

Santon Downham News

The Parish Council Newsletter for Santon Downham Villagers

April 2011 Number 9

Spring is here at last. After the long cold winter, it has been a delight to see all of the trees and shrubs bursting into life. It is such a joy to drive along either of the entrances to the village off of the Thetford-Brandon Road – the lime avenues feel almost stately. Amazingly, we have had some more weather records – see p4. When I produced the last Newsletter, we were all fearful of what was going to happen with the controversial sell-off of the forests. Things took a surprising turn – see p2. Look at some of the activities we have lined up for you in the coming months. *Derek Toomer, Editor*

Forthcoming Events

With the year well under-way, we have a number of events coming up in the next few months that may interest you. Do come along and participate.

Car Boot Sales – These popular events continue on 1 May and first Sundays through to October. Come and support these – have a beverage, a bacon butty or a piece of the finest home-made cakes in Suffolk.

Flower Workshop – Friday 6 May, 7–9pm. With expert guidance, another opportunity to develop your skills in flower arranging. Tickets priced £7 available from Sylvia, Tel: 01842 815213.

Ride for Life – On Sunday 15 May, the village green will be full of bikes and cyclists. With a number of routes and distances, participants will be riding and raising large amounts of money towards EACH (East Anglian Childrens' Hospices).



Cyclists by the thousand. Come and join in.

It's guaranteed to be a great day out for all the family with food and entertainment available on the village green. To participate, log on to http://www.each.org.uk/events/ride_for_life_entry/ or phone 01953 715559 or 01223 205180.

Rotary Beer Festival – 14–15 May. Come along and sample some excellent real ales – by the Village Hall.



Waiting to serve some excellent real ales.

1940s Evening – Saturday 30th July at 6.30pm. The last two evenings have been a great success. This year we have a new band – the *Marrakesh* group. Come and enjoy a fun-packed evening. There will be an excellent barbecue and bar. Contact 01842 815213 for tickets – price £12. We hope to see you there.



1940s fever will be hitting Santon Downham again in July this year.

Later Events

Big Game and Birds of Namibia, Botswana and Zambia - Friday 30 September at 7.30pm.

A talk about his recent travels in Southern Africa by Derek Toomer.

Quiz Evening and Fish 'n Chip Supper - Friday 14 October at 7pm. Our quizzes have proved to be very popular. Come and join in the fun and tuck in to a good fish and chip supper from the Brandon Fish Bar, all for £7 (or just £2 without the supper).

Race Meeting Evening - Saturday 19 November at 7.30pm. Admission £2.

Come and join in the fun and excitement of a 'day

at the races' without having to leave the village. If you have not been to one before, come and give it a go.



You won't see Keiren Fallon at our Race Evening, but it will still be exciting.

Village Hall – Recent Activities

Car Boot Sales resume

April 3rd saw our first outdoor car boot sale of the year. A beautiful spring day saw a record number of stalls being set up. A new addition to the refreshments was bacon baps. The smell of cooking bacon is delicious to all meat-eaters and although a large number of rolls and lots of bacon had been purchased, they ran out after a couple of hours. We will be better prepared for the next car boot.



Chef extraordinaire! Mick Mackender kept up with the demand for bacon butties.

Another great quiz evening

In early April, the Village Hall filled with quiz teams, all ready for a testing evening. There was a fun atmosphere and all participants tucked in to fish and chips at half time. Brandon Fish Bar did us proud again, preparing over 50 portions of fish and chips on time and piping hot.

Do come along to the next quiz in October - the emphasis is on fun, so don't be put off by a fear of not doing very well.



The winning quiz team, the Woolly Jumpers, receiving their prize of a case of wine.

Village News

Shefs Caterers – a change of operations

As of the end of April 2011, Shefs will no longer be operating from the Village Hall.

The Village Hall kitchen will from 1st May 2011 be available for hire by other Caterers and will be available to be used, on a restricted basis, by other hirers at an hourly rate. Such hire to be in relation to bookings for the hall. For further information ring Sylvia on 01842 815213.

Our forest saved!

"I'm sorry, we got this one wrong" said Caroline

Santon Downham News April 2011 no. 9

Spelman, Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when she ditched the controversial forest sell-off in February. It was not something we hear from Government Ministers usually, but we all breathed a sigh of relief. We still have our beloved forest and all its rights of access.



Caroline Spelman MP

Village News continued on p4

As well as being a delightful place to live, Santon Downham has a rich mixture of people in the village. In the next few issues of *Santon Downham News*, I will be featuring some of the interesting and significant members of our community. Our first villager is *Ron Hoblyn*, who developed his passion for birds while working for the Forestry Commission. Ed.



Ron Hoblyn, MBE

One lovely Spring day during the war, I came across a Song Thrush nest. Looking at the eggs, I thought these are lovely. And that's how, at the age of 10, my interest in birds started.

My early career

After schooling and national service, I joined the Forestry Commission 1953, starting as a Forestry Worker - carrying out all sorts of tasks in Cornwall for two years. In 1955 I got a place at Lynford Hall, the Forestry training School, for two years. I was then posted to Alice Holt Forest on the Surrey/Hampshire border as a Forester, in charge of a team of men.

Developing a role in conservation

1970 saw me moving to Thetford Forest with my wife Maureen and two sons, Steven and David, and into our current house in the village. They were just starting to harvest some of the trees in the forest, breaking up the solid blocks of trees and creating a variety of habitats - good for birds, other animals and flowers.

I was made Conservation Officer in 1988. My first task was to draw up a Conservation Plan. This was very forward thinking and produced plans for site management to encourage improvements in the flora and fauna of the forest.

A passion for some birds

The birds that I was particularly interested in were Red-backed Shrike, Woodlark and Nightjar. Red-backed Shrike was a species that was uncommon then, but they used to breed in the newly clear-felled areas. Over the next couple of decades, Red-backed Shrikes continued to decline. The Forestry Commission monitored this species and set up protection measures to stop egg collecting. The



Red-backed Shrike - now 'extinct' as a breeding bird in our area.

G Piton

last pair to breed in Breckland was near St Helen's picnic site in 1988.

The other bird that has taken my interest for several decades now is the Woodlark. It is not a particular colourful species, but it has a beautiful song and interesting life cycle. When I moved into the area in the 1970s, it was a rare bird. As the forest was harvested, this produced clear areas and the Woodlarks moved into this new habitat.



Adult Woodlark with colour rings for individual identification.

Chris Knights

With careful management, the forest has become an important area for quite a number of bird species - rare ones such as Hobby and Goshawk and commoner ones such as Yellowhammer, Stonechat and Tree Pipit.

Awards, rewards and retirement

In 1992 I was awarded an MBE for my services to conservation - an incredibly proud moment. A year later I had reached the age of 60 and had to retire from the Forestry Commission. But it didn't stop there. Forest Enterprise wanted the bird monitoring to continue and invited me to do this on a consultancy basis. How lucky can you be.

With help from nearby British Trust for Ornithology the University of East Anglia, this forest must now be one of the best studied forests in the country.

Provided my health allows me, I will continue to monitor the wildlife of the forest. Thetford Forest is a beautiful and interesting part of the country. Such forests are not just dense plantations of conifers, there is a wide diversity of habitats and associated plants, birds and other animals. We are very fortunate to be surrounded by this beautiful forest.

Ron Hoblyn, MBE

Dates for Your Diary

(In the Village Hall, unless stated otherwise)

2011

Sunday 1st May	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Friday 6th May	Flower Workshop	7pm to 9pm	£7
Saturday 14th to Sunday 15th May	Rotary Beer Festival		
Sunday 15th May	Ride for Life	All day	
Sunday 5th June	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 3rd July	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Saturday 30th July	1940s Evening	6.30pm to 12.00	£12
Friday 30th September	<i>Big Game and Birds of Namibia, Botswana and Zambia</i> by Derek Toomer	7.30pm	£2
Friday 14th October	Quiz Night (with Fish and Chips supper)	7pm	£2/£7
Saturday 19th November	Race Meeting Evening	7.30pm	£2

Village News – contd

Edie Turner – interesting stories needed

In a future “*Spotlight on*” (see p3) I would like to feature an account of one of the village’s more colourful characters, Edie Turner, who lived for many decades in Woodcock Cottage (now my home, Ed.). If you have any memories or anecdotes, please pass them to me - email: derek.toomer@btinternet.com. Tel: 01842 812291, or drop them in to Woodcock Cottage.



the coldest overnight in Britain at -1°C .

It didn’t stop there. On 19 April, Santon Downham was the hottest place in East Anglia at 24.3°C - the hottest day in East Anglia for the year. Wow!

Village Websites

Don’t forget to look at our two websites relating to the village, maintained by Tim Kaye.

www.santondownhamcentre.co.uk;
www.santondownham.org

Photographs by *Derek Toomer*

This Newsletter is compiled and produced by *Derek Toomer (Ed)* and *Sylvia East*

Not more weather records!



On the local TV programme on 7 April, Alex Dolan announced that there was a record in our region. On the 6th April the hottest place in the country was Santon Downham at 23.5°C . But more than that, it was a British record for the hottest EVER 6 April. Three days later and Santon Downham was

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