

# Santon Downham News

The Parish Council Newsletter for Santon Downham Villagers

July 2018 Number 34

## ...and it's goodbye from him!

Sadly, after 21 years in this lovely village, Jan and I will be leaving in August. We feel we have been very privileged to have such a beautiful house in such a delightful location. Changes with my health have meant that we can no longer look after our large garden and Victorian house. We knew that this day would come eventually, but it doesn't make it any easier.

It means that this will be my last newsletter. It is very likely that there is no one in the village that has the appropriate software to continue in the style and quality of this newsletter, but that doesn't matter. It would be great if someone could continue producing a newsletter in some format. Do you think you could give it a go? Get in touch with Sylvia, 018452 815213.

I would like to take this opportunity to look back on what the Parish Council and the Village Hall Working Group has achieved in almost ten years and will review it later in this newsletter. *Derek Toomer, Editor*



## Forthcoming Village Events

### Car Boot Sales – a mixed start!

Easter Sunday, a good day to start our season of car boots. The weather forecast wasn't brilliant, but at least it said it was going to be dry. They were wrong! Stall holders had gallantly set up their sales, but with few punters, by 10am they had to start giving up. This was only the third or fourth time in over nine years that we had to abandon things. A very lucky record.



Then we got to May, and by 6am there were dozens of stalls already set up. A beautiful day brought many punters. The village hall café did a roaring trade – a very successful day. June and July were equally successful. See you on 5th August.

### Coffee mornings

These will be returning in the autumn. Come and join Maggy and Co.. The first one will be on Wednesday 24th October. After that, they will be on the first and third Wednesday each month. Check dates in 'Dates for your Diary' on page 4.

If you have not been before, you can come just once or every time; stay for as little as five minutes, or up to one and half hours; all you need to do is bring your own mug and 50p; no booking, just turn up. Hope to see you there.

## Village News

### Two annoying things:

#### Rubbish dumping

Many villagers with property near the forest have lived a long time in the village. The disposal of garden waste into the forest is technically wrong, but it has been carried out for many years by villagers, who have carried the waste several metres under the trees where it is not visible and does no real harm.

However, recently some rubbish was dumped near the forest by the village hall on the edge of the track with painted timber, old flower pots and



other such items. Not a pleasant sight, and unfair on the rest of the villagers.

## Dog's mess again!

Oh look, someone has left me a carefully wrapped present. No they haven't, it is dog's poo in a poly bag on the verge in front of my house. Why take a poly bag to collect their dog's mess and then leave for someone else to dispose of it? I don't understand why can't people just take it home and put it in their bin.



A recent 'present' left in front of my house

Then of course, there is the pleasure (?) of mowing the grass verges in front of my house. Ahh, the aroma of newly cut grass is rapidly spoiled by the smell of vaporised dog poo. Why do people let their dogs foul such areas? Most dog owners are very good.

## Grass Cutting

On several occasions remarks have been made about certain areas our two volunteers have not been able to undertake. We recognize people may not

understand the system. The grass cutting in this village is voluntary. Mick Mackender has been wholly responsible for keeping the upper village green looking wonderful, and this takes hours and hours of his personal time, with the use of his personal machinery. Michael Finch, who is not on the Parish Council, has taken on responsibility for the upkeep of the other side of the road as a thank you from the hall for being able to use this for its Car Boot, and the Village Hall side he does as it is part of the Village Hall Lease that it maintains its side of the property.

Both undertake this work without payment only taking reimbursement for petrol and repairs, a very large proportion of which is paid by the Village Hall. We must not forget that there are also several other villagers who have over the years quietly and without fuss, undertaken to do certain smaller areas of grass cutting and so we thank you all.

We do understand people's concerns but the Parish Council has a heavy burden on its small Precept and the bottom line is that the work is done voluntarily. We will always try to do our best whilst we are able to do so but in the long term the issue of grass cutting in this village is an ongoing problem.

## A personal review from Derek Toomer

### A set of new brooms

Back in 2009, with changes on the Parish Council, it was decided to set up a new Village Hall Working Group. The new hall had outstanding debts of over £40,000 and very little income. The new group decided changes had to be made or the Hall would undoubtedly sink. It was acknowledged that in order to go forward the bar needed to be run by the Village Hall, which meant that in addition to the existing debt, money was necessary to re-equip the bar and to install a proper cellar. At this point three of the working group i.e. Mick Mackender, Sylvia East and Michael Finch put up an interest free loan between them of £12,000 to cover this. The debt was now £52,000.

The volunteers took on the caretaking, cleaning, booking/purchasing plus the bar management, and happily with all the extremely hard work of these volunteers and moreover the expertise of Michael Finch with his background in pub ownership, the bar started earning money and we were off to an excellent start. A variety of events were organized, advertising placed and amazingly within 18 months the entire debt was cleared.

Nearly ten years on, the same group of people, albeit somewhat depleted in number and now

working under the canopy of the Village Hall and not the Parish Council, work tirelessly and this has meant the hall has been financially sound.

During these years, some important changes have been made to the hall. A new Central Heating system has been funded at great cost, new electrics throughout, the hall has been redecorated twice, a large new Freezer, a new boiler, new glasswasher, new wine cooler, a 'wonder machine' on which to produce the now famous bacon butties, CCTV, picnic tables and seats, repairs, replacements etc. and the hall has hosted and funded a Jubilee event and a Queen's 90th birthday event. The hall has also been responsible for financially uplifting the meager finances of the Parish Council wherever legally able to do so, for which we have been very grateful.

### Bring back the car boots

The working group has organised a wide range of activities to involve villagers and to continue to raise funds. In May 2009, car boot sales were reinstated. We were not sure how easy it would be to get stalls and punters back after several years. Right from the first one, there was a pleasant atmosphere and it rapidly grew.



The setting up of the village hall café involved a lot of effort every month, but it proved very successful. We will never be a large car boot, but over the years, we have developed a loyal following of stall holders and buyers and the stalls and café have brought in important funds.

### Villagers' lunches

For a brief period, we ran a 'lunch club'. It involved a lot of hard work and the Hall largely subsidised it. It proved popular and a good number of villagers participated. Unfortunately, its popularity became its downfall as many people from outside of the village started attending and we could not justify continuing to subsidise and had to stop the lunches.

### Weddings, wakes and parties

Our village hall is in an attractive location and its size and shape make it very flexible for a number of purposes. Wedding receptions had been held in the hall for many years, and its use was actively promoted.



Some of the receptions there have been absolutely beautifully set up. These together with birthdays, anniversaries and wakes have meant that the bar takings have been an important source of revenue.

### Activities for the villagers

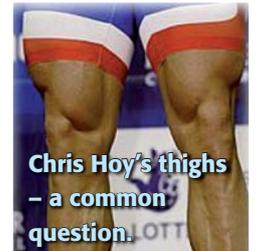
From early on, we wanted to provide some events for people living in our village. We worked hard on this, and although some were successful, it has proved quite difficult to provide activities that interest the villagers.

Early on, we organised some themed summer dances. Several were popular and successful, but

we could only keep these going for a few years. On the other hand, we have continued with our New Year's Eve Parties. Initially, we had a good representation of villagers, and party-goers entered into the spirit well, by turning up in costumes fitting the theme. These parties were hard work, especially as we prided ourselves on providing a superb buffet meal with the excellent organisation of Parish Clerk Sylvia East.

### Quizzes and travel

Why don't we have a quiz, I said. Someone else said good idea, and why don't we have it with a fish & chip supper. That certainly was not my idea, as I would be busy enough putting the quiz together. Anyway, the idea was accepted. NINETY TWO people turned up on that first night!



The local fish & chip shop did a magnificent job, and amazingly, everyone enjoyed a hot meal.

They were a lot of fun for five years, but also a lot of hard work and we eventually called it a day.

Pursuing my interest in travel and wildlife, meant that I had a large and growing collection of slides. I thought it would be a good idea to share these with interested villagers. I took people around many parts of the world, from north and south America, to Africa, India, China and New Zealand. Looking back, I was surprised to find that I had given ten travel talks during this time. I enjoyed putting the talks together and I hope that the villagers who came to watch enjoyed them as well.

### One-off activities

We have tried a variety of other events to attract villagers, We have had an 'Antiques Road Show', and we have had a couple of auctions.

### Supporting local charitable activities

We have provided facilities for a number of fundraising events, including REACH. The Rotarians have also made use of our hall and green for charitable activities, including having a nine-hole golf course on the green, created by Mick Mackender, firstly to raise money for the purchase of a defibrillator and the golf day has now become an annual charity event.

### Santon Downham News

Why don't we have a village newsletter, I said at one of our early meetings in 2009. It was agreed that it would be a good idea. As I had some



# Dates for Your Diary

(In the Village Hall, unless stated otherwise)

2018

Sunday 5th August	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Sunday 2nd September	Car Boot Sale	8am to 1pm	
Wednesday 24th October	Coffee Morning	10.30am to 12 noon	50p
Wednesday 7th November	Coffee Morning	10.30am to 12 noon	50p
Wednesday 21st November	Coffee Morning	10.30am to 12 noon	50p
Wednesday 5th December	Coffee Morning	10.30am to 12 noon	50p
Wednesday 19th December	Coffee Morning	10.30am to 12 noon	50p
Monday 31st December	New Year's Eve Party	7.30pm to 1am	

(Includes superb buffet - very popular event, book early)

## Parish Council Meetings (In the Village Hall)

Monday 20th August	Parish Council Meeting	7pm
Monday 29th October	PC Budget Meeting	7pm
Monday 17th December	Parish Council Meeting	7pm

experience with desk-top publishing, I took on the task. Fortunately, I had also met John Parrington, one of the MDs of Reflex Litho, a local printers, and John was a villager. He agreed to print the newsletters at no cost. We started small with a single page in black and white, and straight-way expanded it to four sides. Then, with an excellent new printing machine, John could turn out full colour newsletters, and continued to do so until he sold the business a couple of years ago.

So were the newsletters appreciated? As with a lot of things in life, it is difficult to tell, as there is very little feedback. I hope that the 34 newsletters have been useful and interesting over the last nine and a half years.

### You're going to do what?

Early on with our new team, when we were still thinking about paying off some of the debt of the village hall, someone said "why don't I do a sponsored Sky-dive". Ah yes, I



remember now, that was me. Sylvia, Parish Clerk said "no way, not ever, NO, NO. A week later, she said in front of witnesses that she felt guilty and had changed her mind and would join me in the Sky-dive.

We got some good sponsorship from around the village and a few weeks later jumped out of a plane at about 11,000 feet. Crazy idea, unique experience and about £1,300 raised. Would we do it again? Yes.

### So has it all been successful?

In many ways, yes. It has been hard work for our small group of workers. It has been fun most of the time and I would like personally to thank our team of Sylvia East, Mick Mackender, Michael Finch, Jan

Toomer, very much for helping to make our stay in the village productive and enjoyable. Thanks to all other volunteers. A special thanks to all of the villagers that we have got to know who have made our time here so pleasurable.

### From our Chairman and Parish Clerk

Our Chairman, Mick Mackender and Parish Clerk, Sylvia East and the volunteers from the Village Hall, would like to take this opportunity to give a big thankyou to Derek and Jan for all their help and support over these almost ten years. What a ride we have all been on.

Yes, we personally would also like to express the sentiments of 'has it all been worth it'? We hope so and we do know a number of our village residents have appreciated the hard work. It has been harder than most people recognize and it has not been without its many stumbling blocks, but we did what we set out to do and the rest will be down to whether or not there are those behind us when we eventually step down who will wish to give as much as we have. For now, we are proud of what has been achieved.

### Village Websites

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

[www.santondownhamcentre.co.uk](http://www.santondownhamcentre.co.uk);

[www.santondownham.org](http://www.santondownham.org) **New version**

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