



Parish Council Matters

Council wishes you all a Happy New Year!

Our January meeting focused to a large extent on **finance**. We have agreed our budget and the precept (PC Council Tax level) for 24/25 and are pleased to say that we have been able to freeze the precept again for next year. This is despite the general rise in prices, and still allows us to operate without any cutbacks.

Part of the reason is that we have been successful in applying for grants, and propose to continue doing this. A major project for the next year is to look into the possibility of improving the **Children's Play Area**. The swings will be requiring more work as they age, and we have set up a group to investigate the possibility of replacement, and other additions, particularly focusing on the younger children. We will keep you fully informed as this progresses.

We received a detailed report on **Bircham in Bloom**, and they will be reporting independently [please see page 8]. We wish them well in their endeavours this year.

We have been investigating **flooding** in Church Lane to try to ensure that as much is done as possible to try to prevent this. You will appreciate that the recent weather has exacerbated this problem, as with other areas locally and nationally. We have written to thank NCC for their recent very good work on the footway along the Stanhoe Rd. [Please remember that you can report problems with potholes, footpaths and so on directly to the County Council. This will speed things up, especially if you can be precise about locations, and use photos. You will also get reports on actions sent directly to you in response.]

We have received correspondence and comments on the subject of **dog-fouling**. Please note that this is not merely unpleasant, but is an important Health and Safety issue, particularly on the Playing Field. We ask all owners to keep their dogs on leads here, and always clear up after your dog. Back Lane was also mentioned as an area where this is especially bad.

Finally, we have been sent a report on the 2023 **Houghton Festival**. The Borough seems generally pleased with the organisation of this event, and the low level of problems associated with it. This year the Festival will run from 8-11 August. The report will be available as part of our meeting minutes, all of which are available in full on our website – www.bircham-pc.gov.uk.

As ever, if you wish to raise any issues with Council, please contact the Clerk on clerk@bircham-pc.gov.uk or by post at 7, Glebe Avenue, Hunstanton, PE36 6BS.



January's Recipe

VEGETARIAN STROGANOFF

After the rich indulgences of Christmastide, try this flavoursome savoury dish. Serves 2

INGREDIENTS

1 large onion, chopped	1 tbl plain flour
2 sticks celery, chopped	2 tbl white wine
1 red pepper, sliced	2 tsp tomato puree
2 tbl olive oil	150ml vegetable stock
250g mushrooms, thinly sliced	1 small carton of crème fraîche
1 tsp paprika	salt and pepper
Pinch of caraway seeds	1 tsp Marmite, dissolved in 2 tbl of hot water
1 tsp thyme leaves or ½ tsp dried thyme	(optional)

Gently fry the onion, celery and red pepper in the olive oil. Add sliced mushrooms and fry for about 4 minutes. Add paprika, thyme and caraway seeds, then stir in the flour. Cook the mixture together for a minute or two, then add wine, stock and tomato puree. Simmer gently for 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper then stir in the crème fraîche. Serve with rice and a green salad.

Eileen

Plant of the Month

HELLEBORES

The garden is somewhat miserable at this time of year, but hellebores are easy to grow and pretty undemanding. They produce blooms in winter and early spring, which makes them a valuable asset in any garden. Braving the chill, they are hardy, compact, and the flowers provide nectar for early pollinators. Their foliage is bold and evergreen, and in some of the new hybrids the marbled leaves are as decorative as the flowers. Hellebores are typically woodland-edge plants that thrive in rich soil and will tolerate full sun or shade. Interestingly, most hellebores have downward-facing flowers. Not only does this protect the pollen from winter snows and rain but it also offers shelter to the attendant insect while it feeds. Try *Helleborus viridis*, or varieties 'Penny's Pink' or 'Merlin'.

Anna

Winter Car Health Check

Start by making a visual check and ensure all lights are working and that tyres are correctly inflated and have plenty of tread pattern left, including the spare tyre. Check the condition of your wiper blades. For emergencies, make sure tow-hook and tow-rope are accessible. Carry ice scraper and de-icer, safety triangle and damp sponge in plastic bag to clean headlights. Carrying a fully charged phone, a coat and a hi-viz vest are also recommended for extreme weather journeys.

Hugh P

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal



Thank you to everyone who supported the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2023, those who helped with the distribution of poppies and those who donated to the appeal. Without you the RBL would not be able to help as many veterans and British Forces family members. The Sedgford and District Branch raised a total of £3,550, including Great Bircham £382 and Bircham Newton £32.

This is the last year that Steve and I will be organising the Poppy Appeal but we have a new volunteer carrying on the good work. If you would like to help with the Poppy Appeal in 2024 by distributing the poppy boxes etc. please let me know and I will pass your name to our coordinator.

Megan Greef



From the Annals

Two tales this month, each concerning animals. The first a story of a mistreated cat; the second concerns the duties of a horse who gets Saturday nights off!

1896

Four boys* of the "labouring classes" were prosecuted by the RSPCA, charged with "torturing a cat" at Bircham Tofts on August 11th. The eyewitness was a 12-year-old girl, also of the Tofts, who notified the Rev J. L. Bennett that it was his cat who had been stoned and beaten. The Chairman of the Bench that heard the case said he wished the Bench could give the boys a good whipping, "wanting to put a stop to such brutality [!!!]". Instead "he recommended that the boys should have a good whipping at the hands of their fathers".

* Names omitted to protect the dignity of any village descendants

1881

A "pimp your pony" advert from the *Lynn News & County Press*

SOLOMON

That noted Stock Horse, late the property of Mr. Chas. Marsters, will stand at his stable, at Mr THOS. WHARTON'S, Bircham Tofts, every evening (except Saturday) during the season, to serve a limited number of mares, at 23/ each and 5/ the groom.

So many questions....especially concerning the punctuation and what it actually meant for the groom!!!

NB For anyone unfamiliar with "old money", the symbol "/" denoted a shilling, or solidus if you are an ancient Roman.

Curl Up With a Good Book

Winter Solstice by Rosamunde Pilcher (2000).

This gentle, uplifting read was the author's last novel, published in 2000 and made into a TV film in 2003 with Sinéad Cusack.



The story largely takes place in Creagan, Scotland, and concerns five main characters who are unexpectedly thrown together in a previously empty house during inclement weather in the run-up to Christmas. All the characters

have recently experienced a traumatic event but through friendship, love and a little faith they begin to heal. The novel depicts a local community which accepts and supports these incomers. The story also contains some lovable canine characters and presents the West Coast of Scotland in an attractive light.

Lynda

Pilcher wrote many novels in her long career but her earliest were published under the nom de plume of Jane Fraser. Check those out too if you enjoy her other works.

Dates for the Diary

Jan 21 Sky Bet Raceday at Fakenham
Racecourse, gates open 10.30am

Jan 22 Cash Prize Bingo at Bircham Social Club. Plus home-made cakes. Eyes down at 7.30pm for £100 top prize

Jan 24-Mar 3 Snowdrop Walk Season at Walsingham Abbey 10-4pm

Jan 25 Bircham in Bloom meeting, at Bircham Stores, 9.30am

Jan 26-28 Sign up for the Big Garden Birdwatch
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch>

Jan 26 *Past Lives* (12A), 7.30pm at the Reading Room, Stanhoe

Jan 27 *Book Club: The Next Chapter* (12A), 7.30pm at Village Screen Theatre, Amy Robsart Village Hall, Syderstone

Feb 1 Stanhoe & Barwick WI, 2pm at the Reading Room, Stanhoe, "Penny Simmonds introduces Reflexology" £5 inc refreshments. Contact Valerie on 01485 576261



Norfolk Dialect

Local placenames

One of the main ways in which we integrate in a new community, where we are given away by our accents, is by “correctly” using placenames, not necessarily as they are spelled but how they are vocalised. Two easy starters are Lynn (rather than King’s Lynn) and Hunny (rather than Hunstanton). A lazy person’s way of describing these places, but with a familiarity that suggests inner wisdom of these parts. These mark you out as at least familiar with the region even in you were not born or bred here. Bircham, pronounced Barchm; Houghton, pronounced Hoeton; and Stanhoe as Stanner suggest a “lazy” but more authentic pronunciation, Trickier still are some places further afield in Norfolk where the written name gives few clues as to the way the place is spoken about: try Hazebro (Happisburgh), Tacklestone (Tacolneston), Cossy (Costessey) and Stewkey (Stiffkey).

But if you were a true Norfolk dumplin’ then you’d know all that!

Houghton Hall

On two recent Sunday afternoons towards the end of 2023, groups of past and present Bircham residents had the privilege of viewing Bircham-related historical maps and documents at Houghton Hall. During these visits, Lord Cholmondeley was pleased to study some additional documents brought by the visitors, including a copy of the sale catalogue from the auction of the Bircham, West Rudham and Harpley Estates in 1944. He also greatly enjoyed listening to people reminiscing about living and working on the Houghton Estate.

Lord Cholmondeley has kindly offered to host another visit on a Sunday afternoon in the near future. If you would like to join the group, please contact Hugh Rayner (07976 510134 or hughrayner@gmail.com).

Similarly, if you or someone you know has personal memories of living or working on the Houghton Estate, please contact Hugh.

Websites of the Month

For birders in Norfolk

An informative site listing the birds living and passing through our county. It lists rare sightings and provides images and descriptions of our avian friends. Very useful if you take part in the national bird watch and are not sure what feathered friend has actually entered your garden.

www.norfolkbirds.com/News.aspx

For free genealogical research

It's free, yes free, and allows you to search for your ancestors throughout transcribed UK records. Pretty reliable and can match (even outbeat) its paid competitors. The interface is admittedly clunky, but did we say it was free? Yup, though you could chuck a few pennies this charity's way if you are impressed or you discover that Aunt Agatha was loaded.

www.freebmd.org.uk

For would-be master mariners everywhere

Global ship tracking intelligence plots the position of (nearly) every ship on the High Seas and inland rivers. Watch in real time the progress of cruise ships, oil tankers, oligarch's yachts and fishing smacks. Marvel at how densely packed the English Channel is!

www.marinetraffic.com

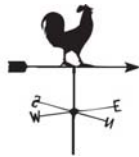


Countryside Lore

The Twelve Months

"Snowy, Flowy, Blowy
Showery, Flowery, Bowery
Hoppy, Croppy, Droppy
Breezy, Sneezzy, Freezy"

George Ellis (1753-1815)



Collop Monday

Traditionally the day before Shrove Tuesday, it was the day when meat (usually bacon or ham) was eaten up before the lenten period. The leftover fat from the collop was of course used to fry pancakes on the following day.

Marmalading

Seville oranges are in season in January. Obviously they're unlikely to be grown locally but can be frozen for when you want to make your marmalade.

You can also make marmalade gin or vodka. Use either marmalade and the spirit or use the raw fruit, spirit and a judicious amount of sugar. Tart up a little with spices, and add a touch of edible gold leaf for sparkle in your bottle. Last year we did the same with a crop of bullaces (largely inedible), cheap vodka and sugar, steeped for six weeks. Beautifully crimson and delicious in summer cocktails.

St Mary's 100 Club Draw 2024

Although the January Draw has taken place it is not too late to enter. The cost is £1 per number per month, so to take part for the rest of the year is £11. You have a chance of winning £25 first prize or £10 second prize each month with the prize money doubling in December.

Please contact John or Sally on 01485 779669 or email lsallyjohn@gmail.com for details

JANUARY RESULTS: 1st prize no. 80; 2nd prize no. 96

Charity of the Month

SAMARITANS

Just over 70 years ago, in November 1953, the Rev Chad Varah of St Stephen's Church Walbrook, east London, took his first call from a troubled individual: "I want people who are in serious trouble to telephone me for help," Varah said, instigating the "Good Samaritan" ethos and organization. Seventy years on we hear from James, of the London City Branch, about the modern Samaritans.

"Every 90 minutes, someone in the UK or Ireland takes their own life.

Over the festive period, Samaritans received around 250,000 calls from people in need. People like you and me, who needed someone to listen. Another 10,000 calls will be made to Samaritans today. And tomorrow. Every day this year. For more than 70 years now, whatever you're facing, a Samaritan has been there to face it with you. If you, or someone you know needs help, don't suffer in silence. Call 116 123 for free, day or night.

If you can help, a donation will help Samaritans continue to reach those who are struggling to cope."

Dates for the Diary

Feb 1 Friends of Bircham – Banter at Bircham Social Club, 2.30pm-4pm

Feb 10 Chinese New Year, the Year of the Dragon

Feb 13-24 818th King's Lynn Mart, Tuesday Market Place, King's Lynn

Feb 16 Raceday at Fakenham Racecourse. gates open 10.30am

Feb 17-25 Poo Trail at Pensthorpe. Tel 01328 851465 for information

Feb 19-23 NORFOLK SCHOOLS HALF-TERM

Feb 24 A Haunting in Venice (12A), 7.30pm at Village Screen Theatre, Amy Robsart Village Hall, Syderstone

Please send events for consideration for next month's newsletter to: news@thebirchams.uk

**MOBILE POST OFFICE**

The scheduled stop at Bircham Social Club, Church Lane are 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

Friday February 2/March 1

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

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 07:22 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

History Corner

Sandringham Time

Between 1901 and 1936 this little rural corner of Norfolk was ahead of the times. Literally! King Edward VII had all the clocks on the Sandringham estate set "fast", to half an hour ahead of GMT. The king, a lover of rural sports, especially hunting, believed that by re-setting the clocks he would get extra daylight for pursuing his passions. Even after his death "the experiment" continued until 1936 when Edward VIII abolished it, one of his few actions as king.

Sandringham time (ST) was also adopted at other royal residences at Windsor and Balmoral. Somewhat cruelly, it was put about that the changes to the clock were to facilitate Edward's habitually tardy consort, Queen Alexandra.

In fact the king, while still the Prince of Wales, seems to have adopted the notion upon having Sandringham House built. And he was said to have adopted the practice from the Earl of Leicester at nearby Holkham Hall. In 1893, a report from the residence said: "Every clock in the Prince's house in Sandringham, from the loud-voiced one over the stables to the tiniest of continental masterpieces, is kept half-an-hour fast. The ringing out of the hour 30 minutes before you expect it is startling in the extreme."

As a postscript: it was noted in 1936 that there were nearly 1,000 clocks and timepieces on the estate, providing work for a team of 12 for two months every year.

Churchwardens' Thanks to Fundraising Helpers

We would like to thank sincerely all the people who helped the Church to raise £1,200 in the **Summer Fair** and £1,700 in the **Christmas Fair**.

Whether you put up the decorations and made the Church ready; or baked cakes, made a success of the raffles, games or the tombola; contributed the prizes and gifts; or provided refreshments for the workers and supporters — or put everything back to normal afterwards — THANK YOU!

It takes a lot of money to keep the Church open and running in the way the village expects.

Dawn-Marie and Antony



Bircham Social Club

Happy New Year to all the club members and readers of the Bircham Times! 2023 was a busy year for the Club, with refurbishments and decorating taking place. There are still a few more jobs to do but the Committee is delighted to welcome old and new members to the Club. We will continue with the monthly bingo and hope to resume the Quiz Nights very soon. Darts, crib and dominoes take place regularly.

The Festive period saw some fun nights, with the annual Darts Competition taking centre stage in late December. The "Crafty Burger Man" came along that evening and is planning to make a regular monthly stop at the Club. Watch out for the dates.

Our Vice Chairman, Pete Elliott, is still with his family in Australia but plans to return in early February. In his absence, the bar has been manned by other Committee members, all giving their time voluntarily. Thanks go to Noddy, John and Pat – our "senior" maintenance team, all of whom are over 80! They continue to do a fantastic job.

BINGO — January 22nd at 7.30pm, come along and have a fun-filled evening in good company, and enjoy a slice of delicious homemade cake! Cash prizes on offer.

VILLAGE SCREEN CINEMA
at Amy Robsart Village Hall, Syderstone



Book Club: The Next Chapter (12A) showing January 27 at 7.30pm

A feel-good film which stars Jane Fonda, Diane Keaton, Candice Bergen and Mary Steenburgen.

Coming soon on Saturday nights: **A Haunting in Venice (12A) (24.2.24); The Miracle Club (12A) (23.3.24); The Great Escaper (12A) (27.4.24)**. Season ticket for all four films £14. Otherwise £4 per film (advance booking/pay on door)

Contact 01485 578171 or syderstonecinema_ARVH@outlook.com for further details



STANHOE VILLAGE SCREEN
at Reading Room, Stanhoe

Past Lives (12A) showing January 26 at 7.30pm. £5 inc refreshments. Doors open 7pm.
An emotional drama/romance by first-time director Celine Song.
Contact 01485 518191 for further details

Classifieds Column

We aim to help our readers sell or swap items, especially if large and bulky or you don't want to go down the Ebay route. If you are interested in anything listed, please reply to **news@thebirchams.uk** and we'll put you in touch with the seller. Instead of PO numbers we're using a system of "big cats" (just because !! well, we reckon the Post Office missed a trick!!).

VIAVITO SATORI EXERCISE BIKE Variety of training modes, heart rate monitor and clear digital display. Bought during lockdown, in good condition, rarely used . **£75** or offer. John (Box "Leopard")

CARAVAN Lovely 2005 Ace Ambassador Two Berth Caravan. **£4,250**. Motor mover included. It is clean, dry, well maintained and everything works as it should. Chrissie (Box "Tiger")

ELECTRIC LEAF BLOWER/VACUUM Titan 2800W, unopened & unused **£25**. Mike (Box "Puma")

THE CRICKETER MAGAZINE (1980-99 bound; 2000-2012 unbound) **£25 ONO****.

** Bargain just for the binders

Beryl (Box "Ocelot")



Bircham Weather

The sequence of wet months continued into December, producing a further 120mm of rain and making it the second wettest month of the year after October. This brought the accumulated total for the past three months to 392mm (69% of the figure for the whole of the previous year!) In fact, the total for 2023 was 941mm, which is 34% above average. Not only was December twice as wet as the previous year, it was also warmer, with an average max/min temperature of 8.7/5.1C compared with 6.2/2.2C. Even so, it began with snowfall on the first day along with unusually cold temperatures for the time of year: a minimum of -3.7C was noted on the night of the 3rd and persistent fog during the 2nd restricted the max daytime temperature to -0.7C. That was the end of any frost and snow though as the remainder of the month was wet and windy with Storms Pia and Gerrit on the 21st and 27th contributing to 10 days of gale force winds. The 12th saw the wettest day when 21.6mm fell with a fair contribution coming from a torrential downpour during the afternoon which resembled a summer's storm. Mild airstreams also pushed the temperatures above 10C on no fewer than 13 days with Christmas Eve providing the maximum at 13.9C, followed by a quieter spell of weather during Christmas Day and Boxing Day. The highlight of the month though has to be the appearance of the rare, stratospheric nacreous or "mother-of-pearl" clouds which gave a magnificent display at sunset on the 21st. Bryan

Bircham in Bloom

Bircham in Bloom Report: December 2023

The main topic under discussion last month was how to improve the area of land between the Snettisham and Fring Roads, known as the Snettisham Triangle. The BiB team would like the Parish Council to investigate options to allow them to enhance this area with the planting of bulbs, grasses and shrubs, keeping the work of maintaining the area to a minimum.

The next BiB meeting is on Thursday January 25 at 9:30am in the Bircham Stores Cafe. Please get in touch with Alison Royle (07725 497368) if you would like to come. If you have any ideas on BiB activities but cannot attend the meeting, please share them via the Parish Clerk (clerk@bircham-pc.gov.uk).

Grand Christmas Quiz

Thank you to everyone who entered the Christmas anagram quiz. We told you it was going to be difficult...made slightly more so by the typo in Q11. Many apologies for that...however, it didn't hold back the correct solution-getters at all...We've discovered we're a very clever village.

We had sufficient all-correct entries to hold a draw for the prosecco (and by some miracle we managed to find a suede drawstring bag for the purpose). The draw provided two winners: Chris Weldon and Terry & Louise Clark...bottle of prosecco to each team.

Congratulations to them and thanks to everyone else who took part. If you're interested in the answers, you can find them on the next page.

Thoughts for the Coming Year

We hope you like the adornment of dragons in this month's Bircham Times, to welcome in the Chinese Year of the Dragon on February 10.

We were also delighted to learn that this year has been designated the UN International Year of Camelids. ... so happy 2024 to all you bactrian, dromedary, guanaco, vicuña, llama & alpaca fans.

It's International Day of Women and Girls in Science on February 11. Lots of work is needed in that arena. It's sad but true that only 3% of Nobel laureates in Physics, Chemistry and Physiology/Medicine in more than a century have been women.

Do make contact at news@thebirchams.uk — especially if you have a tale to tell or an interest to impart.



1 ivy taint	<i>nativity</i>	26 eagerest hepcat	<i>the great escape</i>
2 hens tilting	<i>silent night</i>	27 neon asian dog	<i>sage and onion</i>
3 antenna bum	<i>tannenbaum</i>	28 cologned gawkiness	<i>good king wenceslas</i>
4 shes pecking	<i>kings speech</i>	29 kent ruby zero	<i>bronze turkey</i>
5 onetime twelfth bolthole	<i>O little town of bethlehem</i>	30 my india walls	<i>andy williams</i>
6 shy male	<i>hamleys</i>	31 sack innit	<i>saint nick</i>
7 friar filch CD	<i>cliff richard</i>	32 elope salt	<i>sellotape</i>
8 if hasty girl	<i>fairy lights</i>	33 ascot tightens urns	<i>roasting chestnuts</i>
9 nieces px	<i>sixpence</i>	34 caring losers	<i>carol singers</i>
10 gin collar	<i>carolling</i>	35 dourest owlet TV	<i>two turtle doves</i>
11 shanytowns for me	<i>frosty the snowman</i>	36 fowl snakes	<i>snowflakes</i>
12 nine snack ref	<i>frankincense</i>	37 cannon digit	<i>gin and tonic</i>
13 Mafia pug slurry	<i>sugar plum fairy</i>	38 any caber curser	<i>cranberry sauce</i>
14 I swag nails	<i>wassailing</i>	39 mice spine	<i>mince pies</i>
15 earnest sogginess	<i>seasons greetings</i>	40 sip coleslaw	<i>pillowcases</i>
16 spooks warn hats	<i>santas workshop</i>	41 dinner trowelwand	<i>winter wonderland</i>
17 estonia pit	<i>poinsettia</i>	42 interbred boars	<i>robin redbreast</i>
18 no rattus	<i>nut roast</i>	43 rentals	<i>antlers</i>
19 fat lie criteria	<i>artificial tree</i>	44 bed creme	<i>december</i>
20 elk rigs rink	<i>kris kringle</i>	45 grandma shin	<i>sandringham</i>
21 giblets napkins	<i>pigs in blankets</i>	46 bracer resin	<i>cranberries</i>
22 ye kitten doll	<i>little donkey</i>	47 shave metrics	<i>christmas eve</i>
23 alt inkwell kitten wristlet	<i>twinkle twinkle little star</i>	48 dimmish gnats	<i>midnight mass</i>
24 if vandalized	<i>feliz navidad</i>	49 maori diets	<i>radio times</i>
25 is cecil	<i>icicles</i>	50 amber gardening	<i>gingerbread man</i>