

Parish Council Matters

The main theme of June's meeting was roads – their surface, the speed and direction of traffic driving on them and the state of the walkways beside them.

Thanks to a thoroughly prepared presentation by Hugh Kemsley on behalf of the Speedwatch team and a subsequent response from the Highways Department of the County Council, it was agreed in principle to purchase two more Speed Awareness Monitors. Also known as Smiley Activated Messages (SAM3) signs, these indicate the speed of approaching vehicles and display red or green faces accordingly. Controlled studies have shown that these reduce the speed of traffic and the number of accidents. The signs would be moved between locations and be additional to the existing SAM2 device. A site visit is planned with the Highways Department to discuss refreshing the SLOW 30 MPH markings painted on the road surface. We will follow up our reports of drivers turning right towards Snettisham on the wrong side of the war memorial. We have suggested changes to the road markings to make it more obvious how the junction should be navigated.

We are continuing discussions with Highways about the poor surface of the Bircham Tofts trod. It seems to be prohibitively expensive to replace the ineffective drains. Adding a new layer of aggregate is probably the most cost-effective improvement. Another surface that is in a poor state is the bottom of the track to the playing field. Vehicles turning the corner have created a curved bank and hole. This must be repaired to provide disability compliant access to the playing field. We are obtaining comparative quotes for a tarmac apron to connect the track to the surface of Church Lane, which will be a longer-term solution than just filling the hole. We would love to get all these works done straightaway but money is limited. We will seek additional funding to add to existing funds and then prioritise the sequence of works.

Since the meeting, the new swings have been installed on the playing field. The large basket swing is made of steel core rope and is very robust, designed to take the weight of more than one young person or indeed a heavy adult!

Finally, a reminder – would you be willing to serve the village as a parish councillor? There are a number of vacancies and the broader the range of experience on the council the better. Full details are available on the PC website.

Next meeting is on Wednesday July 29, at 7.30pm, in Bircham Social Club. If you wish to discuss a Parish matter, please attend the meeting or write to the Clerk.

Email: clerk@bircham-pc.gov.uk Post: Hall Farm, Sedgeford Road, Docking, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE31 8LJ Website: bircham-pc.gov.uk

Newsletter Thoughts

This month we are fortunate to hear from King's Lynn & West Norfolk borough councillor Chris Morley as to what concerns are vexing councillors in the wider region, as well as within the local vicinity. Chris is of course a Bircham resident as well as also being on the parish council here. This is timely since as you all know by now the parish council has moved to a new model of meeting every two months (as opposed to the previous pattern of ten meetings a year). We hope to get more input from Chris over the coming months, especially since he is Cabinet Member for Finance!

In the country as a whole it'll be wall-to-wall football over the next month, and we had planned on reviewing an engrossing book on the origins of Hungarian football and how their coaches took the game to South America, as well as all around Europe, but it was TOO engrossing and we've yet to finish :-). Instead, we have a review of one of the most talked about novels of last year. A debut work that poses lots of questions as to "what's in a name". We also take a look at Harding's Pits, a largely hidden green space in Lynn; learn a little about the evolution of local bandstands; enjoy some royal reminiscences; and discover what's on the menu at World Cup stadia (we didn't say we were entirely boycotting the World Cup!).



Councillor Morley Reports

Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk – My Perspective

We have been nominated for two Local Council Awards: one as most improved council and two, for our housing scheme. We await the adjudication but notwithstanding the result, we are in a cohort of top local councils, which is not only where we want to be but, also, we will continuously improve from here. Any suggestions as what we can do even better are welcome but, until we become a Unitary, our powers are limited.

Finance – To balance our budget we had to increase our Council Tax by £5 per household and our discretionary fees by 7%. This resulted in a Band D charge of £152.87 but only 7p in the £ against the total Council Tax you pay at this Band when the County and Police demands are added to total £2,318.64. We still have to give 40% of our Council Tax receipts to support Internal Drainage Boards. We can't wait for both the Government to come up with a more equitable way of funding IDBs and for us to manage the existing County Services more efficiently. We have already delivered efficiencies of 15% since taking over and have built in a further 10% for 26/27. With a pay bill in excess of £25m you can easily calculate the efficiency impact. It has given us a General Reserve of £10m and ensured we pulled ourselves away from the black hole we inherited. We can now start to significantly invest in our communities and I look towards my colleagues to come forward with plans and projects to do just that. We are not waiting for a "rainy day", further significant improvements start now. Those visiting King's Lynn should already notice the work currently under way on major construction projects: this is only the start for the whole District. In Bircham with Rudhams we will have two new Reform colleagues and we look to them, for the short while they will be with us, for considerable support.

Our Housing Programme – A programme to build 1,000 houses, primarily for rent, with a significant number being affordable. To date, 972 are completed or under construction, 260 market sales, 127 affordable houses being occupied, 27 sold under shared ownership, 92 in private rental occupation. A programme worthy of significant recognition, not only in my view.

Coastal – You will recall the extensive work we helped coordinate to remove the oil nurdles from the north coast beaches, and we have recently fixed the extensive sinkhole in the promenade at Hunstanton and put significant £ms aside for coastal repairs. In our capital programme we have also set aside many upgrades to welfare and public facilities.

CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) – The process changed and training was delivered to parish representatives. Syderstone has a Neighbourhood Plan which will evolve. It would benefit all parishes to prepare a Parish Infrastructure Investment Plan to support future CIL applications; help is always available.

Local Plan – The Government, in setting political targets before analysis, is reducing the weight of public opinion. I recommend each parish sends a representative to training sessions (currently arranged for June 15 and 22).

Asset Management – We want to make best use of our buildings as well as our finances. Contrary to initial reactions, we do undertake a very considered and community approach to changes. We have an ageing or limiting estate but we will invest to deliver better outcomes in many ways: health, well-being, enjoyment, sport and the like. This goes hand in glove with a Marmot programme to reduce health inequalities in West Norfolk.

Youth Education – Your tax and fees help deliver our own apprenticeships and showcase opportunities and learning for this important sector for the future prosperity of the area.

Waste and Fly Tipping – We have invested in a team to address this sadly, ever-growing problem and have extensive powers to prosecute and fine. We will do this.

This is just a "potpourri" of my view of our actions to support our communities. Each Borough Councillor will have their own perspective of "deliverables for 2025/26". We are all available to help.

Chris Morley
Cabinet Member for Finance



Harding's Pits

Down by the River Great Ouse in southern King's Lynn, bounded by the river and the River Nar, lies a patch of ground known as Harding's Pits. In the mid-19th century the area was historically a brick field where clay was extracted as a local building material. Following this extraction, landfilling took place with rubbish and chemicals, including informal but nuisance tipping from nearby industrial activities. Also the area served as an official municipal waste disposal tip during the 1950s and 1960s.

At the height of the dumping in the 1920s the place was receiving waste that then had to be pumped out and covered with chloride of lime. Homes then as today were nearby and the smell was affecting householders and leading to claims of illness for up to 30 per cent of local schoolchildren. The area was once owned by the railways, who allowed it to fester before it was bought by the local council in the 1980s. The land was taken over in roughly the same period by "itinerant caravan owners". In 1975 a letter to the *Lynn Advertiser* noted: "The people who were on the pit were not gipsies. They were tinkers, now calling themselves antique dealers. Let me inform XX where they purchased their antiques. They knocked on doors and put their curses on those that refused them. You may laugh at these curses but to older people they were a direct threat and they parted with valuable property in fear."



Eventually the piece of ground known as Harding's Pits Doorstep Green was established and landscaped in 2004. This green lung has been designated a community park with walkways, grassy meadows, trees, a wildflower area, sculpture and an orchard. It's a growing retreat for both flora and fauna: insects, birds, reptiles and small mammals. Oh and there's a whale shelter there too, a commemorative piece of urban art celebrating the history of the whaling town. The upkeep is thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers who tidy, garden, plant and generally look after the site, but further volunteers are always welcome.

The latest venture on the site forms part of the Beuys' Acorn Project. In the 1980s, German artist and Green Party leader Joseph Beuys and his helpers planted 7,000 oak trees in Kassel, Germany. Acorns from these maturing oaks have been nurtured and thanks to artists Ackroyd & Harvey were planted in a seven-tree circle in Harding's Pits. Out of a neglected wasteland, a thriving environment now grows.

<https://www.hardings-pits.org.uk/>

Dates for the Diary

Bircham Windmill From Mar 28, 10-4pm

RAF Bircham Newton From Apr 5, 10-4pm (alt Suns)

RAF Sculthorpe From Apr 5 10-4pm (afterwards 1st Sun month til Nov)

Anmer Social Club Coffee, cake and chat, Mondays 10-12. Contact 07947 580555

Snettisham Park Open daily, 10-4pm

Houghton Hall & Grounds May 2 until Oct 4

Sandringham House and gardens from Mar 28

Jun 18 Mini Museum Club for Under-5s, "Museum Makers", Lynn Museum, 10.30-11.30am

Jun 19/Jul 17 Glow Worm Hunt, Pensthorpe, 10pm-midnight, £16.95

Jun 20-21 Hanseatic Festival of Watersports, King's Lynn (fireworks on the 20th)

Jun 21 Fakenham Duck and Raft Races, Goggs Mill Road, 10-2.30pm <https://www.activefakenham.org.uk/2026-riverside-community-day-raft-races-and-duck-races>

Jun 24-25 Royal Norfolk Show, Norfolk Showground, 7-7pm (Wed)/7-6pm (Thur), from £36/£18

Jun 25/28 National Theatre Live – *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, 7pm/4pm, Majestic Cinema, King's Lynn, £15

Jun 26 Afternoon Talk – A Brief History of Dolls, Lynn Museum, 2-3pm, £2

Jun 26/Jul 24 Butterfly & Dragonfly Walk, Pensthorpe, 10-1pm

Jun 26-28 Festival of Carriage Driving at Sandringham

Jun 27 Merchants Market, Tuesday Market Place, King's Lynn, 9-3pm



Foodie Fare: Football Edition

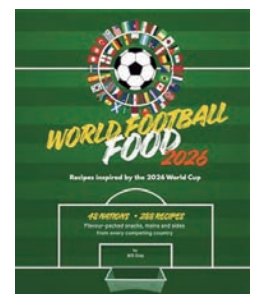
We're sure someone out there must know, but we've been delving into the history of food at football matches and have failed to come up with anything definitive as to when grub was first sold to spectators. None of those grainy black-and-white images of excited spectators show anyone with a football rattle in one hand and a pasty in the other. Come to think of it, that would have interfered with the Woodbines and Park Drive smoking habit. In any case, in the early days when football was centred on Northern and working-class communities (even before the word "community" was a substitute for "grimy town") the very thought of spending any money at all on food at a game would have been an anathema. Beer maybe, but not in the ground and at a local hostelry instead. Think Brentford FC with its Griffin Park ground with a pub on each corner. Or even the Old Spotted Dog in London E7 – a Henry VIII hunting lodge – that was host to Clapton FC for many years.

Anyhow there was definitely food on sale from concessions from the 1960s onwards, where you could grab a meat-and-potato pie and a hot meaty drink from a tea hut. Since then we've all gone fast food mad and at the bigger stadia (no longer grounds) you can have the full dining experience. From this summer's World Cup we bring you the following to amuse your tastebuds.

England first play at the AT&T Stadium, renamed the Dallas Stadium for six weeks. Away from football the place is home to the Dallas Cowboys of the NFL. On offer we've selected * Frito Pie Dog, Fritos Brisket Mac Balls, Texas-Sized Chocolate Chip Cookie, washed down with Black Rifle Coffee (from a can!). This is in-seat delivery of course as is the American way. Moving on to England's second match against Ghana in Boston. Surely a bit more refined dining here? The Gillette Stadium is home to the New England Patriots of the NFL and we've chosen a cheeky few edibles including Beyond Meat Burger, Swedish Fish, Warm Cinnamon Sticks and Bavarian Pretzel Logs. Finally, England meet Panama at the MetLife Stadium, redubbed the New York New Jersey Stadium (and where the final will be held on July 19). Two NFL teams, the New York Giants and New York Jets, both play here. Fried Clams, Fuku Fingers and Fries, Zeppoles, Thumann's Stadium Dog, and take a refreshing drink from the tequila bar.

Maybe you want to reproduce the full World Cup dining experience at home and if so we have a handy Bible to recommend: *World Football Food 2026: Global recipes inspired by the 48 nations in soccer's World Cup 2026* by Will Gray.

There are 288 recipes for matchday parties or home dining, including snacks, mains and sides from all 48 nations. You also get team insights and a tournament guide, and a full schedule to plan your menus. Unfortunately and sadly, there are no Italian dishes in there for obvious reasons and it is definitely NOT endorsed by FIFA. And just so you know that we're not only tormenting our US hosts, the England and Scotland contributions to this rich culinary fare go as follows:



England: Pulled-Beef Yorkshires; Sausage Rolls; Cheddar and Bacon Mini Quiches; Shepherd's Pie; Bubble & Squeak; Pease Pudding.
Scotland: Haggis-Stuffed Mushrooms; Mini Scotch Pies; Smoked Salmon Oatcakes; Cullen Skink; Skirlie (Scottish Stuffing); Neeps, Tatties (& Haggis).

* Tongue in cheek of course... we know full well that if the boot were on the other foot we'd be terrorising foreign football fans by serving up balti pies and Bovril.

Do remember that the *Bircham Times* can be delivered to parishioners by email. You can email us at 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



Hunstanton & King's Lynn Bandstands

There's nothing quite so British as a Victorian bandstand set up on a town's green space, be that an urban park, the seaside or open land. Generally circular in appearance, topped with a domed roof and colourfully painted timbers or built from wrought iron, these structures provide shelter from the weather for the musical players as well as aiding the acoustics. Spectators either sit on the grass, on deckchairs or on specially built seating. Most traditionally they were the venues for brass bands or military bands to show off their skills for public enjoyment; today, musical horizons have expanded and all sorts of music can be enjoyed.



This summer we have a full repertoire of musical Sunday afternoons at two bandstands. One on the Green in Hunstanton and the other in The Walks in King's Lynn. See the links below for full details.

The current bandstand at Hunstanton doesn't belong to the Victorian/Edwardian era at all. The plaque reveals it was "opened" on June 12, 1994, a gift to the town from Searles of Hunstanton in celebration of their 40th anniversary. There was an original bandstand – along with shelters – on the seafront that was built in 1912/13 to commemorate the coronation of King George V in 1911. It was an hexagonal red-brick edifice with zinc roofing that was paid for by public donations. It soon fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1946/7. The local council had sanctioned a loan of £803 over a term of 20 years to finance it, though that decision was preceded by many months of wrangling as to the perceived benefits.

Similar wrangling went on at King's Lynn Council in 1926, after at least three decades of debate regarding funding, whether by public subscription or on the rates, where a suggested figure of £500 was bandied about. By 1928 a tender operation for an octagonal building had commenced that led to the bandstand we have today. It was especially popular during the Second World War and was used for dancing and Punch & Judy shows as well as music.

A listing of summer concerts for both King's Lynn and Hunstanton can be found here:

https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/info/20240/hunstanton_events_and_activities/1289/music_in_the_hunstanton_bandstand
and

https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/info/20195/events/733/music_in_the_walks_bandstand

An incomplete listing of the nation's bandstands can be found here: <http://www.satische.org.uk/bandstands/bs-uk.htm>

Dates for the Diary

Jun 27 *The (Almost) Complete History of Britain* – Open Air Theatre, Deepdale Camping, 7.30pm, £15/£9.50

Jun 27-28 Festival Too, King's Staithe Square, KL

Jul 3-4 Festival Too, Tuesday Market Place, KL

Jul 3-5 Hunstanton One-Act Drama Festival, Town Hall, £7.50

Jul 4 Wild West Norfolk Festival, Glebe House School, Hunstanton, 12-10pm, £29.50/£15

Jul 4 Farmers' Market, Creake Abbey, from 9.30am

Jul 10-11 Festival Too, Tuesday Market Place, KL

Jul 11 Hunstanton Beer & Gin Festival, 1-5.30pm

Jul 12 Open Air Cinema, The Green, Hunstanton (3 films in a day)

Jul 17 NORFOLK SCHOOLS BREAK UP

Jul 17 Open Air Film Night, Tuesday Market Place, KL

Jul 18 World Championship Snail Racing, Congham

Jul 18-19 Folk in the Town festival, King's Staithe Square, KL

Jul 22-26 RHS Sandringham Flower Show 10-6pm (5pm on Sun). From £38.90/children free

Jul 23 Family Fun Day Hunstanton

Jul 23 Peter Piper Picked Some Litter, Hunstanton

Jul 24-26 Old Hunstanton Flower Festival, 10-4pm

Jul 25 Merchants Market, Tuesday Market Place, KL, 9am-3pm

Jul 25 Adult-Only Date Night, Pensthorpe. 6-9pm, £9.95

Jul 25-26 2026 Food Festival, Tuesday Market Place, KL

Jul 30 Family Fun Day, Hunstanton

Jul 31 Royal Norwich Golf Day, Royal Norwich Golf Club NR9 5JE



New Council Representative

Following the elections in May we have a new local representative for the Docking Ward (of which we are a part). Our new county councillor is Julie Costley of Reform UK.

Turnout was 3,998 (or 46.4% of those eligible); Costley won with 1,508 votes to defeat the long-standing member Michael Chenery of Horsburgh (with 811 votes).

St Mary's 100 Club Draw

JUNE RESULTS: Here are the latest draw results: 1st prize no. **41**; 2nd prize no. **59**. (1st prize wins £25; 2nd prize £10).

Many congratulations to the winners!

Sally

Bircham Banter

Next Banter session is on Thursday July 2 from 2.30 to 4pm in St Mary's, Great Bircham. Do come along and join with the regulars for chat, tea/coffee and cake, especially if you are new to the village. You'll be made very welcome!!

Pauline

Stanhoe & Barwick WI

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

July 2 Annual Garden Party (Members Only).

August 6 No meeting.

September 3 A talk by Diane Clark about Norfolk Accident Rescue Service.

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

Contact stanhoeandbarwickwi@gmail.com for more details about events and membership

World Snail Racing Championships

It's the annual rallying call to support the World Snail Racing Championships again this year to be held on July 18 at 1.15pm. Once again, it forms part of the celebration of the Mark Redhead Foundation Day held at Grimston Cricket Ground. Last year's winner was Bilbo Sluggins. Will he be returning to retain his crown? (We wrote that line without the foggiest idea as to how old snails live to... thanks to a quick online check it seems to be 2-5 years in the wild... so not impossible.)

Further research tells us that snails are hermaphrodites, meaning they have both male and female sexual capabilities. In one breeding season they can lay up to 400 eggs, protected in nests for up to a month until they hatch... as complete but tiny snails. They digest their own egg shells, in part to develop the necessary nutrients to harden up their own shells.

They are crepuscular or nocturnal, so this may account for some dopey or dozy snails on the 18th. And the "race track" tends to be wetted. Snails prefer slippery going.



Do go and support this charity event with cricket matches, stalls, bar and barbecue and live music from 6pm... we don't get many world championships to celebrate in our local neighbourhood. Ready Steady Slow!



Curl Up With a Good Book

The Names (2025) by Florence Knapp.

This one is going to polarise people. Readers seem to love it or hate it... so here goes...

On a wild and windy morning in October 1987 (presumably following that month's memorable storms), a young mother propels a pram with a newborn to register his name. She has been instructed by her GP husband Gordon to name him after himself and a long line of men in the family. Gordon, we gather, as well as being a pillar of the community, is an abusive husband and Cora (the "core" of the story) is fearful that giving her new son **his** name will sway the child's future towards violence. Her preference is to break the ties and call her son Julian, translated as "sky father", envisaging a future full of kinder possibilities for him. Meanwhile her 9-year-old daughter Maia, who accompanies her to register the name, wishes he were to be named Bear, "soft, cuddly, kind, yet brave and strong". Here at the very outset the story splinters and we experience a "sliding doors" moment following more than 35 years of the different repercussions from that initial decision of naming a child.



The story is not an easy read, We follow three boys and then men named Bear, Julian and Gordon at seven-year intervals (a take on the old Jesuit thing) through their lives. The only real constant being their sister Maia. There are deaths, a breakdown, love, families, children, relationships, recrimination, fear, reunions, prejudices... every human response... but at the centre is the devastation wrought by domestic violence. How it consumes not only Cora but the three versions of her son, their relationships and everyone in their midst. The novel describes the attrition of domestic violence (though thankfully not unbearably graphic) with the most stunning and unexpected moment occurring two-thirds of the way through.

There are snatches of contentment, devotion, that there's a future always full of possibilities despite the characters' fates and that they eventually learn to escape physically and emotionally the clutches of a bad man and the circumstances in which they find themselves and into which they are born.

Florence Knapp produces beautiful, uplifting and accomplished prose. It's a debut novel, a rewarding and thoughtful book, and takes a look at a common reality for many. It's not an easy read, but one where you must complete it in order to discover the fates of Bear, Julian and Gordon. Can they and their relationships be saved or are they "cursed" by the names given to them on a day when the whole world was shaken up?

Mobile Post Office

Ever since we lost the "static" post office in Church Lane, we have been blessed to be able to turn to the mobile service that runs out of Great Massingham. Actually, it is a service that covers villages all the way to the coast. No insignificant achievement!

We have been asked to put out a friendly reminder to everyone to please, where you can, embrace the service on offer. The mobile van covers all the traditional PO services, including postage, parcels, returns, money transactions, payments, greetings cards and so on. Also, basic food provisions and then the sweet treats in life including chocs, biscuits and cake. Additionally, you can put in a foodie order for something you have a hankering for and they'll bring it *nearly* to your door... well as far as the social club car park. Hours can be found in the boxed panel overleaf.

Lottery tickets, passports, driving licences, meter top-ups?



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 Jun 19/Jul 17

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 (new timetable from June 1)

To Hunstanton (from King's Head): Mon-Sat
07:36; 08:36; 10:36; 12:36; 14:36; 17:06
Return from Stand A Bus Station

To Lynn (from Bircham Stores): Mon-Sat
07:36; 08:36; 10:36; 12:36; 14:36; 17:06
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

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

Bircham Weather

The marked temperature fluctuations experienced in April continued into May, although on this occasion they were sufficiently dramatic to break long-standing records. It was also another notably dry month with only 17.3 mm of rainfall recorded which, normally, would likely have been sufficient to secure the title of driest month of the year but, of course, April will surely have claimed that.

The month began with mainly sunny conditions and temperatures reaching a maximum of 24.8°C on the 1st. However, a north-easterly airflow soon became established, bringing more overcast skies and a noticeable drop in temperature. The 6th was particularly cool with a maximum of just 11.1°C but the sun returned on the 7th and temperatures recovered, reaching 19.5°C on the 9th before cooler, showery conditions reappeared from the 10th onwards and an unseasonably cool day on the 15th saw a maximum of just 12.0°C. Thereafter, a more Atlantic influence brought generally unsettled weather but rainfall totals remained limited with the wettest day of the month coming on the 19th but, even then, only 6.5 mm of rain was measured.

Following this, pressure rose once again and conditions settled down with just 0.6 mm of rainfall recorded during the remainder of the month. Predominantly sunny weather then prevailed and, aided by southerly breezes, temperatures responded steadily. On the Spring Bank Holiday, the 25th, a maximum of 33.5°C was recorded which surpassed the previous UK May temperature record of 32.8°C set on May 29, 1944 at Regent's Park, Tunbridge Wells and Horsham. Unfortunately, this was beaten by many other sites too with the winner eventually going to Kew with a high of 35.1°C on the 26th, although here we still managed to equal the old record of 32.8°C on the same day. Thankfully these temperatures eased during the final days of the month but the maxima still remained above 20°C each day along with plenty of sunshine. All this brought the mean maximum for the month to 20.1°C, which is well above the long-term average of 17.1°C. The clear skies also provided an excellent view of the Blue Moon on the last day, an astronomical feature that only appears infrequently.

Bryan



Dangerous Driving Will Kill...

It's not often that we get stern and serious in this rag but in late May... what can only be described as a lunatic driver... decided to show off his "skills" by zigzagging across BOTH sides of Stanhoe Road approaching the Tofts Pond bend. He did this at at least 50mph, which is why the pedestrians in question turned as he shot past in order to clock his registration. Instead of slowing as one would have hoped, he zigzagged across the roadway on the blind corner, flashing his lights too as he went. One suspects he was showing off or trying to put the proverbial two fingers up but it's also unlikely he would have done this to male pedestrians.

We DO have a partial registration and can only hope that the idiot is not from these villages and is a tourist. Any vehicle, cyclist or pedestrian coming the other way would not have stood a chance...

Giant Rubber Duck Racing

Giant sponsored duck racing returns to Fakenham this June with local businesses adopting and decorating plastic ducks to race. You'll no doubt see them pre-race adorning their adoptive establishments around the town. You can of course get your own numbered duck to be entered into the mass rubber duck start.

And if ducks aren't your thing then there will be cardboard raft racing with intrepid paddlers aboard. There's also face painting, bouncy castle, hog roasts, cake, music and stalls, etc Find all the goings-on at Goggs Mill Road (in the field by the bridge) on June 21 from 10am.

Royal Reminiscences

Our late Queen's sense of duty brought especial joy to the Parish of Bircham in the north-east corner of the Sandringham Estate to which it had been added in 1947. Soon after buying it, the Queen's late father had donated 5 acres in the middle of the village for the building of a new primary school and, in the 1990s, I was privileged to be chair of the school's governing body. To mark the 50th anniversary of that donation we asked the Queen Mother to unveil a commemorative plaque in 1998.

After a most uplifting occasion, we asked the Queen Mother for her support for renaming the school after our late queen's father and, while in hospital recovering from a broken hip, she did just that and our late Queen agreed and it went ahead. A year later we asked the Queen Mother to return privately to see the new name board and the new blue school uniforms – blue – which she told us was her favourite colour because it reminded her of the Norfolk skies. When the day arrived the Lady-in-Waiting phoned me to say that the Queen Mother (then 99) was unwell and didn't want to be in public "but, if we had no objection, the Queen would come instead". We had no objection! And within minutes Her Majesty arrived, driving herself and wearing a headscarf. That evening she told a local clergyman that she had been to Bircham. "Mummy sent me."

In the entrance hall was a cabinet mainly displaying items given by Queen Mary presented on various Royal Tours during the reign of George V. One was a carved wooden plaque plainly depicting the Queen Mother and the late King, and I confessed to the Queen that we didn't know where it was from. Immediately she said it was presented during the Royal Family's tour of South Africa in 1947! What a memory for a minor incident over half a century before!

In 1946 George VI had attended the unveiling of the first post-World War II War Graves Cemetery with a Cross of Sacrifice located in the churchyard at Bircham and our late Queen attended a service of rededication of it 60 years later in 2006.

At the school in 1999, Her Majesty chatted informally with local pupils who surrounded her and presented to a local resident who regularly played the organ in the Church and the piano in the school her requested parting gift, a prayer book.

Keith Ives



Bircham Cricket Club

Our new solar panels are now fully connected, and will doubtless be basking in beautiful sunshine across the summer. As you can imagine, the vast majority of our electricity bill is incurred on sunny summer afternoons (primarily heating water for the showers, and the tea urn), so the panels are set to play an enormous part in making the clubhouse financially sustainable for years to come.

Results at the time of writing see our senior teams in semi-respectable lower-mid-table positions. We were also delighted to prevail in a friendly last month against Norfolk Police, who wrote to us afterwards to say how much they'd enjoyed their visit. The next ECB County fixture in the village is the visit of Warwickshire on Sunday August 23 to play Norfolk at U13 level – all spectators are welcome for what should be a very high standard match.

A reminder that junior, ladies' and senior training is on Wednesday evenings from 6pm – all are welcome, whatever your standard.



Bircham Bowls Club

What a fantastic start to the new season for the bowlers from the Birchams. The weather in June has stalled the enthusiasm a little but how lovely was May? Weather forecasters could never have predicted that, could they? At least the groundsmen's prayers were answered.

The setting at Houghton Hall is simply delightful and this may have been the catalyst for the Bircham division of Houghton bowling club having an intake of 5 players this year; 4 completely new to the sport. We are proud that membership now stands at 24 players plus keen social members too.

We've lost a couple of players through injury and we wish them both well and look forward to seeing them at the social functions.

Although membership is closed for the season, any interest is very welcome. Come along for a roll up. No pressure!

For more information call Alison on 07725497368

Ouse Valley Way WOW! Walk

The Ouse Valley Way is a 142 mile/229 km long distance walk that runs from Syresham in Northamptonshire to the Wash at King's Lynn, following – not unexpectedly – the course of the Ouse Valley through Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. Obviously, the walk can be done in stages but is an undemanding route that is primarily of interest for those wanting to see wildfowl on route: heron, egrets, cormorants, wigeons, kingfishers... not forgetting mammal species such as otters and the occasional seal who has made a wrong turning somewhere.

On Sunday July 12 there is a fun day out to celebrate the walk, though it is being held in nearby Cambridgeshire where nine hubs along the route allow you to stop off for drinks, food and toilet facilities. Full mapping details are available.



For more details try: <https://greatousevalleytrust.org.uk/walk-the-ouse-valley-way/>