The Messenger



Issue 171
June
2026

Serving Gislingham, Mellis, Yaxley and the Thornhams

THE MESSENGER TEAM

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www.facebook.com/themessengergismeltho

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Copy deadline: Saturday 13th June

E-mailed or hand-written submissions always welcome.

The editor reserves the right to edit, amend or omit submitted items at his discretion.

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Disclaimer: The articles published herein do not necessarily represent the views of The Messenger. They are the opinions of individual contributors and are published with a view that free expression promotes discussion and interests.

WELCOME TO THE MESSENGER



Welcome to the June issue!

This month, our congratulations go to a number of deserving award winners across our local communities.

Firstly, Amanda Church from Thornham received a 'One Big Thank You' from the BBC TV programme The One Show, which was recently broadcast nationally — a wonderful achievement and well-deserved recognition.

Meanwhile, in Gislingham, the Parish Council presented awards at the Annual Village Meeting held on 18th May. The Watson Bowl and Volunteer of the Year awards were presented to Martyn Bryant and the Gislingham Variety Club respectively. You can read more about these awards on pages 9 and 11.

Looking ahead, there are also some excellent events taking place over the coming weeks. One particular highlight is the return of The Hidden Gardens of Mellis after a three-year absence. This has always been a hugely enjoyable event, offering visitors the chance to explore a variety of interesting — and sometimes delightfully quirky — gardens, with hosts who are always warm and welcoming.

In Gislingham, Gisfest returns once again on Saturday 27th June. This continues to be a fantastic community event for the village but, as always, everyone is very welcome to come along and enjoy the day.

A full list of local events can be found on page 5.

We have also been delighted by the response to our annual advertising renewals over the past month. We would like to thank all the businesses who have committed to advertising with us for the next 12 months. This includes many loyal advertisers who have supported the magazine since it began 16 years ago, alongside some new advertisers whom we are pleased to welcome.

Finally, The Messenger has always been a genuine community effort. All articles published are written or researched by local residents, while our cover photographs and feature images are all taken by members of the community.

The deadline for the July issue is Saturday 13th June.

We hope you enjoy this month's issue.

Until next month,

Jeff Norman, Editor e) themessengereditorial@gmail.com

Cover photo: Taken in Thornham Road

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DIARY & LOCAL EVENTS

WHAT'S ON

JUNE:

Tuesday 2nd June: Rural Coffee Caravan
- Mellis Memorial Hall: 10.00am-12.00 mid-day.

Saturday 6th June: Coffee morning & Book sale
- Gislingham Village Hall: 10.00am – 12 noon.

Sunday 7th June: Sunday Breakfast Club – with Clare from the Blossom Charity
- Thornhams Parish Hall. 10.00am. Tickets £10 email: breakfast@thornhams.org

Tuesday 9 June: - Gislingham WI summer outing.
- River Deben cruise followed by lunch at The Maybush, Waldringfield.

Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th June: The Hidden Gardens of Mellis.
- See page 18 for details.

Wednesday 17 June: Gislingham WI meeting. 'Bystanders can be Lifesavers'- East Anglian Air Ambulance - Gislingham Village Hall. 7.30pm

Friday 19th June: Film Night – 'Lost In Translation'
- Thornhams Parish Hall: 7.30pm. Tickets £6 pay on the door. See page 32 for more details.

Sunday 21st June: God & Play
- Gislingham Village Hall: 3.00pm. Enquiries email: rev.d.nicholls@gmail.com

Saturday 27th June: Gisfest
- Gislingham Village Hall. See page 12 for details.

WHAT ARE THE NEIGHBOURS DOING?

Sunday 21st June: Games on the Green at Finningham from 2.30pm. See page 59.

Please note, any event changes after the magazine goes to print are updated on our Facebook page at: https://www.facebook.com/themessengergismeltho

SAVE THE DATES:

- **Saturday 11th July:** Gislingham village fete at Village Hall (1.00 to 4.00 pm) – see p. 47
- **Saturday 8th August:** Gislingham Garden, Arts and Produce Show.

Our next issue is July 2026. The "What's On" Diary deadline is: Saturday 13th June

CLUBS, CLASSES & REGULAR EVENTS

GISLINGHAM

Chat & Craft Club: Gislingham Village Hall. 1st Wednesday of every month. 12.00-2.00pm. Contact: Elspeth Tranter on 07473 131841.

Baby and Tots Group for the Under 2's: Primary School (School Term time only)**.** Every Wednesday 9.45am – 11.00am. Contact Debbie Nicholls: 07762 116 335

Carpet Bowls Club: Village Hall. Every Monday 2.15pm to 4.15pm. £3.00 per session. All equipment provided.

Pilates Classes: Village Hall. Wednesdays 9.15am and 10.15am and also Thursdays 7.10pm. Becky Cruickshank: 07734 414151

Total Fitness: Village Hall. Every Thursday 6.15pm - 7.00pm. A cardio fitness class that can be adapted to all abilities. Becky Cruickshank: 07734 414151

Gislingham WI: Village Hall. Meet the third Wednesday of every month at 7.30pm. New members welcome. For more details contact Margaret: 01379 783903 or Terrie: 01379 788521.

Gislingham Silver Band: Band Hut. Tuesdays 7.30pm - 9.30pm. Contact Iris Debock: 01379 788066 or debock.iris@gmail.com

Yoga Classes: Gislingham Village Hall. Tuesdays 7.00pm - 8.30pm And via zoom on Thursdays 7.00pm – 8.00pm. Both term time only Contact Clare Hall on 07704 570877 or email: thornhamyoga@yahoo.com

Gislingham Variety Club: A local multi-talented group who perform twice a year in the Village Hall. If you are interested to join us, please contact by email: gislinghamvariety@gmail.com

THORNHAM

parkrun: Thornham Walks Every Saturday at 9.00am. 5k. www.parkrun.org.uk/thornhamwalks/

Pilates Classes: Parish Hall every Tuesday. Sit to Stand Pilates – 10.00am. Pilates – Strong, Stretch, Relax – 11.30am For information please contact: Michelle 07572 500465 or via email: hello@yapl.co.uk.

Thornham Bowls Club: Thornham Road. New Members welcome. For more details contact Keith: 01379 871881

Bellringing: Thornham Magna Church. Mondays 7.30pm – 9.00pm. For details contact Sylvie: 01379 788130

Mellis Cricket Club plays at Thornham Estate Saturdays and Sundays (May to Sept.) New Players phone: James on 07789 111165 or email: jameshkw@icloud.com

MELLIS

Circuit Training Fitness Class: Memorial Hall. Mondays 7.30pm – 8.30pm Gus: T: 01379 788506 or 07716 118235 / anguswilkinson@btinternet.com

Scentwork for Dogs Meetings on Tuesdays 2.00pm – 3.00pm at Mellis Memorial Hall Further details: 07725 567110 or email: info@trailingtails.co.uk

YAXLEY

The Art Club Meetings on Tuesdays 10.00am to 12 noon once weekly at Yaxley Village Hall Dates: 2nd, 9th, 23rd and 30th June. All abilities are welcome. £4.00 per session. Come and create something artistic in your own style. Further details: Glyn Owens 07768 026065 or email: gavowens@aol.com

The Garden Club Thursday 4th June: Afternoon Visit to Brick Kiln House, Norwich. NR5 1HX. More details: Abby Brett: 01379 783984 or email: tony1andabby2@hotmail.com

Yaxley Needlework & Craft Group Meetings on alternate Wednesdays (10th June – Outing & 24th June) from 2.00pm to 4.00pm at Yaxley Village Hall - £2.50 per session. Finish old projects or start a new one – enjoy a chat and a cuppa! Further details: Celia Armstrong 01379 788754 or email: celiaarmstrong@hotmail.co.uk

Gislingham Parish Council Meetings are held at Gislingham Village Hall and start at 7.00pm

Meeting dates for the next 12 months are:

15th June 2026
20th July 2026
17th August 2026
21st September 2026
19th October 2026
16th November 2026
21st December 2026
18th January 2027
15th February 2027
15th March 2027

GISLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

For more information email: clerk@gislinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

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Batteries
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Bulbs
Calor Gas

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THORNHAM'S AMANDA CHURCH RECEIVES 'A BIG THANK YOU'



If you were watching the 'One Show' on BBC TV on Thursday 23rd April, you would have seen Thornham resident Amanda Church surprised by 'A One Big Thank You' from the One Show, at the 'dream on' Fashion Show at Suffolk Constabulary.

This was presented by Amy Dowden (Strictly Come Dancing professional dancer) and Vicky Gill (Strictly costume designer). Amanda knew nothing about the award but the team from dream on and The Blossom Charity had been preparing for this for months.

The award was given for the work that the dream on in Eye do for ladies who are going through treatment for cancer. The Blossom Charity gifts some Makeover Days to local hospitals and they nominate ladies who are living with or going treatment for cancer to go and spend the day at the 'dream on' shop in Eye. The Makeover Day involves having a makeup lesson, styling advice, gel nails, hair (or wig) styling plus lunch and photos of their day. It is a treat day but it is also about giving ladies confidence after, what can be, gruelling treatment on their bodies and self-esteem.

Amanda said: "I feel very lucky to work where I do. As I said on the show, there is a big team behind our Makeover Days and we all genuinely feel privileged to do what we do. We meet some incredible ladies who are going through a difficult time in their lives so our aim is always to provide a relaxing environment where they can meet others who are going through similar. But it is also a positive, fun day. Having gone through a similar experience in my younger years and more recently, I know how your life gets taken up with hospital appointments, doctor visits and constantly waiting for test results. Our Makeover Days couldn't be more different."

The Blossom Charity also funds a variety of programmes to support people going through personal difficulties and challenges. Focusing on topics such as improving confidence and problem solving, developing communication skills as we as stress and body management.

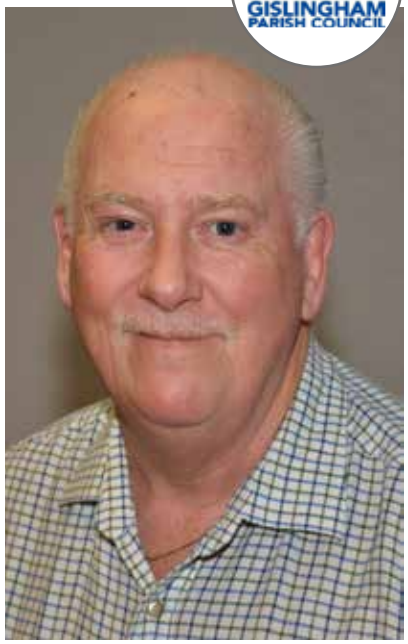
'dream on' is also a high street boutique in Eye and they have a charity shop in Harleston called 'The Pink Trolley'.

If anyone would like to know more about their work then look online at dream-on.co.uk or Theblossomcharity.co.uk or just pop into 'dream on' and have a chat with them.



GISLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL NOTES

CHAIR CHRISTOPHER TRANTER RESIGNS



Gislingham Parish Council wishes to formally thank **Christopher Tranter** for his outstanding service to the Council and the village. Co-opted in January 2016, Christopher has contributed over a decade of commitment in roles including Councillor, Vice Chair, and, most recently, Chair. The Council records its appreciation for his leadership, hard work, and support throughout his tenure.

REFURBISHMENT OF GISLINGHAM PLAY AREA

Gislingham Play Area has been fully refurbished. We kindly ask all visitors to respect the area and dispose of litter in the bins provided within the play area. Please note that the nearest dog waste bin is situated near the school. PLEASE NOTE: CCTV is in operation. Please enjoy the play area responsibly… and resist the urge to dance on the ping-pong table!

Sharlene Budd, Clerk to Gislingham Parish Council









GISLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL AWARDS

WATSON BOWL AWARDED TO MARTYN BYRANT



Martyn contributes an exceptional amount to the village, much of it quietly and without seeking recognition. His ongoing commitment to the community includes:

- Maintaining the footpaths around the village
- Organising the village litter picks
- Writing interesting local walks for The Messenger
- Helping to set up and clear away at the monthly book sales
- Supporting village events, where he is always a willing and dependable helper

VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR AWARD AWARDED TO GISLINGHAM VARIETY CLUB



Gislingham Variety Club brings an extraordinary amount of joy, creativity, and community spirit to the village through the performances they stage and the opportunities they create for people of all ages. Their shows are not only entertaining—they are uplifting, inclusive, and a real highlight of village life.

The group works incredibly hard behind the scenes and is unfailingly generous with their time. What makes them especially deserving is the nurturing environment they create. You can genuinely see people's confidence grow after getting involved, whether they are stepping on stage for the first time, helping backstage, or supporting the production in other ways.

Their contribution goes far beyond the performances themselves. They help build community, encourage participation, and give people a chance to discover new skills and friendships. For all these reasons, we believe the members of Gislingham Variety Club are truly worthy of this award.



NEWS FROM GISLINGHAM VILLAGE HALL

FUTURE EVENTS

Saturday 27th June: Gisfest
- Doors open 1600. Free entry. BBQ and Entertainment. Bar selling beer, lager, cider, wine, cocktails and soft drinks

Saturday 25th July: Quiz Night
- Doors open at 7.00 pm. Bring your own food and drinks. £5.00 entry. Tickets available from Terry Williams at gislinghamvillagehall@gmail.com or 01379 83903

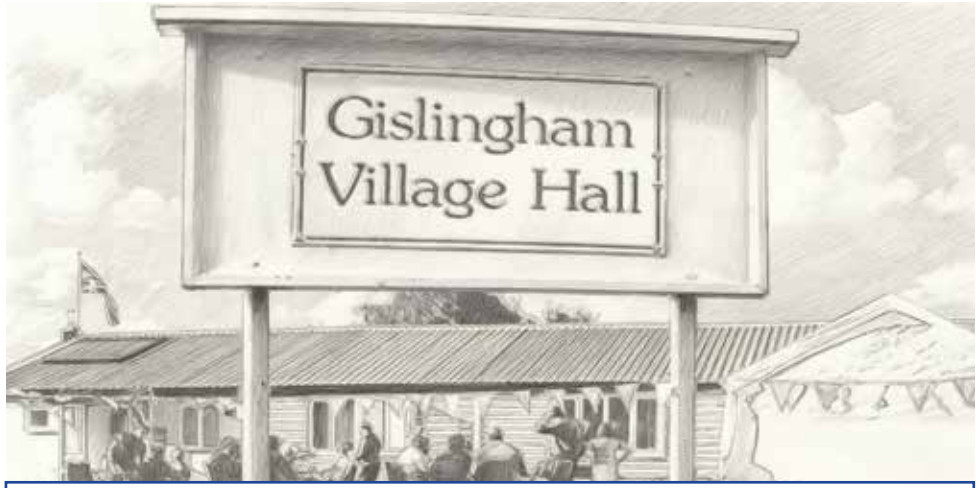
Saturday 22nd August: Jumble Sale
- Watch this space for details.

Saturday 12th September: Quiz Night
- Doors open at 7.00 pm. Bring your own food and drinks. £5.00 entry. Tickets available from Terry Williams at gislinghamvillagehall@gmail.com or 01379 83903

Saturday 17th October: Bingo Night
- Watch this space for details.

Saturday 14th November: Music Night – watch this space for details

Saturday 12th December: Quiz Night
- Doors open at 7.00 pm. Bring your own food and drinks. £5.00 entry. Tickets available from Terry Williams at gislinghamvillagehall@gmail.com or 01379 83903



The Hall is available for hire at a cost of £10 per hour, which includes tables, chairs, lighting, heating, water etc. There are also village hall assets available for hire at an additional cost. These include, a sound system and a large screen television. Additionally, there are tables and chairs and a marquee which can be used outside of the hall.

Follow us at www.facebook.com/GislinghamVillageHall/
PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR VILLAGE HALL

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL NEWS



By the time you read this we will be on the verge of meteorological summer. Let's hope it's a good one!

Annual Parish Meeting

It will soon be time for Yaxley's Annual Parish Meeting which will take place on Wednesday 27th May at 7.00 pm immediately before the Parish Council meeting. The Annual Parish Meeting has to be held between March and June as a legal requirement imposed by the Local Government Act 1972. It is a meeting of local electors, not a Parish Council meeting and as such is held under different rules with members of the electorate able to speak through the Chair at any point during the meeting. Any motions passed are not binding on the Parish Council although I will ensure that anything raised is considered at a subsequent meeting of the Parish Council. At least I will do so if I am elected again as chairman by parish councillors since the Parish Council meeting immediately following the APM decides who is to hold the offices of chair and vice chair for the period May 2026-May 2027.

Although every elector and organisation operating within Yaxley is allowed to attend, the APM in practice is rarely attended by more than one or two members of the public and usually consists of the reading out of written reports summarising actions and concerns from the previous year. These consist of:

County Councillor's Report

Over many years this has been extensive and given in person by Cllr Jessica Fleming but since she did not stand in the election of May 2026 her successor, Cllr Paul Bains, will be invited to submit a brief report.

District Councillor's Report

Cllr Tim Weller of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council often gives his report in person

Parish Council Report and Accounts

I will submit a report explaining and accounting for the most significant decisions and actions of Yaxley Parish Council since May 2025. This will be followed by detailing of YPC's expenditure and income by our Clerk, Mr Philip Freeman who is our designated financial officer and a paid employee of the Parish Council

Yaxley Town Estates Fund and Accounts

This is an ancient charity which has operated in Yaxley since at least the 16th Century. Its activities and accounts will be explained by a Trustee of the fund: Cllr J. Moore (also Vice Chair of YPC).

Yaxley Village Hall Committee Report and Accounts

This committee runs and cares for the interior and equipment of Yaxley's Village Hall as well as organising many events through the year. I anticipate that the report will be submitted by its current Chair, Mrs Stone and Treasurer Mr Muir.

Yaxley Parochial Church Council

YPCC is legally and financially responsible for the operation and upkeep of our Grade 1 listed 14th century village church, St Mary the Virgin, which is part of the Church of England. The report will be compiled by the Rector, Reverend Debbie Nicholls or the Churchwarden, Mr J. Moore and PCC members.

As I say above attendance of this important meeting by members of the public is minimal. Looking in the Suffolk Archives recently this is nothing new and seems to have been the case through the twentieth century as well as today. The fact has to be faced that meetings, whilst vital to keep things running are rarely much fun. All electors wishing to attend remain most welcome.

Speed Indicator Devices



Yaxley has two speed indicator devices which show a vehicle's approach speed from 26mph upward and issues a warning to slow down if its speed exceeds 30mph. These were bought and are maintained by the Parish Council with the battery being charged and maintained by a parish councillor. These devices are very effective with absent minded or unintentional speeders, but they have little effect on a minority who wilfully ignore the speed limits through our village despite the danger this presents to families cycling to and from Mellis School, pedestrians and horse riders. Yaxley has not been successful to date in recruiting community Speedwatch volunteers but we are included on the Suffolk County Council rota for deployment of an Automatic Number Plate Recognition Device for a period of a week or so. This device will record the number plates of speeding vehicles and drivers will be contacted by the Police. Of course, although better than nothing, deployment of such a device over only one or two weeks in a year is not at all adequate and Yaxley Parish Council will be lobbying our new county councillor to increase the number of such devices available. This is particularly important considering the congestion that occurs every morning and afternoon in term time as parents' drop-off and collect their children outside Mellis School. The bend on the road and the inevitable positioning of even perfectly legally parked cars and vans outside the school stretching for some considerable distance along Mellis Road means that speeding drivers and motorcycle riders present a particularly acute danger.

If anybody does wish to put themselves forward for training as a Yaxley Community Speedwatch Volunteer please contact our clerk on: philip.c.freeman@btinternet.com)

Potholes

Since my article two months ago some potholes in the village have been repaired to a very high standard. We thank Suffolk Highways for this and hope that the potholes that remain awaiting repair along Church Lane and opposite Yaxley Manor House will soon receive equally effective treatment. If anybody notices significant potholes (over 4cm deep and roughly the size of a dinner plate) please feel free to report them on Suffolk County Council's reporting tool which can be found on https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-pavements-and-verges/potholes/report-a-pothole or, alternatively if you are uncomfortable reporting things online please bring them to the attention of Yaxley Parish Council by emailing our clerk on philip.c.freeman@btinternet.com

Enjoy what is left of 'The Merry Month of May' and prepare for 'Flaming June'. The latter always reminds me of my dad sitting under a plastic mac in the rain on a June day trip to Leigh on Sea referring to 'Flaming June indeed'.

Ian Luff (Chairman, Yaxley Parish Council)



YAXLEY VILLAGE HALL NEWS



Planning for the Village Hall's Centenary Celebration in September is ongoing. The weekend will be filled with events for all the family. In addition, we will be holding a raffle over the whole weekend with prizes donated by local businesses. The programme for the weekend will be completed in June with details of the events and how you can buy your raffle tickets and hopefully included in the July Messenger so watch this space.

While planning our Centenary we were reminded that it wasn't very long ago we discovered rot in some of the flooring joists in the hall. At the end of 2023 this was discovered and a building firm were invited by the Parish Council to investigate.

The hall had been clad in concrete several years before, and with plastic sheeting beneath the cladding so the building was unable to breathe. On partial removal of the cladding, it was discovered that the problem was greater than at first anticipated. Restoration would require the removal of all the cladding and additionally some internal work also. This resulted in the hall being closed so that the work could be undertaken.

Thankfully the problem had been discovered in time and the restoration work was fully completed with modern boarding being installed to ensure the hall would last for hopefully another 100 years. Our thanks go to the Parish Council who oversaw the restoration and also to our regular hirers who had to find alternative venues for their activities.

We hope you will put the dates in your diary and join us to enjoy our Centenary Celebration.

With everything back to normal for the last year the hall is in regular use. Our Quiz evening in April was well supported by the community as was our Bingo evening on the 9th of May, with our regular caller Mr John Hawes, who does an excellent job. He's well practised as he's been doing it for over 20 years. (Thank you John)

Remember, the Hall is available to hire for your event at a very reasonable all-inclusive rate for your family celebration, club or party. Just ring the Booking Secretary on 01379 788754.

Our committee would like to organise more events to support the Hall and we are looking for volunteers who would like to join us to help. ***If you have an hour or so a month to spare and would like to assist us in running the Hall then please get in touch with Gill Stone (Chairperson) gill.ianstone@yahoo.com.***





HIRE OF YAXLEY VILLAGE HALL
To book or enquire, please contact Celia Armstrong on 01379 788754 or by email: celiaarmstrong@hotmail.co.uk



The Hidden Gardens of Mellis 2026

13th & 14th June 2026
10.30am - 4.30pm

Approximately 14 gardens will be open

Tickets and refreshments for sale on the day at the Memorial Hall
Plant sale
Children's activity
£5 per adult, accompanied under 16s free

Assistance dogs only please

All proceeds to The Memorial Hall and St Mary's Church, Mellis

MELLIS, MEET YOUR LOCAL... COUNCILLOR



MPC is currently working on our Biodiversity Plan where we are looking at how to protect and improve the natural areas within our village. We are also updating the Emergency Action Plan which shows what to do if we suffer a major event. We will soon be arranging the installation of VAS (vehicle activation speed) equipment now that licences have been issued and locations confirmed and work is ongoing with the Mellis Garden maintenance ready for Mellis Open Gardens. As always, any help to support the work we do will be gratefully received, whether it is attending meetings or helping with the subjects mentioned.

Mellis, meet your local...Church Warden, Andrew Peel.



St. Mary's church, Mellis, nestled within statuesque trees, has a proud heritage where the site has been a place of worship for 1000 years with its "new build" dating from the 13th century. The church bell tower collapsed in 1730, but the stone was put to good use and became the foundation for the Carnser.



Meet Andrew, our new Church Warden who sees his role as being a good listener and looking out for all 574 parishioners, as well as ensuring the smooth running of the parish, the maintenance of the church and grounds, chair of church meetings and even keeping the compost toilet working, so a sense of humour is key to this role. Andrew also works as Head Gardener at Quiet Waters Christian Retreat, Flixton and does smaller gardening tasks for people in need, as well as being trustee to two charities, one supporting children and young people with Autism and a social enterprise charity offering vocational training for young people. So, it seems our Andrew likes to keep busy.

Andrew was a journalist by trade, as well as being responsible for communications in the civil service and before "retiring" was a delivery driver as he wanted to do away with the office environment, meetings and emails. Having grown up in Harleston and attending Diss Grammar he became a reporter for the Diss Express, but has close links to Mellis having been taught English by Roger Deacon who was a "huge impact on my life and introduced me to poetry" and remembers the school outings where the children climbed into the back of his pickup to be taken to sit under a tree to be read to.

Andrew's goal is for more people to come to see the church, which is a beautiful building and to enjoy it for what it is, a perfect community space.

FUTURE EVENTS

13th & 14th June – Hidden Gardens of Mellis - Open Gardens around the village.

More events are being planned and if you would like to use the church as a community space, please contact Andrew by email: andrewd.peel@yahoo.co.uk

EOG

Money raised goes to
Eye Church Development Appeal.

Eye Open Gardens Weekend 6 – 7 June 2026

Enjoy a wonderful weekend exploring Eye's beautiful gardens!

Open 12 – 5pm
Admission to all gardens and Flower Festival in the church is £5.00 per adult
(accompanied children are free)

Tickets available from Eye Town Hall
Ticket is valid on both days





THE SUPPLY STORES, MELLIS

These two photograph shows the Supply Stores on Rectory Road in 1910. At this time Benjamin Marsh was the proprietor and the village had a population of 463.

Trying to find historical information to accompany these photos, taken in 1910 proved fruitless. I did find the following extract from the book; 'Dot on the green' – memories of a life in Mellis by Dorothy Dye.

"Marsh's sold most of the things we needed. I particularly remember the big blocks of salt we used to buy. The Grocer would saw off a slice for 2d and crush it with a rolling pin. And sugar was never sealed up in bags as it is today. It was weighed out in the shop and put into a funnel of dark blue sugar paper.

A young man called "Simpson" from Yaxley used to be employed at Marsh's. We called him "Luggs". Together the family that owned the shop and Mr. Simpson were known as "Missie and Ma, Luggs and Pa".

He made his won sausages. Sometimes I helped put the sausage into the skins – they were beautiful sausages. We called him 'Tell You What' after a phrase he always used."

Jeff Norman





NEWS FROM THORNHAM PARISH HALL



FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Sunday 7th June: Sunday Breakfast Club with Clare Jackson from The Blossom Charity - 10am £10. To book email events@thornhams.org

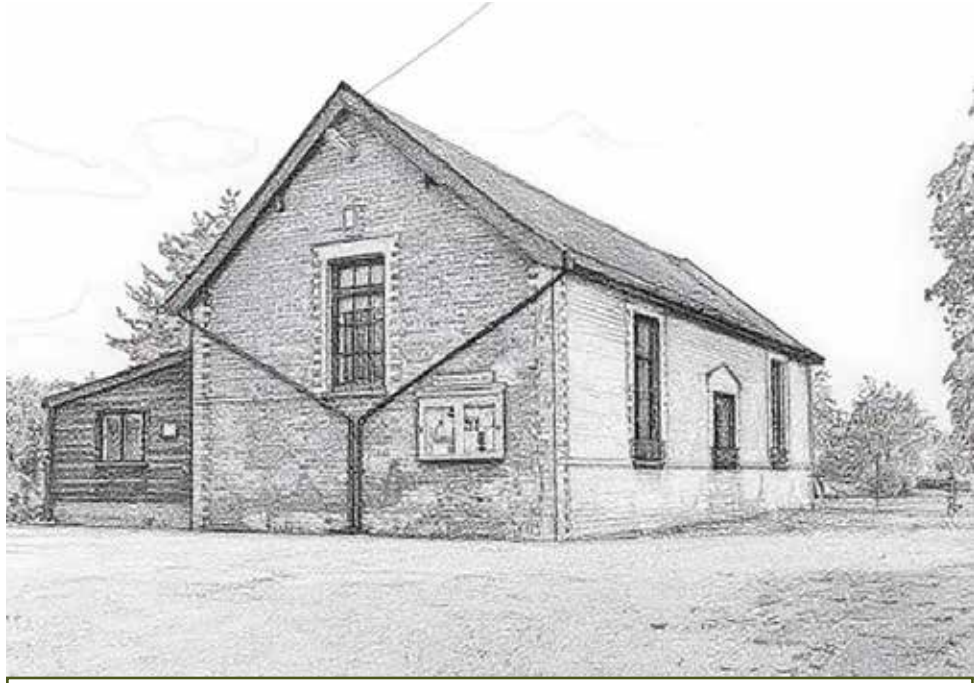
Friday 19th June: Film Night – 'Lost In Translation'
Bookings: films@thornhams.org Tickets £6 pay on the door.

Sunday 5th July: Sunday Breakfast Club - details tbc

Sunday 15th November: Winter Fair: – details to follow.

REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS:

Tuesdays:
Sit to Stand Pilates – 10.00am
Pilates – Strong, Stretch, Relax – 11.30am
For information please contact: Michelle 07572 500465



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*School holidays: open Mondays and Tuesdays for coffee and cake only (no lunches / breakfasts)

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CHEQUE FOR GISLINGHAM PLAY GROUP



On the 26th March a cheque for £1000 was presented to Gislingham Playgroup.



Edward McEwen of Masonic Lodge Faith 2438 handed the cheque to deputy playleader Lucy Seymour. The £1000 was made up of 2 cheques, £500 from Lodge Faith and £500 from the charity match funding scheme approved by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Suffolk.

The playgroup plans to use the donation to build a water wall which will help children with sensory, imaginative and group play. Gislingham Playgroup opened in 1972 by volunteer parents to provide support for families with young children in the village and the local communities. The Playgroup has since been developed into a registered charity organisation run by a voluntary committee of parents/carers and a small team of staff.

The playgroup is registered to provide care for up to 24 children in each session, caring for children from the age of 2 until they progress onto a local primary school. The children are provided with a safe environment to learn through play in an imaginative and satisfying way.

The Staff work in partnership with the parents/carers to help children learn and develop, to support the local community, and to offer a service to children, parents and carers that promotes equality and values diversity.

Lodge of Faith 2438 is a masonic Lodge in the province of Suffolk. It was warranted and consecrated in 1892 and is very proactive in supporting local charities in this county.

GISLINGHAM PLAYGROUP

We provide a safe, warm, friendly and caring setting for children aged 2-5 years, in a purpose built building on the same site as Gislingham CEVCP School, with whom we work closely to provide an excellent education.



Breakfast Club 8.00am - 8.45am
Morning 8.45am to 11.45am
Lunch Club 11.45am to 12.45pm
Afternoon 12.45pm to 3.45pm



"Children arrive with a 'spring in their step' and are welcomed by friendly staff. They immediately join in with their friends and explore a well resourced and fun environment." Ofsted, May 2022.

Please visit our website www.gislinghamplaygroup.com or phone us on 01379 788934

FAMILY HISTORY: WHAT WAS DISCOVERED?

So, back in February, I invited people to enter a draw to have the family tree researched and I promised, if anyone was interested, to let you know what I discovered. Well, there was no shortage of interest and I had to draw a name out of a hat to decide whose family to research.

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone who entered the competition. The lucky 'winner' has given me permission to share what I discovered.

Some family histories are easier to research than others. Having ancestors from far flung corners of the globe, illegitimacy or having very humble origins (which applies to most of us) makes research challenging. The challenge, in this case, was not a lack of information, but too much information. But that is what happens when you are descended from several very distinguished family lines. Family trees can grow very large, very quickly and it is a good idea to pursue just 2-4 branches at a time. In this case, those branches started with the surnames Fellowes and Hamilton. So, what illustrious family connections and skeletons in closets did I unearth?



THE FELLOWES LINE... Let's start with Dr William Fellowes (left), a military surgeon and Physician-General to the Royal Navy forces In Menorca from 1780-82. Then, from 1817, William was 'Physician Extraordinary' to the Prince Regent, the future King George IV!



Dr Fellowes's son Thomas (right) was born in Menorca in 1778 and he also had a gallant naval fighting career which included a leading role at the 1827 Battle of Navarino, which was fought between a European Alliance and the Ottoman Empire during the Greek War of Independence. Thomas's ship, 'the Dartmouth', opened the action on the British side. He was subsequently knighted and, in 1849, was made Superintendent of the Royal Navy Hospital and Victualling Yard before, eventually, being promoted to a Rear Admiral in the Royal Navy.



Thomas's elder sister Anne Fellowes was the Royal Herb-Strewer at George IV's coronation - the last time this practice was observed. Sir George Naylor produced the engraving on the left that shows Anne and her fellow herb-strewers in action.

In 1817, Thomas had a son, Thomas Abdy Fellowes who was born in Saint-Germain, France. Sadly Thomas's mother, Katherine Abdy died giving birth to him. Thomas became a solicitor and his son, William, became a Barrister.



Next in the line came Sir Edward Abdy Fellowes (right). Edward was due to take up a place at Merton College, Oxford University when WW1 broke out. He, and his brother, Basil, joined up.

Sir Edward, served in various officer roles in the Royal West Surrey Regiment and was awarded the Military Cross in 1917.

Sadly, Edward's brother Basil died at a Casualty Clearing Station at Avesnes-le-Comte near Amiens in France as a result of wounds incurred during an attack on a German trench behind enemy lines.

On Edward's return home, he took up a position as an Assistant Clerk in the House of Commons and, in 1954, he was promoted to the role of Clerk of the House of Commons.

THE HAMILTON LINE... There was another Rear Admiral, Sir Charles Hamilton, in the Hamilton line who, in 1811, during the Napoleonic Wars, was employed by the War Office to control all of the Royal Navy vessels in the Thames.

But even the wealthy have secrets and 'characters' in their families and I'm sure they never dreamed that someone would come along, several hundred years later, to unearth and publish their details! But I am going to anyway...

Scandal... One Hamilton family member engaged in an illicit affair at a villa in Italy while her husband was away (for 4 years!) trading in Shanghai. On his return, the cuckolded husband filed for divorce on the grounds of adultery, freeing the lovers to marry and set up home together in Rome.

Characters... The award for most interesting character (amid stiff competition) goes to Adam Hamilton. Born in Westminster in 1718, Adam was apprenticed to an Attorney before moving to Hertfordshire where he practised law and ran several coaching inns that formed part of the Royal Mail postal network. His legal work seems to have been mostly conveyancing and this probably didn't require much time in court. However, Adam seems to have had a knack of being in the 'wrong place at the wrong time' and, as result, he spent plenty of time court, albeit as a victim of, or witness to, crime. In 1772, two men were indicted for assaulting a man on the king's highway and putting him 'in corporal fear and danger of his life' before tying him up and stealing 60 leather Royal Mail bags. The man got loose and rode to Adam's inn to alert the authorities. In 1781, Adam witnessed another robbery, this time of the Bristol and Bath mail coach.

In January 1782, a cart, called the The Stilton Diligence, which belonged to Adam (but was not being driven by him) struck and killed a woman crossing the Enfield Highway. In July the same year, Adam witnessed another cart driving 'furiously' before hitting and killing a man.

In 1784, a William Holmes was hanged in front of Newgate Prison in London for 'burglariously and feloniously breaking and entering the dwelling house' of Adam Hamilton and stealing a pistol, silver spoons and tablecloths.

I enjoyed doing this family tree and have since been commissioned to dig around in other people's pasts so my dream of doing this for a living may come true! Feel free to get in touch if you would like me to have a delve into your family's secrets.

Jo Clifford jclifford2009@gmail.com

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ADRIAN RAMSAY MP VISITS GISLINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pupils at Gislingham Primary School enjoyed an inspiring visit today from Adrian Ramsay MP, who spent the morning speaking with children about his role in Parliament and the importance of protecting the environment.



During a special assembly, Mr Ramsay explained what it means to serve as a Member of Parliament and shared his views on improving environmental sustainability, both nationally and within local communities. Children from across the school had the opportunity to ask questions, raising thoughtful points about flooding, the protection of natural areas around Gislingham, and road and pedestrian safety in the village.

Mr Ramsay responded to each question with care, offering insight into the challenges and responsibilities involved in representing a constituency. Staff commented on the maturity and curiosity shown by pupils throughout the session.



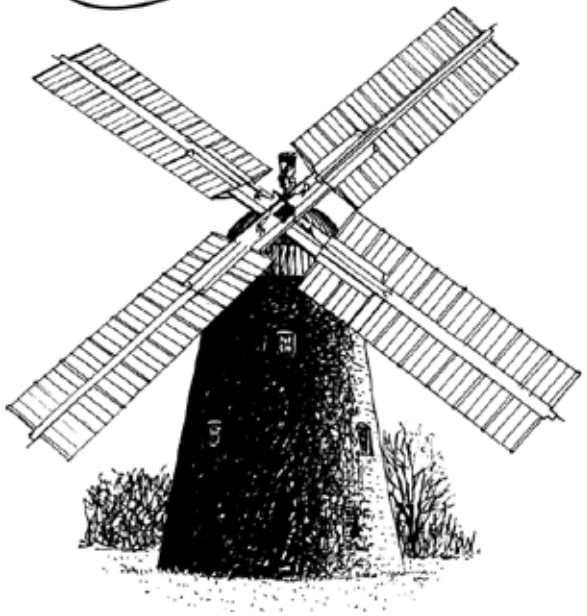
Mr Ramsay also spent time looking at the road safety within the village, speaking to the school's Junior Road Safety Officers about their current campaigns to encourage drivers to be more careful when driving around the village.

Mr Ramsay also spoke with Mr and Mrs Bridges, who volunteer at the school on a daily basis. He thanked them for giving up so much of their time to help the school to which they responded by saying they are happy to help out and just want the best for their grand-daughter's school.

The whole school expressed its gratitude to Mr Ramsay for taking the time to visit and engage so openly with the children. Richard Benstock, Headteacher, told us; "Mr Ramsay's visit provided a valuable real world link to the curriculum and encouraged pupils to think deeply about issues affecting their community."

Adrian Ramsay said: “Thank you so much to everyone at Gislingham Primary for inviting me to speak at your assembly. It was a real pleasure to spend time with the pupils, and I really appreciated the warm welcome from the boys and girls. I also had a great conversation with Richard Benstock, the headteacher, about how I can help and support the school.”

Thelnetham Windmill



OPEN DAYS 2026

The mill will be open between 11 am and 4 pm *
(* Last tours of the mill commence at 3pm)

on the following days, and wind permitting the sails will be turning

Monday 4th May
Bank holiday

Sunday 24th May **

Sunday 21st June

Sunday 12th July

Monday 31st August
Bank holiday

Sunday 27th September

Guided tours: Adults £5: 15 and under free and need to be accompanied by a responsible adult
Children under 5 are not allowed in the mill

Windmill cream teas and other refreshments are available
Cash payments only at the mill

CREATIVE FEN GROUP ART EXHIBITION AND SALE IN THE GRANARY **(cash and card accepted)
LOHP GUIDED FENLAND WALK 13:00 TO 15:00 MEET ON PARKERS PIECE

Thelnetham windmill was built in 1819 and lovingly restored to working order in the 1980s. In 2013, ownership was transferred to the charity -Historic Suffolk
The mill is now regularly maintained by highly skilled volunteers and has been producing flour since 2015

For more information go to thelnethamwindmill.org.uk

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Thelnetham.windmill@gmail.com or speak to us on open day
Thelnetham windmill Charity number 265212

"SUFFEN' FOLKY" AS PERFORMED BY THE GISLINGHAM VARIETY CLUB

If you came along to Gislingham Village Hall on April 17th or 18th, then you were in for a very entertaining and imaginative evening. The clue is in our name - variety, because there was plenty of that!!

Our latest production was a folk show focusing on the history, traditions and legends of East Anglia. It was a thoughtfully researched and cleverly written script by Oli Erith and Hannah Wells, both of whom also directed. The amazing costumes and beautiful set dressings were overseen by Michelle Norris. The techie stuff was provided by our wonderful Tony Kilbee.

For a couple of hours, the show travelled through the seasons of the year, paying tribute to the East Anglian countryside and its people. This was performed in the form of songs, acting, monologues, dance, storytelling, poems, sayings, music and puppets. All accompanied by our fantastic musicians.

Day to day rural activities were portrayed, including farming life and the work of the farrier.

There were scenes of silliness, frivolity and general bawdiness! Vikings with bananas for helmet horns and Diss Country Fair with elephants - think "Carry on" meets "Monty Python"!

Plus, moments of great poignancy - the struggle of the cotton mill workers, life on the seas, the Peasants Revolt. The demise of King Edmund and the witch trials were also included.

There was the telling of ghost stories and chilling tales - including Black Shuck and The Green Children of Woolpit. And who can ever forget the haunting "Green Man" sketch?

The singing was of our usual high standard with a wide selection of songs - including folk songs and sea shanties, amongst others.

The entire cast worked really hard preparing and rehearsing for this show, always with a lot of fun and laughter! We learnt new skills including mask making, puppetry and Morris dancing!

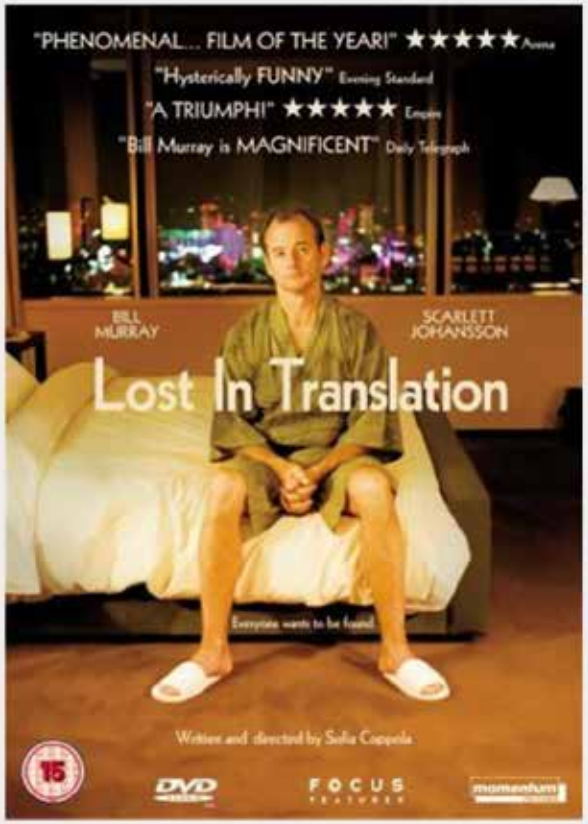
We really hope you will come along to our next show, in November - details to follow.

And should you feel inspired to join us either on stage or behind the scenes, then please get in touch. We'd love to hear from you! Although we are the 'Gislingham Variety Club' you do not have to live in Gislingham to join us, some of our members come from Eye, Rickinghall, Wortham, Diss and Wetheringsett! Email: gislinghamvarietyclub@gmail.com

Di Herbert



Thornhams Film Night
Friday, 19th June 7:30pm



Thornhams Village Hall
Tickets £6 pay at the door
Licensed Bar incl. al-free - Ice Creams
Bookings films@thornhams.org

THE RAILWAY TAVERN

MELLIS

Thursday 4th June 7.30pm QUIZ NIGHT

Cash Prize & Free Snacks. Booking is Essential.

Saturday 6th June 8.30pm UNCOOL SAM

Playing driving R&B in a Dr Feelgood style. FREE ENTRY.

Saturday 13th June 8.30pm KARAOKE DISCO

Musical jollification with Paul "On The Road Again" Draper. FREE ENTRY

Wednesday 17th June 9pm ENGLAND v CROATIA

England's opening game of the 2026 World Cup

Thursday 18th June 7.30pm QUIZ NIGHT

Cash Prize & Free Snacks. Booking is Essential.

Sunday 21st June 5.00pm DISCORD & RHYME

Playing classic 1980's electronic pop from Spandau to Duran. FREE ENTRY

Thursday 25th June 7.30pm BINGO NIGHT

Eye's down for a fun night of Bingo with BIG CASH PRIZES.

Saturday 27th June 8.30pm COUNTRY & WESTERN

Live music from KENDAL COUNTRY. FREE ENTRY

Friday Night Fish Fry EVERY Friday from 6pm

Burger Kitchen EVERY Friday from 6pm & Sunday from 1pm

NATURE NOTES by Darrel Charles



Hello everyone, welcome back to Nature Notes

Over the past month I've made two trips to Bradfield Woods (IP30 0AQ) - first to see the Bluebells and then, a few weeks later, to see the Wild Garlic in bloom. In their own way, each of these flowers made a splendid sight, both singly and en masse. I was particularly fortunate when viewing the Bluebells as the weather was most kind and there was dappled sunshine falling on the brilliant blue flowers beneath the canopy of the trees. Conditions for viewing the snowy-white Garlic weren't quite so favourable, the sky being largely overcast. Still, the flowers made a fine sight, particularly those either side of a path that wound through the spectacle. That's it for another year now so far as these flowers are concerned, but I plan to return to these Suffolk woods in the summer to see the many kinds of butterflies that can be found there.







I imagine that many of us can name at least a couple of kinds of bee, e.g. Bumble Bee and Honey Bee, but there are in fact many, many more, including some 270 species in the UK alone. Some of these are called social bees because they live in colonies, each comprising a queen who lays all the eggs and workers who gather pollen and nectar for the grubs to eat.



The majority of bees are, however, solitary bees, amongst which are Mining Bees. Although classified as solitary bees, Mining Bees can congregate in groups but they nest individually and each female lays her own eggs.

In early-May, when tending my vegetable patch, I came across a group of half a dozen or so Mining Bees. Before I realised what they were, I was surprised to see them burrowing into and later emerging from the soil. I think the lifecycle of these creatures is extraordinary. After appearing in late spring they build their own nests by mining under ground. Then they provision the nests with nectar and pollen before mating and the females lay their eggs. They then die, never seeing their offspring. All this activity, which happens over just three weeks, takes place again a year later. Remarkable!



I recently visited the North Norfolk coast and walked around the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's reserve at Cley. Walking on the boardwalks through the reed beds, it can be frustrating to hear so many birds and not see them! On this occasion, however, a Sedge Warbler popped up to survey the scene, sing its song and allow me to take this photo. Other birds seen included Greylag Geese, Avocets, Swallows (nesting in one of the hides) and Shelducks. I also came across a couple of not so common Wall Brown butterflies. A Grand Day out!

Until next time, happy wildlife watching!

See these and other photos at my Flickr site: flickr.com/photos/darrelphoto/

See Tony Clarke's monthly list of local bird sightings at The Messenger on Facebook.

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GISLINGHAM SPEEDWATCH REPORT

The Gislingham Speedwatch team recommenced monitoring the speed of vehicles in February this year following the winter break. The adverse weather in February limited our activities, but as the weather has improved, we have increased our monitoring sessions accordingly.

The results of vehicles exceeding 35MPH for the period covering Feb – April 2026 are as follows: -

- February – 2 sessions - 1 vehicle recorded at 54mph
- March – 6 sessions - 8 vehicles recorded - highest recorded speed 40mph.
- April – 6 sessions - 16 vehicles recorded – highest recorded speed 40mph.



Those vehicles recorded will have received warning letters from Suffolk Constabulary, with repeated incidences of speeding dealt with accordingly.



In February, one of our founder Speedwatch members, David Braybrooke, sadly passed away and he will be greatly missed by the whole team.

In the coming months, we shall once again be working with this year's Gislingham Primary School Junior Road Safety Officers and carrying out some monitoring sessions.

Over the past year, several members have had to leave the team for various reasons, and we urgently need help to continue to protect our young people travelling to and from school, along with other road users. If you feel you can spare one or two hours a month maximum, you would be very much welcomed by our team. All training and equipment is provided, so we just need your time and help.

If you feel you can contribute, please give me a call on 01379 783825, or email s.j.critchley@btinternet.com and I will be happy to give you more information.

Finally, once again, I would like to express my thanks to all our current and, hopefully, future Speedwatch volunteers.

Steve Critchley, Gislingham Speedwatch Coordinator

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SCOUTING FOR GIRLS AT THE LCR, NORWICH

MUSIC NOTES



Formed in 2005 by three childhood friends from London, Scouting For Girls are an English pop-rock band featuring Roy Stride on vocals, piano and guitar, Greg Churchouse on bass guitar and Peter Ellard on the drums and are known most for their songs 'She's So Lovely' and 'This Ain't a Love Song'.

I first saw Scouting for Girls live at The LCR in 2023, and I'll be honest - I didn't know anything about them and only went because my housemates all were. I had such an amazing time despite only knowing their 2 or 3 biggest hits and left that night knowing that I'd love to return and see them again once I'd listened to their entire discography. So that's exactly what I did.

So, on March 10th, my friend Niamh and I went to the LCR for 'Everybody STILL Wants to Be On TV' - a tour that celebrates 15 years of their album 'Everybody Wants To Be On TV'. We managed stand right at the barrier which was really exciting, especially as last time I went, I was at the very back. I had a great view of the synthesiser and the piano (Roy switches from one to the other) as well as the two guitarists.

Bursting straight into 'Famous' as the crowd erupted with applause and cheer launching us into an evening filled with energy and 2010s nostalgia with a buzz in the air from the very start. With its addictive beat, it was the perfect choice to open the show. They played the album in full (which was incredible as it's such a good album and definitely my favourite of theirs, including songs such as (1+1, Posh Girls and Little Miss Naughty) and then followed it up with fan-favourites from their other albums such as This Ain't a Love Song, I Wish I Was James Bond, and Elvis Isn't Dead. They also weren't afraid to look back on themselves and laugh, halfway through they sheepishly admitted to ripping off Dexys Midnight Runners' 'Come on Eileen' in their 2011 crowd-pleaser 'Gotta Keep Smiling' - and then proceeded to perform a mash up of the two that was thoroughly enjoyed. They also gave us a little teaser of their new album 'These are The Good Days' which wasn't out at the time, but is now! Towards the end of the set, they even included a video message from Michaela Strachan, which launched them straight into their song, Michaela Strachan.

To bring the show to a close, it was no surprise that they played their true smash-hit She's So Lovely. The crowd sang the lyrics at the top of their lungs as the entire floor shook from all of the jumping. The energy was so infectious and it was such good fun.

The highlight of this gig was their commanding stage presence. From the second they stepped onto the stage, Roy, Greg, and James were constantly bouncing off each other's energy, and they were keen for the audience to sing along and get involved. The set behind them was unlike anything I've ever seen before - a huge tv screen with all of us on it! A camera was catching us singing and dancing all night for the tv screen behind them, an apt nod towards the name of the album and the tour.

To top it all off, as we were leaving the venue, Niamh spotted a glimpse of Roy Stride near the tour bus. So, we went over and actually got to meet Roy and Pete! They were so incredibly lovely and such a laugh, it was a great finish to an already amazing evening.

Charlotte

CIRCULAR WALK AROUND PAKENHAM (INCLUDING PAKENHAM WOODS)

O/S Map: 211 West Sheet. Distance: approx. 4 kms/2.5 miles
What three words: ///partly.tapes.loaded

Pakenham's name has Anglo-Saxon roots, Pacca being the founder of a settlement on the hill where Pakenham church sits above Pakenham Fen. The discovery of many Anglo-Saxon artefacts, notably a bone-toothed comb in the old school garden (just over the road from the church) in the 1950s, testify to the authenticity of the site. The village was named Pacca's Ham, i.e., the home of Pacca, which eventually became Pakenham, (pronounced locally with a long "a" sound.) The Anglo-Saxon family name later became "de Pakenham". Pacca's descendants continued to farm here until the Norman Conquest, 1066.

Pakenham Hall, the family seat of the Spring family, has been demolished. Nether Hall was the original home of the de Pakenham family and later the seat of the Greene baronets. Newe House was built by Sir Robert Bright before becoming the dower house of the Spring family. Several members of the Spring family are buried in the parish church.

The village describes itself as the "Village of Two Mills", as it has a water mill, that claims to be the only working example in the county, as well as a working windmill.

We started our walk by parking in the High Street of Pakenham, near Bury St Edmunds.



With the Fox pub behind you, walk to your right along the pavement and at the corner turn right and walk up the slight hill. On the right, you will see a sign for Church Green Walk. We didn't investigate on this occasion, but it looks like a very interesting walk.

Continue up the hill and cross over into the large graveyard of St Mary's church.

You will see a very large family grave, with a space at the bottom for someone to be added, but I am not sure if this will happen, due to the last death.

We walked around the outside of St Mary's first to give us an idea of the size. It has a very unusual tower. Inside St Mary's, you first see the large font. We noticed the large organ which is situated at ground level. Upon leaving, the lock on the large door was quite impressive (see pictures at the top of page 37).

Land at Pakenham, Rougham and Barton was given in the will of Theodred, Bishop of London (942-51), to his kinsman Eadulf's son, Osgot. The Pakenham estate was given to St Edmundsbury Abbey by Edward the Confessor. In 1086 the estate included a church with 30 acres of free land in alms. In the reign of Henry I (1100-1135), one Walter founded a new church at Pakenham, and the 12thc. work recorded above belonged to Walter's church. In 1199, Abbot Sampson allocated one third of the demesne and tithes to St Saviour's Hospital, Bury, and in 1256 Abbot Walpole appropriated the church to the maintenance of hospitality in Bury.

Leave the church, return to the road and turn left. At Church Cottages turn left onto the wide footpath. Continue past the metal gate keeping the hedgerow to your right. At the gap in the hedge turn right and follow the footpath around the field. You will notice several upright grey posts along this path and, at the last one, turn right.









Continue along this path with the hedgerow to your left until you reach a small road. Go past the small bungalow and reach a grass triangle on the main road. Turn left and walk along the road until you reach the bridleway sign and continue along this track



At a large concrete pad with a large black trailer, turn left and continue until you reach the corner of Pakenham Woods. There is a wooden signpost to your left. Take the footpath to the right to go around the outside of the woods. Where the footpath splits, keep left and follow the woods to your left. At a cross paths, the left path will take you through the woods, so take the footpath to the right for a short distance until you reach the road.



Turn left at the road and walk until you reach the footpath sign on your left. Be careful here as there is a blind bend on the road. Signposted for Home Farm, continue up this track and, at the farm entrance, turn left and go past the metal gate. At the end of the paddock fencing turn right towards the church. Go through the kissing gate and head across the field between the two large trees. Ignore the path that veers to the left. At the bottom of the field (there may be cattle grazing) go through the kissing gate onto the road and you will be back to your starting point.

The Fox pub dates back to the 1700s. It boasts a very large garden with a children's play area. They have a large range of real ales and other beers on tap, along with 35 gins and an extensive menu. They organise music events and special offers for Senior citizens.

Emma and Martyn Bryant



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WHEN THE VILLAGE CAME ALIVE



When I moved to Gislingham nine years ago, I was immediately charmed by its peace, beauty, and the kindness of the people. There has always been a feeling of warmth and comfort here. But over time, I felt the need to add a little more emotion, new connections, music, movement, and lively social evenings — and that is how the idea of organising dance nights at the Village Hall was born.

I wrote about the idea on Facebook and asked for support, as well as help with the music. I was truly delighted when Anthony replied and agreed to help. As it turned out, he is an incredibly talented person who genuinely knows and loves music. He creates the atmosphere for our evenings, carefully chooses favourite songs, understands the mood of the room, and happily plays requests from guests throughout the night. Thanks to his energy and musical talent, the dance floor comes alive from the very first minutes.

I also contacted the local Parish Council to ask for support in organising events for village residents. They kindly helped with funding towards the hall hire, and their support became a very important part of making these evenings possible.

Honestly, I never expected such a warm response. After the first evening, people immediately began asking when the next one would be, and that became the best motivation to continue.

Our second evening showed just how much people needed this — the number of guests noticeably increased. It was wonderful to see everyone relaxing, laughing, dancing, chatting, and simply enjoying the moment. The atmosphere was warm, easy-going, and exactly what we had hoped to create.

Life is very short, and too often we spend our time at home, caught up in routines and daily worries. Evenings like these give us a chance to pause, come together, enjoy the moment, recharge with positive energy, and simply feel happy.

I am sincerely grateful to everyone who supported me, helped with the organisation, and continues to inspire and motivate me to carry on. It is thanks to people like this that a simple idea can turn into warm evenings filled with music, smiles, and a true sense of community.

Sometimes happiness requires very little — a favourite song, a few kind people nearby, and an evening that stays in our memories long after the music has ended.



A special thank you also goes to our guests who help with decorating and tidying the hall after the events. This support is truly appreciated and plays a very important part in creating the warm and friendly atmosphere that everyone has come to enjoy.

We are already planning two new dance evenings:

- **Saturday 22nd August: 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm**
- **Saturday 5th December: 7:30 pm to 10:00 pm**

We would be delighted to welcome everyone back to the dance floor! ***Svetlana Carter***

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Gislingham Village Hall	Wednesdays	10:15am
Gislingham Village Hall	Thursdays	7:10pm

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TERRAPIN NEWS



A challenge for the new council.

On 25 March 2026, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP, wrote to the leaders of Suffolk councils to inform them of his decision to implement the proposal for 3 unitary councils to be established in Suffolk.

He wrote: "I understand the importance of preserving local identity, in this case for market towns and urban communities. I believe that the boundary design and governance arrangements of the three unitary proposals also present a way of balancing urban centres with surrounding rural areas while maintaining distinct identities. I took account of all consultation responses and I noted the strong, consistent local support from residents, named consultees and organisations for the three unitary proposals, in particular in relation to local democratic representation in new authorities. The three unitary proposal was supported by five out of six councils in the area."

The councils have agreed on a Senior Responsible Officer, Mark Ash, one of the two Joint Chief Executives of Suffolk County Council, he is the individual ultimately accountable for ensuring that the transition from six predecessor council structures to three unitary, structures is successful.

Following with the decision comes a Structural Change Order, the statutory instrument that completes the process as it will be laid before both Houses of Parliament for approval – probably autumn 2026. This will set the date when the new unitary authorities will formally take over full legal powers from the predecessor councils, the "Vesting Day" expected to be 1st April 2028.

Before then there may well be calls for a judicial review by a "disappointed" County Council, this, I think, is more likely now as a result of the May 2026 County Elections.

The planned SCO will set up two transitionary periods, in the first, three voluntary Joint Committees will be set up, they are expected to reflect the political balance of the existing councils and will be supported by officers. They will have no statutory powers but will carry out preparatory functions and give direction to the preparatory team.

In May 2027 there will be elections to appoint councillors to the new unitary authorities. Each authority will have approximately 60 councillors.

At this point there will be District Councillors, County Councillors and Shadow Unitary Councillors! The Shadow Councillors will agree a leader and governance model, key interim appointments, agree a constitution and set the first budget for April 2028/29.

Finally, there will be a Mayoral election in 2028 and as the mayor takes Office the New Unitary Authorities will formally take over and the predecessor councils dissolved.

Throughout this process the District Councils and County Council have a responsibility to ensure that they operate with legal competence, independence and authority, and deliver day to day services as normal. The addition task falling on them is the need to prepare for transfer to new authorities. Effective collaboration and communication will be essential and personal with key skills, knowledge and experience will have a major part to play.

Rowland Warboys Cllr. Mid Suffolk District Council

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GUC Trustees meeting dates for 2026 are: 10 July, 11 September, 13 November.
Dates for 2027 are: 8 January, 5 March, 7 May, 2 July, 3 September, 5 November.

Applications, together with the necessary supporting documentation, should be received **seven working days before the meetings** to allow Trustees time to consider applications and request additional information if required. In the event of emergency applications, Trustees will consider an application when received and, if necessary, will call a special meeting to review the application.

Application forms can be obtained from: The Clerk, Lilac Cottage, Mill Street, Gislingham, IP23 8JR
Tel: 01379 783380, Email: gislinghamunitedcharity@gmail.com
Or can be downloaded from the "Organisations" page on the Parish Council Website:
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SCAM ALERT

Pensioners are being warned to be on high alert for scams as the recovery of Winter Fuel Payments begins this month.



Almost two million people are expected to repay their winter 2025 payment due to their annual income being more than £35,000 – for most, an automatic process.

HMRC saw more than 25,000 Winter Fuel Payment scam referrals over the last 12 months and is warning that scammers may now use the recovery process as a hook to use texts, emails and phone calls to target this group.

For most, the payment will be recovered through a change to their PAYE tax code from this month (April 2026) with no need to contact HMRC. For those in Self-Assessment who file online, the payment should be pre-populated in their 2025 to 2026 tax return, due by 31 January 2027.

Customers should check and add it manually if it is not shown. Paper filers will need to add it on their tax return, due by 31 October 2026.

HMRC will never contact people by text or email to ask them to repay their Winter Fuel Payment, or to request bank details.

To report a suspicious text claiming to be from HMRC, forward it to 60599. To report a suspicious email, forward it to phishing@hmrc.gov.uk.

To report a scam phone call, visit GOV.UK. If you have had money stolen, contact your bank immediately and notify Report Fraud.

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To enter a team of 8 contact Ian Armstrong, phone 01449 780215 or email ianbacton@aol.com - or just turn up! Teams can be formed on the day.

If you would just prefer to watch we look forward to seeing you. Feel free to bring a picnic and drinks, perhaps a chair. An ice cream van will visit at around 3 o'clock.

Show us your footy talents at the "penalty shootout". A tug-of-war competition will round off the afternoon.

It's free! (Donations to Friends of Finningham are always most welcome!)

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WHERE AM I? QUIZ

Below are six clues as to where I am.

1. I have 132 rooms and a bowling alley.
2. When I was first built in 1792, Freemasons laid the cornerstone and then went to the pub and forgot where they'd placed it. It's never been seen since.
3. It's been called a "glamorous prison" as you can't even open a window if you live here.
4. To keep the exterior white, the mansion requires 570 gallons of paint.
5. Multiple people, including Winston Churchill, have reportedly claimed to see the ghost of Abraham Lincoln
6. Ten people have died here, including two US presidents.

The answer appears at the foot of page 63.

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

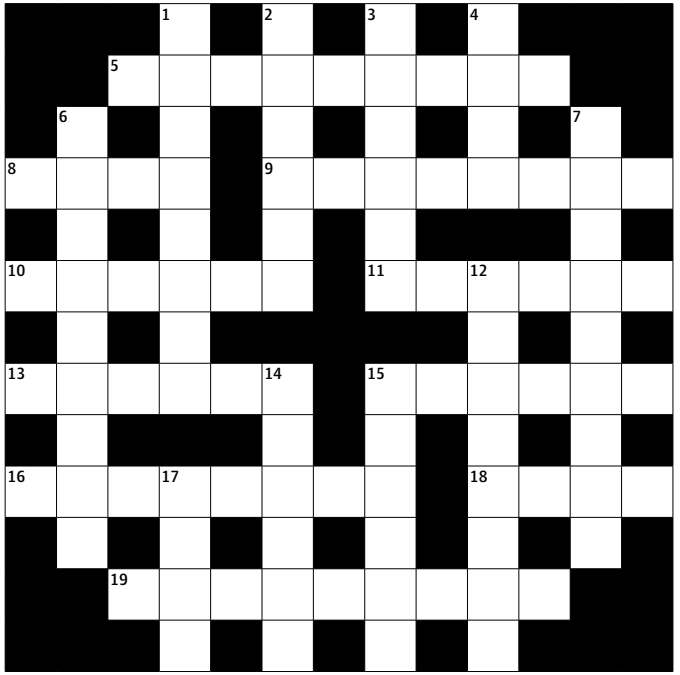
8	1	4	9	7	2	5	6	3
2	3	6	4	1	5	9	8	7
7	5	9	8	6	3	1	2	4
9	4	2	5	8	1	3	7	6
5	6	7	3	2	4	8	1	9
3	8	1	6	9	7	2	4	5
4	9	8	2	3	6	7	5	1
6	7	3	1	5	8	4	9	2
1	2	5	7	4	9	6	3	8

Each 3 x 3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9

Last issue solution

3	7	2	6	9	4	1	8	5
8	9	4	1	5	7	3	2	6
5	6	1	3	2	8	4	7	9
2	8	3	5	4	1	9	6	7
7	4	9	8	3	6	2	5	1
1	5	6	9	7	2	8	3	4
6	2	8	4	1	5	7	9	3
9	1	5	7	8	3	6	4	2
4	3	7	2	6	9	5	1	8

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE



Across

5 CIA trials (anag) – mocking the powerful (9)
8 Child of poor behaviour (4)
9 eg iPlayer or Disney+ (8)
10 Race – vocation (6)
11 Plunder – pampers – pollutes (6)
13 Biblical strongman (6)
15 Like a garment without fastenings – spinet (anag) (4-2)
16 Keith, Cruz or the wife of Odysseus (8)
18 Irritatingly cute (4)
19 Extended – drawn-out (9)

Down

1 Socially unaware – undiplomatic (8)
2 Washer-upper's second-incommand (6)
3 River through Baghdad (6)
4 Spreadsheet's contents (4)
6 'Have a good show, fellow actor!' (5,1,3)
7 Popular (4-5)
12 Like a shoe that leaves nail varnish on display (4-4)
14 Pasta – pool toy – play around on an instrument (6)
15 'Raw' or 'burnt' pigment (6)
17 River through Zaragoza (4)

Last issue solution

S	O	Y	S	A	U	C	E	■	J	O	B	S
A	■	F	■	P	■	H	■	C	■	B	■	T
S	C	R	A	P	■	A	V	O	C	A	D	O
H	■	O	■	R	■	S	■	B	■	M	■	N
■	I	N	V	E	R	T	E	B	R	A	T	E
P	■	T	■	H	■	E	■	L	■	■	■	A
U	N	S	E	E	N	■	S	E	A	D	O	G
S	■	■	■	N	■	M	■	S	■	U	■	E
S	A	T	I	S	F	A	C	T	O	R	Y	■
Y	■	O	■	I	■	L	■	O	■	A	■	L
B	O	L	I	V	I	A	■	N	O	B	L	E
O	■	L	■	E	■	G	■	E	■	L	■	N
W	A	S	P	■	B	A	N	S	H	E	E	S

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EYE POST OFFICE

Eye Post Office & Premier store opened at Lawrence House in Magdalen Street on 12th May.

This will restore service to the area after the previous branch in Church Street closed in December 2022.

U3A DISS

The monthly meeting takes place on the morning of the first Thursday of each month at the United Reformed Church in Mere Street, Diss, IP22 4AD. Forty-five minutes are allocated to refreshment, socialising and catching up on the interest groups and notices. This is followed by a talk from an interesting guest speaker.

Doors open at 9.45am and the meeting commences at 10.30am.

Refreshments are available FOC until 10:15am.

Visitors/Non-Members are welcome. We ask for a £3 donation towards refreshments and the speaker.

Our speaker on the 4th June 2026 will be Paul Jordan who spent 35 years in the Metropolitan Police including with the ante terrorist branch, forensic detective training and covert operations.

For information about https://diss.u3asite.uk/

u3a



Answers to the Where Am I? Quiz on page 60. *The White House.*

SOUTH HARTISMERE BENEFICE



After asking his followers if they understood his teaching and them saying yes, Jesus went on to say how teachers are like those who lead a household, with treasures both old and new.

I thought of our Benefice with the different traditions of worship and the way we live out our faith. Within the Church of England but also the other local denominations, Stoke Ash and Rishangles Baptist, Mickfield evangelical to name but a few, we have our outward differences in the songs sung and prayers said, with ideas about faith both old and new but we have one Lord Jesus.

You may have seen in the notices or messenger 'God and Play', you may have thought – what is this all about! So, I thought I'd share a little of what we do at God and Play.

We are creating a space for a different expression of worship, something new. We welcome each other and then gather in a small semicircle to hear a bible story. One afternoon we looked at Moses leading the people out of the land of Egypt.

The place of the story is in the wilderness and so a small part of the desert is brought into the circle. The swirling of the sand reminds us of the barrenness and danger of a desert and how easily a person can get lost. It makes the importance of God's presence to guide and protect the people and Moses very real. We see the waters of the sea part and the people freed from slavery and the joy seen as they dance.

It is time to wonder at the story, which parts did we like best, which bits could be left out, which part do we feel we would play in the story. God's stories are to be explored and also to enter into and after our wondering we can choose what to do next.

There are creative prayer spaces, a craft table and a place to read books to help us find out more and to enjoy. There are the desert and items from the storytelling so anyone can explore and re-tell the story.

Duplo is there to create a bible scene or to play with, as well as play items for young ones to choose from. It is OK to go from one activity to another, or to sit and draw at the table and chat.

As we work and play, we fellowship, sharing with one another, refreshments are served and enjoyed.

Time goes quickly and soon we have gathered again, to share what we have been doing. It is then time to sing and to pray before we end with a blessing.

We are all ages, a granny and granddaughter, families with young children, others come by themselves, and some to serve as well as join in.

The hope is to be a safe and relaxed place to be and explore the stories of God, to fellowship, to worship and find out more about Jesus.

If you want to know more. Please get in touch or pop into join us. Our next 'God and Play' is Sunday June 21st, 4pm at Gislingham Village Hall.

Rev Debbie

JUNE 2026

SUNDAY 7TH JUNE	Gislingham	10.30am	Holy Communion
1st Sunday after Trinity	Thorndon	10.30am	Worship for All
SUNDAY 14TH JUNE	Mellis	10.30am	Worship for All
2nd Sunday after Trinity	Stoke Ash	10.30am	Holy Communion
SUNDAY 21ST JUNE	Thorndon	10.30am	Holy Communion
3rd Sunday after Trinity	Thornham Parva	10.30am	Holy Communion
	Gislingham Village Hall	4.00pm	God and Play
SUNDAY 28TH JUNE	Thornham Magna	10.30am	Mattins
4th Sunday after Trinity	Wetheringsett	10.30am	Welcome to Worship for All
	Yaxley	10.30am	Holy Communion

Telephone Church BCP Holy Communion is on Thursdays at 11.00am



Reverend Debbie Nicholls – Rector
rev.d.nicholls@gmail.com ✆ 07762 116 335
WhatsApp 07762 116 335

Find us on Facebook:
South Hartismere Churches

LOCAL INFORMATION

BUS TIMETABLES

GISLINGHAM AND THORNHAM BUS TIMETABLE

Route No. VC0001: Gislingham to Stowmarket (Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays)
Leaves Gislingham 09.45 / Arrives Stowmarket, Bury Street 10.26. **Returns** from Stowmarket, Bury Street 13.00 / Arrives Gislingham 13.41

Fareline Bus 460 (Thursday only) from Eye to Stowmarket
Leaves Thornham Magna (Four Horseshoes) 09.25 / Gislingham (Shop) 09.31 / Stowmarket (Argos) 10.02. **Returns** from Stowmarket (Argos) 12.15 / Gislingham (Shop) 12.45 / Thornham Magna (Four Horseshoes) 12.52.

Simonds Bus 72 (Fridays only) Gislingham (via Thornham) to Diss
Leaves Gislingham Village Hall 09.30 / Thornham Magna Four Horseshoes 09.41 / Diss Bus Station 10.05. **Returns** from Diss Bus Station 13.00 / Thornham Magna Four Horseshoes 13.30 / Gislingham Village Hall 13.35.

MELLIS BUS TIMETABLE - https://www.simonds.co.uk/local-bus-times)
110 – Eye to Diss
Eye – Diss (Monday to Friday) – **leaves** Mellis, opp. Railway Tavern: 10.46
Diss – Eye (Monday to Friday) – **leaves** Diss, adj. Bus Station: 13.30



Post Van:
Yaxley
Fridays in the layby on Eye Road:
9.00am to 10.00am

Gislingham
Fridays at Village Hall:
12.15 – 14.15



Mobile Library: Gislingham
2026 visits will be on the following Wednesdays: 15 July, 12 Aug, 9 Sept, 7 Oct, 4 Nov, 2 Dec, 30 Dec.

Times: Broadfields Rd: 15.10-15.45

Mill St.: 15.50-6.05

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Anglian Water Emergency	0800 145145
Botesdale Health Centre	01379 898295
Citizens Advice Bureau Diss	0800 8127 138
Connecting Communities = Suffolk Passenger Transport	01449 614271
Crime Stoppers	0800 555111
District Council - Cllr. Rowland Warboys rowland.warboys@midsuffolk.gov.uk	01379 783412
Electricity Emergency	08007 838838
Essex & Suffolk Water Emergency	08457 820999
Eye Health Centre	01379 870689
Hall Bookings:	
Gislingham - Terry Williams: gislinghamvillagehall@gmail.com	01379 783903
Mellis - Helen Timmons: bookmellishall@gmail.com	01379 783449
Yaxley - Celia Armstrong: celiaarmstrong@hotmail.co.uk	01379 788754
Thornham - Beth Fredrikssen-Jones: hallhire@thornhams.org	
Mendlesham Health Centre	01449 767722
Member of Parliament - Adrian Ramsey adrian.ramsay.mp@parliament.uk	07534 933356
Mind's support line - a safe place to talk about your mental health	0300 102 1234
NHS Direct	111
Parish Councils:	
Gislingham (Clerk): clerk@gislinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk	07833 705915
Mellis (Chairperson - Lawrie Read): mellisparishcouncil@gmail.com	01379 788248
Yaxley (Clerk): Philip.c.freeman@btinternet.com	01379 783203 / 07958 623897
Thornham Parva (Clerk - Christine Moore):	01379 783226
Rev'd Debbie Nicholls, Rector of South Hartismere Benefice rev.d.nicholls@gmail.com	07762 116 335
Suffolk Police (non-emergency)	101
Suffolk Doctors On Call	03001 303066
Suffolk Fire Service & Community Fire Safety	01473 260586
Suffolk County Council - Cllr Paul Bains Paul.Bains@suffolk.gov.uk	
Samaritans – for everyone:	116 123

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