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USEFUL LOCAL INFORMATION

POLICE STATION: Baldock Road, Buntingford	Non-emergency telephone: 101 In emergencies dial 999
GAS:	Emergency (gas leaks) – Freephone 0800 111 999
ELECTRICITY:	Emergency (power loss) – Freephone 0800 7838 838
WATER (Veolia):	Emergency – Freephone 0800 376 5325
SEWERAGE (Thames Water):	Emergency – Telephone 0800 316 9800
FLOODLINE:	Emergency – 0345 988 1188 or 0845 988 1188 Environment Agency Incident Line: 0800 80 70 60
DOCTORS:	Buntingford Medical Centre – White Hart Close Tel: 01763 271362 (24 hours)
B A S H (Buntingford Action For Social Help):	Providing transport for hospital and doctors appointments. Tel: Colin Horgan 07733 091731
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, RAPE, RACE or HATE CRIME:	Confidential Information Helpline: 01992 554440 (in emergency, dial 999)
LOCAL COUNCILS:	Buntingford Town Council – 01763 272222 East Herts District Council – 01279 655261 Housing – 01279 714714 Benefits – Freephone 0800 373852 For emergencies out of office hours: 01279 655261 Adult Care Services – 0300 123 4042 Children’s Services – 0300 123 4043 Hertfordshire Highways – 0300 123 4047, or report faults online: www.hertsdirect.org/highwayfaults
BUNTINGFORD LIBRARY: High Street, Buntingford	Opening times: Mon, Tue, Thur 10:00–17:00 Fri 14:00–17:00 Sat 10:00–13:00 Telephone enquiries – 0300 123 4049 Option 1 – Renewals 03:00–23:45 every day Option 2 – All other enquiries Mon–Fri 08:00–20:00, Sat 09:00– 6:00 More info at: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk
CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU: The Manor House Market Hill, Buntingford	Offices are currently closed due to Covid. For telephone advice call 03444 111 444 (Mon to Fri 10am–4pm) or call the local Messageline on 01920 459 944 for a call back
HOUSEHOLD WASTE & RECYCLING SITE: Watermill Industrial Estate Aspenden Road	Usual opening: Mon to Fri 17:00 – 20:00 Sat & Sun 10:00 – 13:00 Currently closed due to Covid. Our nearest open recycling site is in Royston.

The Buntingford Journal is published by, but is editorially independent of, the Buntingford Civic Society. For information on how to join the Society and have the Journal delivered to your door, please email: membership@buntingfordcivic.org.uk

EDITOR'S LETTER

Hello and welcome to the first Buntingford Journal of 2021 and the first one ever to be published just in digital form. This has been forced on us by lockdown which makes it difficult to distribute the printed version within the rules. The Buntingford Civic Society, who publish the Journal, felt it would be better to offer something rather than nothing for yet another month. I hope that regular readers find their way to it on the Civic Society's website. We hope to be back to a printed issue very soon, and the deadline below assumes we will be able to distribute a printed April issue, but if the easing of lockdown proves too slow for that, we will fill the gap once more with another digital issue.

Just in case, as we hope, the digital issue attracts some new readers, I thought it might be a good idea to explain the rather curious layout of Journal pages, the logic of which is lost in the mists of time but makes far more sense in the printed copy. The 'advertising' pages (numbered A2 to A40) and 'editorial' pages (numbered 1 to 40) are produced as two separate sections, then put together to go the printer, with the advertising section wrapped around the editorial. This means there are 20 pages of advertisements for local firms and services before you get to the 'Contents' page for The Journal followed by the articles, news, stories and other content that make up the editorial section. Finally, there are another 20 pages of advertisements – an index of all the advertisers is on page A38.

Apart from the difficulties connected with distribution, the main impact of Covid on the editorial section of The Journal has been the cancellation of all the events and meetings of local clubs and societies that usually make up a huge part of the content. As a result, many of our usual contributors are missing completely from this issue. To make up for this we have double helpings from the Buntingford Writers' Group and also from the Hundred Parishes Society, who reliably send me something every month but because they always range far wider than the 'Buntingford and Villages' area the piece is always the first to be cut when I don't have enough room! Of the schools, Jo Gant, Headteacher at Edwinstree, has kindly found time to report on how they are coping with – and learning from – lockdown. Brian Thompson of the Local History Group introduces Sir Frederick Abbott, another once prominent but now obscure figure with a Buntingford connection. Chris Kell reports on the very worthy winners of the Unsung Hero Awards for 2020. And Vyse gives us his inimitable take on the subject that's had everyone talking – the bike rack on Church Street! In amongst his news of what's going on at our County and District Councils, Jeff Jones reveals what the bike rack's fate will be.

Christine Noble

**Editorial copy deadline for the April 2021 Journal
is Saturday 13th March 2021**

Editorial submissions: Christine Noble – 01763 273095
68 Hare Street Road, Buntingford SG9 9HN
email: Journal@buntingfordcivic.org.uk

Advertising enquiries: Keith Edwards – 01763 272032
email: Advertising@buntingfordcivic.org.uk

**The views expressed in the letters, emails and articles in the
Buntingford Journal are not necessarily those of the editor.**



Buntingford Civic Society

(Reg. Charity No. 1014873)

www.buntingfordcivic.org.uk



I do hope that this online version of the Journal finds you all well and coping as best you can with the latest lockdown.

I have found it so much more difficult this time – the weather during the first lockdown was glorious and made the ‘stay at home’ rules so much easier to deal with. It seems to have been raining virtually non-stop since about October which has hardly helped.

Whatever your views on how the Government has handled the pandemic, they must be congratulated on the vaccine rollout – it has been truly inspiring and hopefully gives us the best way out of lockdown.

Thankfully the number of cases of the virus in Buntingford have come down dramatically from a very serious peak in mid-January when we were experiencing case-per-100,000 levels amongst the highest in Hertfordshire.

It is still so difficult to make any long-term arrangements. We were due to hold the Buntingford Carnival this coming June, but although Covid progress is being made it is difficult to see how any ‘mass’ gatherings like the Carnival will be permitted. The planned Summer Arts Festival has already been put back to 2022 and there are still doubts if the Classic Car Show will be allowed.

One meeting which will happen this year because we can do it on Zoom is the Civic Society’s A.G.M. This was cancelled last year because we were in the thick of the first lockdown and had not then mastered doing things digitally. I’m not sure we’ve mastered it now, but we are going to give it a go! We are keeping it simple and there will not be a visiting speaker, but all the other usual A.G.M. business will be dealt with. If you would like to join us on Zoom, please make a note of the date which is **Tuesday 20th April, from 7pm**. There will be more information on local social media sites nearer the time, and also, of course, in the April Journal and on the Civic Society’s own website.



Apologies for the ‘downbeat’ nature of my article this month – at least Spring should be with us soon and I always find that time of year uplifting. So best wishes to you all, keep well, stick to the rules and hopefully we will soon be in a better place.

Graham Bonner, Chairman Buntingford Civic Society
graham_bonner123@yahoo.co.uk

Buntingford Civic Society was established in 1972 with the aim of improving the fabric of the Town. It has led or been involved in many restoration and enhancement projects and in planning, communication and financial support to improve aspects of life in Buntingford. **Annual household membership is just £10** and includes delivery of the Buntingford Journal (10 issues a year) to your door. If you would like to join Buntingford Civic Society, an application form is available on the website at www.buntingfordcivic.org.uk. Or you can email the Society’s Membership Secretary, Peter Hay, at membership@buntingfordcivic.org.uk.



Well, let's start with some good news! Last November the Town Council unanimously voted in favour of adopting a town-wide maximum 20mph speed limit for the whole of Buntingford. Apparently, a letter has been drafted to Herts Highways making them aware of of the Town Council's decision. Whilst we wait for news of further developments, I thought it would be an idea to explain the difference between Wide-Area 20mph schemes and 20mph Zones and why a wide-area approach to 20mph speed limits is much more effective.

 <p>20mph Speed Limits Schemes that involve a default 20mph speed limit with signs and road markings and no traffic calming (eg speed bumps), typically used over a wide area on roads where people mix with traffic</p>	 <p>20mph Zones These schemes include traffic calming (eg speed bumps), are self-enforcing and typically used over a small area</p>
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COST: Sign-only schemes are 7 times more cost effective than installing speed bumps. For the same cost as installing speed bumps on just one road, a whole community can have a sign-only scheme including education and community feedback.

POLLUTION LEVELS: Wide-area speed 20mph limits see a reduction in noise pollution equivalent to halving noise levels compared to 30mph. Speed bumps increase noise and air pollution due to increased braking and acceleration of vehicles. In fact, The National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE) advise the removal of speed bumps in 20mph zones for smoother driving and to improve air quality.

SPEED LIMITERS: From 2022 all new models of car (and all new cars from 2023) are required by law to be fitted with speed limiters. Cars fitted with limiters will act as pacer vehicles - keeping more traffic within the speed limit. Over time, speed bumps will no longer be required to control the speed of traffic and become obsolete.

SPEED BUMPS ARE UNPOPULAR: They are hard on spines and so unpopular with drivers with back problems. As well as being costly, they are also time-consuming to install and because of this are generally only used over small areas. This means many communities end up with a confusing patchwork of different speed limits and many vulnerable road users are still left unprotected on faster roads.

In December 2020, Herts County Council voted against the introduction of a county-wide, default 20mph speed limit. Their current policy favours expensive 20mph zones, which only benefit a few people. With so many communities across Herts blighted by speeding drivers (demonstrated by the rapidly growing support for our 20's Plenty Campaign) and the World Health Organisation calling for a global 20mph speed limit where people and motor vehicles mix, perhaps it is time for a rethink on the part of Herts County Council?



JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN

Join Mailing List/Contact: buntingford@20splentyforus.org.uk
 Facebook: @20's Plenty for Buntingford
 Instagram: 20splentybuntingford
 Twitter: @20Buntingford
www.20splentyforherts.org



43 High Street
Buntingford
Hertfordshire
SG9 9AD

Tel: 01763 788222

BIG ENOUGH TO OFFER THE WORLD, SMALL ENOUGH TO CARE buntingford@travel-stop.co.uk

A throw-away comment by a government minister has caused ripples across the travel industry, both in the UK and overseas. You will no doubt be familiar with the statement I am referring to, that of Grant Shapps who said: *“please don’t go ahead and book holidays for something, which, at this stage, is illegal to actually go and do, whether it’s here or abroad”*. It has been a front-page story and has been covered on all news cycles ever since. Unfortunately, what is lacking from much of the coverage is commonsensical clarity. Confusion and hearsay not only cloud the facts but also have far-reaching ramifications for all organisations within tourism, many of which have been surviving on next-to-no income since the pandemic began.

Below I would like to provide answers to two of the most pressing questions.

Can I book a holiday?

Of course you can. The UK is currently in lockdown and restrictions are in place covering social interaction, education, work and travel. International travel is currently illegal, unless for a permitted reason and holiday travel is not one of those. Many destination countries have also imposed their own restrictions, and some have closed their borders to non-residents. Our overseas partners are, like the UK, battenning down their countries in order to minimise infections so that they can open for the summer season.

No-one is suggesting that you book a holiday in the UK or abroad for imminent travel. What is permitted, however, is to book a holiday for the coming summer and winter season and beyond. Holidays for 2021, 2022 and 2023 (for selected destinations) are on sale. We all deserve something to look forward to and to want to enjoy life is not illegal. Having had a vaccination to protect us from the virus we are also all entitled to start living again and, by May of this year, 70% of the UK population will have been vaccinated.

When do you think that overseas travel may resume?

As with holidays in the UK, there is no definite start date for overseas travel. Many hurdles must be overcome before this day, but it is clear that steps are being taken to reduce rates of infection, to mitigate the spread of the virus and to introduce protocols to safeguard the wellbeing of citizens and visitors so that holidays can commence when safe to do so.

Much will change between now and spring – vaccinations will have been administered, testing mechanisms enhanced and global learnings shared. For this reason, we believe that destinations will start reopening for leisure travellers in May, with the number of countries open to us increasing throughout the summer months.

At Travel Stop, we will be closely monitoring the situation. We promise to provide honest advice backed up by an in-depth destination knowledge and a human voice at the end of the phone. And whilst the Buntingford shop is not open at present, business is as usual via telephone and email. Once restrictions ease, and as soon as we are able to do so, business will resume initially on an appointment basis.

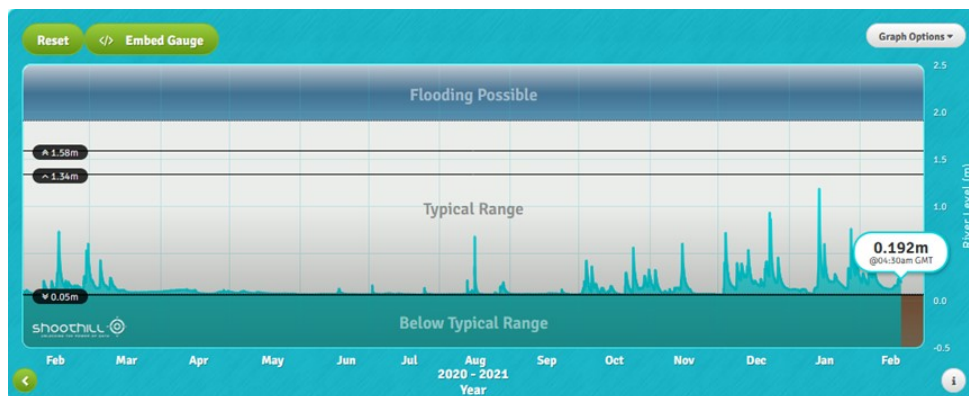


The FORQ executive were sorry that we had to postpone our online public meeting in January but are delighted to announce that this has been rearranged and will now be held on **Wednesday 17th March** at 7.30pm. Please visit the FORQ website to sign up to attend,

We were very disappointed to see that the debate on the Private Member's Bill (Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill) put forward by the Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP (head of Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee) was postponed. There is a chance that it will be rescheduled when the House returns to normal business, but it is unlikely that there will be sufficient parliamentary time to allow it to clear both Houses before the current parliamentary session ends.

We were pleased, however, to see the DEFRA announcement, on January 22nd, that the Storm Overflow Taskforce has agreed to set a long-term goal to eliminate harm from storm overflows. Following recommendations from the Taskforce, water companies will also increase transparency around when and how storm overflows are used.

With all the rain we've been having it has been interesting to see the levels of the Rib and the Quin going up and down in response. The depth of both rivers is monitored by the Environment Agency, the Rib at Buntingford and Wadesmill, and the Quin at Braughing. The data generated is published in graph form, which can be found at <https://www.gaugemap.co.uk/>. For the vast majority of the time the depths barely register. Of course, levels rise in times of heavy rainfall when road and field run-off increase the river flow. The graph below shows how the river level in Buntingford has varied in the last year.



The Chalk Aquifer Alliance have also been continuing with their series of talks. In December Kate Heppell and Paul Jennings talked about ChessWatch, a co-designed observatory for the River Chess which flows through Buckinghamshire and joins the River Colne at Rickmansworth in west Hertfordshire. February's lecture was by Jo Bradley, who looked at what road runoff is doing to our rivers and streams. You can catch up with all the talks via the Chalk Aquifer Alliance website.

Useful Links:

- <https://friendsoftherib.wordpress.com/blog/>
- <https://chalkaquiferalliance.wordpress.com/events/>

Pauline Ayres, Communications FORQ

The Unsung Hero Awards, the Buntingford Food Bank and tins of meat

The Unsung Hero Awards began in Buntingford in 2019, initiated by Toby Archer of The Cheeseplate and supported by Buntingford Town Council, Buntingford Civic Society and Buntingford Chamber of Commerce. These are annual awards given to local people, one to someone over 20 and another for someone under 20 years old, who have gone 'above



Karen Lavers and daughter Bronwyn Evans, winners of the Buntingford Unsung Hero Awards for 2020, flanked by Graham Bonner of the Town Council and Civic Society (left) and Buntingford Town Mayor Graham Waite (right).
Below: the moment of the individual, socially distanced, presentations.
Photos by Jeff Jones.



and beyond' in doing something for their community. An Unsung Hero award can be made for a one-off event or for a dedicated commitment over a period of time.

In November last year, the Awards for 2020 went to Karen Lavers and her daughter Bronwyn Evans for running the Buntingford Food Bank.

Don't get me started on the collective disgrace that make Food Banks a necessity in one of the richest countries in the world. But as individual heroism goes, look no further than Karen Lavers and her daughter. They started helping out at the Food Bank in Royston and noticed that people from Buntingford had to travel there. Karen set up the Buntingford Food Bank herself 5 years ago, starting by using her own home as a stock room. Bronwyn, 12, is a great organiser and so she has the job of keeping records of what's in store and who needs what, as well as helping with the packing and deliveries.

Yes, deliveries – because since March 2020 Karen has been packing her own car with the goods she's received and taking them round to people's homes. In November, she and Bronwyn delivered 60 food boxes: the previous year it was just 15. Unlike the Royston Food Bank, the Buntingford Food Bank is not part of the Trussell Trust which provides help and resources to Food Banks across the country. Whilst this means that there are fewer people to help her, it gives Karen the freedom to accept requests from people who are not referred by a health visitor, GP, school or other public service, and to do personal deliveries instead of just shutting down during Covid.

I asked Karen who her customers were: the answer is that any of us can find ourselves desperate for food and toiletries. There are people in their 20s and people over 60; families and single people; those on long-term Universal Credit and others suddenly unemployed; those with long-term health issues, and those who have been made homeless. Did you know that if you are hospitalised whilst you are on Universal Credit, your benefits stop and you have to reapply for money when you return home? That can mean a 5-week wait with no food in the cupboard.

Karen and Bronwyn are supported by her family, Buntingford Town Council, local Schools and Churches, and by the Co-operative Food Store and its customers. Sainsbury's would like to help, but can only support registered charities. The Co-op has no such restrictions and it is their Food Bank box which provides most of the food and toiletries. In the last year, Karen has been given premises by Steve Lawson-Smith whose local business helps people move goods abroad when they emigrate. Well done, Steve.

I asked Karen what she would do with a windfall of thousands of pounds. She said that she would set up a furniture recycling store in Buntingford so that she could help people with all the offers of TVs, computers, beds etc.

And finally, what would persuade a 40-year-long-vegetarian (i.e. me) to buy a tin of meat? The answer is: The Buntingford Food Bank.

I have a deep concern for the way we treat animals and a deep concern for humanity. Sometimes you have to make a judgment call. As I think myself lucky that I do not currently need a Food Bank myself, if others are desperate for food I should give them what they ask for and not what I would like to give them. Karen was clear that the items that they most need at the Food Bank are tinned meat and toothpaste. From now on I will be adding a tin of meat or fish to my groceries at the Co-op (well done Co-operative Stores for your community efforts) and a tube of toothpaste, and putting them in the Food Bank box.

You could do the same.

Chris Kell

The Ash and Quin Valleys Group

Living God's Love

Rev Julie Gawthrope – 01920 823531

Services for March & Easter 2021

St Mary the Virgin



ST. MARY'S
FURNEUX
PELHAM

St. Mary's
Stocking
Pelham

St Mary's, Braughing

Wed 3 rd	9.30am	Holy Communion (said)
Sun 7 th	11.15am	All Age Holy Communion
Wed 10 th	9.30am	Holy Communion (said)
Sun 14 th	10.00am	All Age Morning Worship – Mothering Sunday
Wed 17 th	9.30am	Holy Communion (said)
Sun 21 st	11.15am	Holy Communion
Wed 24 th	9.30am	Holy Communion (said)
Sun 28 th	10.30am	Benefice Palm Sunday Procession and Morning Worship
Mon 29 th	7.30pm	Holy Week Compline on Zoom
Tues 30 th	7.30pm	Holy Week Compline on Zoom
Wed 31 st	9.30am	Holy Communion (said)
Thur 1 st Apr	8.00pm	Maundy Thursday Benefice Holy Communion on Zoom
Fri 2 nd Apr	2.00pm	Good Friday Benefice Stations of the Cross on Zoom
Sun 4 th Apr	11.15am	Easter Day Family Communion Celebration

St Mary's, Furneux Pelham

Sun 7 th	9.30am	BCP Holy Communion
Sun 14 th	11.15am	Holy Communion
Sun 21 st	9.30am	Café Church
Sun 28 th	10.30am	Benefice Service at Braughing
Sun 4 th Apr	9.30am	Easter Day Family Communion Celebration

St Mary's, Stocking Pelham

Next Service in May



United Benefice of Aspenden, Buntingford and Westmill

Sadly, this month it was not possible to bring you news of services and Zoom events at the three churches of St Mary's Aspenden, St Peter's Buntingford and St Mary the Virgin Westmill.

For information please go to the Benefice website at: unitedbenefice.org.uk

Or contact Nina at the Benefice Office (email: admin@unitedbenefice.org.uk)
or call **07484 945027** or **01763 271552**

Or follow them on Facebook @UnitedBeneficeABW,
Twitter @BeneficeUnited, or Instagram @UnitedBenefice



Christ Church

Baldock Road, Buntingford SG9 9AA

Minister: Rev. Sue Fender

Secretary: Peter Godbert
buntingford.urc@talktalk.net
Tel: 01763 281359

We are pleased to advise that our period of vacancy will soon be over and a new Minister for our linked pastorate, including Buntingford, Great Chishill, Melbourn, Bassingbourn and Fowlmere, is expected to be inducted in June. Details of the induction will be communicated in due course.

Christ Church will begin worshipping via Zoom from March 7th and hope to continue this weekly even after we are allowed to worship again in person. Details of services can be found on our website at [**Services – Christ Church \(buntingfordurc.org.uk\)**](http://Services – Christ Church (buntingfordurc.org.uk)) and these will be updated regularly. The Zoom services will be accessible via phone or online. If you would like to attend please contact the church secretary for details of each service.

Website: www.buntingfordurc.org.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/URCBuntingford

BUNTINGFORD GARDENERS' CLUB

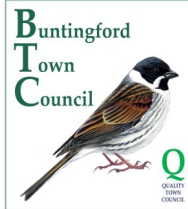
Our gardens are waking up after a cold and wet winter. Spring is just around the corner, so this will be a busy time for most gardeners.

Not much has happened in the club, which hasn't met since March last year. The committee met on Zoom, everyone was very well-behaved, and it was agreed that the AGM, due in March, should be postponed a year and the membership of the club would continue until then. It is hoped that we may be in a position to start up hall meetings again by the autumn. A Zoom session was held for members to attend, just for a chat, and it was great to see some familiar faces once again. The session was so successful we will be doing it again in March. Meanwhile, members have been keeping busy, especially our Treasurer Sue Miller who has been making lots of lovely chutney and jam.

Gardening jobs for this month: prepare your seed beds for vegetables; chit potatoes; prune wisteria; prune winter flowering shrubs when finished flowering; divide and plant snowdrops when finished flowering.

Stay warm and safe.

Lesley Lowers, Club Secretary



BUNTINGFORD TOWN COUNCIL

A QUALITY TOWN COUNCIL

During lockdown the Council offices are closed to the public except by appointment. The Community Centre is also closed. We are still at the end of a phone or on email, so please contact us if you need us for anything.

Despite restrictions Graham Bonner and his team worked hard to make sure the town still had Christmas lights, which went some way to brightening things up for people. Grateful thanks to Graham for his hard work.

Until very recently, the COVID rates in Buntingford have remained very high. For this reason the Council took the decision to close the town's playgrounds. This situation will be reviewed in late February and hopefully the playgrounds will be open again very shortly.

Please look out for information on the green waste charge to be implemented by East Herts Council from April. This will be for brown bin collections, other waste will be collected as normal.

We are receiving more and more complaints about dog fouling in the town. Please pick up after your dogs, free dog bags are available at the Manor House and also from the dispensers around the town.

If after lockdown you feel the need to work away from the house then we have an empty office at the Manor House, on the 2nd floor. This will accommodate a small business. If you are interested in leasing an office please give us a call.

Jill Jones MILCM Cert HE, Town Clerk

**Office hours: Monday–Thursday 10am–4pm; closed Friday.
The Manor House, High Street, Buntingford SG9 9AB**

(The offices are currently closed due to lockdown, except by appointment.)

Tel: 01763 272222 email: clerk@buntingford-tc.gov.uk

Twitter: [@buntingfordtc](https://twitter.com/buntingfordtc) Facebook.com/BuntingfordTC

Website: www.buntingford-tc.gov.uk

In line with GDPR Regulations, the Town Council has published a number of Privacy Notices. These can be viewed on the Town Council website.

Town Council meetings for March 2021

Thurs 4 th March	7:00pm – Amenities Committee
Thurs 11 th March	7:00pm – Resources Committee
Thurs 25 th March	7:00pm – Full Council

All meetings will be held remotely, details for observing the meetings are published on the agenda and can also be obtained from the Clerk's office.

News from Your District and County Councillor, Jeff Jones

London Road Cycle & Pedestrian Improvements

Hertfordshire County Council has been awarded £6.4million by the Department for Transport as part of the Governments Active Travel Fund. The grant will be used to create safer, easier to use spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. By increasing walking and cycling, it will improve health, air quality, road safety, the local economy and road congestion.



There have been 11 sites identified across Hertfordshire, one of which is a London Road scheme. This includes a shared cycle and pedestrian route, new and improved crossing points, improvements to junctions, potential speed limit reduction and better access to the High Street and schools.

HCC will need to prioritise schemes which will be dependent on local support and funds available, so I would urge everyone to have their say on the proposals and respond to the consultation online at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/transport-and-highways/active-travel-fund.aspx>

Green Waste Charge

East Herts Council has decided to introduce a charge for your brown bin collection from 1st April 2021.

The Council's budget has been seriously affected by additional Covid related expenditure and unfortunately can no longer afford to subsidise the collection of this additional waste. Not all properties in East Herts require a garden waste collection service as they do not have a garden. Introducing a charge is considered fair as the service will only be paid for by those households that choose to use it. Many District or Borough Councils in Hertfordshire have already introduced this charge. The new charge will be an opt-in service and residents who do not want to pay the additional charge are encouraged to home compost or take your green waste to a Household Waste Recycling Centre. A limited amount of green waste will be allowed in your black bin that goes to landfill.

You will receive a leaflet explaining the new charge for green waste collection and how to pay and register on-line. The cost will be £49pa and an early bird offer is available at £45 for direct debit bookings made up to 22nd March. A sticker will be provided to identify that your bin has been paid for and operatives will also have an electronic system confirming this. Those not requiring the service are encouraged to keep their existing brown bin for storage use in your garden, or at a later stage the bin will be collected from you.

For more information and to opt-in to the brown bin Green Waste service, please visit:

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/bins-waste-recycling/garden-waste-service>

Unfortunately it is not currently possible to pay by cash or cheque. Officers are currently looking at ways that it may be possible to register for the service if you are unable to have on-line access.

Cycle Rack

The two-tier cycle rack system located at Church St that has created so much discussion is to be relocated to Freman College. The school is keen to accept the rack to provide secure cycle storage for staff and students and encourage sustainable travel.



A new 'streetpod' rack (right) will be put in its place in Church St that hopefully will be considered more suitable for this location. The new 10 cycle rack is the only rack with 'secure by design' accreditation. The front wheel fits securely in the rack and with one locking point secures the whole cycle.

Hertfordshire's COVID-19 Book of Remembrance

The Lord Lieutenant for Hertfordshire, Robert Voss, has opened an electronic **COVID-19 Book of Remembrance** for the county on his website. He says:

"In due course, when the dangers associated with the pandemic have been overcome and the restrictions have been lifted, I will lead remembrance services and memorial events in Hertfordshire to honour the memories of those who died while the restrictions were in place. Until then however I think many might find it helpful publicly to record and acknowledge the loss of loved ones during the restrictions, and I have set up a virtual Book of Remembrance to enable people to do this."

County Council Elections 6th May 2021

I am very pleased to confirm that I have been selected once again as the Conservative candidate for the upcoming County Council Elections on 6th May. This will be an election like no other as I am sure there will still be some form of Covid restrictions in place. Postal voting will be very much encouraged and I will be happy to send you the appropriate postal ballot vote form if required. Please let me know and I will post it to you. With the current Covid restrictions in place I am unable to leaflet drop, unless by post, or personally call on you. I am hoping there may be less restrictions nearer the election to enable me to discuss with you any issues you may have. If you would like me to call you to discuss please let me know.

The election will also include voting for our Police and Crime Commissioner. The current PCC is David Lloyd and he is once again standing. The PCC elections were due last May but were postponed until this year due to Covid.

Councillor Advice

I receive many requests for advice and help on District or County Council matters. If you have any concerns that you need assistance with, I am always available on the contact details below. Stay safe.

Cllr Jeff Jones
District and County Councillor, Buntingford Ward
07836 232963 / Jeff.jones@hertfordshire.gov.uk



Voting Safely at the 2021 Local Elections

On Thursday 6th May residents in East Herts will go to the polls to have their say on who represents them at Hertfordshire County Council and who will be the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner, as well as several town by-elections. While the elections are not until May, plans are already being made to help you stay safe while casting your vote. There are a number of ways to have your say in the elections in May – you can vote in a polling station, by post, or by appointing someone you trust to vote on your behalf, which is known as a proxy vote.

Richard Cassidy, Electoral Registration Officer for East Herts District Council, said: “We’re thinking about these elections now so that, however you choose to cast your vote in May, you can do so safely. We’re putting arrangements in place to help you stay safe at the polling station; you can expect many of the measures you’ve become used to in shops and banks over recent months, such as hand sanitiser, floor markings and face masks. But you also have the option to apply to vote by post or by proxy.”

Ailsa Irvine, Director of Electoral Administration and Guidance at the Electoral Commission, said: “The choice on how to vote at next May’s elections is yours – you can have your say in person, by post or by proxy. If you’re thinking about voting by post, you can apply now. This will make sure your application is processed early, and your postal vote can be sent to you more quickly. It’s easy to apply and you can find out how by visiting the Electoral Commission website.

“You need to be registered in order to vote – the easiest way to register is online at: www.eastherts.gov.uk/elections-voting/how-where-vote.”

Residents can visit the FAQ page on the East Herts website to find out more about the elections on 6th May 2021 – <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/electionfaq>. The page will be updated with new information as it becomes available. Any residents who have questions can also contact the local elections team at electors@eastherts.gov.uk

East Herts launches latest discretionary business grant scheme

From Monday 1st March East Herts Council will be accepting applications for the latest discretionary grant scheme to help businesses across the district during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG Discretionary) scheme is primarily aimed at businesses which were not mandated to close during the lockdowns and tier restriction periods, but suffered despite being able to remain open. It is also available to businesses which were mandated to close but are not liable for business rates. All applicants must confirm that they have lost at least 20% of their turnover since January 2021, compared with the same period the previous year.

The grants will range from £1,000 to £6,000 and more information will be available on the council’s website in due course. Applications for the grants must be made by midnight on Wednesday 31st March and once the applications have been received the council will review them.

Cllr Geoff Williamson, Executive Member for Finance, said: “If you think your business is eligible then please apply before the closing date on Wednesday 31st March. We will process payments to businesses that qualify as quickly as possible and would also encourage people in East Herts to spread the word and share the details of the scheme with those businesses they are aware of that might be eligible for support.”



Call for projects that strengthen the community – grants of up to £8,000 will be available

East Herts Council is looking to support projects that strengthen the community and lead to the improved health and wellbeing of residents. Information on eligibility for this support is available on the East Herts Council website under **Funding for Community Organisations**. Details of the Council's priorities for 2021/22 and an amended application form will also be posted soon. It is anticipated that this next funding round will open mid March with a deadline in early May. Past projects which have secured funding include a community garden, training for volunteers, a Parkinsons Support Group, arts and crafts outreach, expansion of a lunch club, Men's Shed projects, play and sports development projects, and improvements to a bowls club and village hall.

If you think your project could be eligible and want to apply for funding, please contact Grants Manager Claire Pullen on claire.pullen@eastherts.gov.uk before submitting your application.

The Race (or a reminder of that New Year resolution!)

Our family home was a small maisonette with barely enough room for two children, mum and dad, and occasionally a pet. What we did have though was a long hallway which ran along one side of our sitting room and opened out into a larger area from which the remaining rooms were accessed. For me this corridor was my training area, that is until we were old enough for bikes and then it became their parking place.

My dad had always had a love of sport and it was no surprise that he brought me up learning about football, cricket and rugby. He was still playing cricket at that time, in his late 30s, and as a family it became a regular outing to accompany him to the match. I had a small cricket bat in my hands before I was out of short trousers and a selection of balls to smash with it.

Our hallway therefore was the natural venue for cricket practise; Dad at the front door end as a bowler and me wielding the willow in the larger space at the other end. Even on my own I would be practising my shots with imaginary bowlers or perhaps bouncing one of my tennis balls off the walls to hone my catching skills.

In the winter the games were swapped and a football was heard being thumped off the walls and linoleum floor. This led to regular calls from the sitting room to pack it in as they tried to watch the television. At that age I must have been a real pain in the backside. Perhaps a games console or laptop wouldn't have been quite so scowled at in my days as a child.

My enthusiasm for sport was bolstered by our home's location which was within just 30 yards of a recreation ground. Here, when the weather permitted, I was plying my trade as a future sports star with various other boys from the area. It was a common sight to see my mum at the entry gates calling or waving to me to come home when my lunch or tea was ready.

Dad fully encouraged me to play sport; perhaps it was to justify his absences at the weekends to play cricket, while mum was left at home with my younger sister. I never became aware of any sign of marital rift in this respect, which was probably because thousands of men like dad had fought so hard in the war for this kind of liberty.

As the cricket season approached dad would amuse us by trying to get in shape. This usually involved him jogging up and down the hallway, doing a few squat thrusts or press ups and trying, usually in vain, to touch his toes. He was only about five feet seven tall and carried a bit of a belly on him, or so I as a skinny kid used to think. He did like a pint or three, so this pre-season preparation was quite necessary. I recall that I used to goad him about how fat he was as my head bounced off his beer gut. One day, however, I went too far with my tormenting and I challenged him to a race to prove how unfit he was. At first he laughed this off and said I would stand no chance, which I took as him not being up for it. Undeterred I pressed on and said we should go to the park on Sunday morning when there is no one around. To my surprise he accepted the challenge.

My dad was an accountant and sat at a desk all day. He had a walk to work of no more than 100 yards. He consumed pints of beer on any and every occasion as well as liking a good fry-up before wolfing back a roast dinner on a Sunday afternoon. Where was the difficulty for a sprightly eight year old?

That morning came and dad popped into my bedroom to see if I was still happy to go through with the race. In truth I hadn't thought too much more about it, believing that probably he would find an excuse to get out of the challenge. But no, he was ready, but not changed. I asked him if he was going to wear something other than his day clothes, but he said he wouldn't bother. Meanwhile I prepared in my soccer shorts and tee shirt and we headed off to the park.

All the signs that dad was not taking this too seriously led me to think that he would probably just let me run like a mad thing as he stood down after a few paces. Then he suggested the course for the race, which I hadn't previously considered. What he proposed was that we would run across the field over two widths of football pitches and then back again, probably about 250 yards.

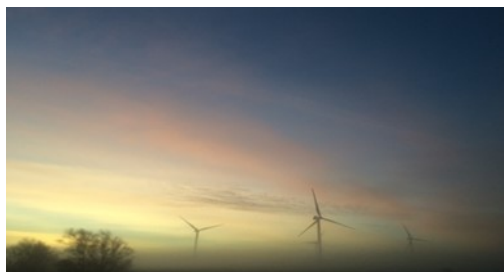
This didn't seem an issue for me as one who spent about five hours a day playing sport on this field. So as my sister started us off with a countdown I was soon running hell for leather building up a substantial lead before even half of the first lap. As I approached the fence on the far side of the second pitch my pace was slowing. I had gone off too quickly. At the turn I could see dad jogging along at an even pace, gradually getting closer.

The return leg was something I hadn't anticipated and I soon found that I had nothing left in the tank. Perhaps it was the tension in my running but I was beginning to flail my arms thinking that might spur me on. All the time dad was just controlling his pace, taking longer strides of course but never seeming to sprint. He was soon at my side and he turned to smile at me in a form of mockery. With 40 yards still to go he passed me comfortably and was greeted with a hug by my sister at the finish line.

I almost gave up, straining to run, a stitch in my belly and embarrassment in my head. I felt foolish and realised that I had been badly duped by the length of the race which I had overlooked when the challenge was laid down.

We gathered at the finish, me doubled up gasping for breath, my dad being hugged like a hero by my sister. I straightened up and looked towards the park gates. There was my mum, this time not beckoning me in for breakfast, rather checking on us all to see if we had survived.

David Bantick, Buntingford Writers' Group



A new dawn for Buntingford in Transition

Buntingford ACTION
on Climate Change
and
Sustainability

WHAT DO YOU WANT
BUNTINGFORD
TO LOOK LIKE IN
2050?



Buntingford in Transition has begun 2021 by looking to the future. Since our formation back in November 2014, we have seen:

- the agreement of 193 UN Member Governments to the Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015;
- the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report in 2018, which told us that countries of the world only had 12 years to limit global warming to a rise of 1.5°C to avoid the worst effects of climate change;
- the UK Parliament declaration of a Climate Emergency in May 2019, committing the UK to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050;
- Hertfordshire County Council doing the same thing in July of that year;
- East Herts District Council passing a motion committing to net zero carbon emissions by 2030; – and,
- climate change coming to the forefront of the public's attention through the efforts of Greta Thunberg's *School Strike 4 Climate* initiative and *Extinction Rebellion* becoming a globally recognised climate protest movement.

Whilst, here in Buntingford, we feel it is worthwhile acting on issues such as reducing single-use plastic, managing the community garden, hosting apple-pressing events and public awareness meetings on topics such as food waste, we believe that the urgency to act on climate change requires us to do more – much more, especially in the build-up to the Climate Summit in Glasgow in November (COP26). We are, as the Summit organisers say, entering the “most consequential decade in human history”: the decisions we take in this decade will impact not just how Buntingford looks in 2050, but the nature of the lives that our children and descendants are able to lead in the future.

We have a great and recently expanded community here in Buntingford. We have links from people in our town around the world. If we are to “Think Globally and Act Locally” we must lead by example with more local ACTIONS that will help to preserve our environment and keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

First step: we decided to change our name. Buntingford in Transition came out of the Transition Towns movement (<https://transitionnetwork.org>) and we still very much support its ethos. However, it doesn't really capture what we are aiming for. (*Some people felt that it was something to do with the LGBTQ movement!*) So we have chosen a new name that more accurately reflects our ambition:

Buntingford Action on Climate Change and Sustainability (BACCS)

We will have an official online launch on 25th April with a global online event followed by a local meeting shortly thereafter. Details to follow in the next edition of the Buntingford Journal. We would welcome new members in the lead-up to this launch, so if you are one who “Thinks Globally” – and wants to ACT locally to make our world a cleaner, greener place to live, please contact us at: baccs@tutanota.com

David, Rosey and Madela



Royston, Buntingford & South Cambridgeshire

Supporting parents when it matters
because childhood can't wait

Registered Charity No. 1105385

Do you shop online?

If you do, did you know you could be supporting Home-Start, and many other good causes, by using EasyFundraising?

EasyFundraising is a free-to-use tool that collects charity donations. Every time you make a purchase through one of the EasyFundraising partners, a small donation is made to your chosen charity.

There are 100s of retailers signed up to EasyFundraising that you can shop with, from John Lewis, Argos and ScrewFix to the Travelodge, TrainLine and Virgin Atlantic.

You can use EasyFundraising for insurance and phone contracts; for computers and fridges; for books and toys and clothes. You can even use it when purchasing desks, chairs and PPE, ready for when the office reopens!

It really is easy to use, as well: you simply sign up for a free account, and then use the EasyFundraising website to search for the things you want to buy. If you're feeling really high-tech, it comes with a little widget in your browser and your donations will be collected automatically. It's almost like fundraising magic!

And the best part is that it doesn't cost you a penny! The donations come to Home-Start from the retailers, so you can shop with an easy conscience, knowing that you're also helping a good cause.

If you'd like to know more about EasyFundraising and how you can use it to help support Home-Start, take a look at their website: easyfundraising.org.uk or get in touch with us at the Home-Start office at admin@hsrsc.org.uk

Thank you so much for your support.

If you'd like to know more about Home-Start, the work that we do and our fundraising campaigns, please take a look at our website www.hsrsc.org.uk, send us an email admin@hsrsc.org.uk or give us a call on **01763 262 262**

Prominent Buntingford People Sir Frederick Abbott CB

Sir Frederick Abbott was born on 13th June 1806 at Little Court in Buntingford. He was the second son of Henry Alexius Abbott, a retired Calcutta merchant, and his wife Margaret, the daughter of William Welsh of Edinburgh. Just how and why Frederick came to be born in Buntingford is not clear and by a strange coincidence Little Court was also the house where Dr John Addenbrooke had died some 90 years earlier. At the time of Frederick's birth the house was owned by a solicitor, Mt Spurrier, who is said to have employed Henry Repton, the famous landscape gardener, to advise on the layout of the estate. So unusually both Addenbrooke and the Abbott family were short-term tenants. Intriguingly, when Henry and Margaret left Calcutta for England they settled in Blackheath, not in Hertfordshire, so it is not clear how they came to arrive in Buntingford. Perhaps, therefore, before we consider the events of Frederick's life we should look more into the family background.



Frederick's father Henry Abbott was born on 16th October 1764 in Pera on the outskirts of Constantinople, of an extensive family in the region. His own father had died when he was ten years old and he and a brother were brought up by two of his uncles in Aleppo: his brother's guardian, John Abbott, was the British Consul while Henry's guardian, Robert Abbott, was a merchant and factor for the Levant company. While his brother was sent to England for his education, Henry was educated privately and in due course was apprenticed in his Uncle's business where he had to deal with correspondence in English, French and Italian as well as the accounts. Uncle John, the Consul, died in 1783 and Henry, who had already travelled extensively in the region, decided it was time to spread his wings. With Uncle Robert's support and letters of introduction (including to the Governor General Warren Hastings) he travelled in 1784 to Bengal where initially he was employed by the Government, subsequently reverting to business as a merchant trading across India, the Middle East and Turkey. In the early years of his life Henry kept an informative diary but it does not explain why he and his wife Margaret decided to leave for England, sailing in 1802/3 with their daughter, also called Margaret, who had been born in 1791. It was, of course, a time of war with France and India was not exempt from its impact. And it seems that settling in Blackheath, in a country that he had not visited before, left Henry no time to continue with his diary. At any rate there is no explanation for the family settling for a brief period in Buntingford, during which Frederick was born. Moreover Frederick's five brothers were all born either in London or in Blackheath itself.

The one factor which seems to have influenced the whole family and the future careers of all the brothers is the connection to the East. All of the Abbott brothers were educated at Addiscombe Military Seminary, shown here (on page 21) in a very early photograph. Founded in 1809, the British Military Seminary at Addiscombe, Surrey, near Croydon, trained young officers for the East India Company's private army in India. As such it was the sister institution to the East India Company's college in Hertfordshire, Haileybury. Initially the cadets were trained for the Engineer or Artillery arm of the service. Frederick attended Addiscombe from 1820 to 1822 and in 1823 was posted to India with the Bengal Engineers. Soon after his arrival he was involved in the First Anglo-Burmese war,

which lasted from 5th March 1824 to 24th February 1826. This was the first of three wars fought between the British and Burmese empires, primarily over control of North-East India. With a decisive British victory, control of Assam, Manipur, Cachar and Jaintia was obtained. This was the longest and most expensive war in British India history; 15,000 European and Indian soldiers died and it cost £5-10 million sterling which caused severe economic damage in British India and cost the East India Company its remaining privileges. The battle of Prome in November/December 1825 effectively ended the war, leading to the Burmese surrender and the imposition of a £1 million indemnity. Frederick was recorded as being distinguished in the battle and was wounded.

As a military engineer, Frederick served in various locations across the sub-continent, but the next event of significance was his marriage in 1835 to Frances Cox, the daughter of Lt. Colonel Cox of the Royal Artillery. It was her second marriage, Frances being the widow of Lt. Colonel Hubert de Burgh. In 1839 there was another outbreak of war, this time in Afghanistan. The First Anglo-Afghan war lasted from 1839 to 1842 and was chiefly the result of the diplomatic competition in the 19th century between Britain and Russia. Any advancement by Russia into Central Asia was viewed as a threat to India. The threat of any Russian invasion of India, it was felt, should be counteracted by bringing Afghanistan into the British sphere of influence. Accordingly, in December 1838 British and Indian troops invaded and by August 1839 had entered Kabul. The occupation lasted until 1840 when a lowering of Anglo-Russian tension made holding Afghanistan an expensive luxury. Control of the city was lost and the British and Indian forces, comprising 4,500 troops and 12,000 camp followers under the leadership of Major-General Elphinstone, withdrew. The conditions were desperate: snow, frozen ground and extreme cold. In the Koror-Kabul pass in the Hindu Kush they were ambushed and completely annihilated. Frederick, by now holding the office of Chief Engineer, was part of the army of retribution which was despatched to Kabul in 1842. His orders were to demolish the city's main bazaar in retaliation for the destruction of Major-General Elphinstone's force, an act which thereafter he deeply regretted.

In 1841 Frederick had been appointed superintendent engineer for the North-West provinces of Bengal but he was called back to action when the First Anglo-Sikh war broke out in 1845. Two major factions within the Punjab had been contending for power and influence and the British East India Company began increasing its military strength in the adjacent region. The lack of any strong leadership to control the Sikh army was

seen as a serious threat to the British territories along the Punjab border. It was also the last independent kingdom not under British influence, as well as the wealthiest. Diplomatic relations broke down and an East India Company army was sent to reinforce the military encampment at Ferozepore. The Sikh army responded by crossing the river Sutlej and the British, regarding this as a hostile move, declared war. In 1846 the battle of Sobraon effectively broke the Sikh army, and in the Treaty of Lahore the Sikhs surrendered valuable territory and were required to pay an indemnity of 15 million rupees. Following his



Would-be officers at the British Military Seminary at Addiscombe in Surrey

involvement in the war, including the final battle, Frederick was created a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB).

Frederick left India the following year and returned to England where in 1851 he became the Lieutenant-Governor of Addiscombe Seminary. In 1854 he was appointed a Knight Bachelor and in 1858 promoted to Major-General. The East India Company was wound up that same year and control of the Seminary passed to the Government. Frederick retained his position until 1860 when it was decided to close the establishment. In the meantime, however, in 1859 Frederick was appointed to serve on the Royal Commission on the Defence of the United Kingdom. There were serious concerns at the time that France could invade following a significant growth of the French battle fleet during the 1850s. It was felt that Britain's coastal defences were inadequate and the Commission was created to advise on the country's ability to defend itself. The Commission's report, which came out in February 1860, recommended a huge programme of fortifications, including coastal batteries and land forts. Not all the recommendations were accepted but construction of the batteries and forts was completed in 1880, by which time the French threat had disappeared. However, much of these defences still exist today, having served their time in two world wars. Frederick was asked to serve on various other Royal Commissions before he died at his home in Branksome Park, Poole, in 1892, his wife and daughter having predeceased him.

Sir Frederick Abbott was a typical man of his period and class, living as he did at the height of the British Empire. But while he may not be held in such high esteem today, he did write a book which has stood the test of time. Entitled "A Practical Treatise on Permanent Bridges for Indian Rivers" it has been reprinted and is still available today through Amazon.

Brian Thompson, Buntingford Local History Group

Buntingford Library

During the current lockdown situation, Buntingford Library is available for the free Government approved **Ready Reads service – 'We select you collect'**.

Library members can order books using an online form or by calling our customer centre on 0300 123 4049. You will be notified when your order is ready and available to collect from your selected library. The books are collected at the library entrance – you are expected to provide your own bag. Staff will remain socially distant and will be wearing face coverings during the collection process.

We will do our best to match our available books to specific subject requests, based on stock in our libraries. This will need to be on a first come, first served basis.

For further details of the service visit our website: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/other-library-services/ready-reads.aspx>

The Ready Reads services is proving very popular and we are pleased to be able to offer it to the library community in Buntingford at this time.

Library membership also enables access to our free e-library where members can read or listen to books from **BorrowBox**, the online eBook and eAudio library.

Anyone who does not already have library membership can join very easily online, simply visit our website for details. Up-to-date information and details of library opening times and can also be found on the website.



We are pleased to announce that Attend2Health has now moved to the old Barclays Bank building at 27 High Street, Buntingford. This building gives us so much more space, which is great, especially in the current climate.

Downstairs we have six treatment rooms (one is shown below) for our chiropractors, osteopaths, physiotherapists, podiatrists and massage, and coming soon a nutritionist, acupuncture and hypnotherapy. We also have a private GP doing health checks and Botox. Upstairs is a studio

(bottom photo) where we hope soon to be able to hold classes such as Pilates and yoga.

We want to thank the local community for all their support at this time. If you would like to book an appointment or free chat to see if we can help call **01763 878087**. Full PPE will be worn.

To take a 360-degree virtual tour of the whole clinic please visit: https://attend2.co.uk/attend2health_Walkthrough/





The Hundred Parishes Society

www.hundredparishes.org.uk

The **local pub** has long been a focal point of the community. Samuel Pepys in his diary described the pub as “the heart of England”. Beer was once much safer to drink than contaminated water.

Many of our local pubs are centuries old, built when most of the population were illiterate. They had distinctive names and simple signs to identify them. As early as 1393 Richard II required landlords to erect signs so that ale houses were clearly visible to his inspectors, who judged the quality of the ale. Nowadays, not all have signs but there are many interesting names.



The Saracen’s Head in Great Dunmow, opposite the market place, is a 16th-century coaching inn. A Saracen was an Arab Muslim who in the Middle Ages fought against Christians for control of The Holy Land.

The Blind Fiddler in Anstey (left) takes its name from the cautionary tale of George the blind fiddler who for a bet entered a tunnel said to run from a pit to the castle mound

a mile away. He was accompanied by his dog. A scream was heard, the dog reappeared singed from head to tail, but George was never seen again!

In Bartlow, The Three Hills dates from around 1800 AD and is named after the parish’s giant Roman burial mounds which also feature on the village sign.

The Sword Inn Hand in Westmill takes its name from the coat of arms of the Greg family who once lived in the parish and were generous benefactors. It has an unusual and distinctive new sign (right).

Let’s hope that we can soon all return to fully enjoying the hospitality of our local hosteleries. Each of those mentioned here can be found on one of the walks described on the Society’s website.



Our area has a good number of so-called “**Hertfordshire puddingstones**”. I am not convinced that Hertfordshire has any particular justification for claiming the puddingstone because examples can be found on both sides of the Essex/Hertfordshire county boundary. I recently acquired a copy of “Puddingstone Walks in Essex”, a neat little book that describes walking routes which in total pass more than 20 puddingstones or groups of puddingstones in the Essex part of the Hundred Parishes.

A puddingstone is a conglomerate of many small, rounded and colourful pebbles that appear to have been cemented together. Geologists explain that they were formed around 50 million years ago and were deposited in this area by a retreating glacier, possibly only 10,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age.

Some puddingstones lie where they were deposited, whilst others have been moved to more convenient locations and sometimes put to good use. In Brent Pelham (right) and in Arkesden (below)



they have been incorporated into the war memorials. Others in Arkesden are visible in the stream of Wicken Water beside the bridge.

Puddingstones have been used as building material within walls in Much Hadham and in Wendens Ambo (right), in the church tower at Great Hallingbury and in St Helen’s Chapel at Wicken Bonhunt.





A puddingstone in Standon (left) is proudly displayed almost as a work of sculpture, whilst in contrast this large puddingstone in Newport (below) seems to have been unceremoniously abandoned beside the approach road to the station.



Others stand in Tilty churchyard, by the pump at Ugley Green (left), in Saffron Walden Museum's grounds, by the Shell House in Hatfield Forest and beside the Yew Tree pub in Manuden.

No doubt there are many more – I would be pleased to hear of any I have missed. If you know of one please email me at hundredparishes@btinternet.com, if possible with a photo. Will we find more of these curious stones scattered around Hertfordshire or Essex?

Ken McDonald, Secretary

BUNTINGFORD MEMORIAL CHARITY holds a small amount of funds for distribution to local organisations. If you would like to apply for a grant from these funds, please send a letter of application to the address below. The trustees will meet towards the end of March to discuss all the applications received.

Val Reedman, Chairman, Buntingford Memorial Charity
16 Mill Close, Buntingford SG9 9SZ

‘SLIPPERS, LABEL, CREAM’ – AND A SMILE

A short story

The meadow looked lush and green, but the water-logged earth was frozen as hard as concrete. Pete knew, even as he fell, this was going to hurt. A lot. And it did.

He looked up from the ground through the meadow grass. The two dogs stared back at him as if to say “you don’t normally get down to our level and look us in the eye”. They had no idea they were to blame for his trip. Ruben, the older of the two, was dutiful and guarded Pete as the instinct of his breed took over. Woody, a little younger, headstrong and definitely less well-bred, had returned to the badger sett that he had been investigating by the hedgerow.

Pete was face down and tried to turn over and sit up. He put his left hand down and a shock of pain shot from his wrist to every other nerve in his body. He could reach his walking stick and grasped it in his right hand to help him sit upright. From there he tried to stand, but his right knee buckled and protested more than his elderly joint usually did and Pete made to grab a tree in the hedge with his left hand. Once more pain shot through him and he slumped to the icy ground.

“This is a bit of a pickle, Pete,” he said. To be fair he was also talking to Ruben but knew the conversation was only really going to be with himself so included himself in it. “I suppose I’m going to need some help, aren’t I?”

Peter was accustomed to disaster, his time in the fire service had given him a sense of what the priorities for life were and then intuitively devising how to help those in need. However, it didn’t often include himself.

“Thank goodness for mobile phones and GPS, eh Pete,” he said. He undid his outer coat and fished under the three layers of jumpers and shirts to where he had placed his mobile and retrieved it. He had a signal (just) and a full charge. The restricted bridleway was only a few metres from the meadow he had tracked across but the cold, the wind, and the threat of snow had kept the usual folk out on a Covid constitutional at home. He couldn’t see or hear anyone. With no one at home he rang his son Jeff; but Jeff didn’t pick up, which was a shame since Jeff was a paramedic. He was probably out dealing with strokes and more pandemic breathlessness. There was very little point in phoning his 90-year-old Mother.

“999 it is then Pete,” he said.

The first-responder was soon on the scene. “You were easy to find,” she said, setting a huge medical back-pack on the grass beside him. “That ‘What 3 Words’ app is really good.”

“I may be a pensioner but I do keep up with stuff like that,” said Pete.

“Interesting the three words it gave though,” she said laughing, “Slippers, Label and Cream.”

“Yes. Perhaps I should have stayed in my slippers, had some Black Label whisky and put cream on some hot mince pies,” said Pete.

“It would be much better than sitting here getting a cold bum,” she smiled, “Let’s have a look what’s wrong then.”

While she examined him and fired all sorts of questions, Pete mused about her joining him for a whisky and a mince pie. She really was quite lovely. Not in that media-driven way, but in her smile. Her many-layered uniform hid everything else but Pete was entranced by her smile. He judged she was about ten years younger than him, confident in herself, in her skills and how she treated his embarrassment.

"Do your furry boys often take you on a trip?" she punned.

"More than you know," said Pete. The two Tibetan terriers had become his whole world since Janet had gone. They lay in the groove their 'Mum' had left on the living room sofa to watch TV with him. Even after so many years, he could discern the shape in the cushion. They guarded him at the foot of the bed each night and their morning barking ensured that they all went out to inspect the local wet spots for the latest canine news. He hadn't seen Jeff in nearly a year as during the pandemic he had been working every shift he could manage, with barely time for Laura and the grandkids, let alone his poor old Dad. The first-responder's phone went.

"Hi, Caroline here. Where are you guys?"

Ah, Caroline then, thought Pete.

"I've no idea if a wheelchair is going to be useful on this ground. We'll be able to manage him between us, he has one good knee; don't you Pete!" She smiled at him again. Her eyes twinkled. He smiled back.

The crew from the ambulance came into view. It was then he realised neither he nor Caroline were wearing masks. The crew already had theirs on.

"I'm Clive. Peter isn't it?" said the larger of the two paramedics.

"I'm Clive too," said the other pointing at his badge, "but everyone calls me Nero to make it simpler. He pointed at his very Roman nose. Peter considered asking if there was also a fiddle buried somewhere in the bags he was carrying. "Let's get you up and into the ambulance. It's not too far."

They put their arms under Pete's armpits and lifted him. Pete let out a yelp as he hurt both his knee and his wrist. Both dogs were on alert at the strangers and started concerned growling.

"I have their leads in my coat pocket," said Pete as he managed to put his weight on his good knee. Caroline and Clive supported him either side and Caroline took his good arm over her shoulders as they set off to the bridlepath. Nero collected all the bags over his shoulders. He looked like a Third World porter. The dogs followed after, led by Caroline's free arm.

"I can look after them once the boys take you for X-ray. I only live in Wood End and my Poppy will love the attention," she said. "The Police normally get them into kennels but they're all in lockdown. Give me a ring when you're back home." She smiled again. It was warm enough to thaw his frozen backside.

"Count on it," he said. He hoped the Co-op was still selling mince pies.

Richard Wood, Buntingford Writers' Group

Could you be a life saver?

Up for a new challenge?

Where better to start than at the heart of your community as a Community First Responder, saving lives.

The East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) is currently recruiting Community First Responders (CFRs) in this area and would love to hear from you.

CFRs are volunteers who work alongside colleagues from the ambulance service and respond to situations within their local community where the ambulance may take longer to arrive than the critical first few minutes following a 999 call. All volunteers are trained by EEAST to deal with life threatening situations, ranging from cardiac arrest, chest pains and stroke to fits, falls, breathing difficulties and severe diabetic attacks.

CFRs carry an oxygen supply and defibrillator enabling them to deal with the patient immediately and to continue doing so until paramedics arrive at the scene.

There are 730 CFRs working in towns and villages across the eastern region, but we are keen to develop a First Responder presence in those areas which currently do not have any CFR support.

Lorna Hayes, Head of Community Response for EEAST, said:

“Our CFRs provide a really valuable service within their local communities, ensuring that patients receive the care they need as quickly as possible. In certain situations, a CFR being on scene first can mean the difference between life and death.

“Our volunteers come from all walks of life, some are in full-time employment, some are retired, and others have young children, but they all want to make a difference. Myself and all my colleagues are incredibly grateful for the support they provide.”

If you fancy a new challenge and would like to find out more about becoming a CFR then please visit: <https://www.eastamb.nhs.uk/>



**YOUR
COMMUNITY
NEEDS YOU!**

Would you like to save lives and be at the heart of your community?

**Become a Community First Responder (CFR) for EEAST.
Find out more on our website.**

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Recipe for March

1st March is celebrated in Wales as St. David's Day. The Welsh national emblem is a Daffodil or Leek. Welsh cakes were traditionally made with ewes' milk or cows' milk and baked on a 'bake-stone' or Dutch oven placed before an open fire. This is my modern version. They are best cooked on a griddle but a heavy frying pan will do. They are delicious eaten warm and spread with butter or jam – or both!

Welsh Cakes

Recipe ingredients

225g plain flour	100g butter or margarine
75g caster sugar	75g currants
Pinch of salt	1 medium egg
$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp ground nutmeg	1-2 tbsp warm milk (optional)

Method

- To make the dough, mix together the flour, sugar, salt and nutmeg in a bowl. Rub in the butter with your fingertips until the mixture begins to stick together. Add the currants and egg and mix with a fork to form a stiff dough. If the dough is too dry, add a very little milk
- Roll out the dough on a floured board to a thickness of 2cm. Cut into circles with a 7.5cm cutter, dipped in flour.
- Grease the griddle or frying pan and place on a moderate heat. Don't allow the pan to get too hot!
- Carefully lay 4-5 cakes on the griddle and leave to cook slowly (8-10 mins for each side). When the undersides are brown carefully turn over with a metal spatula and leave to brown on the other side. Repeat until all the cakes are cooked.
- Remove the cakes carefully onto a cooling tray.

Elaine Wyld

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Buntingford & Stortford Hybrid Studio



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HIIT, Hooping, Boxing & Mindfulness



Last time I wrote in the Journal, we were still in Lockdown 2 with plans and classes ready to restart. At the beginning of December we opened some of our venue classes with excellent attendance. Our Online Studio continued to grow and we added to our programme with a variety of Christmas Workouts & Quiz evenings.

Then BOOM, along came Lockdown 3, and we were back to full time on Zoom. January saw the usual surge of people wanting to get back into shape post-Christmas, with many new members joining us at our Hybrid Studio. In February we ran an Indoor Run Club, offered extra help with those suffering Lockdown Fatigue, and held a Valentine's Quiz evening.

Looking back, it's amazing how our jobs have changed since March 2020. We have gone 100% teaching online, we've been writing quizzes, hosting Bingo evenings and coming up with new monthly home challenges. It has been hard work but also fun and fully worth the effort we've put in. Dani & I have had some wonderful feedback from members of our Hybrid Studio.

As I write this newsletter, I am waiting to see what plans the Government announces on 22nd February, so we can get the ball rolling with our own plans to bring back venue classes again.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Annie & Mike personally for allowing me to use their tennis court at Alswick Hall.

And lastly, if anyone wants some help getting into fitness (whatever your age) or some mental health assistance, please contact me at theteam@jacqui-smith.net

Jacqui Smith, Personal Trainer

Buntingford Meditation Group

Since March last year's lockdown, Buntingford meditation group has gone online. We normally meet at 8pm on Wednesday evenings, as before.

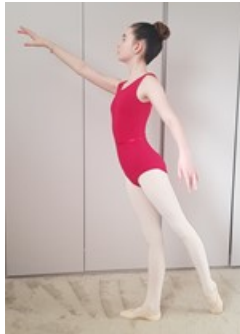
If anyone reading this would be interested in further details, please get in touch by email on the following address: m_zetter@yahoo.co.uk

Martin Zetter



ISTD Graded classes in Ballet, Tap & Modern and recreational classes in Commercial Dance

All our classes have continued online during the third Lockdown, and will continue online until the Easter Holiday. We hope to be returning to face-to-face classes after Easter, but will of course have to wait for details on the easing of Lockdown.



We have been able to celebrate some GOOD NEWS this term, which is very exciting. Following submission of self-taped auditions, four pupils have been offered places on the Cecchetti Associates Scheme for the year and three other pupils have retained their places on the scheme for another year. So congratulations to our pupils, Esme, Freya, Tegan and Vivien who gained places on the scheme for the first time, and to Amelia, Chloe and Darcy who retained their places. Pupils will attend monthly ballet classes in London (online – initially) in addition to their regular classes with us at BSD. Chloe has also secured a second year on the Cecchetti Scholars scheme where she will attend weekly classes in addition to the classes with us. The photos show Freya (top left), Esme (left), and sisters Chloe & Tegan (right).



To help spread some feel-good factor and community spirit, over the February half-term we offered a series of completely FREE classes both to our pupils and to anyone new who wished to join us. We'd like to thank the local schools that shared the information with their parents and pupils to spread the word. We had lots of responses and hope everyone enjoyed their classes and learned how dance can really deliver that 'feel-good factor' which is so much needed in these difficult times.

Our Baby Ballet and Pre-Primary Ballet pupils have been enjoying a different theme each week for their classes and have been on musical dance adventures to the Jungle, the Circus and the Farm to name but a few. Pupils have come to the classes in themed dressing up and with toys relevant to the theme. It has been a lot of fun seeing their creativity each week.

Some of our Senior pupils are awaiting news on applications to full-time vocational dance schools. They had to work hard recording all the audition material to submit to each school. If successful, they will go off to study dance full-time in September.

New pupils are always welcome to join us at BDS, whether they want to dance for fun or ultimately would like to pursue a career in dance or the performing arts. Pupils can either

join us now while on Zoom or go on our waiting list for a place when we return to face-to-face teaching. Contact us for a **NO OBLIGATION TRIAL IN ANY DANCE GENRE!** We currently offer Ballet, Tap, Modern & Jazz and Commercial Dance classes.

Have a look at our website www.buntingfordschoolofdance.co.uk

Follow us on **facebook** and **Instagram**



Debut Novel of Local Writer

In November last year The Journal announced the publication of the debut novel of Sue Shearing, a member of the Buntingford Writers' Group. That announcement proved to be premature, but Sue's book, 'Two Old Ladies and a Secret Child' (right), has now been published – details of how to buy a copy are given below.



Suzanne Shearing is no stranger to the creative industries. She is a retired journalist, stage school owner and film-maker who started her career as a cub reporter on her local paper, the Welwyn Hatfield Times. She progressed to evening and national publications, writing news and features, as well as a local column. In 1995 she had a change of direction, due to her love of theatre and film. After attending drama school, she opened a stage school, which soon became the most successful part-time stage school in Hertfordshire, with 300 young students and 14 teachers of drama, dance and singing.

When she retired Suzanne started writing scripts and made two feature films, 'No Smoke' and 'Archie', which have been distributed throughout the world, and a short, 'Nobody's Child'. 'No Smoke' was an official selection for the International Marbella Film Festival.

'Two Old Ladies and a Secret Child' is Suzanne's debut novel, something she thought she would never achieve. As she describes it, writing 80,000 words is not easy for a journalist who has been trained to keep everything short and sweet!

Suzanne lives locally, in one of Buntingford's 'neighbouring villages', with her pups Rusty and Rocky, and with her son and his family nearby. She is now working on her second novel with great enthusiasm, having discovered that fiction can be so much more fun than facts!

Meanwhile, 'Two Old Ladies and a Secret Child' is available from Amazon and from www.bookdepository.com, www.waterstones.com and blackwells.co.uk

And what is the book about? Well, according to Sue's blurb:

"When a lonely pensioner finds an abandoned baby on her doorstep, she has no idea that the child is the illegitimate offspring of a member of a royal family.

"But the secret is soon out. The authorities and the press pull out all the stops to find the missing child – but so does Charles, a violent man with his own agenda who, it soon becomes clear, will stop at nothing.

"The old lady and her best friend take to the road in an attempt to keep the baby safe. They are soon on the run in a foreign country, with no idea what to do next, where they're going, or what will happen to the innocent foundling ..."



Edwinstree Middle School



A Voluntary Controlled Church of England School

*As a Christian school, we recognise the unique and wonderful in everyone.
As a community, we support one another to flourish and live life in all its fullness.*

January 2021 Return to School

In preparing for the February edition of the Journal I wrote the following: “What a start to the new term! On Sunday night Year 7 and Year 8 were returning on the 18/1/21 and all other students on Tuesday 5/1/21. On Monday morning they were not, and by 8pm Monday evening only children of key/critical workers and the vulnerable children were in school, with everyone else at home until at least the end of February half-term. The Government plan that all schools with secondary children should roll out mass testing, Year 7 and Year 8 would be online learning for two weeks while primary children were expected to attend, had disappeared. By Tuesday, we had identified the students who would attend school and created a 50% timetable, i.e. 2 classes in each year group operating under the strict Covid-19 social distance restrictions in classrooms. The remainder of the school (over 80% of children) were working online at home.”

Reading this again reminded me of the whirlwind of change that we have all had to continually face, but I am so pleased and thankful to be working with a community whose capacity, resilience and sheer willpower to adapt, train and support online learning as quickly as possible has been astonishing. This lockdown, we have seen almost all students at home engage with their online learning in English and Maths, and this is testament to the strength and resilience of their parents and carers, as well as their individual determination to keep on learning.

How have online lessons adapted over this time?

Learning at home is really tough and requires confidence and independence. The younger you are the harder this is, as we all take time to develop this skill set. However, we were clear that students would continue with their learning programme.

To help students, the school produced a guide to learning for each subject, both in hard copy and electronically, alongside guides and learning resources the school adapted to provide video tutorials, live chats and support sessions for those students who were struggling, and in some subjects, live lessons.

What have we learnt and what will we take forward?

- We know that teaching is not just about talking at the front of a classroom, but about the interaction a teacher has with students and the ability to spot and remediate errors quickly. Remote learning makes this much harder. It is not enough to say they are learning if they are listening from home. We only know learning is taking place when students submit work and it takes time to support everyone to have the confidence to do this.
- We love the use of videos, model answers and guided examples of what to do when learning gets stuck. The videos we have created will become a huge part of our intervention strategies post-Covid – if a child still has the basics of long division or use of apostrophes, we have mini-videos to help support them to secure this learning, either in class or as home learning.
- Schools are more than academic institutions. When working well, they create a community learning that supports students to learn to live well with each other – we have missed this and we have also missed the fun that a middle school generates for students. We know that part of our catch-up programme will involve making sure that

students have opportunities to enrich their learning with sporting activities and events, theatre productions, musical shows, film club, programming club and dance.

- Collective Worship has been valued both in school and out, with students taking the time daily or weekly to tune in to hear our reflections on the values we have been using to support us through this difficult time. Last half-term we considered the importance of 'service' and how those who we value in society may have changed during this time.

How have we supported the well-being of our students during this time?

In-school Wellbeing: Students receive a weekly morning lesson about well-being; this will continue to be based on Educational Psychology guidance on how to help students grow through trauma. Students will continue to explore how to generate a sense of safety, control, calm, connectedness and hope. The morning sessions on Monday will gently take them through the science of why this is so important and lean on their value of compassion.

Out-of-school Wellbeing: One of our trials with online learning involves providing regular opportunities, weekly or fortnightly, for students in school to connect with those out of school in a Collective Worship and/or set Wellbeing activities. We agree with parents that it is important we provide interface time with each tutor group to stay connected.

In the last week of the half-term, we set up virtual teacher-parent consultation meetings at which parents could hear about their child's progress and give feedback on the work that had been taking place at home.



How are we supporting those community members who are struggling with the financial impacts of Covid?

Food parcels (left) are delivered on Fridays for those students eligible for free school meals within our community, available for collection from the school office.

During December, the Edwinstree community took part in the Christmas Hamper Challenge. We are delighted to report that students and staff raised a total of £1,226.14 for the Buntingford Food Bank. Everyone worked together to help make as much as possible and raised more than was expected. Students enjoyed the challenge and demonstrated our Christian values of *Thankfulness, Humility, Endurance, Service, Compassion, Trust, Peace, Friendship, Justice, Hope* and *Community*.

What are our hopes for the next half-term?

We look forward to our students returning to school, supporting their health and wellbeing and getting them back in the classroom. We have missed them very much and hope and pray that we now have the opportunity to help them recover. We want to learn from our experiences, build their confidence and provide opportunities for fun and laughter alongside the joy of learning.

Jo Gant, Headteacher



**Essex & Herts
Air Ambulance**

Your local life-saving charity

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance gets keys to new airbase

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) has taken possession of its brand-new purpose-built airbase at North Weald Airfield. Work on the facility began in February 2020 after planning permission was granted by Epping Forest District Council. Project managed by quantity surveyors Castons, and designed by architects Hurley Porte and Duell with structural engineer specialists Superstructures, the new airbase was built by Barnes Construction and has been delivered on time despite the challenges of Covid-19.



Mark Hart of Barnes Construction (on the video screen) officially hands over the new airbase to EHAAT CEO Jane Gurney. Also present are (left to right): Cliff Gale (EHAAT Operations Director), Gaynor Wareham (Critical Care Paramedic), Lee Burling (Pilot), Clive Sturdy (Co-Pilot) and Ben Clarke (Pre-hospital Care Doctor). The helicopter is the charity's AgustaWestland AW169 . Photo by Warren Page of Pagepix.

In a socially distanced handover Jane Gurney, CEO of EHAAT, and Cliff Gale, Operations Director, took possession of the building from Mark Hart, Joint Divisional Managing Director of Barnes Construction. The handover was carried out by video link in order to comply with lockdown restrictions on non-essential travel.

Jane said: "The handing over of this building today by Barnes Construction marks yet another milestone in what is a very important project for the Charity. The opportunity to design and build our own Airbase has allowed us to include elements such as dedicated areas for training, which will benefit not only our crews but also the local pre-hospital care

community, along with an interactive visitor centre for our supporters, who we look forward to welcoming to this incredible new building when such visits become possible.

“On behalf of the Trustees and the Executive Team I would like to thank Barnes Construction, associated partners and suppliers for all their hard work and support in seeing this project through to completion in such a professional manner, especially with the added pressures the pandemic presented. I would also like to thank our amazing fundraisers and donors for helping us secure the future operation of the charity at North Weald for many years to come by supporting us and making this possible.”

On behalf of Barnes Construction, Mark Hart said: “We are proud to have played a key part in the construction of this new airbase, which is a true community-based project that will help everyone. The project has been a collaborative team effort and I’m very grateful to Castons, Superstructures and Hurley Porte and Duell in particular, for helping us to get the scheme delivered on time, and under the most extreme and challenging circumstances due to Covid-19”.

In addition to housing one of EHAAT’s two helicopters and two of its rapid response vehicles, the new building has areas for training, mentoring, patient liaison and fund-raising. There is space for cross training with other emergency services, which will benefit both EHAAT and the local pre-hospital care community. Part of the new airbase will be a dedicated interactive visitor centre which will allow the charity to welcome and engage with the local community.

The new building includes a hangar capable of housing two helicopters when necessary (for example, to permit aircraft maintenance) and has underground heating beneath the helipad to keep it free of snow and ice during winter.

The building has been designed with ‘green’ issues very much to the fore. It includes charging points for electric cars and photovoltaic panels on the roof which will generate electricity for the airbase, with any excess being supplied to the National Grid. There is bicycle parking for staff who wish to cycle to work and as much waste as possible will be recycled. The building has been well insulated to retain heat and reduce noise pollution and makes as much use as possible of natural light in order to save on electricity.

Work has now begun on the internal fit-out phase, with the building scheduled to become operational by June. To watch a time-lapse video of the external build, visit:

ehaat.org/north-weald-airbase/



Is it one of Tracy's?

"Hey! That man there!" Cleggy's dulcet tones boomed out across the water meadows that complement his parkland idyll behind Clegg Manor.

I turned from my chosen path en route to the stile and saw my old pal gesticulating some way off. "Come over," he called. "I want to talk you."

Secreting the brace of pheasants behind a bush I made my way towards the waiting form of Chicken Clegg who had by now walked down to the river, followed by his flock of prize-winning fowls, which forever meandered throughout his estate (the river, that is, not the birds).

"What's the problem, Cleggy?" I called out just as I was crossing the bridge that is modelled on Monet's that overlooked the water lily lagoon in that far off French seclusion. You have to admit Cleggy has taste.

"I need your advice, my scruffy friend." He has a wonderful way with words, but I suppose by relative comparison to his marvellous attire I may look a tad ruffled.

"Come with me, come with me!" He ushered me towards the rear terrace of the big house where a rather sumptuous high tea had been laid out by the ever peripatetic lady of the house. The table, dressed in finest linen, china and silverware, was a picture to behold and mine host gestured me to alight. Putting an open copy of Poultry Farmers Monthly on the cushioned wrought-iron seat, he indicated for me to "sit". As I carefully lowered myself I saw the disappearing image of the fragrant lady of the house. Dressed in a paint splattered pair of dungarees and carrying a paint roller, she disappeared into the darkened interior. Cleggy caught the direction of my gaze. "Marvellous woman, marvellous," he remarked. "Do you know she can turn her hand to anything, marvellous confections and the cabinetry she has created with the Black and Decker I bought her for Christmas is a wonder to behold."

Chicken Clegg sat making himself comfortable and adjusting his purple safari jacket and cravat. "Earl Grey OK for you?" he quizzed. "Now, to the problem in hand," and with that he took a sheaf of photographs from an A4 buff envelope and began to lay them before me. "Our old friend Photo Foggy took these. What do make of them?" he asked "Absolutely disgusting, I say" he went on. "What say you?"

I was afraid to look and almost spilt the saucer of Earl Grey down the front of my shirt. What was I about to see? What had Foggy been snapping now? There, laid before me on the pristine linen, were a selection of sharp monochrome prints. "Can you make out what it is?" Cleggy pressed.

Absentmindedly grasping one image, I struggled to decipher what Foggy had captured. "Looks like a heap of scrap metal," I proffered.

"Just so," Cleggy came back. "A heap of scrap." Why, the thought crossed my mind, has Foggy taken a picture of a plumber's nightmare? Cleggy was keen to explain. "Well, apparently he was taking a photo diary of the town – you know the sort of thing, the constant up-rooting of roads and paths, flooded areas, mud-caked roads, internal demolition of Barclays, yellow arrows painted on the floor of Sainsburys and the Co-op with customers walking in the opposite direction, over-filled dog waste bins, and the speeding four-wheel drives tearing down the High Street (20 is plenty? more like 50 is nifty!), and now this monstrosity!"

"But what is it Clegg, what's it supposed to be?" I attempted, crumbling a piece of a cucumber sandwich and feeding one of Clegg's chickens at my feet.

"That's what I want to know," he said, and with that he took his latest state-of-the-art mobile phone and punched in a number of digits. His face looked puzzled and he was vexed when he was told to leave a message. Exasperated he dropped the device on the table narrowly missing an untouched Victoria sponge. Almost immediately the gadget burst into life with a rendition of FBI and Cleggy grabbed at the sound but unfortunately he misjudged and placed a chocolate éclair to his ear. "Is that you Photo?" he shouted into the cream confection. "Speak up man!"

Realising his error he retrieved the prostrate mobile and tried again. "About that picture you gave me? No, not that one, how did that one get in there? I refer to the tangle of iron, where is it, and more importantly what is it? ... Where? ... I don't believe it ... Who came up with that idea? ... Surely not! ... How much?!!! I'll come back to you later and yes I will get that other photo back to you, plain cover, no prob."

Turning to me, his face now bright red with exasperation, he exclaimed: "It's a bike rack, a bloody bike rack, unbelievable!" Warming to his subject: "He says it's a bike rack! What on earth do we need with a bike rack? Look at it, who on earth will be able to get a bike up on the top level?" Not taking a breath, "And it's right on the corner of Church Street!"

Just the right height to inflict some serious damage when you are coming back in the dark with a kebab, I thought. I tried to placate him, saying I had seen another "Rack" in another town in Hertfordshire that was in the shape of a bicycle and it was taking up two car spaces and not a single bike in sight. But he was not to be distracted: "Who on earth designed that thing?"

"Looks like one of those planning initiatives and a way of spending all our increased community charges, perhaps", I ventured. Then I tried bringing a little intellectual humour to the table: "It looks like the love child of Damien Hurst and Tracy Emin," I suggested.

"That's a point, we could put up a blue plaque and people will flock to see this marvellous work of art. It will be just about the right thing to give the town a more intellectual reputation. I can see it now, no longer the unsung jewel in Hertfordshire's Crown, now a Woke powerhouse of art and culture!"

"Perhaps we can get that Eddie Izzard to do the unveiling, she seems like a nice girl?"

"More tea? One lump or two?"

Vyse



The bike rack that's got everyone talking – or should that be complaining? Someone finally used it to park their bike, but not as intended in the pre-fabricated frames, rather the bike is simply leant up against the end of the rack and locked to it! Photo from Nextdoor Buntingford, courtesy of Cliff Callow.



And finally ... It's nice to see someone just get out and do something that needs doing! David Edwards and pals have been clearing up rubbish from around the back of Freman College and the path near the Ermine Street allotments. Well done them! And I'm sure they're not the only ones who have been taking it upon themselves to get out and pick up some litter. Hopefully, once we're out of lockdown we can get back to having the organised group litter-picks around town again. Photos from Nextdoor Buntingford. – CN

