

Santon Downham News

The Parish Council Newsletter for Santon Downham Villagers

April 2014 Number 21

Spring has finally arrived. What a relief after the earlier storms. In fact, we got off very lightly here in this part of East Anglia.

As most of you know, we have an unusual climate here in Santon Downham. Over the winter period this year, we again featured on weather programmes, with highest and lowest East Anglian temperatures. It is because of our location within Great Britain and because of the light breckland soils, we get very little rain, and a wide variation in temperatures. *Derek Toomer, Editor*



Spring flowers on the green

Forthcoming Events

The Village Hall Quiz Evening – don't miss it!

Our first of the year. Come along for an evening of fun and a good meal of fish and chips. Prizes of wine for the winners. Don't worry if you don't think you will do very well, it's really only for fun. To book a table (teams of four) phone 01842 812291.



Friday 2 May, 7pm. Cost £7.00, including an excellent Fish and Chips Supper.

Car Boot Sales – 1st Sunday of the month, 8am to 1pm

Our car boot sales have proved very popular with stall holders and buyers for several years. Come along to look for bargains, or to set up your own stall – only £5.



Bargains galore! Come and have a browse.

The Hall Café, is also a great success with its large selection of home-made cakes and delicious bacon butties. Come and enjoy.

Boot Sales will run through until October.

Ride for Life – Sunday 11 May

The annual Ride for Life is one of the major fundraising events for EACH – East Anglia's Children's Hospices. Last year the weather was perfect and it was a very enjoyable and successful event. Let's hope it will be as good this year.

This year it will include on and off-road rides. The off road rides range from 5 to 25 miles. The new 5 mile off road ride is perfect for the family. The road rides range from 19 to 35 miles and there are Walks for Life of 3 and 9 miles. As last year, entrants are allowed to do 2 or 3 laps of the 35 mile on-road route, perfect for those who would like an extra challenge!

There is still time to take part, so if you are looking for a good day's fun around our forest tracks, and raising money for a very worthwhile cause, sign up online, please visit www.each.org.uk/rideforlife or call Laura Shearing 01953 666767 for an entry form, or just turn up on the day.

As well as the cycle rides and walks, there will be stalls, refreshments and entertainment on the Village Green, so it's a great day out for all the family!



Ready for the off!

Rotary Beer Festival – Saturday 10 May and Sunday 11 May

The Rotarians will be hosting their annual Beer Festival by the Village Hall. All profits go to charity. They usually have a good range of real ales, including some local ones. Do come along and sample some fine real ale.



Come and sample a good real ale and help raise some funds for charity.

Illustrated talk about travels in Peru by Derek Toomer – Friday 17 October, 7.30pm, £2

Running from the dry coastal desert, to the high Andes and down to the Amazonian basin, Peru's scenery and wildlife abound. Added to that are the ruins of one of the world's most fascinating cultures, the Incas.

Do come along and share in the splendour of this amazing country.



Waiting for a train, Peruvian style. It's one way of making sure it stops.

Village Hall – Recent Activities

Ken's Birthday Bash

Back in March, Rotarian Ken Harris had his annual 'birthday party'. It may seem unusual to pay to go to someone's birthday party, but it makes a lot more sense when you realise that Ken is doing it to raise money for charity. Entrance fee and profit from raffles, meant that Ken was able to donate £500 to Rotary charity. Well done Ken!



Live music at the party – takes some beating.

Coffee Mornings

The current season of coffee mornings ended in April. They have proved very successful, with a range of interests being presented. The main purpose was to bring villagers together for a leisurely chat. To encourage this, most weeks had something of interest, from travel pictures by Phil, to information about Brandon Country Park by Doug, and quite often a look at old village photos brought in by those present. The latter always proved fascinating.

Thanks to Maggy and Phil for organising the mornings.

They may be run again in the autumn, so look out for dates in future newsletters.

Village News

Vandalism



One of the stylish hanging baskets that had been wrenched off of the front of the hall.

In recent months, there have been a number of acts of vandalism. The most recent one involved

the hanging baskets on the front of the hall, the **totally mindless** damage to two of them. The brackets holding them have had to be re-fixed.

Suspicious character

A short while ago, a villager observed a suspicious looking 'vagrant' coming out of the forest and loitering behind the village hall/club building, and that later on this villager noticed that their gate and their neighbours gate was open. Although no other reports and certainly no reports of theft were received, it would seem sensible that we all keep our eyes open and that we all take precautions with locked doors.

Be vigilant – we are all prone to leave doors unlocked whilst in the garden etc.

Explorers of Southern Africa from Santon Downham

Andrew Kedar has been investigating more of the interesting or famous people who lived at some time in Santon Downham. This time it is an African explorer who is remembered by gravestones of his family at the east end of the graveyard. Here Andrew relates the story of some of the Phillips family.

Derek and Jan Toomer had a bird-watching holiday in Namibia, last year. They returned with many superb photographs of birds and other wildlife. A few weeks later, Derek gave a splendid, illustrated talk about their time in Namibia. They were “explorers” in Southern Africa - with a camera.

Local Victorian Explorer

Another explorer of Southern Africa lived here in Santon Downham in the 19th century - George Arthur Phillips, born 170 years ago. In 1841, his father Frederick, was a Land Agent - presumably of the Downham Hall estate. Ten years later the 1851 Census describes him as “Farmer, of 2,500 acres”.

A headstone, at the east end of our churchyard, records the 1860's burials of Frederick and his wife Frances. The bottom line reads - “Also 7 of their children”.



The two Phillips headstones in Santon Downham graveyard.

Next to this headstone is another, which records the burials of three more of the Phillips children. The first part of the inscription reads “In memory of George Arthur Phillips - buried at sea - One of the early pioneers in South Central Africa”.

Exploiting Africa's natural resources

So, what did George Arthur Phillips do? In 1862, at the age of 19, he went to South Central Africa, and explored in Natal. Eventually, he moved to Matabeleland where he met up with a man named George Westbeeck. Together, they discovered rich mineral deposits, but then they found that elephant tusks were a better source of income. They shot many of these, and other wildlife animals, for profit. Both men were ‘larger than life’ and well-known



The headstone of George Phillips' parents

to the native peoples. George Phillips had several nicknames. By some, he was known as “Elephant Phillips”, to others - “VOLAIMPI”, which, in English, means - “behold an Army”. Can you hear him coming?

Whereas Derek used a noiseless camera to “shoot” wildlife, George used guns.

A sad ending

He returned to England in 1890, by which time the Phillips family had moved to London. None of the family remained here. Then, in 1896, George boarded the S.S. Roslin Castle to return to Africa, but fell ill and died at sea on 14th April. His body was buried at sea, at Lat 2N, Long 10W (not at Lat ION, as inscribed on the headstone). *Andrew Kedar*



The headstone commemorating the death at sea of George Phillips.

Dates for Your Diary

(In the Village Hall, unless stated otherwise)

2014

Friday 2nd May	Quiz Night and Fish & Chip Supper	7pm	£7.00
Sunday 4th May	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 1st June	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 6th July	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 3rd August	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 6th September	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 5th October	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Friday 17th October	"Andes to Amazonia" An illustrated talk about Peru by Derek Toomer	7.30pm	£2

Parish Council Meetings

(In the Village Hall)

2014

Wednesday 28th May	Parish Council AGM	7pm
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Village News

Looking forward to Church Teas

A very pleasant activity in the summer months is sitting in the churchyard with others, enjoying a piece of homemade cake and a hot beverage. The teas also raise good revenue for the church.

They start on Sunday 6 July and run until Sunday 31 August. Do come along.

The Church Teas rely on volunteers. If you would like to help, even for just one Sunday, contact Margaret Kedar, 01842 812985.

It's a small world!

We were having a day out at Duxford Imperial War Museum yesterday. Near one of the exhibits, an American Forces guy asked us if we had been before. We said we had, somewhere in the mid 1970s (rather a long time ago). He asked if we had come far. I replied from East Anglia. When he said whereabouts, I said near Thetford. He looked interested and said where exactly. I said Santon Downham. He said he knew it, as his son was arrested there a couple of weeks ago. I said what for, for attempting to break into a car with a couple of others? And he said YES! After further conversation, he said quite emphatically that his son would never do anything like that again.

What a coincidence!

Christmas bonus for the church



Most of you will have seen the piles of Christmas trees being sold near the village hall in December. Charlie Field has been doing this for several years with the permission of the Parish Council.

This year, Charlie gave the Parish Council £100 from his profits. The Parish Council made this a donation to the Church.

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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