



# B I R C H A M T I M E S



In and around the Birchams

[news@thebirchams.uk](mailto:news@thebirchams.uk)

February 2025 Issue 16

## *Parish Council Matters*

This is a quiet month for the Parish Council as there is no meeting in February. However, things are quietly getting done.

You may have noticed the new gate at the south-east corner of the playing field and the new signage at both entrances. We thank George McPherson for taking on this task.

The PC bank account is being transferred to a new provider that offers on-line banking and other conveniences that will make it easier to do business.

At the January meeting, the PC decided that the precept, that is the small part of your council tax that goes to the PC, would not be changed for this coming year.

Donations to the Church of £500 towards the upkeep of St Mary's Churchyard and £300 towards printing of the *Bircham Times* were agreed.

Our next meeting is at 7.30pm on Wednesday March 5 in the Social Club, followed by one on April 9 and the Annual Parish Council Meeting on May 14. If you come along, you will be very welcome.

Meanwhile, if you wish to raise any issues with the Parish Council, please contact the Clerk.

Email: [clerk@bircham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@bircham-pc.gov.uk)

Post: Hall Farm, Sedgeford Road, Docking, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE31 8LJ

Website: [bircham-pc.gov.uk](http://bircham-pc.gov.uk)

## *Newsletter Thoughts*

We talk a great deal about RAF Sculthorpe in this issue and hope to keep the memories and stories flowing over the next few months. Just some 70 years ago there were 10,000 personnel, mostly American GIs, stationed at the base and their families were billeted and lived in this immediate area. At the time Hunstanton was even nicknamed Little America. Today, there is a developing heritage centre at Sculthorpe and we urge you to take a look for yourselves. We will list the Open Days during the summer, which start on April 6.

We follow with a couple of calls to arms: first, you will all be aware that the country at large is commemorating the 80th anniversary of VE Day on May 8. It's not a bank holiday but the national organisers are encouraging groups to light beacons and lamps of peace as well organise street parties, bell-ringing, fish & chip suppers, cake-baking and so on. Take a look at what events could be planned <https://www.veday80.org.uk/>

If there are those of you who would like to band together to create something special in our villages, then please do contact us here and we'll put you all in touch with each other. Council has kindly agreed to donate towards any events that are fitting and accessible to villagers.

Second, whilst we're chatting about the concept of volunteering time and effort, are there villagers out there who would enjoy organising fun fund-raisers, be it for Comic Relief, say, or indeed any other good cause? Could you organise a sponsored silence, a charity walk, golf tournament, bake-off, craft sale, whatever interests you and others locally. Do drop us a line, you never know who's on your wavelength.

Do remember that the *Bircham Times* can be delivered to parishioners by email. You can email us at [news@thebirchams.uk](mailto:news@thebirchams.uk) to request that (or for any other matter).

In addition, we publish, in advance of the paper copy, on the 15th of every month on our website: [www.thebirchams.uk](http://www.thebirchams.uk)



## *Pancakes, Pancakes... and Yet More Pancakes*

This month we shamelessly mine Mrs Beeton for some pancake recipes to celebrate Shrove Tuesday (March 4) and the onset of Lent. First up is a basic recipe, second is a "richer" recipe, which inevitably contains booze, and thirdly we present "The Hidden Mountain", which may be news to you all!!

### **PANCAKES**

**INGREDIENTS.**—Eggs, flour, milk; to every egg allow 1oz [28g] of flour, about 1 gill of milk [that's about a quarter of a pint (140ml) and needless to say full fat], 1/8 saltspoonful of salt [a generous pinch... we're not being picky here].

**Mode.**—Ascertain that the eggs are fresh; break each one separately in a cup; whisk them well, put them into a basin, with the flour, salt, and a few drops of milk, and beat the whole to a perfectly smooth batter; then add by degrees the remainder of the milk. The proportion of this latter ingredient must be regulated by the size of the eggs, &c. &c.; but the batter, when ready for frying, should be of the consistency of thick cream. Place a small frying-pan on the fire to get hot [try the cooker – it's less of a faff]; let it be delicately clean, or the pancakes will stick, and, when quite hot, put into it a small piece of butter, allowing about 1/2oz to each pancake. When it is melted, pour in the batter, about 1/2 teacupful to a pan 5 inches in diameter, and fry it for about 4 minutes, or until it is nicely brown on one side. By only pouring in a small quantity of batter, and so making the pancakes thin, the necessity of turning them (an operation rather difficult to unskilful cooks) is obviated. When the pancake is done, sprinkle over it some pounded sugar, roll it up in the pan, and take it out with a large slice, and place it on a dish before the fire. Proceed in this manner until sufficient are cooked for a dish; then send them quickly to table, and continue to send in a further quantity, as pancakes are never good unless eaten almost immediately they come from the frying-pan. The batter may be flavoured with a little grated lemon-rind, or the pancakes may have preserve rolled in them instead of sugar. Send sifted sugar and a cut lemon to table with them. To render the pancakes very light, the yolks and whites of the eggs should be beaten separately, and the whites added the last thing to the batter before frying.

**Time.**—from 4 to 6 minutes for a pancake that does not require turning; from 6 to 8 minutes for a thicker one.

**Average cost,** for 3 persons, 6d.

**Sufficient.**—Allow 3 eggs, with the other ingredients in proportion, for 3 persons.

**Seasonable** at any time, but specially served on Shrove Tuesday.

### **RICHER PANCAKES**

**INGREDIENTS.**—6 eggs, 1 pint of cream, 1/4 lb of loaf sugar, 1 glass of sherry, 1/2 teaspoonful of grated nutmeg, flour.

### **THE HIDDEN MOUNTAIN**

(A pretty Supper Dish)

**INGREDIENTS.**—6 eggs, a few slices of citron, sugar to taste, 1/4 pint of cream, a layer of any kind of jam.

**Mode.**—Beat the whites and yolks of the eggs separately; then mix them and beat well again, adding a few thin slices of citron, the cream, and sufficient pounded sugar to sweeten it nicely. When the mixture is well beaten, put it into a buttered pan, and fry the same as a pancake; but it should be three times the thickness of an ordinary pancake. Cover it with jam, and garnish with slices of citron and holly-leaves [optional, since they are a bit poisonous!]. This dish is served cold.

**Time.**—About 10 minutes to fry the mixture.

**Average cost,** with the jam, 1s. 4d.

**Sufficient** for 3 or 4 persons.

**Seasonable** at any time.





## History Corner: The Anmer Minque

### AN HISTORICAL JOURNEY FROM FLITCHAM TO BIRCHAM

We current inhabitants are just a tiny speck on the timeline of human activity that has endured for many thousands of years around here.

The evidence is fairly easy to find, if you know what you are looking for. Some of the earliest evidence includes flint blades, probably from the Mesolithic period (about 5.5 to 12 thousand years ago), as well as Neolithic axeheads, arrowheads and flint tools (about five thousand years old). But in some places the evidence is much larger and more obvious.

There are numerous surviving Bronze Age barrows (probably around 3-5 thousand years old). These are usually burial mounds and marked on an OS map as a tumulus. Just as you leave Flitcham towards Bircham, on the right is a particularly striking tumulus — even more impressive in those years when it is totally covered in red poppies.

Continuing our drive from Flitcham to Bircham, about halfway between the two, where the main road and the Peddars Way intersect, lies on the right a wooded area named Anmer Minque. On our historical tour today we are now also simultaneously moving much further forward — into the Classical Age. Local legend has it that there was a battle on Anmer Minque between the Roman occupiers and the local Iceni people. As far as I know there is no evidence to verify this. We do know, however, that the Iceni were a major force in these parts and we have all heard tell of Queen Boudicca leading the Iceni against the occupying Roman forces in AD60/61 and very nearly overwhelming them.

The Peddars Way was reworked by the Romans into its current very straight route sometime around AD70. So was that done before or after the supposed battle at Anmer Minque? We'll likely never know, but it seems feasible that Anmer Minque would be a good place to waylay the Roman forces, with the Peddars Way being a major route for them. Or was the route built to help keep down the Iceni who had proved more difficult to suppress than the inhabitants of most other parts of Roman Britain?

LR



### Dates for the Diary

**Anmer Social Club:** Coffee, cake and chat, Mondays 10-12, 07947 580555

**Snettisham Park:** Open daily from February 1

**Feb 14-22** 818th King's Lynn Mart, Tuesday Market Place

**Feb 15** Snowdrop Charity Day, Walsingham Abbey, 10-4pm, £6.50/£2.50

**Feb 15** Songs of The Beatles by local band Dog House, Westacre Theatre, 7.30pm, £14

**Feb 15** The Great Gatsby Party at Anmer Social Club, fancy dress, £6 inc cocktail

**Feb 15-23** (not 17th) Pop-Up Children's Bookshop, Holkham Hall £6

**Feb 16** Totally Tina – Tina Turner Revue, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, 7.30pm, £28.50

**Feb 17-21** NORFOLK SCHOOLS HALF-TERM

**Feb 20** *The Importance of Being Earnest*, NT Live, Westacre Theatre, 7pm, £14

**Feb 21** Anmer Social Club Film Night, *The Critic* (15), 7.30pm, £5

**Feb 22** Dersingham Social Club Quiz, 8pm, £2pp

**Feb 22** *Vindication Swim* at Village Screen Cinema, Amy Robsart Hall, Syderstone, 7pm, £4

**Feb 23** Bagthorpe Hall snowdrops walk, 11-4pm, £6

**Feb 23** Rude Science: Naughtiest, funniest, most revolting science show in the world. KL Corn Exchange, For children, 11.30 and 3pm, £17-19

**Feb 25** *Madama Butterfly*, KL Corn Exchange, 7.30pm, £43-49



## Curl Up With a Good Book

***The Cat Who Saved Books*** (2022) by Sosuke Natsukawa

Despite outward appearances this is definitely not exclusively a children's book, but a tale by Japanese author and doctor Sosuke Natsukawa, who challenges the reader to think about our relationships with books – how and why do we read them, possess them, use them, need them, treat them?

*The Cat Who Saved Books* tells the heartwarming tale of Rintaro Natsuki, for whom books hold a special place in his heart. Left bereft upon his grandfather's death, Rintaro, a reclusive young man, considers closing the family bookshop... but then in the aisles of the cavernous library he meets a talking tabby cat called Tiger, who recruits him on a magical mission to save books from those who have imprisoned, mistreated and betrayed them. The cat and young man visit four different labyrinths and attempt to use their powers of persuasion on the bookowners they find there.



This slim book has headed many best-selling charts and has been beautifully translated. Of course it chimes with those who love books but also has plenty to say about human nature and finding courage. And if you enjoy this volume, do track down *The Cat Who Saved the Library* (April 2025) that sees a returning Tiger the tabby, who has a whole new mission on his paws.

## Cold War at RAF Sculthorpe

RAF Sculthorpe was open from the Second World War to 1992. Among other units it was home to the USAF's Reconnaissance, Air Rescue and Bombardment squadrons and, most importantly, was a nuclear strike base at the forefront of the Cold War ... in the sights of Soviet aggression. In its long history it hosted USAF nuclear bombers and reconnaissance aircraft. In its heyday (1952-1960), around 10,000 people worked at the base; and their families lived in the local region.

We hope to return to the subject of the shadiness of the Cold War operations there in future issues but for now we concentrate on the other comings and goings at Sculthorpe, most notably the effects of having GIs based for years in North Norfolk...

### CRIMINAL ACTIVITY GALORE

In 1958, an American Air Force sergeant threatened to commit suicide by firing his revolver at H-bomb trigger mechanisms. In an eight-hour standoff at Sculthorpe he demanded that all his immediate superiors should stand beside the nuclear weapon so he could destroy them too!! [We'll tell the full story in next month's issue]

Also in 1958 a murder trial was held at Denham, Buckinghamshire, where the accused, a master sergeant based at Sculthorpe, was found guilty of being both an adulterer and of killing his wife using arsenic.

A court martial in 1960 involved 100 "lost" pistols and 4 sub-machine guns. The trial, held on the base, was stopped suddenly by a nuclear alert that led to "action stations" and US planes taking off to confront the enemy. The gathered press were hurried offsite. Turns out the "missing" armour was being sold in Manchester, with many fearing it was ending up in the hands of the IRA.

Also in the same year, a fight took place on Liverpool St station between a US airman and the Flying Squad...the airman was wanted over an attempted safe-blowing at the base before going on the run. The case was notable for a City gentleman with prodding umbrella who tried to defend the "heroic" US military man in the scuffle.





### LITTLE LOCAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS

When Americans are off duty they play golf, right? Well the airbase received complaints from golf clubs in the Dereham vicinity who issued etiquette leaflets to the US airmen who had been hacking up the precious greens in their attempts to play the game properly.

Dances were held on the base but apparently they attracted the wrong sort. In 1959 "the floosies" (some as young as 14) flocked to the base, no doubt to snare a GI boyfriend. After various complaints from the higher-ups in command, the young ladies were encouraged to get permits from their parents or have them attend themselves as chaperones. A 20-year old airman said "we won't get much of a ball this way".

In January 1959 a 60-year-old British "janitor" was held at gunpoint after losing his way after dark on the camp without his official pass. Another janitor who vouched for him was also threatened with being shot if he moved. A year earlier two Post Office engineers were marched around the camp with their hands on their heads.

### US HEROES

It wasn't all misunderstandings between the locals and the US military men though. US families were based in the villages and towns in the vicinity. In 1953, 16 Americans were killed during the East Coast floods in Hunstanton, and many servicemen were engaged in the rescue attempts. The station commander turned up at the coast with rescue equipment. A US amphibious vehicle, with a crew of US airmen, civilians and British policemen was overturned by a wave. Later, a silver eagle bought by the local populace was presented to the US airmen at the base in grateful thanks for their rescue work.

Servicemen Reis Leming and Freeman A Kilpatrick were both awarded the George Medal for their heroism in saving 45 lives. They are commemorated, as are the locals who perished in that tragedy, at the memorial in Hunstanton's Esplanade Gardens.

### Big Garden Birdwatch (Part 2)

The early results are in. As of February 11, more than 8.1 million birds had been spotted in UK gardens, with the most common type being the house sparrow at just over a million. In second place comes the blue tit with 830,000 followed by the woodpigeon in third with some 717,000.

Those in the West Riding of Yorkshire were the most avid bird watchers (more than 15,600) with Norfolk habitués reporting almost 7000 avian sightings. The top three birds spotted in Norfolk were the blue tit, followed by the woodpigeon, with the blackbird in third.

For the full and up-to-date results, follow this link <https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch>

### Dates for the Diary

**Feb 27** An Evening With Jeff Stelling, KL Corn Exchange, 7.30pm, from £34.50  
**Feb 28** Talk: The Carnivores of the Serengeti, Sculthorpe Moor Nature Reserve, 1.30-3.30pm, £12  
**Feb 28** Anmer Social Club Quiz Night, 7.30pm, £3 pp  
**Mar 1** Josh Jaggard photo course, Pensthorpe £100  
**Mar 4** Bircham in Bloom, Bircham Stores Café, 9.30am  
**Mar 5** Council Meeting, Social Club, 7.30pm  
**Mar 6** Bircham Banter, Social Club, 2-30-4pm  
**Mar 6** Tim Dutton – The work of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Stanhoe & Barwick WI, Stanhoe Reading Room, 2pm, £5  
**Mar 6** World Book Day  
**Mar 10** Bingo Night at the Social Club. Eyes down at 7.30pm  
**Mar 20** WaterAid Spring Lunch, Social Club, 12-1.45pm, £5  
**Mar 22** Gayton Hall Open Gardens, 11-4pm, £6  
**Mar 26-28** Spring Market at Burnham Deepdale, 60 pop-up stalls  
**Mar 28** Discover Bird Watching at Pensthorpe, £25  
**Mar 29** *The Critic* at Village Screen Cinema, Amy Robsart Hall, Syderstone, 7pm, £4  
**Mar 29** Spring Coastal Guided Trail Run, Holme to Wells, 9am, £25 <https://findarace.com/events/spring-coastal-guided-trail-run>  
**Mar 29** Mother's Day Spring Bouquet Workshop, Pensthorpe, 10-1pm, £60  
**Mar 30** CLOCKS GO FORWARD



## *From the Annals*

A touching little tale about an airman from Sculthorpe, his gal, their romantic trip tracked by local bobbies with nothing better to do... and several dollops of titillation and indignation.

DAILY HERALD - August 26, 1959

### ROMANCE TOOK A TURN AT THE WHEEL

The GI and his girl snuggled close together. Each had an arm round the other. And the police decided that proper control was lacking. Proper control, that is, of the car which the GI happened to be driving at the time. Airman Second Class Doyle Dwayne Lorence, aged 22, and his 19-year-old fiancée Janice Spavina drove past Police Constable Henry Fletcher as he stood beside a police car in a Bedford street.

Lorence was not holding the wheel of the left-hand drive American car, Constable Fletcher told Bedford Court yesterday. Janice was close beside Lorence – with both hands on the steering wheel. Constable Fletcher and another policeman got into their car and followed. Lorence's arm appeared to be behind the girl's back, Constable Fletcher said. Then she took her left hand off the wheel and put it round his neck.

### NO SIGNALS

They were so close together that I could see the steering wheel to their right, he said. The car turned corners without giving signals. When the police car overtook it, Lorence took his arm from behind the girl.

Mr Cyril Riley, prosecuting, said it was submitted that the couple were mauling each other in the car.

He added: There is a time and place for everything, and this was not it.

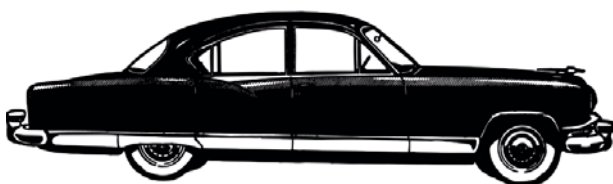
Lorence, of the US Air Force base at Sculthorpe, Norfolk, was fined £5 for driving in such a position that he could not properly control the car. A summons for careless driving was dismissed.

Janice, a nursemaid of Alamein Avenue, Bedford, was fined £2 for aiding and abetting. Lorence told the court he drove the car normally, but agreed that Janice sat close to him.

### A CIGARETTE

He denied that he put his arm behind her or that she touched the steering wheel. Attractive Janice, who wore an engagement ring, said she did not lean on Lorence. I had my arm on the back of his seat and had a cigarette in the other hand, she declared. She added indignantly: I did not like the way it was said we were mauing each other. We are an engaged couple and had not just met that night.

Their destination on that romantic journey? Said Janice: We were going to get some fish and chips.





## Stanhoe & Barwick WI

Here at Stanhoe and Barwick W.I., if you are into crafts, cookery or even campaigning, whether you're looking for friendship, fun or fascinating speakers, we have all that and so much more. Do join us!

Forthcoming events to be held at the Stanhoe Reading Room, Cross Lane PE31 8PS at 2pm.

Thursday March 6: Tim Dutton – The work of The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Thursday April 3: Robert Smith – Wells Harbourmaster

Thursday May 8: VE Day celebrations featuring The Castaway Crew shanty singers

Thursday June 5: Liz Scott – Life as a Monastery

Additionally, visitors are always welcome. Our charge is £5, which includes refreshments.

Contact [stanhoeandbarwickwi@gmail.com](mailto:stanhoeandbarwickwi@gmail.com) for more details.

## WaterAid Spring Lunches 2025

On Thursdays March 20 and April 10 we will be holding this year's WaterAid Spring Lunches in the Social Club in Bircham, 12 noon to 1.45pm. If you haven't been before do come along, since it's a chance to have a chat with friends over a bowl of homemade soup (there is a choice of two) washed down with a cup of tea or coffee.

It costs £5 a head with all proceeds going to WaterAid, a charity that helps a million people every year in underdeveloped countries to access a safe water supply and sanitation.

Sally



**VILLAGE SCREEN CINEMA**  
at Amy Robsart Village Hall, Syderstone  
Saturday February 22/March 29 at 7.30pm



### **Vindication Swim** (PG)

*Vindication Swim* depicts the story of Mercedes Gleitze, who in 1927 became the first British woman to swim the English Channel [see *Bircham Times* February 2024 for an account of Gleitze's Wash swim]. The film portrays Gleitze's upstream struggle in overcoming both the cold waters of the English Channel and the oppressive society of 1920s Britain. However, after a rival comes forward claiming to have accomplished the same feat, Mercedes is forced into battle to retain her record and her legacy.

Starring Kirsten Callaghan, John Locke and Victoria Summer.

### **The Critic** (15)

Set in 1930s London, *The Critic* revolves around a feared theatre critic named Jimmy Erskine, his loyal assistant, a newspaper owner who wants to get rid of the critic, and an actress who has been devastated by his excoriating theatrical reviews. The critic's determination to survive ensures that the other characters are caught in a web of blackmail, deceit and murder. Starring Gemma Arterton, Lesley Manville, Ian McKellen and Mark Strong.

Price £4 – pay on the door  
Doors open 7pm

Bookings can be made by email [syderstonecinema\\_arvh@outlook.com](mailto:syderstonecinema_arvh@outlook.com) or call 01485 578270.

Caz Appleby,  
on behalf of the Syderstone Cinema Team



### MOBILE POST OFFICE

Scheduled stop at Bircham Social Club, Church Lane is as follows.

Monday	10:45-11:30
Tuesday	10:45-11:30
Thursday	10:45-11:30
Friday	12:10-12:55

### MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

Fridays February 28/March 28  
Stops at:

Monks Close	15:15-15:35
Village Shop	15:45-16:00
Social Club	16:05-16:15
Windmill Hill	16:20-16:35

### RECYCLING CENTRE

For pre-booking your visit at **any** Norfolk centre:  
<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/62632/Norfolk-Recycling-Centre-bookings>  
Or phone 0344 800 8020

### BUS 33/33A

To Hunstanton (from King's Head): Mon-Fri  
07:36 10:36 13:36 17:16; Sat 8:21 10:36  
13:36 15:41  
Return from Stand A Bus Station

To Lynn (from Bircham Stores): Mon-Fri  
07:17 09:23 12:23 15:38 15:43; Sat 09:23  
12:23 15:38 17:08  
Return from Stand E Bus Station

### GREAT MASSINGHAM AREA COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME

Offering a reliable door-to-door car service,  
7 days a week for anyone without personal  
transport. Book on 01485 520823  
Please give at least 2 days' notice

## Bircham Weather

Dry January upheld its resolution by contributing 20 days without measurable rain whilst also slightly underscoring the average rainfall figure with a total of 50mm and this was despite the new year introducing itself rather differently with gale force winds throughout the night followed by some heavy rain during the morning of the 1st. It was, however, just one of the three days that saw temperatures exceeding 10°C during a month that produced an average maximum of 5.7°C, which is 1.5°C below the norm. By contrast, the following two days were clear and sunny but with a high of only 3.8°C before another short spell of unsettled conditions provided the wettest day on the 5th when 10mm of rain fell. This also proved to be the warmest day with a high of 12.4°C as calmer conditions were to follow with no recorded rain between the 7th and 21st.

Despite the cooler temperatures there were some sunny days to enjoy during the first half of this spell, albeit after the clearance of overnight fog along with some sharp frosts. A maximum daytime temperature of just 1.6°C was noted on the 8th along with a minimum of -4.6°C during the night of the 12th. However, the compensation of the sunny days was to disappear from the 13th as cloudier conditions prevailed that were also accompanied by fog which persisted through the 15th and 16th before clearing to the previous inert and overcast offering. Storm Eowyn then had the final say as it tracked across the northern half of the UK on the 24th though, fortunately, we were spared the record-breaking winds that were recorded there but the system did introduce more changeable weather for the remainder of January.

Bryan

## St Mary's 100 Club Draw

**FEBRUARY RESULTS:** 1st prize no. **39**; 2nd prize no. **55** (1st prize wins £25; 2nd prize £10).

Thank you to all who supported the Club Draw last year. If you have not yet entered this year's draw, and would like to, please email me on [sliliweb10@gmail.com](mailto:sliliweb10@gmail.com) and I will send you an application form.

Sally





## In the Garden

### SNOWDROPS

This hardy, perennial, bulbous herb is found in Europe and western Asia. Its scientific name, *Galanthus*, derives from the Greek word meaning "milk", a reference to the white colour of the flower. There are nearly 50 species available to growers.

Its nodding white, sweetly scented flowers bloom in the early spring, traditionally when snow is still on the ground between January and March. It is nicknamed the "Fair Maid of February" and in Spanish is known as *Campanilla de febrero*, or "February's bells". A larger species, the greater snowdrop, is native to the eastern Mediterranean.

The common snowdrop comes in single and double varieties and we see them in spring in drifts (like snow) in shady and damp places like woods and churchyards. Of course they are not just seen in the wild; wily gardeners plant them to have colour (albeit white) in the garden as early as possible. Despite being bulbs, snowdrops are usually planted "in the green", which means they are delivered to gardeners already growing.



The common snowdrop is called *galanthus nivalis*. Some of the more popular other varieties include *galanthus sam Arnott*; *galanthus magnet*, which has solitary flowers borne on long pedicels that are great for gardeners who prize movement as much as colour; *galanthus straffan* is an Irish cultivar; and *galanthus elwesii*, which bears large flowers with green markings.

The division of snowdrops is a simple process, to be performed after the blooms have died but crucially before the leaves have followed likewise. It is also possible to split the bulbs and is advisable to do this every few years to avoid overcrowding... they're the spring present that keeps on giving.

If you want to see snowdrops en masse this spring, try a trip to Bagthorpe Hall (see details in the panel) or, closer to home, the churchyard of St Mary's. If you fancy tuning into a talk on snowdrops, courtesy of the National Garden Scheme (the cost is £10), try <https://ngs.org.uk/shop/online-events/recordings-of-previous-talks/recording-of-in-celebration-of-snowdrops/>

Additionally, you may still have time to order your own. We like Boston Seeds, that sends out snowdrops "in the green" overnight for you to plant out or pot up inside if the ground is too hard. <https://www.bostonseeds.com>

## Bircham in Bloom

Our next meeting will be at 9.30am on Tuesday March 4, 2025 at the Bircham Stores Café, and new members are welcome to attend.

Chris F

## Bircham Banter

Next Banter session is on Thursday March 6 from 2.30 to 4pm. Thanks to the Social Club for continuing to host our get-togethers over winter. See you in March!

Sue



## Cricket Club News

Bircham Cricket Club held its Annual General Meeting on February 10. One issue overshadowed discussions about team captaincies and mower maintenance. After over 50 years as a member of the Club, Dave (Ben) Howell (aka Trigger) is standing down as Club Chairman.

Trigger has taken BCC from humble village status to the thriving club it is today. He has devoted countless hours to the cricket ground and masterminded the project to build the new pavilion. His support and vigorous encouragement has helped many youngsters develop a love for cricket and grow the players and club leaders of the future.

Trigger and his wife Barbie will always be the heart and soul of Bircham Cricket Club. We are delighted that Trig has agreed to be the first Club President and we look forward to him performing ceremonial duties for many years to come.

Filling Trigger's shoes is our new Chairman, James Wroth. He has a tough act to follow but we are excited for the future with him at the helm.

Alex



## Words on Birds

### BRAMBLING

Those of us who have been keeping our bird feeders well-stocked during the winter will have enjoyed a parade of colourful birds. Most will have been familiar resident species but, if you are lucky, your feeders may be visited by a colourful finch from the continent, the **brambling**.

A close relative of the chaffinch, bramblings breed in the extensive forests of northern Europe, moving south in the winter to escape the harsh conditions. The numbers that come to the UK vary each year, depending on how successful their breeding season has been, how harsh the winters are, and how plentiful or otherwise their food sources are.

It is a stunningly attractive bird. Although the ones we see are largely in winter plumage they are still worth a close look. The males have a vibrant orange breast and shoulders which contrast with a black hood and back, a colour combination that always reminds me of the Art Deco pottery of Clarice Cliff. They also boast bright wing bars, spotted flanks and, as they zip away from you, an obvious narrow white rump.

Another distinctive feature of the brambling is its call. In flight they utter a pleasant high-pitched nasal "twang". It's a call you might hear when out on the Norfolk coast in late October as they come bouncing in across the North Sea. In the UK we are used to hearing the call issued by single birds but each winter in Switzerland there is a gathering of brambling estimated at around one million birds and the noise they make as they gather to roost is truly amazing.

You can of course see them away from garden feeders. They can be found in local woodland where there are beech trees as they feed on the fallen mast. They are also often encountered as an element of the mixed finch and buntings flocks that adorn our hedgerows and field edges at this time of year.

Steve Rooke

## Coming soon...

Get your thinking caps ready and your sense of adventure primed... the *Bircham Times* is hosting an Easter Egg hunt, a fun competition (with goodies donated by a wonderful sponsor) open to Bircham individuals and families over the Easter weekend. Full details will be available in next month's *Bircham Times*.