapet have all been re-built. Since most of the work is not visible from the ground, photographs have been placed on the notice board inside the church.



When all the bills are finally paid, this first and most urgent phase of the restoration will have cost over £86,000. Some £8,000 remains to be found at the time of writing, although it is hoped that further grant aid will be forthcoming. The church architect has identified a further £200,000 of work which will be needed in the not-too-distant future, but at least the building is now safe and waterproof for the time being.

The Church Council would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of this huge undertaking. The new Bishop of Chelmsford has agreed to come and preach at a Service of Thanksgiving on April 25th at 11.00 a.m.. Everyone is most welcome to join in!

Wethersfield CE Primary School News - Autumn Term 2003

The new academic year began in September with the exciting news that planning permission had been granted for a new Hall, classroom, ICT suite and staffroom. However, in order to minimise disruption to the school, work will not begin until July 2004, so that alterations to the boiler and the toilets will be done whilst the school is closed during the summer holiday. Although we are disappointed at the delay, we are looking forward to the huge impact that the new building will have upon the quality of the educational experience that we will be able to offer the children.

The governors and staff have continued to work on the points for improvement raised by the Ofsted inspection last summer.

The school has offered netball, multi-sports, cooking, recorder, crafts and gardening clubs this term.

Towards the end of October we held a very successful 'Healthy Living Week' which included activities relating to healthy eating, hygiene, road safety and exercise, ending the week with a themed 'Smile Day' when children and staff dressed as clowns for the day, collected jokes, made clown biscuits and painted and collaged more clowns! It was a very enjoyable day and the week's underlying messages about healthy living were reinforced in a fun way! Also during the week, the older children launched a Healthy Tuck Shop which is open every week and is proving to be very popular. We are also investigating the provision of school milk.

Along with helping to organise Healthy Living Week, the Healthy School Task Group has been working hard to prepare a bid for the School to join 'Safer Journeys to School', a county-wide campaign to improve children's road safety. As a school community we are very concerned about road safety outside the school and several residents, local groups and the parish Council are supporting our bid.

The School Council has been active in redrafting the school rules and encouraging cloakroom tidiness through a poster campaign.

In December, the whole school was involved in a very successful Christmas production, 'The Christmas Alphabet', which drew a huge audience and was greatly enjoyed by all! We also had a school Christmas Party, attended by a special visitor in red!

During the term, Class 1 attended the 'Kids' Carols' service at the United Reformed Church, Class 2 visited Sutton Hoo for their work on the Anglo-Saxons and Class 3 visited both the Essex Record Office and the Braintree Museum to support their work on the Victorians.

This term the school has raised money for the 'Children in Need' charity by covering a picture of Pudsey Bear with coins and taking a retiring collection after the Christmas production, raising a total of £179.51. We also supported the British Legion Poppy appeal.

The Parent Teacher Association has been very busy raising money for the school. They organised a Sponsored Bounce, a 'Penny' Auction and a Christmas Bazaar, ran stalls after school, compiled a recipe book, organised a school tea-towel for sale, and more... resulting in the fantastic sum of £1000 being made available to the school for next term. We are very grateful for the commitment and hard work of all the parents who give so freely of their time to raise much-needed funds for the school.

We have continued to foster community links by inviting the Friendship Club, Jays and the Pre-school to a variety of functions during the term. Year 6 children delivered harvest gifts to the older members of the village community.

J.D.

PEOPLE.....

The Rescuer Returns

In the last few months the village has seen the return of Maxine Gillespie who as we all know has put in many hours rescuing and caring for animals.

Maxine toiled away for many years as the Manager of the Wethersfield Animal Home and during her time there rehomed approximately 6000 animals that came into her care. She also helped to care and rehabilitate many species of wildlife.

Maxine still continues to care for sick and injured animals and since she has been back in the village mentioned: "I've been approached by various people for either help with stray dogs and cats and has also have had injured wildlife left at my door".

Maxine feels "glad to be back in the village - it is as though I've never been away".

She is pleased that her animal rescue service (TAILS) - Taking Animals In Life Seriously - has been supported and remembered by so many people. "I can again play a part in village life and more importantly give something back to the community whilst doing something I'm passionate about - caring for and helping animals."

Maxine lives at Barnley Cottage, opposite the Wethersfield playing field, and is on hand if anyone has a problem with an animal or finds a stray cat or dog. Maxine is going to be running a dog show in the summer to help pay for veterinary treatment and neutering costs so watch this space for details.

All that remains to be said is welcome back our very own personal rescuer.

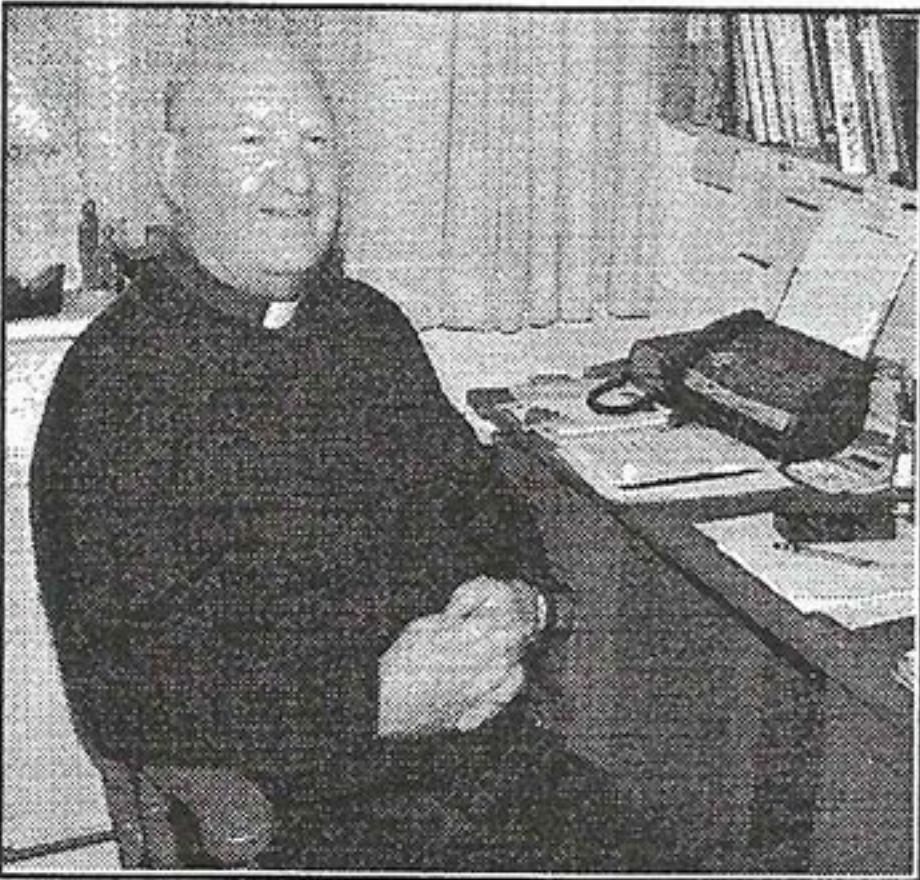
Take a look at www.tails.org.uk



The Reverend John Shead

John Shead, who is married to Hilary and has three grown up children, was born in Ilford, and after being educated at the County High School Wanstead, and joining the RAF for National Service, he trained as a teacher.

John taught from 1970 until he resigned from his Headteacher post at Thaxted School in 1985, this was when he was appointed Curate at St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, where he served for two years. Following his ordination in 1975 he had managed to combine his



teaching job at Thaxted School with that of Honorary Curate at the Parish Church. In 1988 John was inducted as parish priest to Wethersfield and Shalford, and later the parishes of Finchingfield and Cornish Hall End were added.

Have you ever wondered what the Vicar does in between Sundays? If you imagine that all John does is just sit in his book-lined study thinking good thoughts and looking for something to do, you are wrong. He is constantly frustrated by never having quite enough time to cover all the demands of a parish priest's duties. So much of his life is spent driving around his large rural patch, always having to travel in a rush from one appointment to

another. Apart from Sundays when John's day is full, conducting services at his four parish churches, there is no particular pattern to the other weekdays except that he says Daily Offices, (short services of prayer) three times. Every week he takes a school assembly at Wethersfield and Finchingfield, both Church of England schools, where as a Governor he also attends board meetings. Despite careful forward planning he has often to deal with matters as they arise, his schedules frequently changed at very short notice. Visiting sick parishioners at home and in hospital, answering the telephone, dealing with the four parishes' mail and administrative work, seeing parishioners often listening to their problems, arranging baptisms, weddings and funerals, attending Diocesan and Parochial Parish Council meetings, preparing sermons, as well as putting in appearances at the villages' social and other functions leave him with little time for relaxation. Once a month at a group meeting he joins nine other priests, who support each other by worshipping together, talking through their parochial experiences and then later enjoy a pub lunch. Like several other priests John has a Spiritual Director and three or four sessions a year with him help John day-to-day in what can be an isolated rural life.

John finds his parish work very fulfilling, his deep faith sustains him; worship, particularly celebrating the Eucharist, is most important, as is the time he sets aside for prayer and study. Apart from having a deep-rooted Christian belief, he feels that being a good listener and an easy communicator are very necessary qualities for a priest, his wide experience of different types of people and their lives, prior to being ordained, has been of real value. John has a keen sense of humour and an appreciation of living life to the full, and he sums it all up by quoting a former Vicar of Thaxted with whom he worked and who said, "There's no point in religion if you can't enjoy it"

Brenda Hanley

Letter from a resident

Does the sight of the continuous acts of vandalism that take place within the village make you as fed up as it does me? If you have been the victim of such an act you may think that it was a one off and that it is best forgotten about and that it might not happen again.

Sadly this is not the case - there is an almost continual cycle of walls, hedges and bushes being damaged as well as broken glass everywhere and litter bins uprooted and emptied. The playing field particularly seems to attract the attention of those who think that it is good fun to damage the property of others. The fence around the pavilion has been damaged several times as well as the windows broken, sometimes it would appear by the use of an air gun.

It is also obvious that at times quantities of alcohol are consumed on the playing field judging by the litter left behind. With all this in mind I called into the mobile Police station when it was in the village a few weeks ago and voiced my concerns about these matters.

The officers manning the station were well aware that such events took place but not necessarily on such a scale. They then said that officially Wethersfield did not have any problems as there were no reported incidents on the books. Because of this no further resources would be assigned to police the village. The only way to get this situation changed is for every incident to be reported to Braintree police station on 01376 551312 just to make them aware that an event has taken place. Most importantly make sure that you get an incident number, you probably won't get an appearance from the police as in most cases it would be a waste of time and resources. What will happen is that the police will see that there is a problem to be tackled and assign resources to it.

It is therefore most important to report the incident and get an incident number. The officers however did say that they would a) ask for the bottle banks to be emptied more frequently, to hopefully cut down on the amount of broken glass and b) that they would try to patrol the village after dark on occasion. When most of these incidents seem to take place. They also said that for some time they have been suspicious that alcohol is being sold to underage children by someone who is probably buying it abroad. This is not just confined to our village. They asked that any suspicious activity be reported to them on the above number.

If we all make an effort to report these events it may just make the difference and make the village a nicer place to live.

Name & address supplied

APRIL/MAY DEADLINE IS APRIL 10th

We are always looking for ideas for articles, especially written ones!

News@ChurchHillHouse.co.uk

Letters and comments are welcome, but please note that they will not be used unless name and address is supplied. This information will not be published unless the writer wishes.

Latest version of this newspaper, often with photos in colour is also available on: www.wethersfield-essex.co.uk