



Parish Council Matters

Our next meeting is on Wednesday 27th November at 7.30pm in the Social Club; as usual, Members of the Public are very welcome. 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 Hall Farm, Sedgeford Road, Docking, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE31 8LJ. Our website is <https://bircham-pc.gov.uk/>

Newsletter Thoughts

The week of November 4-8 took us back to the 70s in a somewhat unexpected way. To those who experienced the power cuts on the Monday and Friday evenings (at Bircham Towers it was 8½ hours and 5½ hours respectively) it brought memories of living by candlelight back into sharp focus. Well not sharp focus since it was a very dark week with not a lot of moonlight to help out. And at least in the 70s the blackouts were staggered and pre-planned.

UK Power Networks did keep us up to date with regular messages if you could locate your mobile phone and had previously requested text messages to be sent in such an emergency. By the end of the week, we'd become accustomed to the pings in the dark from Maisie, Lisa and Dave I think it was. Can't read back my handwriting...

We were never given anything other than tantalising snippets so it became like a low-grade murder mystery. UKPN centred the problem on Anmer in their blackout map (them, huh! bet they weren't sitting in the dark wishing they had had an early tea), but bit by bit the clues came if you could be bothered and hadn't resorted to bed by 7pm. Lucky individuals were being rerouted but those of us who couldn't were being reassured that engineers were on the scene, which then turned out to be Docking Road. It's a blooming long road so whereabouts? They never said, but told us a cherry picker was being ordered. Then after the cherry picker arrived it was struggling with the boggy ground. Must be in a field somewhere. Does that leave us any the wiser? Oh and we were told that the electricity cables were on the ground. Seemed odd since we'd had no rain or other bad weather, and the air was about as still as could be. Probably not malicious damage so we pinned our sleuthing colours to the "flock of geese" mast.

All fixed by the early hours and awoken by lights, beeping of machines all around and a trot around a cold house to switch everything off that needed switching off. Eight and half hours without electricity does not entitle us to compensation (it kicks in after 12 hours) so we took it on the chin. When the lights went out on Friday before even 5pm it became a bit clearer. Did they "bodge" the first fix to get in under the 12-hour compensation? We may never know but they seemed to be on site in double-quick time in this instance. The cables were down again on Docking Road. Candles, torches and powerbanks to the fore we settled down again to a cold tea and a book to read.

Things we learned: old houses do get cold very quickly, even on a not-very-cold night. Conversely, the inside of fridges do get warm very quickly without power. And we were reflecting upon our obviously poor choice to buy a huge smoked haddock, currently residing in the fridge, that we'd planned to eat over a course of a few meals ... and that we'd now have to gorge on for breakfast, dinner and tea.

More seriously, there are issues to overcome when the "lights go out". Keep doors in your house closed, stay safe with quick access to blankets, torches, mobile phones, powerbanks, candles and matches (take care obvs...lanterns are a safer bet if you have them). Don't open your fridge or freezer if you can help it. Switch off, if you can, any devices or machines that may experience a power surge when it comes on again. And check on vulnerable neighbours by announcing your arrival (don't scare the bejesus out of them in the dark!).... Till next time!

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

In addition, we publish on the 15th of every month on our website: www.thebirchams.uk



From the Annals

WHAT TO BUY FOR CHRISTMAS 1924

One hundred years ago Christmas present-buyers were spoiled for choice. Just take a look at what was on offer from the pages of the *Lynn Advertiser* of Friday December 19, 1924. It may provide inspiration for this festive season. Or maybe not!

According to Stanley Walker, wireless engineer, the present to go for was a wireless set “the ideal Christmas present”. Well he would, wouldn’t he, since he owned the wireless shop in Norfolk Street, King’s Lynn. “Or failing this, why not a pair of ‘phones or other suitable wireless requirements?” Jermyn & Perry of the High Street — “The House Like the London Store” — gave plenty of advice for the lady love in your life, from linen and lawn handkerchiefs priced from 2d to handkerchiefs in fancy boxes [very fancy boxes at 11/9]. The perfumes on offer were “Luces” and “Ye Olde English” [which sounds a bit nasty to modern ears]. Also a fine array of aprons: rubber, servants’, muslin aprons and plain old tea aprons. Gloves came in many colours and many animals from deer, doe, coney, seal and so on...

At 20 High Street there was Cash Wallpaper Co., which advertised deer skin rugs, tricycles and Chinese work baskets. Meanwhile over at Snettisham Army Surplus ... what every demobbed hubby really fancied being reminded of at Christmas was "Army Heavy Wool Pants and Vest, Oily Skin Coats and Leggings and Rubber Thigh Boots and Police Coats".

E C Longmate in Norfolk Street, King’s Lynn, was more interested in your Christmas holidays passing with no unexpected visitors. Dec 26 1924-Jan 1 1925 was designated “Rat Week in Norfolk” and Longmates Rat Poison at 6d a tin was designed to kill rats, mice and moles — “The Liverpool Virus”. Harmless to anyone else and “always fresh” apparently!

Also in Norfolk Street was Plowright, Pratt & Harbage, which confidently announced that the best Christmas present ever was an Aladdin Incandescent Paraffin Lamp, “the Christmas gift for every home. The gift that will probably foster more real happiness and contentment than anything of equal cost you could give” [Dunno... I’ve seen it and am non-too impressed].

Jo Cox & Sons, “the leading Meccano dealer”, fittingly selling their wares from Railway Road, set great stall by having moving models in their window. In 1924 it was a grandfather clock (!). Never mind, think of the excitement of a Hornby train set for the kiddies, complete with a “Zulu passenger set” [actually think Zulu must have been a brand rather than harking back to the South African Wars and bare-chested gents with spears boarding the 10.20 to Cambridge]. Also for young lads, the Christmas shopper was urged to visit Verry’s: “Boy, tell your parents that the most useful present is a FOOTBALL (for outdoor) and a FRETWORK OUTFIT (for indoor). [Honestly, we have no idea... possibly one of those balsawood construction toys.] Though apparently, “Verry’s famous Linnet football is the very best procurable” [and we have no way of proving them wrong].

In fact all shops were urging shoppers not just to believe the newspaper adverts but to come and view their windows (from hams, rich Christmas puddings, royal mincemeat, imperial strong ale, blankets, Christmas dainties, golf hose, motor foot muffs, and invalid port). Ladies were encouraged to visit the DEAD MEAT MARKET on the Saturday before Christmas to get an assortment of, well, the attractively named “dead meat”.

John Ward’s Fruit Stores had plenty of fresh fruit available: apples, nuts, pears, oranges as well as the more exotic Tunis dates, cocoa-nuts, Sunmaid raisins and “Garden of Allah dates”. Tinned fruits were also available for purchase alongside tinned fishies: salmon, crayfish and lobster. “Home made jams made by electricity” must have been a novelty as were crisps “Have you tried potato crisps? Only 2d and 3d a packet”. [Think we can remember when they were that price in the 1970s...maybe they were expensive because they were also made by electricity?].

Eat, drink and be merry this Christmas everyone, and don’t forget to stock up on the rat poison!!



Foodie Fayre

Scotland's national day on November 30 is a bank holiday but is less celebrated than the two other wintertime Scottish festivals: Hogmanay and Burns' Night/Supper. There's tons of Scottish food to celebrate with though, most with funny names — *cullen skink* (smoked haddock stew), *parten bree* (creamy crab soup), *crappit heid* (stuffed haddock/cod head), *howtowdie* (oat-stuffed chicken), *neeps* (turnips), *rumbledethumps* (potato and cabbage), *clootie dumpling* (suet pud), all washed down with Irn Bru of course. Here, though, we go for an easy recipe with possibly three of the most Scottish of ingredients: raspberries, porridge oats and whisky.

CRANACHAN

Cranachan is a traditional Scottish dessert. It sometimes goes by the name of Atholl Brose. But the latter is actually a drink that uses most of the same ingredients. As legend goes, in 1475, the Earl of Atholl suppressed a Highland rebellion by spiking the rebels' well with said drink, leading to the inebriation of the enemy.

85g pinhead or porridge oats
100ml whisky
300g raspberries
3 tbsp honey
568ml double cream

Toast the oats either in a dry frying pan or under a grill until browned — keep an eye on them, since it's a fine line between browned and burnt! We like to use pinhead oats, but they can be a bit hard to find these days, so regular porridge oats are fine.

Now mix the toasted oats with the whisky: add whisky until the oats cannot soak up any more. If you add the whisky to the oats while they are still warm, a fair amount of the alcohol will evaporate, making the dish less intoxicating. To keep all the alcohol content, wait for the oats to cool.

Wash the raspberries, then gently heat them in a saucepan with a tiny bit of water, so that they are slightly softened, and mix in the honey. Divide the raspberries among four serving dishes and allow to cool.

Whip the double cream until you get soft peaks — unless you've got arms like the Scotsman on the porridge box, you'll need to use an electric mixer. Stir the whisky and oat mixture into the whipped cream, making sure it's evenly distributed.

Finally, top the raspberry mixture in the serving dishes with the cream mixture. Decorate, if you fancy, with a raspberry or mint leaf.

Frozen raspberries work fine this time of year; you'll not need to add water though.

LR

Dates for the Diary

From Oct 7 Coffee, cake and chat, Anmer Social Club, Mondays 10-12, 07947 580555

Nov 1-Dec 24 Deepdale Christmas Shopping, Dalegate Market, Burnham Deepdale

Nov 15-17 Sandringham Christmas Craft, Food & Gift Fair £12/£5

<https://www.livingheritagecountryshows.com/sandringham-craft-food-and-gift-fair-tickets/>

Nov 16 Bircham Social Club Quiz, 8pm

Nov 16 Burnham Market Christmas Market and Lights Switch-On, 1-7pm

Nov 18 *Fairytale of New York* (Irish-themed Christmas concert), King's Lynn Corn Exchange 2.30/7.30pm £30

Nov 19 Horseracing @ Fakenham. Residents' Raceday

Nov 21-Dec 24 Luminare Sandringham 4.30-8pm. From £15

Nov 23 *The Holdovers*, Village Screen Cinema, Syderstone, 7.30pm £4

Nov 23 Christmas Wreath Workshop @ Pensthorpe £55

Nov 23 Creake Abbey Christmas Gift Fair, 10-3pm

Nov 24 King's Lynn Christmas Lights Switch-On

Nov 24 Christmas Market @ Pensthorpe £3

Nov 27 Parish Council Meeting at Bircham Social Club, 7.30pm

Nov 29-Dec 1 Wells Christmastide Festival

Nov 30 Fakenham Christmas Lights Switch-On 10-5.30pm



Digital Digest

For retro Christmas TV

For a bit of nostalgia, take a peek at this site that details Christmas TV programming from the past. We plumped for BBC Christmas Eve/Christmas Day 1974 (as the 50th anniversary). BBC2 brought us the classy bits: Tchaikovsky Night with the LSO, Verdi's *La Traviata*, Olivier's *Henry V*, Elton on the *Old Grey Whistle Test* and, curiously, retrospectives of the golfing and horse-racing seasons. BBC1 to modern eyes was more problematic, with the *Black and White Minstrel Show*, Rolf Harris broadcasting from the National Children's Home and, yes, you've guessed it, Jimmy Savile introducing *Top of the Pops*. Other than that we got *Top Cat*, *Star Trek*, *Billy Smart's Circus*, *Holiday on Ice*, Brucie, Mike Yarwood and Parky, and the reassuring touch of both David Attenborough and the Queen. Roll back the years from 1936 onwards on the Beeb, also ITV, Channel4 etc.

<https://ukchristmastv.weebly.com/>

Curl Up With Two Good Books

A Russian Journal (1948) John Steinbeck, with photographs by Robert Capa.

An engaging volume of reportage from post-war Russia, written and photographed dispassionately by journalist Steinbeck and photojournalist Robert Capa (he of the famous image from the Spanish Civil War, *Death of a Loyalist Soldier*). The pair visited Russia and Ukraine on a 40-day trip in the summer of 1947 to tell, as Steinbeck put it, "not the Russian story, but simply a Russian story". They eschewed the politics of the time to concentrate on loves, mores and characters of the ordinary Russian populace: What they enjoyed, what they ate, how they dressed, did they have parties, and so on.

Steinbeck is a witty and captivating writer with a curious eye and amusing tales to tell of the foibles of Moscow plumbing, the ramshackle nature of Soviet air travel and food and drink. Food features highly on the agendas of both Steinbeck and Capa and they marvel at the bountiful generosity of Ukrainian farmers and show genuine confusion at the tomato salad and cream soda breakfast fare they meet everywhere in Stalingrad. Needless to say, there are also hoary tales of Soviet bureaucracy and labyrinthine paperwork.

The book bounds along but is also peppered with unavoidable descriptions of the Ukrainian harvest being brought in by women and the few men left, mostly maimed, after the total destruction of that country by German forces, and when the two eyewitnesses reach Stalingrad even they as hardened war reporters are horrified by the vision of a near-savage young woman who lives below ground in the razed city and who emerges every morning to devour what scraps she can find.

Sometimes light in tone and sometimes very sobering, there are within these 200 pages many parallels with today. It's very definitely a worthwhile read.

Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine (2018) Anne Applebaum

This is a much weightier and powerful tome that discusses the Holodomor, the 1932-3 terror-famine in Ukraine that followed the USSR's agricultural collectivisation of the country, which resulted in the starvation of some 4 million Ukrainians. Argued by some as a genocide, Applebaum's research uses first-hand testimony as well as Soviet records to tell the history of the period.

It's a tough and unflinching book in its description of the Holodomor ("killing by hunger"), which led to widespread cannibalism, the subjugation of Ukrainians (their language and culture) and the persecution of intellectuals. And then, as with other great world tragedies, there was the immense cover-up of the atrocities. Less than a decade later Ukraine was plunged into the Second World War where an estimated 7 million died and the land was again scorched, this time by the German foe. Is it any wonder why present-day Ukrainians fight so heroically for their culture, homeland and sheer existence once more?



History Corner

THE MYSTERY OF AMY ROBSART

You'll be familiar with the name — it's the one given to Syderstone's Village Screen Cinema venue (see page 7) — but who exactly was Amy Robsart? No, not some local government ribbon-cutting dignitary but the wife of Robert Dudley, a son of the earl of Warwick, a man who became a favourite of Good Queen Bess.

Robsart, the only child of a well-to-do Norfolk family from Syderstone, was born in 1532. Her marriage to Dudley seems to have been happy but after he became Master of the Horse to the queen, he spent his time at court. Amy, after a period of illness, was removed to Cumnor Place, near Oxford, which is where she died on September 8, 1560 in mysterious circumstances, having fallen down a flight of stairs while alone and breaking her neck. Her inquest also discovered two small wounds to her head

Gossip surrounded the circumstances of her untimely death, whether it was suicide or accident or murder, with many suggesting Dudley had a hand in it. Whether guilty or not the scandal meant he failed to secure a marriage to the queen — as did anyone else of course!

KENILWORTH

If you want a fictionalised account of Amy Robsart we have no hesitation in suggesting you pick up a copy of Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth*, which tells of the life and times of Amy, Robert and Elizabeth.

There's also an informative podcast <https://digpodcast.org/2019/12/01/amy-robsart-lady-dudley/> based more on fact than fiction.

REVOLUTION

A movie that was deemed a spectacular flop at the time, and whose reputation hasn't actually improved over the past 40 years, was partially set in King's Lynn. *Revolution* was a big-budget epic set during the American War of Independence/American Revolution (take your pick) and starred Al Pacino, Donald Sutherland, Nastassja Kinski and Steven Berkoff as well as being directed by Hugh "Chariots of Fire" Hudson. The original Georgian buildings of King's Lynn, with associated muddied and cobbled streets and augmented by some creative polystyrene infills, doubled as late 18th-century New York.

The iconic Custom House takes centre stage, sailing ships were moored on the quayside, soldiers marched along cobbled streets, and hundreds of Norfolk extras earned £20 a day (with meals) to fill the street scenes, creating a baying, filthy American populace.

Not often shown on TV, you can re-live the movie, or just skip through to the KL bits, on YouTube.

Dates for the Diary

- Dec 1** Hunstanton Christmas Lights Switch-On, 10-6pm
- Dec 5** Bircham Banter, Social Club 2.30-4pm*
- Dec 7** *A Christmas Carol*, The Brick Barn, Deepdale Camping, Burnham Deepdale from 7.30pm, £14.50/£9
- Dec 7** Snettisham Christmas Fair, 5-8pm
- Dec 7-Jan 5** *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton, from £21.50/£19.50
- Dec 10-Jan 5** *Cinderella*, King's Lynn Corn Exchange, From £19
- Dec 11** Bircham in Bloom at Bircham Stores, 12 midday
- Dec 13-15** Christmas Food, Drink & Gift Market at Holkham Hall, 10-4pm
- Dec 14** *An American in Paris – The Musical*, Amy Robsart Hall, Syderstone 7pm £6/£4 See also page 7
- Dec 22** Horseracing at Fakenham
- Dec 25** Christmas Day Fancy Dress Swim at Hunstanton 10.30am

* Venue to be confirmed



Churchill Time and British Standard Time

As we endure darker, earlier evenings since the clocks went back on October 27, we cast an eye back to wartime when Winston Churchill introduced changes to the clocks whereby we didn't put the clocks back in the autumn, maximising the amount of daylight hours and cutting the associated fuel costs of lighting and heating for domestic users and industry.



Interestingly, the MP for Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard, Alex Mayer, has recently suggested a return to "Churchill Time", or Double Summer Time as it was also known, where we could capture those same benefits. It would also bring us more into line with Western Europe. Scottish farmers, however, have long resisted the idea, since they would spend many hours in the winter mornings under the cloak of darkness. Maybe we would see the divergence of the two countries and their time zones and see the introduction of Celtic Time? As one wag put it, if we've been saving daylight for so long, where is it and can we cash it in? Or is it being stockpiled by the EU?

PS November 30 sees the 150th anniversary of the birth of Winston Churchill.

Some of you will be old enough to remember the experiment between 1968 and 1970 when we did not put the clocks back and ran with British Summer Time all year round (renamed British Standard Time). Kids were issued with reflective armbands, since they were going to school in the dark.

The experiment saw an increase in road accidents in the morning, but a reduction in the evening, with a substantial reduction in accidents overall. However, the statistics were slightly skewed since they did not factor in the recently beefed-up drink-driving laws that saw the introduction of the breathalyser!

Bircham in Bloom

'The Bloomers' met on October 15 and were delighted to welcome two new members, Andy and Debbie Underwood. It's great to have new ideas and enthusiasms in the group.

Gardening work and improvement has been done on a number of areas and we will be planting bulbs and plants that will brighten up the village next year. We will be planting three Wayfaring trees (*Viburnum lantana*) in spaces along the eastern boundary of the playing field. These have attractive flowers and berries.

We reviewed the management of the Fring triangle and decided to plant more spring bulbs, then regularly mow the whole area to keep the grass short.

Our next meetings will be at 9.30am on Thursday November 14 and at midday on December 11 at Bircham Stores. Do join us!

Chris F



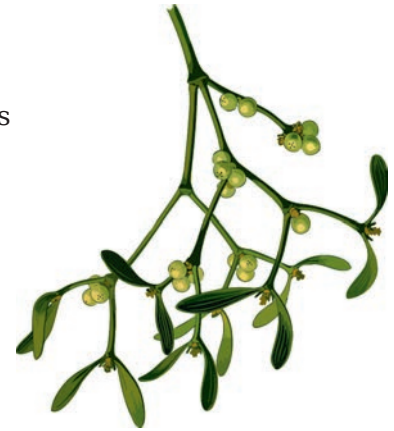
In the Garden

DRESSING THE FESTIVE HOME

For hundreds of years homes were decorated not with tinsel, paper decorations and stringed lights (thank the Victorians and Prince Albert in particular for that) but with evergreens. Prominent among the Yuletide evergreens is mistletoe (as well as cypress, box, rosemary, yew).

Mistletoe, the kissing bough, has been the Yuletide home decoration since at least the 16th century. Traditionally, a man who won a kiss under the mistletoe was expected to remove one of the white berries; once all berries were gone the kissing had to stop.

Symbolism was to the fore with holly: with prickly holly representing males and smooth holly standing for females. Bringing holly into the house at any time other than Christmas was meant to bring a death to the family.



VILLAGE SCREEN CINEMA at Amy Robsart Village Hall, Syderstone



The Holdovers (15) Saturday November 23

College professor Paul Hunham, forced to stay on campus over the 1970 Christmas holidays to care for a handful of “holdover” students, befriends troublemaker Angus and grieving cook Mary in this witty retro comedy that won Best Original Screenplay at the 2023 Oscars.

Starring Paul Giamatti and Oscar-winning Da’Vine Joy Randolph.

Doors open 7pm; tickets £4 pay on the door

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

ANNOUNCING OUR SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SCREENING — you really won’t want to miss this “a truly feel-good film for the festive season”.

On Saturday December 14 we bring the West End to Syderstone with a special festive screening of *An American in Paris – The Musical* — a film of a live stage show. This Live to Screen recording was filmed at the Dominion Theatre in London’s West End. The Broadway musical, inspired by the Oscar-winning MGM film, tells the story of discovering love in the “City of Light”. Featuring show-stopping choreography, it received a record 28 five-star reviews from critics. It features glorious George Gershwin favourites such as ‘I got rhythm’, ‘S’wonderful’ and ‘They can’t take that away from me’. The story: Jerry Mulligan is an American striving to make it as a painter in Paris. Following an encounter with a dancer named Lise, the streets of Paris become the backdrop to a sensuous romance of art, friendship and love in the aftermath of war.

PLUS, there will be free refreshments..... fizz.....alcohol-free fizz.....canapés..... Christmas-themed raffle.....Christmas music

Christmas jumpers very welcome! There’ll be a prize for the best.

The hall will be decorated for Christmas. A warm festive welcome awaits!!

Advance booking preferred. Doors open 6.30pm. Film starts 7.00pm.

Tickets: £6 adults and £4 for children under 14.

Bookings can be made by email syderstonecinema_arvh@outlook.com or call 01485 578270.

Caz Appleby

on behalf of the Syderstone Cinema Team



MOBILE POST OFFICE

The 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

Friday December 6

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
07:17 09:23 12:23 15:38 15:43; Sat 09:23
12:23 15:38 17:08

Return from Stand E Bus Station

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

Bircham Weather

Heavy rain during the first two mornings of October suggested that it could be another wet month after a total of 26mm had already been recorded for the first two days but then the remainder brought a mixed bag of weather, resulting in a final figure of 67mm, which was around the norm. A dry spell followed this disappointing start with some lengthy periods of sunshine until a showery pattern took over from the 6th until the sun returned on the 11th. The clear night that followed then allowed the air temperature to fall to 1.5°C, thus providing the first ground frost of the season. This also coincided with the appearance of the Aurora, which produced an impressive display for those lucky enough to catch a glimpse.

There followed a period of fairly cloudy conditions but with limited amounts of rain, although the southerly wind also maintained reasonable temperatures with a maximum of 20.3°C on the 16th, which would turn out to be the warmest day of the month. Until then we had been spared the usual autumn gales and even Storm Ashley, the first named storm of the season, passed sufficiently to the north of Scotland on the 20th and 21st to discharge only a strong breeze here.

Another dry spell then followed with some sunny afternoons and a high of 17.7°C on the 25th and, apart from the 28th which saw a further 9.3mm of rain, the remainder of the month was mainly dry. The average maximum temperature was 15.1°C, which is just slightly above par with the 1st remaining the wettest day with a recording of 20.3mm.

Bryan

St Mary's 100 Club Draw

Please contact John or Sally on 01485 779669 or email lsallyjohn@gmail.com for details of how to enter each month's draw. **NOVEMBER RESULTS:** 1st prize no. **74**; 2nd prize no. **16**

A big thank you to all who have supported the Club Draw over the past year. The money raised goes towards maintaining this Grade I listed building in the heart of our village. You can help by entering next year's draw, details of which are on the enclosed form. Alternatively, the forms will be available during the Bircham Banter session on December 5.

Thanks

Sally



Words on Birds

CHAFFINCH

The chaffinch is a bird familiar to almost everyone. Indeed, it is often regarded as the most common and widespread bird in the UK. The males are particularly striking with a blue-grey crown and shoulder patch, pale, rusty-red underneath and prominent white on the wing and tail. In addition, its loud, descending song and loud "pink pink" call are instantly recognisable and familiar sounds of many gardens and parks. Every year chaffinches from northern Europe flood into the UK for the winter and people studying visible migration at Hunstanton cliffs sometimes record some staggering numbers, upwards of 50,000 birds, moving through in one day!



It is no surprise therefore that you may have noticed chaffinch numbers increasing as we enter winter, especially if you have bird feeders. Furthermore, you may notice that the majority of birds are males. It is a feature of chaffinches that outside of the breeding season they form groups of, mainly (although not exclusively) male birds. It is this that gives the bird its scientific name of *Fringilla coelebs*. *Fringilla* is the Latin word for "finch", and *coelebs* means "unmarried" or "single".

Steve Rooke

Commemoration With Poppies

A commemorative poppy cascade at Syderstone was imaginatively created by a team of knitters and crocheters from the village and while in position for the Armistice it will continue to adorn a tree near the village sign on Docking Road until November 25. Some 1,400 poppies were created for the project.

For more, and a photo of the cascade (which was covered by the BBC), visit here.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgxmv80y33o>

Bircham Banter

Next Banter session is on Thursday December 5 from 2.30 to 4pm. We're hoping to decamp to the Social Club. Do keep in touch.

Sue

Further Recycling Update

The service previously described is now live. The numbers/address you need are:

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/article/62632/Norfolk-Recycling-Centre-bookings>

Or by phone 0344 800 8020

From next month we'll move these details to the information box opposite.

Stanhoe & Barwick WI

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

Thursday December 5: Gary Bocking, demonstrating Christmas floral decorations. Sorry, this is for members only, but why not consider joining?

Visitors are always welcome. Our charge is £5, which includes refreshments. Please be aware that Valerie is no longer our contact point with Stanhoe & Barwick WI. As soon as we know of her successor and their contact details we'll let you know. <https://stanhoe.org/WI>



Christmas Birds...

... Of the edible kind. In the past it was primarily goose (the fatty one) you'd have as a Christmas feast but you might also be a bit partial to blackbird, pigeon, peacock or swan. The three (or more) bird roast ... an abomination to many since it resembles a failed Dr Frankenstein-type creation ... also known as Turducken ... was actually an idea that was popular among the Tudors who did their best to sew five birds inside each other. Arriving from the New World was the turkey (our "dry" saviour!); he now comes in black or gold varieties with the former having a more gamey flavour.

Our favourite birds of Christmas are the ones we sing about: the partridge in his pear tree, the turtle doves, French hens or poulets, calling birds or colley birds, swans that just have to be a-swimming and then those damned greasy geese again!!

Christmas Lights Switch-Ons and Pantos

November 16 Burnham Market 1-7pm
Nov 21-Dec 24 Luminate at Sandringham. From sunset
November 24 King's Lynn, Tuesday Market Place 4.45pm (lantern parade from 4.20pm)
November 30 Wells Christmastide from around 4.30pm. Events on Fri, Sat & Sun
November 30 Fakenham 10-5.30pm
December 1 Hunstanton 10-6pm

Two Panto offerings this year for festive fun and a lot of yahboosing.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Princess Theatre, Hunstanton

Dec 7-Jan 5 From £21.50/£19.50

Cinderella, King's Lynn Corn Exchange

Dec 10-Jan 5 From £19

Also, don't forget that you can still book tickets for the Thursford Christmas Spectacular
<https://www.thursford.com/christmas-spectacular/>

Think Of Our Posties!

You want pressies and cards, right? Then spare a little thought for hard-pressed posties, deliverymen/women and even our Newsletter deliverers at this time of year. Be happy to accept parcels on behalf of neighbours, ensure you've removed trip and slip hazards between pavement and letterbox/main door and keep the furry family under control (yes, we know they get excitable at this time of year too). And if you're expecting deliveries after dark do try to provide sufficient house lighting so they can find their way. Some of us live in very dark corners of the village.

Christmas Lights Competition

Are we really that close to Christmas? Bah! Humbug. Anyway, one parishioner last Christmas noted how many lovely lighting displays there were on individual householders' properties and gardens in the villages, so we came up with the idea to make it a (gentle please!) competition amongst villagers. We decided on two categories:

a) **"We're the epitome of good taste"** and b) **"We've thrown the kitchen sink at it"**.*

There's only one rule: Don't be offended if the judges think your effort is more b) than a)!! And note that the judging team (not us) cannot be bought at all — not even with sherry & mince pies. Judging likely to take place, anonymously, in the week of December 9-13. Suitable prizes for the winners.

* Usual Christmas elf and safety advice: stay safe and avoid naked flames; don't overload electrical equipment; don't dazzle or impede the highway; and do try to avoid unsafe climbing on to roofs, etc, whatever your age — leave the gymnastics to Santa.