

December
2010



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Issue No. 11

North Stifford Village NEWS

North Stifford Village Community Group
Working together to improve our village

We will remember them

At 11 am on 11th November 1918 the guns of the Western Front fell silent after more than four years of continuous warfare.

November is the time of the year when we wear a red poppy in memory of those who sacrificed their lives for us during wars past and present.



There was a good turn out for the Remembrance Service at Stifford Green on Sunday 14th November. The service was conducted by Rev. Andy Higgs. Andy also held a service at St. Mary's Church war memorial on Thursday 11th November. More pictures on page 9

A message from our Chairman

Hello everybody. Just a few words to say that we have had a very successful year. The Race Night, Halloween Quiz Night and the Summer Barbecue (which was the highlight of the year and where we were thoroughly entertained by Elvis (Pete Storm), were all well attended. I would like to thank all of you and members of the committee for the support shown. In addition, a special thank you to Cliff who does all our printing and produces a very good series of News Letters.

In the next 12 months we hope to have our Village Sign erected on the village green (at the corner of Sherwood and the High Road). We are looking for sponsorship to accomplish this. We have already raised over £500. Any company or individual can support this project by making a donation, for which we would be very grateful. This can be done by contacting either myself or any committee member. Contact can also be made via the village website www.northstiffordvillage.co.uk

I hope you all have an excellent Christmas and a successful New Year.

Gordon Roberts, Chairman NSVCG

9 Clockhouse Lane, RM16 5UJ Tel: 01375 374208



Belhus Cricket Club - North Stifford Village Green

Friday June 10th, 2011

Lashings International XI

This is a charity event - More information later

Contributions to the Village News are very welcome

**Just Married? New Baby?
Special Birthday? Lost Pet? etc.**

Why not send us a picture with a few words and we will include it in the next issue of the Village News.

Also welcome: stories about the village past or present.

The Village News is published for the first day of March, June, September and December, with a copy deadline of two weeks before.

Contact Cliff Cowin: editor@northstiffordvillage.co.uk

Funding from The Veolia Mardyke Trust

We're hoping for some good news this month from the Veolia Mardyke Trust. We have applied to them for funding for the new village sign, stocks, and Village in bloom project, and our application will go to their meeting in December.



We're pretty optimistic though: so far, in its 13-year history, the Trust has never turned down an application from North Stifford, which is an impressive record.

In the past the Trust has helped:

St. Mary's Church restoration,

The Village Hall – resurfacing the car park, new doors and windows, and for the new toilets,

Davy Down – toilet block, signs, paths and various other improvements,

Belhus Cricket Club – practice nets, covers, marquee and score box,

The Field of Peace – railings, signs, and paths,

The children's play area near the village hall.

In total the Trust has given or promised around £323,000 to projects in North Stifford or the Mardyke Valley, and when you think that sometimes that has helped to secure even more money from other funders like the lottery, you can see what a difference the Trust has made locally. All the money the Trust receives and gives away comes from Veolia Environmental Services (formerly Cleanaway), generated by the landfill site nearby.

If you're thinking the Trust might be able to help with something else in the village then contact Andy Furze, Secretary on 01279 84 3675. Bear in mind though that the Trust is only allowed by law to help with "public amenities", historic and religious buildings, and bio-diversity projects – take a look at their website www.mardyke.org.uk for more information.

Mobile Library

The mobile library parks in Clockhouse Lane on Mondays
12.25 p.m.—12.55 p.m.

Councillor Surgeries - First Saturday each month

North Stifford Village Hall - 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Councillor Garry Hague and Councillor Neil Rockliffe

Quiz Night

The NSVCG held their Halloween quiz night on 29th October and it was a great success. A fantastic time was had by one and all.

The Quiz Master was Andy Higgs assisted by scorer John Collier and his wife Karen.



This year there was a prize for best children's Halloween costume and it was won by Eve Moran, age 4. Pictured right with proud mum Helena.



The winning team each received a bottle of wine. (picture on left). The team in last place (picture right) received the traditional donuts, although they were at a bit of a disadvantage with just two players.

The NSVCG would like to thank everyone who kindly donated raffle prizes including Thurrock Garden Centre who donated a gift voucher. A big thank you also goes to the Dog and Partridge Pub and Richard Groome manager at the Park Inn who each donated meals for two. These vouchers were auctioned at the end of the night and raised £67. In total the evening raised over £200 which will go towards the village sign fund.



Is there a pirate buried in St Mary's church yard ?

I do get some unusual requests via the village website. The latest one was a question about a Pirate buried in St. Mary's church yard with a skull and crossbones on the headstone. The enquiry ran as follows:-
"Ever since the early 1960's when passing through St Mary's Church cemetery my friends and I would marvel at the headstone to the left of the church door. Is there really a pirate buried in this grave?"

I consulted Rev. Andy Higgs who said "Yes, such a headstone does exist. Years ago, unlike today, people were not afraid of such symbols of death. As far as I know it is not the grave of a pirate. That's a (good) story which generations of children have been told! We have a large memorial in the tower that also has a skull on it."

Further investigation has shown that graves with the skull and crossbones seen on the gravestone sometimes contain the remains of Freemasons. Freemasons used this symbol to denote a Master Mason. The skull and crossbones is a sign of Mortality and death.

Ed.



Festive Fayre

Now serving our Christmas Menu
two courses £6.99
and three courses £8.99 .
(available all day everyday)

High Road, North Stifford
Tel: 01375 379689

Beekeeping in North Stifford

by Jan Cowin

On a bright and beautiful morning in early September we wound our way along a network of small lanes and dirt tracks, bouncing over ruts and potholes, until we eventually came to the entrance of an ancient orchard hidden in the midst of farmland. Here your intrepid Editor had arranged to meet local beekeeper Paul Savvides (generally known as the bee man) and I had gone along for the ride.

Paul is a regular at the village fete where he demonstrates his glass observation frame of live bees at work on their honeycomb, and also sells his lovely local honey.

As we drove in, five inquisitive geese wandered over to meet us and waddled along behind as we made our way over to where Paul dressed in his protective beekeeper's suit was using a strimmer.

Paul has been clearing and tending this piece of land for the last five years in order to create his own apiary, but we soon discovered that the resident bees have plenty of company.

In a large enclosure, Paul's impressive collection of rather unusual and very colourful chickens happily scratched about in the earth or snoozed in the golden warmth of the late summer sunshine, whilst a flock of snow white geese flapped their wings and splashed and swam in the small pond which has been specially created for them. Meanwhile a peacock appeared and lazily strutted around doing his own thing. It was as if we had somehow strayed into a scene from 'The Darling Buds of May.'

Paul gave us a guided tour of his apiary, which he explained is still a work in progress. Since he acquired the land he has been busy clearing areas of this densely overgrown orchard which has existed here for over 100 years. His many wooden beehives are located in these clearings so that the bees can fly around and collect the nectar from all the different surrounding trees as they burst into blossom. Apple, plumb, cherry and willow catkins are just a few they have to choose from, and to supplement this nectar feast Paul is trying to turn some of the land into a natural wild flower meadow.

Paul got into beekeeping through his job as a pest controller. In the course of his work he would occasionally be called out by worried residents who had acquired a swarm of bees in their house or garden and were afraid of being stung. However Paul did not like to destroy the swarms he removed because bees are such wonderful pollinators of flowers, fruit and vegetables, and the work these amazing little insects do is essential to the survival of most living things. So, he started to re-home the swarms he collected in his own hives.



Honeybees are much smaller than the large furry bumblebee. In fact they look a bit like a small wasp. However, bees have a much nicer temperament than wasps. They will not sting unless they feel frightened or under threat. Usually the selfless reason they sting is to protect the rest of the colony from danger because sadly if a bee is forced to sting it immediately dies.

Paul obviously loves his bees. He showed us the intricate wax structures the bees make to store their honey and he told us many fascinating things about beekeeping. For instance:-

In times long past before hives were invented people kept bees in wicker baskets.

The Forest Fire: It is necessary for a beekeeper to regularly take the beehive apart to inspect the bees or to gather some of their honey. By puffing a little smoke into the hive the keeper can make the bees easier to handle. Bees are woodland insects and instinctively fear forest fires. A whiff of smoke will make them rush to load up with honey in case they have to evacuate the hive. As they compulsively eat all they can, their attention is diverted and they are therefore calmer and more docile. When the keeper has finished his work he stops puffing the bees with small doses of smoke, and they then return to their normal behaviour.

Hay Fever: As a preventative hay fever remedy, some people swear by taking a teaspoonful of **local** honey a day. Honey produced locally is of course made from the nectar of local plants and is thought to protect against the allergens in the pollens of the area. This remedy should be taken throughout the winter to build up natural resistance by the spring.

Bee Dancing: Bees have developed a communication system of their own. If a bee, during the course of its travels, comes upon a plentiful source of nectar or a good place to build a new colony, it will return to the hive and do a kind of wagging dance. The movements demonstrated will indicate the exact location of the find to the other bees.

Beekeeping is a hobby more often taken up by retired people, which is great, but Paul says that in addition, they desperately need younger people to come into beekeeping and help to protect and increase our bee population, which sadly has been declining. The bees are under threat from modern farming methods, pesticides, certain diseases, and the Varroa mite. This is a parasite imported from Asia which lives only on honeybees and unfortunately our British bees cannot tolerate it. However, by careful management, beekeepers are trying to breed in resistance to this mite.

Bees are fascinating and incredibly important little creatures. They are truly the gardener and farmer's friend and their work (and their honey) has been valued by people for centuries.

If you are interested in beekeeping and would like to carry on the tradition Paul will be pleased to give you a free introduction to beekeeping to get you started. He will let you look inside a working beehive and he runs free beekeeping classes
Contact Paul the Beekeeper Tel: 01708 670665 or 0783 7021955
Email: pest-control@hotmail.co.uk More info: www.northstiffordvillage.co.uk

PLEASE WEAR A POPPY

~~By Don Crawford~~

"Please wear a poppy," the lady said
And held one forth, but I shook my head.
Then I stopped and watched as she offered them there,
And her face was old and lined with care;
But beneath the scars the years had made
There remained a smile that refused to fade.

A boy came whistling down the street,
Bouncing along on care-free feet.
His smile was full of joy and fun,
"Lady," said he, "may I have one?"
When she's pinned it on he turned to say,
"Why do we wear a poppy today?"

The lady smiled in her wistful way
And answered, "This is Remembrance Day,
And the poppy there is the symbol for
The gallant men who died in war.
And because they did, you and I are free -
That's why we wear a poppy, you see.

"I had a boy about your size,
With golden hair and big blue eyes.
He loved to play and jump and shout,
Free as a bird he would race about.
As the years went by he learned and grew
and became a man - as you will, too.

"He was fine and strong, with a boyish smile,
But he'd seemed with us such a little while
When war broke out and he went away.
I still remember his face that day
When he smiled at me and said, Goodbye,
I'll be back soon, Mum, so please don't cry.

"But the war went on and he had to stay,
And all I could do was wait and pray.
His letters told of the awful fight,
(I can see it still in my dreams at night),
With the tanks and guns and cruel barbed wire,
And the mines and bullets, the bombs and fire.

"Till at last, at last, the war was won -
And that's why we wear a poppy son."
The small boy turned as if to go,
Then said, "Thanks, lady, I'm glad to know.
That sure did sound like an awful fight,
But your son - did he come back all right?"

A tear rolled down each faded cheek;
She shook her head, but didn't speak.
I slunk away in a sort of shame,
And if you were me you'd have done the same;
For our thanks, in giving, if oft delayed,
Thought our freedom was bought - and thousands paid!

And so when we see a poppy worn,
Let us reflect on the burden borne,
By those who gave their very all
When asked to answer their country's call
That we at home in peace might live.
Then wear a poppy! Remember - and give!



Remembrance Sunday, 14th November, Stifford Green



More pictures can be found on www.northstiffordvillage.co.uk (Photo Gallery)

PUBLIC MEETING 20th October 2010

North Stifford Village Community Group

Herewith, a brief summary of topics covered at the above meeting for those who were unable to attend.

Welcome and Treasurers report.

Treasurer Gordon Roberts welcomed everyone and announced that committee member Martin Thurgood had resigned from the committee due to work commitments. This creates a vacancy. Gordon thanked Martin for his contribution and hard work during his time on the committee.

There was a breakdown of income and expenditure over the summer months. This included a small loss on the summer barbecue, the cost of planting perennial plants in the village and box hedging around the Stifford Green War Memorial. Also, high visibility vests had been purchased for participants in the regular village tidy ups.

The council has given a sum of £500 for the purchase of barrel planters. This amount includes the cost of soil and plants. The project still has to be assessed to decide the number of barrels and where they could be positioned around the village.

Alan Twine, Crime Prevention Officer, gave an interesting talk and some very useful tips on securing your home and belongings, rogue traders and personal safety. He supplied the forum with 'goodie bags' which contained information on the subjects he had discussed. Alan also advised of the 'No cold calling' scheme. 50% of villagers would need to agree to join the scheme. Notices displayed in windows would warn off doorstep traders. If they ignored the signs they could be reported to Trading Standards and action could be taken.

P.C. James Preston, community police officer, said the village appeared to have a low crime rate. He gave crime figures for Thurrock which suggested that crime and anti social behaviour was down. However, James needed to warn residents that there was a major scam in Thurrock where bogus, but very convincing phone calls are made, claiming the caller is from a bank and requesting the last three digits of card details as a check.

On vehicle thefts he said that new Ford cars are being targeted. A gang of thieves are using very high tech equipment to override alarms. The Ford Motor Company are aware of the problem and are looking into it. Also, thieves are stealing number plates, so be aware and check the number plate on your car each day.

The problem of cars being raced at lakeside was raised again, and James advised that the previous police operation only stopped them for a while. It appears they have now come back. He will look into the matter again.

Village sign; Gordon referred to the leaflet given to each member of the meeting which outlined the proposal for the village sign. The proposed positioning of the sign (on the corner of the village green and entrance to Sherwood) had not met with any objection from the manager of the cricket club, which leases the green. We will have to consult with the council to this effect as well. We are in the process of finding an artist to paint the scenes to be scanned onto the sign. Gordon went on say that the village sign will cost in the region of £2000. Cliff had been in contact with Oliver Pendered from the National Grid, who are doing maintenance work locally. They have kindly donated £500 towards the project. In addition a local charity, who village resident Ray Smallcombe is involved with, are prepared to consider a donation. Gordon had also been promised other donations including £25 by one of our retired residents. If other villagers wish to make donations they would be gratefully received, but in the meantime the committee continues to raise funds towards the project. Although agreed at previous public meetings, the committee wished to have a final vote recorded, so a formal vote to proceed with the village sign took place. This was unanimously agreed and no objections were raised.

Social Events: A Christmas party for village children needs to have a minimum of 20 children attending. Grandchildren of village residents are also to be included. The date is December 11th in the village hall, 3.30 to 5.30 p.m., for children up to the age of 11 years. The cost will be £2.00 per child and for legal reasons it is necessary that they must be accompanied by an adult. Food, presents and an entertainer are planned.

Another Race Night is planned and is to be held in the village hall in February. Details will be advertised later.

The Village Fete is to be held later next year on the 25th June.

A.O.B. Mike Murphy suggested that when the village sign is erected, a time capsule could be buried beneath it. This suggestion will be considered by the committee.

Next Public Meeting: 19th January 2011.

Vandals smash window

Vandals smashed a window of a property in Stifford Hill on Friday night 12th November.

T.J. and Theresa moved into their cottage last year and have been working hard to improve the property.

New windows had just been installed one week before the vandals attacked. Theresa was very upset and said she just couldn't understand what satisfaction these mindless individuals get out of smashing up other peoples property.

Beech-wood fires burn bright and clear,
 If the logs are kept a year.
 Store your Beech for Christmas tide,
 With new cut Holly laid beside.
 Chestnut's only good they say,
 If for years it's stored away.
 Birch and Fir-wood burn too fast,
 Blaze too bright and do not last.
 Flames from Larch will shoot up high,
 Dangerously the sparks will fly.
 But Ash-wood green and Ash-wood brown,
 Are fit for a queen with a golden crown.

What did one angel
 say to the other?
 Halo there!



©funmunch.com

What Christmas Carol is a favourite of
 parents?
SILENT NIGHT

For you
 to colour



The Flight to Egypt
 A teacher asked her Sunday School class to draw pictures of their favourite Bible stories. She was puzzled by a young boy's picture which showed four people on an airplane, so she asked him which story it was meant to represent.
"The flight to Egypt," he replied.
 "I see ... and that must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus," she said. "But who's the fourth person?"
"Oh, that's Pontius - the Pilot!"

What do snowmen eat for breakfast?
SNOWFLAKES

What goes
 "oh, oh, oh"?
 Santa walking
 backwards!

Why do reindeer scratch
 themselves?
 Because they're the only ones
 who know where they itch



What do you get
 when you cross a
 vampire with a
 snowman?
FROST BITE

Why is turkey popular at Christmas?
 Because the weather is warmer over there.

Mum, can I have a dog for Christmas?
 No, you can have turkey like everyone



What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?
 It's Christmas, Eve

The North Stifford Village Community Group
 wish all the residents of North Stifford a
 Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

£500 Donation from National Grid

Thanks Ollie

The Electricity Alliance who have been doing maintenance work in the area during the year have kindly donated £500 towards our Village Sign project. We send a special thank you to Oliver Pendered, National Grid Community Relations Officer, who negotiated the donation for us.

Letter from the National Grid Electricity Alliance

Dear Resident,

Project update: Essential overhead electricity line works

I am writing on behalf of the National Grid Electricity Alliance to inform you that the majority of the essential overhead line works taking place between Lakeside and the National Grid substations at West Thurrock and Littlebrook south of the river, are now substantially complete.

These essential works are part of National Grid's investment programme in the Thames Estuary region, and were essential to help ensure a safe and secure electricity network into the future for London and the South East.

On behalf of the National Grid Electricity Alliance we would like to thank you for your patience and understanding during these recent works and would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused.

During 2011 we need to return, for a short period, to an overhead line section in the Thurrock area and to the pylon located on the traffic island adjacent to the A1306 Arterial Road and the A126 road north of Lakeside, but these minor works will cause little if any disruption.

Subsequently you may notice that we will be working on the overhead line between Lakeside and the National Grid substation in Barking towards the latter part of 2011.

If you have any queries or require any further information, our community relations team is on hand and they can be contacted by calling 0800 021 7878.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Bullen,
Project Engineer.



St Mary's Church...Notice of temporary closure

St Mary's Church will remain closed for worship until probably the end of November or beginning of December to allow our decorator to complete his work efficiently. In the meantime we will share worship with St Cedd's, Crammavill Street, RM16 2AP, at 10.30 am each Sunday.

Christmas Services St Mary's and St Cedd's

Sunday	19 th December	Nativity - St. Cedd's, 10.30am
Sunday	19 th December	Nine Lessons & Carols - St. Mary's, 6.30pm
Friday	24 th December	Children's Carol Service - St. Cedd's, 5.30pm
Friday	24 th December	Midnight Communion Service - St. Mary's, 11.30pm
Saturday	25 th December	Christmas Day Family Communion - St. Cedd's, 10.30am
Sunday	26 th December	St. Stephen's Day Family Communion - St. Mary's, 11.15am

Advertising in the Village News

We are now accepting a very limited amount of advertising in the 'Village News'. We print 300 magazines each quarter (March, June, September, December) and a copy is delivered to every property in the village.

The Village News is also archived on the village website.

Half page £25.00 per issue or full page £40.00 per issue.

All proceeds from advertising will go into the NSVCG funds to be used for village projects.

For more information:- Please contact Cliff Cowin
cliff@northstiffordvillage.co.uk Tel: 01375 376483

Crime Prevention

Meet your Neighbourhood policing team to get some crime prevention advice. If you are having problems or you are a victim of crime please DO report it. If we do not hear from you then we cannot help.

If you need any help do not hesitate to contact us on:-
0300 3334444 ext 70164 NPT Mobile 07779319907
or by e-mail. james.preston@essex.pnn.police.uk
Neighbourhood Specialist Officer: NSO James Preston
Police Community Support Officers:
PCSO's Stacie Williams - Jackie Ball - Samantha-Joanne Harrington



Christmas
& New Year
2010



Park Inn
Thurrock

- Our Christmas & New Year brochure now available
- All Inclusive Party Nights
- Meet santa on Christmas Day
- Celebrate New Year's Eve in style
- Come and see our newly refurbished bedrooms
- Bookings being taken, terms & conditions apply

Park Inn Thurrock
High Road, North Stifford
Near Grays, Essex, RM16 5UE
T: 01708 719988 F: 01708 719980
www.parkinn.com/hotel-thurrock

park inn
by Radisson