

Santon Downham News

The Parish Council Newsletter for Santon Downham Villagers

January 2012 Number 12

It's difficult to believe that January is almost over already. Happy New Year to all of you. A note from the Chairman of the Parish Council follows. *Derek Toomer, Editor*

I hope you all had a good Christmas. Last year, 2011, was another successful one for the village, the Parish Council and the Village Hall. I would like to thank you all for your continuing support. We all feel very fortunate to live in this delightful village and we hope to continue to organise activities that bring the villagers together. Happy New Year to you all. *Michael Mackender, Chairman of the Parish Council*

Forthcoming Events

Village Coffee Mornings - These have proved popular, a chance to chat to villagers in pleasant surroundings.

They are continuing through to early Spring, so do come along. The cost is just 50p. The next dates (all Wednesdays) are 1 February, 15 February, 29 February and 14 March (this will be the last one till the autumn).

Don't forget to BRING YOUR OWN MUG.



Coffee and good company. A busy January coffee morning.

Car Boot sales - these have continued to be very well supported by both stall holders and buyers.

The next event is an indoor car boot sale on 5 February, 8am-1pm. By popular demand, we will be serving bacon butties as well as delicious home-made cakes. Come along for refreshments even if you don't plan to buy anything.

Further dates are in the 'Dates for Your Diary' on page 4.



Come and snap up a bargain.

An illustrated talk by Derek Toomer
'Top to Bottom Down Under - New Zealand's Beauty'

Fri 27 April 2012, 7.30pm, £2.

Derek toured New Zealand in Autumn 2011. It is a beautiful country, the dramatic scenery having been moulded by volcanic activity and glaciation. Much of its native wildlife is under threat, but is still quite fascinating.



Ride for Life - 20 May

The annual Ride for Life will take place in Santon Downham, with cyclists taking to forest tracks routes of differing lengths. Money raised goes to East Anglia's Children's Hospices.

If you are interested in taking part, please contact Claire Lelievre, 01953715538.



All that's missing is YOU!

Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee - 2-5 June

A request for support was put in the July Newsletter. As we have received very little interest, the Parish Council is looking at a simple way of marking this anniversary - probably a tree planting ceremony.

Sunday 3 June coincides with our regular car boot sale and we will be having a Jubilee Car Boot Sale on that day.

Details will be given in the next newsletter.



Village Hall – Recent Activities

Rotary Barn Dance

The Rotary Club of Brandon & District barn dance at the end of November in Santon Downham Village Hall, proved a great success with participants quickly learning the dance routines.



Jason Whichelow

Yeah ha! or something like that. Participants entering into the spirit

Christmas Bazaar

With the hall decorated for Christmas, the bazaar tables filled up with a wide variety of high quality gifts and goodies. The bazaar cafe did a steady trade and stall-holders and buyers were well satisfied.

Father Christmas made his appearance, while outside the hall, the local horse riding school made an appearance in festive fancy dress.



Festive fund-raising by the local riding school.

New Year's Eve Party

The 1960s and 1970s theme helped to make this our best New Year's Party. So many people attending made an excellent effort with their appropriate costume (or digging out our old clothes as it was for some of us!).

The 60s and 70s music had everyone on their feet, dancing for five or more hours.

The buffet was excellent, with a superb range of tasty items – difficult to believe it was all produced by four or five 'Village Hall volunteers'.

If you missed last year's event, make a note in your diary now for this year's party.



So Elvis hasn't been working in Tesco's after all. Our barman Michael Finch as an older Elvis looks just the part.



Peace man! Love the hair. Really entering into the spirit.

Village News

Road signage

Road names and house numbers and names in the village can best be described as quirky. There are no visible road names, and there is duplication of numbers. This has and can cause problems with emergency vehicles finding the correct address.

If we were to introduce road signs, this would have to be agreed by all of the villagers before the District Council would carry out the work. We will be canvassing opinion in the near future before we progress any further.



Road repairs

In autumn 2011, workmen were employed to carry out some needed repairs on village roads.

The Parish Council owns some of the minor roads in the village and these have to be maintained by them. Money to pay for such repairs comes from the precept from the District Council. Last year's repairs knocked a very big hole in this.

There is a limit to what can be afforded in any one year, but do let us know if you have a problem with one of the Parish Council owned roads.



Spotlight on...

I am continuing with our feature on some of the interesting and significant people in our village. For this issue, I have been talking to 'Mac' McCreath who has lived in the village for a large part of his life and has played an important part in the social aspects of village life. Mac recently had a stroke, but although initially debilitating, he is making a good recovery. Ed.

I was born in Sussex in 1936 - making me a grand 75 years old. My real name is Norman, but hardly anyone calls me that - just a few cousins (and, of course, my mother did when I had done something wrong!).

A working life with forestry

My first job was with forestry. After two years in the army, I moved from Sussex to the Forest of Dean, where I did two years of training to be a forester. I ended up staying there for nine years.

I started as an assistant forester. In those days foresters had to perform many tasks including felling trees. Nowadays, this is carried out by contractors with state-of-the-art machinery.

I got involved with E & T - Education and Training - and this took me all over Britain.

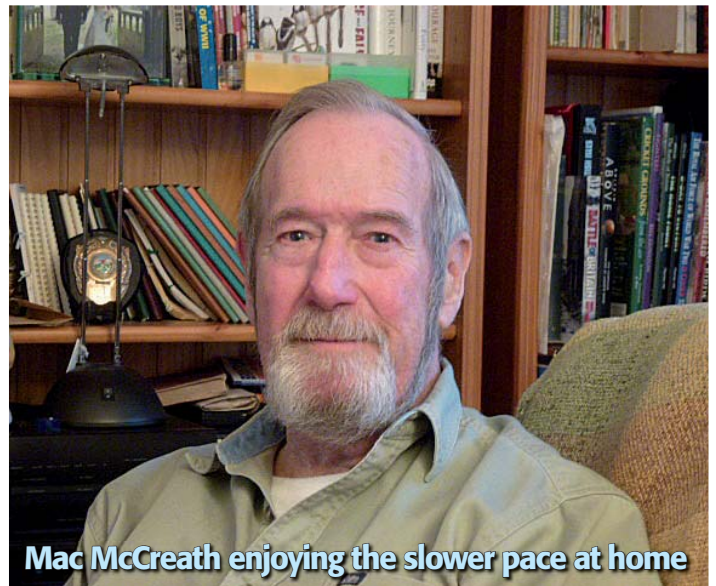
Then in 1971, I got a post with Thetford Forest. I had to stay in lodgings with fellow foresters initially, before moving into my current house. I have lived here for 41 years and still love our village.

One interesting episode that came from working for forestry was in 1974 when I was sent to Cyprus. This was at the end of the Greek/Turkish war. A lot of forest areas on Cyprus were badly damaged by bombs and artillery fire. My role there was to train workers in the use of chain saws so that they could tidy up the damaged forests.

Involvement with village life

Back in the 1970s and 1980s, in a small village like ours, residents (mainly forestry workers) relied on the social side of the village for their entertainment.

The Breckland Club had been established to act as the village pub and to coordinate events throughout the year for forest workers. I got involved back in the 1980s and became chairman for a number of



Mac McCreath enjoying the slower pace at home

years. As is often the case, we had a small nucleus of four or five active members, and with their help, we organised a wide variety of activities, many of them making use of the village hall. We had a mother's and children's club which was very popular. We organised a Woodchoppers Gala, Fun Days, darts competitions, quizzes and much more.

There were two village football teams in those days and matches were played on the green. We had a cricket team as well, but they had to play at Mundford. I played football, but only in fun games with village children. I was goalie.

I played a big part in running the Club bar and when we had the new hall, I helped run the bar there for weddings and parties.

I even used to mow the greens in the village.

Forestry 'encouraged' me to join the Parish Council. I remember one of my first roles was to train villagers as to what to do in the case of a nuclear attack. I am not sure how valuable that training has been!

Towards retirement and beyond

For several years I worked at Lynford in the grounds and with the arboretum. When I retired in 1996, one delightful leaving gift was a plaque with model trees made from dozens of different woods. I have been married to Maureen for 54 years. We have three children, six grandchildren, and six great grandchildren. I derive much pleasure from them now I have been forced to slow down a bit.

It was chance that brought me to Santon Downham, but I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. *Mac McCreath*



Mac's arboretum - an apt retirement present

Dates for Your Diary

(In the Village Hall, unless stated otherwise)

2012

Wednesday 1st February	Village Coffee Morning	10am to noon	50p
Sunday 5th February	Indoor Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Wednesday 15th February	Village Coffee Morning	10am to noon	50p
Wednesday 29th February	Village Coffee Morning	10am to noon	50p
Sunday 4th March	Indoor Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Wednesday 14th March	Village Coffee Morning	10am to noon	50p
Sunday 1st April	Outdoor Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Friday 27th April	<i>Top to Bottom Down Under, New Zealand's Beauty</i> by Derek Toomer	7.30pm	£2
Sunday 6th May	Outdoor Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 20th May	Ride for Life	All day	

Village News – contd

Theresa Catton – 1917–2011

In November, one of the oldest residents of Santon Downham sadly passed away.

“Mum was Born in Aberdare Wales and moved to Santon Downham when she was 11. She went to Ely Hospital to train as a nurse and then to Bury St Edmunds Hospital as a children’s nurse.

She met George at Abbey Gardens, where he was selling ice cream. They married and came to live at first at Santon Lodge, then Bridge Cottage.

In 1949 they moved up to Cranberry Cottage at the top of the green. Mum enjoyed the deer which came into the garden, squirrels and a feral cat. She lived in the village for 83 years.

She had three children, one granddaughter, five grandsons, and four great grandchildren.” *Anita Martin (daughter)*



Theresa Catton celebrating her 94th birthday.

Family Photograph

Mystery station? Can you help?

John Cranston from Norwich was reading a book about local railways and came across a reference to ‘Sexton Gate’. Apparently, Lord Powlett who owned Downham Hall, was granted the right for trains to stop at ‘Sexton Gate’ presumably near the Hall.

He has not been able to find any further information about this station. Do you know anything about this stopping point? If so, please pass me the information, or email at derek.toomer@btinternet.com, or email John Cranston directly at crandaw@btinternet.com.

Church in lights

It was commented on at a recent Parish Council meeting how lovely our church looked over the Christmas period with its illuminations. The Parish Council would like to extend its thanks to Andrew Kedar for arranging this. Having spoken to Andrew, the plan is to have them on for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.

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

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