

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

Life in the Birchams

November 2023 Issue 1

## Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of *Bircham Times*. We're very happy to have you along for the ride, but also so very keen to have your involvement. Some things remain the same: the minutes from Parish Council meetings, for example; but we also as an editorial team love to see greater involvement and interaction from villagers. This is not a publication that is done to you but one that you feel fully allows you to express yourselves (within the limits of decency of course).

We'd love your reaction to what you see here. The new (recipes, countryside lore, from the annals, charity of the month, and so on) as well as the familiar. This, hopefully, is just a start and when we get feedback (as we undoubtedly will) we'll know what catches everyone's eye as well as what you'd like to read about ... importantly the stories you have to tell, the skills you can share and clubs/meetings you'd like to set up. We can put you in touch with each other.

There's no need to feel alone on cold winter days. Share the love of knitting, book reading, wood sawing, stamp collecting, Spanish speaking. Book-keeping, bicycle fixing, as well as the less obvious such as malt whisky drinking, star-gazing, Scottish country-dancing, water-divining, pigeon racing or shed-building. Later we want to have our own version of a classifieds column, with skills and objects being shared about. Apples donated after a bumper crop, a skilled seamstress offering to replace a broken zip, donation of tomato plants in the spring, lending a leaf blower in the autumn, finding new homes for unwanted but serviceable items. And each and every one of us has something to offer, even if it is just companionship and a cup of tea or coffee.

We have a dedicated email address so do talk to us at [news@thebirchams.uk](mailto:news@thebirchams.uk)

And for those of you who don't appreciate a paper newsletter through your letterbox each month, then do let us know and we can send you an electronic version instead. And if you're really sure you don't want any correspondence at all, then again just get in touch the once.

### *The Editors*

The Editors would like to thank Gloria Daniels for her tireless work on all the Newsletters to this point. It's a tough job and she has done it uncomplainingly for many years. We've also been grateful for her wise counsel during this switchover.

Many thanks Gloria!

## Dates for the Diary

**Nov 8-Dec 23** Thursford Christmas Spectacular

**Nov 11-Dec 24**  
Luminate festival at Sandringham

**Nov 17-19** Christmas Craft, Food and Gift Fair at Sandringham

**Nov 21** Greene King Raceday at Fakenham Racecourse

**Nov 23-26** King's Lynn Film Festival

**Nov 24-26** Wells Christmas Tide Festival

**Nov 25** Christmas Fayre at the Parish Church

**Nov 25** Creake Abbey Christmas Gift Fair

**Nov 26** Hunstanton Dickensian Christmas Market 12-6

**Nov 26** Pensthorpe Christmas Market 10-4

**Nov 29** Winter ducks and evening roost at Pensthorpe 2-4.30

**Nov 30** Stanhoe Village Screen showing *Oppenheimer*, 7pm

## October's Recipe

### CHEESE SHORTBREADS

Makes 40 to 50

#### INGREDIENTS

150 g (5 oz) plain flour  
170 g (6 oz) extra mature Cheddar/Parmesan (or mix)  
115 g (4 oz) unsalted butter  
2 teaspoons ground black pepper/spice (I use Cayenne or Paprika)  
4 sprigs chopped fresh thyme leaves or level teaspoon dried thyme  
pinch seasalt

Pre-heat oven to 180-190 °C/(350-375 °F).

Beat the butter and grated cheese(s) together until soft. Add seasonings and spices etc. Mix in sifted flour until a soft dough is formed. Wrap the dough and chill for 10 mins. Cut the dough in two and roll each piece into a sausage shape. Chill again.

Cut the dough into thin slices and slightly mould these into rounds. Place on greased and lined baking trays and cook in the oven for 10 to 12 mins until brown. Cool. Keep in an airtight tin, Tupperware or, alternatively, freeze.

Jane

## Plant of the Month

### NERINE

Great for adding a splash of glamour to the autumn garden, these hardy bulbs produce flowerheads in particularly vivid shades of pink, as well as white and red. They prefer a sheltered spot and full sun and are also happy in pots. Nerines are bee-friendly, providing pollen and nectar at the end of the season. Try *Nerine bowdenii* (pink), which we have in our garden, *Nerine bowdenii* Alba (white) or *Nerine sarniensis* (red). This scarlet one is also called the Guernsey Lily, where it has been growing wild for 350 years. However, no one knows how it came to be there as it is actually native to the cape of South Africa!

Anna

## Parish Notes

### Allotments

There is a wish by a number of Bircham residents to obtain some allotment space. In order to best present the case for acquiring land it would be helpful if those who would, in principle, be interested could forward their names and contact details (phone or email / ) to the newsletter in the first instance. At the moment some progress is being made in earmarking possible space.

**news@thebirchams.uk**

PS

## From the Annals

### November 1923

A case of road rage at Houghton, when a car was held up by a lorry. George Dickinson was summoned for "wilfully preventing" the car driver from passing at Houghton. Dickinson and a man in the back of the lorry failed to hear the insistent "hooting" of the car [Ed. images of Toad of Toad Hall]. The defendant was ordered to pay 5s in costs and advised to fit a reflector to his lorry.

### November 1703

November 1703 saw what is known as The Great Storm rip its way through the country, killing an estimated 8,000 people, tearing up trees, destroying thousands of livestock, damaging hundreds of windmills, which were reported as catching fire such was the ferocity of the winds on their sails. Most calamitous was the destruction to hundreds of sailing vessels, with the drowning of thousands of sailors both in port and out at sea. A contemporaneous account follows:

"The great Storm of Wind on Sunday last has done abundance of Damage, both by Land and Water; about 3 or 4 in the Afternoon, there arose a most terrible Hurricane which lasted near an Hour, and threw down several Chimneys, until'd several Houses, and shook the Churches, in such a manner, that in many Places, the People left Divine Service unfinish'd, and fled with the utmost Consternation, and many Persons broke their Limbs, and came to divers Misfortunes by the Precipitancy of their Flight."

A more modern account has been penned by Martin Brayne in *The Greatest Storm* (The History Press) .

## Quiz

### Rearrange the names to give the correct solutions to the clues

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| ! Which nonagenarian was evacuated to North Elmham in WWII?                           | A. John Rolfe     |
| 2 Name the vacuum knight of the realm born in Cromer                                  | B. Richard Burton |
| 3 Which prize-winning boy soprano was a navigator at Bircham Newton in the mid-1940s? | C. Edward VII     |
| 4 Which Heacham man did Pocahontas marry?   | D. James Dyson    |
| 5 Who tampered with GMT in the early 20th century?                                    | E. Michael Caine  |

**Dec 1** On Disney+ *The Shepherd*, a story by Frederick Forsyth about a lost fighter pilot, filmed at West Raynham and starring Ben Radcliffe and John Travolta

**Dec 1-3** Hunstanton Christmas Tree Festival

**Dec 2** Xmas Special Quiz at Bircham Social Club. £50 to winning team

**Dec 2** Creake Abbey December Farmers' Market

**Dec 2** Fakenham Christmas Fayre

**Dec 6** Xmas wreath-making workshop at St Mary's. Tickets from xxx priced at £15 for supplies, refreshments etc

**Dec 7** Bircham Banter 2.30-4

**Dec 7** Stanhoe & Barwick WI Christmas Entertainment from Stuff & Folly

**Dec 19** Christmas Raceday at Fakenham Racecourse

**Dec 20** Nelson's Shantymen at the Ffolkes, Hillington

## Doctor's Note

If you are over 65 (or will be 65 by 31 March 2024), remember to grab your free Covid and flu vaccinations before winter

Contact Bayfield Surgery in Docking (01485 521135) or the Great Massingham surgery (01485 520521) for further details.



Remember that the village has its own Defib machines, attached to the outside wall of the social club in Church Lane, with the other at the Bircham Stores.

## Charity of the Month

We aim to spotlight the work of a charity a month, some local and some national. And to pique your interest in some of the good works that are going on and how you can donate or give your time in other ways. Next month we start with Baby Basics, a charity that shares much with the Christmas story.

## Websites of the Month

### **For jigsaw fans**

Cold winter evenings, at a loss for something to do? Instead of clearing the table for a week to do a jigsaw try instead an online version, with the satisfaction of a click when you select the correct piece. The puzzle sits in the background until you're ready to do some more. Over 15,000 puzzles and all for free!

<https://puzzlegarage.com/>

### **For People-Powered Research**

A big hit during lockdown, the Zooniverse voluntary community transcribes old records for current researchers to utilise the data.

For example, you can currently go on elephant or penguin watch, identify historical inmates at Sing Sing, count animals on Mont Blanc, chew over the records of 18th-19th Australian convicts or map the weather on Mars. Do as much or as little as you like... no obligations.

<https://www.zooniverse.org/>

## Curl up with a Good [Norfolk] Book

*Devices & Desires* (1989) by P D James, eighth in the Inspector Adam Dalgliesh mystery series. It is set on the North Norfolk coast in a fictional place called Larksoken, to where Dalgliesh has decamped for a bit of R&R. The peace is broken by the emergence of a serial killer dubbed the Norfolk Whistler, and the discovery of the body of Hilary Robarts, administrator of a controversial nearby power plant. True to form, there are numerous other suspects, all with compelling reasons to bump her off.

## Countryside Lore

### Tree Dressing Day

The first weekend in December is traditionally, in certain counties, celebrated as a tree dressing day.

Dressings can range from the subtle to the frankly OTT with paper streamers, lights, objects, bric a brac, and so on.

For a further peak at some of the excesses involved, take a look at the website of the environmental organisation Common Ground <https://www.commonground.org.uk/tree-dressing-day/> which also has a wonderful gallery of trees, dressed and undressed, as well as being an inspirational resource for anyone interested in art and the environment.

### Stir-Up Sunday

The Sunday before Advent (so this year it falls on November 26) is typically the day when women would start to prepare Christmas puddings.

Traditionally, the mixture was stirred in a specific way – from east to west to pay homage to the journey undertaken by the Three Wise Men. And not just women were involved. To bring luck, every member of the family had to be involved (though this might have had more to do with the stiff and heavy pudding mixture needing all hands on deck).

## Norfolk Dialect

The county has a rich repository of words that can baffle outsiders. Some are amusing and some give the countryside a romantic air. Nature gives us the bishy barny bee, which isn't a bee at all but a butterfly; the dodman, which is a snail; and the Billy Wix, who sounds like he's a winger for King's Lynn Town but is actually a barn owl. Do you have a favourite dialect term? And do you know its origins?

## Cristmas Lights Switch-ons

**Nov 18** Burnham Market

**Nov 25** Wells Next the Sea

**Nov 26** Hunstanton

**Nov 26** King's Lynn Tuesday Market Place

**Dec 2** Fakenham market square

## Pantos

**Dec 2-Jan 1** Jack & the Beanstalk, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton.

**Dec 8-31** Dick Whittington (and his cat), Corn Exchange, King's Lynn

**Dec 21** Funny Ffolkes stand-up comedy at the Ffolkes, Hillington

**Dec 23** Creake Abbey Christmas Farmers' Market

**Dec 25** Hunstanton Xmas Day Swim, from 11am

**Jan 2** New Year's Raceday at Fakenham Racecourse

**Jan 4?** Bircham Banter

**Jan 20** Peddars Way Ultra Marathon

Please send events for consideration for next month's newsletter to: [news@thebirchams.uk](mailto:news@thebirchams.uk)

### CONTACT DETAILS

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

**MOBILE POST OFFICE**

The scheduled stops 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 December 8/January 5  
 Stops at:

Monks Close 15:15-15:35  
 Village Shop 15:45-16:00  
 Social Club 16:05-16:15  
 Windmill Hill 16:20-16:55

**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 MASINGHAM AREA COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME**

Book on 01485 520823  
 Please give at least 2 days' notice

We welcome all contributions to this newsletter, be it suggestions, contributions and especially input for *Dates for the Diary*.

## Stanhoe & Barwick WI

Christmas entertainment on Thursday Dec 7 at the Reading Room Stanhoe. £5 inc refreshments.

Our 2024 Programme is still under wraps, but will be full of our usual entertaining and informative talks. We return on January 11th and thereafter on the first Thursday of each month, from 1st February. Please contact Valerie (01485 576261) for further details.

## History Corner

**Barbary pirates come-a-calling.**

The wealth of Lynn, a prosperous Hanseatic town, led in the early 17th to the slow but steady build up of arms and gunpowder munitions at the river's edge to fend off "pirates of Algiers and Tunis" as well as the training of a military force and the acquisition of ships of war. In 1633 captured pirates were conducted to Marshalsea prison in London.

**Shakespeare season to celebrate the Anniversary of Shakespeare's First Folio**

Autumn on TV is celebrating the anniversary of the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio, with a season of documentaries, comedies and showings of the plays themselves. Coinciding with this was the announcement of the discovery of the original wooden stage of St George's Guildhall, in Lynn. Now Britain's oldest working theatre, the medieval stage was discovered beneath the existing floor and was where Shakespeare (in his actorly phase) actually trod the boards. The acting troupe were in Lynn avoiding a bout of the plague in London.

## Random Local Facts

One of the shortest rivers in the UK, the Cong rises on the Hillington side of Congham and is just 1.5 miles long.

Talking of Congham, it has been the venue for the World Snail Racing Championships since 1960. Overseen by the Snail Master, the 2-minute world record was set by Archie the snail in 1995. Just goes to show that size is no barrier.

The Robert Redford/Meryl Streep classic film *Out of Africa* (1985) was partially filmed at Castle Rising... which doubled as Denmark (no, not Kenya – that would have been a bit of a stretch).

Castle Rising has counted as its MPs both Samuel Pepys and Robert Walpole, and as remarkable is the fact that this inland place was once a port on the Wash.

Long thought to have been commissioned by Thomas Coke of Holkham Hall who wanted robust headgear when he went a-hunting, since he was held back when his tall riding hat hit low branches. The design was created by London hat-makers Thomas and William Bowler and made its debut in December 1849.

## Nature Watch

The celebrated pink-footed geese are back with us again, seemingly slightly later than in previous years with them no doubt adjusting to climate change and the late Indian summer weather and delaying their departure from Arctic climes.

Local news outlets have been discussing the sighting of a golden pheasant, a game bird so bright that it looks like it's had a head-on collision with a packet of children's crayons. Last seen in Dersingham in September, have you seen it in your garden. Difficult to miss!

Keep us up to date with other strange village interlopers. Seen recently are caterpillars of the Elephant Hawk Moth (a hideous chap) and the Tomato Hornworm (a vivid green beast). Has the army of moles retreated from gardens to fields, are we all ready for all sorts of small furry critters ready to keep warm at our expense, and where do all the muntjacs/pigeons go in winter?

## Quiz Answers

1 E; 2 D; 3 B; 4 A; 5 C.

## *Bircham Weather*

October continued the soggy Autumn theme with 170mm of rain, equating to around three times the monthly average and a vast difference on the 33mm recorded last year. The month began reasonably enough though with only 19mm noted up to the 12th and there were some warm days when the temperature exceeded 20C, with a figure of 22.0C on the 10th -- the warmest day of the month. The decent spell was interrupted on the 13th which saw one of the "wet" days when 24mm of rain was noted but things soon settled down again, bringing plenty of sun and dry conditions between the 14th and 18th. Only three dry days up to the end of the

October though, which will be remembered for Storm Babet that moved up from Biscay to hit the UK on the 20th. Apart from the gales, here in Bircham we received 52mm of rain on that day which was responsible for some significant flooding locally, not helped by a further fall of 27mm on the 24th. Although spared a repeat of such dramatic daily numbers for the remainder of the month, a further 29mm was still allocated to us with the traditional wet November to follow!

Bryan

## *Magpie Centre*

The home of West Norfolk Riding for the Disabled Association is hosting Christmas pony activities for young riders at £25 per rider. Tel: 01553 810202.

The centre always needs volunteers, offering a range of talents, from tea and cake-making at events, through DIY abilities, to hands-on

work with the horses, and not forgetting donations.

Please also contact the centre at [www.rda-westnorfolk.org.uk](http://www.rda-westnorfolk.org.uk) for details.

## *St Mary's 100 Club*

November's winning numbers are 16 (£25 1st prize) and 63 (£10 2nd prize). Congratulations to the winners.

The draw, which take place at the beginning of each month, is £1 per number per month and you may buy more numbers if you wish. For December the prizes are £50 and £20 respectively.

A big thank you to all who have supported the Club Draw over the past 3 years. In that time you have raised nearly £2,000. This money goes towards maintaining this beautiful Grade I listed Church at the heart of our village.

You can apply by completing the form enclosed with the newsletter, alternatively, the forms will be available during Banter on 7th December.

Sally

## *December's Newsletter*

### **Bumper edition, early for Christmas.**

A super new feature Charity of the Month (Baby Basics from Jan), Get into the spirit of Xmas early with some of our very best Christmas cracker jokes (no honestly they are quite good), a huge Christmas-themed anagram quiz to keep minds occupied over the Christmas period (with a prize!), more dates for your diary. AND, we hope, much more content and suggestions from you, the readers. Make your voices heard, especially if you are organising events within the villages. Make contact at [news@thebirchams.uk](mailto:news@thebirchams.uk)