The Messenger



Issue 167
February
2026

Serving Gislingham, Mellis, Yaxley and the Thornhams

THE MESSENGER TEAM

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News, features and advertised events in the Messenger magazine are added daily to the Messenger Facebook page at:
www.facebook.com/themessengergismeltho

Next issue: March 2026
Copy deadline: Saturday 14th February

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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www.the-messenger-online.com

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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



Happy New Year to you and welcome to the February issue.

After our short seasonal break, welcome back to our first issue of 2026. This issue finds us incorporating all the Yaxley village information within our pages, in addition to that of Gislingham, Mellis and the Thornhams. And, with this, comes an increased distribution of an additional 250 copies, as we expand our distribution to now include every house and business in Yaxley. Therefore, we will now be printing and distributing 1200 copies each and every month.

I would like to welcome the residents of Yaxley to the magazine as they may well be reading 'The Messenger' for the very first time! I hope you find the magazine an interesting and informative read. I would like to thank Ian Luff, the Yaxley Parish Council and the Yaxley Village Hall Committee for their help and support with this initiative. We look forward to publishing their contributions every month.

Throughout 2026, our villages will be putting on numerous events for us all to enjoy. Volunteers are much needed by the various groups in our villages who organise these so, if you can help, please do. You will find details of all these vacancies and requests for help throughout the magazine and on page 45. If you are new to our villages and want to meet new people, please offer some help and contribute to the social fabric of your village.

Growing up in the 1960's, I loved watching Hanna-Barbera cartoons on TV. Many would probably describe this as a "mis-spent" childhood. Not so! Because when, 60 years later, I attended a recent Quiz Night at Gislingham Village Hall in aid of the Teenage Cancer Trust and there was a question about a cartoon character with a "rhyming name" – I just knew it had to be the one and only 'Squiddly Diddly'. My fellow team members looked at me in astonishment as I was the only member of our team to know the answer. Now, you're probably wondering why I am boasting about this useless piece of information that remains locked in my brain... Well, someone challenged me to mention 'Squiddly Diddly' in my editorial and, if I did, they said they would give me £20! Therefore, I will take great pleasure in not only collecting my money after the magazine is published, but also donating it to the money that was raised for TCT at the quiz. By my calculation, that will take the total raised to £1422 (see page 63 for more details). Next month, I'll happily mention another Hanna-Barbera cartoon character of a reader's choosing in return for a £25 donation to TCT!

Finally, please note that our March issue, which will be out for distribution the weekend of, 22nd/23rd February, has a copy deadline date of Saturday 14th February. Please send your contributions as soon as possible.

Until next month!

Jeff Norman, Editor e) themessengereditorial@gmail.com

Cover photo: Taken looking across fields on Gislingham Road, Thornham at 08.15am on 6th January.

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DIARY & LOCAL EVENTS

FEBRUARY:

Tuesday 3rd February: Rural Coffee Caravan
- Mellis Memorial Hall: 10.00am-12.00 mid-day.

Saturday 7th February: Coffee morning and book sale
- Gislingham Village Hall: 10.00am – 12 noon.

Sunday 8th February: Sunday Breakfast Club with local artist Reg Siger the guest speaker.
- Thornhams Parish Hall: 10.00am. See page 20 for details.

Saturday 14th February: Jumble Sale
- Gislingham Village Hall: 10.00am – 12.00 noon. See page 16 for details.

Wednesday 18th February: Gislingham WI meeting – Speaker, Elene Marsden 'The truth about our clothing - the environmental impact with upcycling and second-hand solution.'
- 7.30pm Gislingham Village Hall.

Friday 20th February: Film Night – 'The Roses'
- Thornhams Parish Hall: Tickets £6 pay on the door. See page 43 for details.

Saturday 21st February: Dance Evening for Adults
- Gislingham Village Hall: 5.30pm – 9.30pm. Free entry. See page 26 for details.

FUTURE EVENTS:

Sunday 22nd March: Gislingham Litter Pick
- Gislingham Village Hall: 10.00am – 11.15am: Equipment and refreshments provided

Saturday 28th March: Music Quiz Night at Gislingham Village Hall - Details to follow

Saturday 25th April 2026: Bingo Night at Gislingham Village Hall - Details to follow

Saturday 27th June 2026: Gisfest at Gislingham Village Hall - Details to follow

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

Our next issue is March 2026. The "What's On" Diary deadline is: Saturday 14th February.

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. Tuesdays 10.00am. No floorwork.
Thursdays 11.00am – mix of Pilates, yoga and functional exercise.
Contact Michelle 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

Circuit Training Fitness Class: Memorial Hall. Mondays 7.30pm – 8.30pm
Gus: 07540 473203 / anguswilkinson@btinternet.com

Pilates Classes: Memorial Hall. Mondays 9.30am. Becky Cruickshank: 07734 414151

YAXLEY

Yaxley & Mellis Reading Group
Enjoy reading? Want to discuss books with others?
Meets 4th Thursday afternoon of the month.
Contact Marie Needham: 07904 121215 or email: mnwhizz@yahoo.co.uk

The Art Club
Meets on Tuesdays at Yaxley Village Hall: 10.00am – 12 noon. Dates: 3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th February.
All abilities welcome £4.00 per session.
Contact: Glyn Owens: 07768 026065 or email: gavowens@aol.com

The Garden Club
Thursday 5th February at Yaxley Village Hall from 7.30pm
A Deer Resistant Garden – A Case Study – Phil Rusted
More details: Abby Brett: 01379 783984 or email: tony1andabby2@hotmail.com

The Yaxley Needlework and Craft Group
Meetings on alternate Wednesdays (4th & 18th February) 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

TELL US ABOUT YOUR REGULAR EVENTS in GISLINGHAM, MELLIS, YAXLEY & THE THORNHAMS

If you would like to submit details of a regular group or club for inclusion, please send to: themessengereditorial@gmail.com

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GISLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL NOTES



Welcome to 2026!

This promises to be an exciting year in the village!

We are going through resident's thoughts about what new equipment goes in the play area on Charities Meadow. We will be making decisions on what can be done within the budget that is available to us.

The mayoral elections, which basically will decide how we are governed in the future and what extra work will be required of the Parish / Council, appear to have been temporarily deferred, so we may have to wait a further one to two years before this is finalised.

We will be looking at further ideas to try and protect our landscape / environment from developers and whilst this will be a lengthy and expensive process, we believe it is essential for the betterment of the village and will give us greater control as to what may or may not be done within the village confines.



The pylons and solar farm projects rumble on. We are in liaison with relevant organisations and we are trying to arrange another visit from either or both of the pylon and solar organisations early in the new year in order that residents are fully aware of what the future of both projects may bring.



My Parish Council colleagues and I wish you all a happy, healthy and, hopefully, wealthy 2026 and rest assured we will continue to do whatever is in our powers for the continued betterment of our village.

Vacancies

Please note, we still have vacancies on the Parish Council, so if you feel this may be of interest, please do not hesitate to contact me by email:

christophertranter@gislinghamparishcouncil.com Tel: 07473 118929 or our clerk at:

clerk@gislinghamparishcouncil.gov.uk Tel: 07833 705915.

Christopher Tranter - Gislingham Parish Council Chair

YAXLEY PARISH COUNCIL NEWS



Hello Everybody,

I do hope that you have had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year. They are probably a distant memory by now.

I am delighted to be writing to you all through the pages of this long established and successful magazine and I thank Jeff, the editor, and the committee for the warm welcome and help they have given to facilitate the inclusion of Yaxley content in the Messenger. Yaxley Parish Council and Yaxley Village Hall Committee are both very grateful to be able to provide contributions to your magazine.

Before I begin, I would like once again to thank Abby and Tony Brett of Yaxley who produced and distributed 'The Yaxley Messenger' so successfully over 13 years and stepped down from this highly demanding voluntary work in December 2025. They extended and developed the tradition in Yaxley of having a high-quality monthly magazine and I am so pleased that tradition will now be able to continue through these pages.

Suffolk Water Recycling and Transfer Project

The Parish Clerk, Philip Freeman, and I attended an online consultation meeting about this project in November 2025. In a nutshell this project seeks to boost water across Suffolk (currently designated as a 'water stressed' area) for housing and industry by building a second water recycling plant near Lowestoft and using it to boost water supply which will then be distributed through the River Waveney, new pipelines and two new reservoirs across the county. One of these reservoirs, having the capacity but not the surface area of fifteen Olympic swimming pools, is projected to be built on one of fifteen sites to the north of Yaxley.

Although not opposing the whole, vast, scheme Yaxley Parish Council made it clear in its submission to the consultation process that it was unfortunate and unacceptable that fourteen of these fifteen sites lay to the west of the A140 in the small village of Thrandeston, even though the reservoir's principal use would be to supply new industry and housing on and around the airfield on the eastern side of the road. Construction and maintenance on any of those western sites would not only be unnecessarily costly but would place grave extra demands on the single-track roads of Thrandeston; a village which is already a proposed site for a battery storage facility and solar farm. Three of these reservoir sites were in proximity to an historic building whose occupants had already suffered greatly from infrastructure development. Essex and Suffolk Water staff attending the meeting weren't able (or weren't willing) to give any reason why these sites could not all be on the eastern side of the A140. Our consultation submission also made it clear that the reservoir must be fenced to avoid danger to wildlife. This project has not yet reached the stage of applying for planning permission. When it does so the decision on the application will be made by the Secretary of State since it will be designated as a NSIP (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project).

Energy Projects in and Near Yaxley

Yaxley Parish Council and many people in Yaxley remain concerned about many aspects - but particularly those concerning fire safety - of two large energy projects planned within our parish boundary. One, known as Field Yaxley, has had planning permission approved by MSDC Planning Committee. This was granted despite strong opposition from the Parish Council on the grounds that the BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) will be constructed within 86m of a high pressure gas line and many heavy lorries will cross that gas line in the construction process.

A company known as 'Regener8' has applied for planning permission for battery storage and a sub-station in the village despite naming a narrow lane as one of two emergency fire access routes. A company representative admitted to Yaxley Parish Council at a meeting in November this lane is not wide enough for a fire engine without the appliance going up on a muddy verge, yet it still intends to proceed with its application. Depending on the direction of the wind on the outbreak of any fire this totally inadequate single track route might have to be used as the sole access to the fire. Even though the advice for these batteries is, alarmingly, to 'isolate and let burn' crops and nearby houses could catch fire and would need to be accessed by fire appliances.



Eye's part time fire station has only one engine. Diss is only a two engine station. Would these three appliances be sufficient as a first response to contain a fire even with proper access? According to the planning application access to Regener8 would be via the lane pictured on the right (shown with my bicycle laid across to give an idea of size). Whatever one's view might be of the necessity or otherwise of such projects surely local people have a right to proper fire safety measures in the design of these sites and the access to them?

Yaxley Village Allotments

Unusually in this area only a very small proportion of Yaxley's many allotment plots are in use. This is despite the advantages of: good road access down Old Norwich Road; fertile soil; cheap rents; a water supply from a bowser and a community building (OK, a shed. A big and well-maintained shed, but a shed, nonetheless). People from all local villages are most welcome to rent an allotment in Yaxley. If interested, please contact our Parish Clerk Philip.c.freeman@btinternet.com

Village Events

My wife and I recently attended a most enjoyable evening of bingo in our characterful and warm village hall. The Yaxley Village Hall Committee which plans and organises such events is seeking new members and ideas for future events to appeal to local people. If you have any suggestions or wish to serve on the committee please contact its secretary, Ian Muir on riumnai@gmail.com I know that the Committee is planning what will be an exciting series of events to commemorate the centenary of our Village Hall over the summer and autumn of 2026. Your involvement will be most welcome!

I wish a happy 2026 to you all.

Ian Luff, Chairman, Yaxley Parish Council

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MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL NOTES



Would you like to join us in 2026 and help make a difference in your local community?

The Parish Council would like to wish a happy and healthy New Year to all members of the community, and invite you to consider joining the council, or come along to a future meeting. With the many energy projects and development proposals due to impact Mellis, this is a great time to join the council, or engage with us to help shape the future of Mellis in a positive way.

The Parish Council meets at least 10 times a year in Mellis Memorial Hall. Members of the community are always welcome to attend, and the agenda includes a 'public participation' item, to allow members of the public to contribute to the meeting, or raise any concerns.

The first point of contact for the council is always the Clerk, Jane Challis, who can be contacted via email: clerk@mellisparishcouncil.gov.uk, or by calling 07796 410694.

You can find the date of the next meeting, along with agendas, minutes, and the latest news, on the Parish Council's website: https://www.mellisparishcouncil.gov.uk/, or by viewing the noticeboard outside the Memorial Hall.

The next council meeting is due to be held on Thursday the 19th of February 2026 at 6:30pm.

Role of a Parish Councillor

Councillors are elected to represent the local community, so must live or work within the parish, (for at least 12 months prior to being elected), and be over 18 years of age.

The role is varied and can include developing strategies and plans for the local area, taking up issues on behalf of residents, making decisions in relation to where money should be spent and what services should be delivered, interacting with the community, other local organisations and government bodies.

There are currently three councillor vacancies, so if you are looking for a rewarding role, would like to be involved with positive changes to improve the local community, and can commit to attending the monthly meetings, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

To express an interest, or request further information, please contact the Clerk as above.

Mellis Parish Council

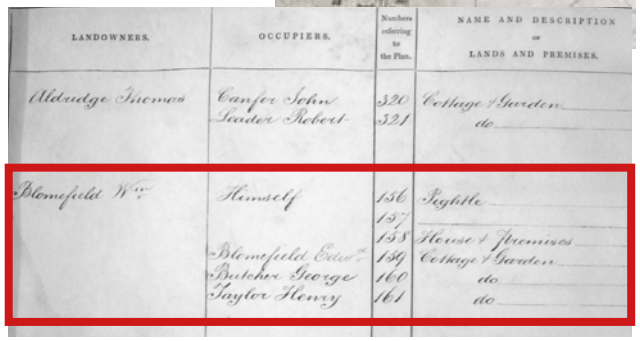


A YAXLEY SMUGGLER

DOWN Memory LANE

I wonder how reliable and true to form oral history can be? I was recently asked if I had come across any information about a secret tunnel that allegedly connected Yaxley Hall with the Church and maybe used by smugglers. So far, I haven't and I suppose if I did, then it won't be secret anymore. However, I have found a story about Yaxley smugglers! An article appeared in the Diss Express on April 4th 1941 written by George Blomfield telling a story most likely handed down by word of mouth about an ancestor who lived almost a century earlier. I wondered if it was true or maybe written to give a light-hearted break from the gloom of those war years. I have researched where possible some of the facts presented in the following tale, fact or fiction, it's for you to decide.





LANDOWNERS.	OCCUPIERS.	Numbers referring to the Plan.	NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF LANDS AND PREMISES.
Aldridge Thomas	Canfer John	320	Cottage & Garden
	Leader Robert	321	do
Blomefield Wm	Himself	156	Pightle
		157	
		158	House & Premises
	Blomefield Edwd	159	Cottage & Garden
	Butcher George	160	do
	Taylor Henry	161	do

"In March 1848 there died in Yaxley a noted smuggler, who in his day earned a prosperous living. The house he owned and occupied has for many years served as a school, well known to be the most ancient of buildings in the country to be so used." True, the 1839 tithe map describes a house in Church Lane occupied by William Blomfield that became well known a few years later as the school house. *"Here was the home of William Blomfield, well known as 'Kegs' by reason of the many choice liquors and wines that were there deposited, and also in the church and churchyard. Soon he purchased the block of houses and even to this day is known as Kegs Alley."* William Blomfield did indeed own a block of houses according to the tithe map in 1839, now accessed by a driveway off Church Lane. Is that driveway 'Kegs Alley'? Please tell me. William also owned many of the fields as they were at the time surrounding the church and down towards Hall Lane.

"He had two wonderful horses, large chestnut cobs and he used to take them alternatively from here to the coast for his cargo, never travelling the same road twice in succession. These most beautiful animals were trained to cover the journey in a most marvellous way and many were the hairsbreadth escape of being captured." Fact, surprisingly the major distribution centre for smuggling in Suffolk was not on the coast but 40 miles inland in Hadleigh. During the 18th century there was a gang numbering 100 men, each turning out with two horses. Such a force would have been almost unstoppable, even when the customs authorities had military support. Customs letters from the time record, 20th May, 70 horses with dry goods landed at Sizewell. 27th May, 27 horses with wet goods and 36 loaded with tea landed at Sizewell. 11th June, 60 horses, most with brandy, 53 with tea. 2nd July, 83 horses with tea, 9 waggon loads wet goods. And so on.

"His house and Alley were in close proximity to the church and churchyard, where on the north side were three large slab tombs approximately four feet high. The insides of these were cleared away and herein was placed the cargo of the precious vintage. On the south side there were more of these tombs which were also filled." Fact, although there are no raised tombs in front of the church today, on Victorian photos, the raised tombs are present on the left-hand side. These have now been lowered to a few inches above ground level. When it's stated, 'the insides were cleared away', that doesn't refer to skeletons and suchlike but nests and rubble. The raised tombs, sometimes coffin shaped are created as a display of grandeur and do not hold a body, this is six feet under, hence a void behind either stone panels or brickwork when removed. On the south side of the church, there are to this day four partially raised tombs and one that has since been lowered. *"Then, the wonderful North Porch which is the admiration of all visitors; built in 1459 and which has a narrow winding staircase leading up to the Parvix, was used by William and could easily hold eight barrels. How these heavy weights of wines got there in such a winding and narrow place is a mystery – but so it was."*

Fact, the Parvix is a room above the church porch in which important church documents were once stored and it does have difficult access.

"In those days there was no resident parson and the church would be served by a travelling curate who would have several parishes to attend to. The sexton or clerk no doubt 'was in the swim' and kept the keys of the church and churchyard." Fact, at the time William Sprigge was mentioned in the 1841 census as being a clergyman. To the best of my knowledge the vicarage at the time was in a poor state of repair so maybe the clergyman was not always resident in the village. Making an accusation that the sexton or churchwarden may have gone along with the storage of illicit alcohol seems to be a touch libellous, however I have heard of a similar tale relating to a riverside village in Essex where barrels of wine were stored in the loft above the seamen's mission.

"Kegs Blomfield had a one and only son, James, well known as Dumpling by reason of being the possessor of a very large, plump red nose. All the property passed to James, but only for a short time. The first resident vicar acquired the property, and only the horses were left." Fact, a resident vicar named Edward Cobbold, son of the owner of the large Ipswich brewers, Tolly Cobbold is recorded on the 1851 Yaxley census as vicar of Yaxley. Prior to the death of 'Kegs', James lived along Yaxley Street near the Lion public house and on the 1851 census his profession was described as a 'carrier', equivalent to a present day self-employed long distant lorry driver or 'white van man'. I have not found a reason for 'Dumpling' giving up so much property in such a short time, drink and gambling maybe, or the new vicar put an end to the smuggling, who knows?

Back to James now and a ghostly story to end. *"On one occasion his journey was allocated from Yaxley to London, with a cargo of goods, starting from Yaxley late in the evening; his route was via Mellis, Burgate, and on to the Bury turnpike. Just as he arrived at Burgate Rectory gate, a form appeared and went up the road a short distance, then crossing the road, moving along towards the church. His horse halted at the sight and it was with great difficulty he could get it to move. When the object reached a large tree called the twin sycamore, it stopped again and the horse as well. The object had turned the corner towards the churchyard before he could get the horse to move again. When he reached the corner, he could see the object had vanished into the churchyard and with a great deal of coaxing and gentle handling he moved off onto the Bury Road where he stopped and examined his horse. To his amazement it was covered from head to tail with snow white lather." George goes on to write. "On one fateful harvest day in 1513 the then vicar of Burgate, William Heywood, whilst binding wheatsheaves was attacked and pursued by an enraged parishioner to the parsonage, and there murdered him."*

Has anyone ever seen a ghostly figure in the area of the left turn to Burgate off the Mellis – Wortham Road?

John Hawes

Registered Charity NO.304751

JUMBLE SALE

Gislingham Village Hall

Saturday 14th February 2026

- Toys
- Clothes
- Books
- Bric a Brac
- Refreshments
- No Electrical Goods

Please bring jumble for sale to the Hall on the day between 9:00am and 9:30am

Doors open at 10:00am

Free entry



NEWS FROM GISLINGHAM VILLAGE HALL

The long-awaited kitchen and toilet refurbishment is due to commence on Monday 5th January. There will be some upheaval and we would ask everyone to bear with us during this project.

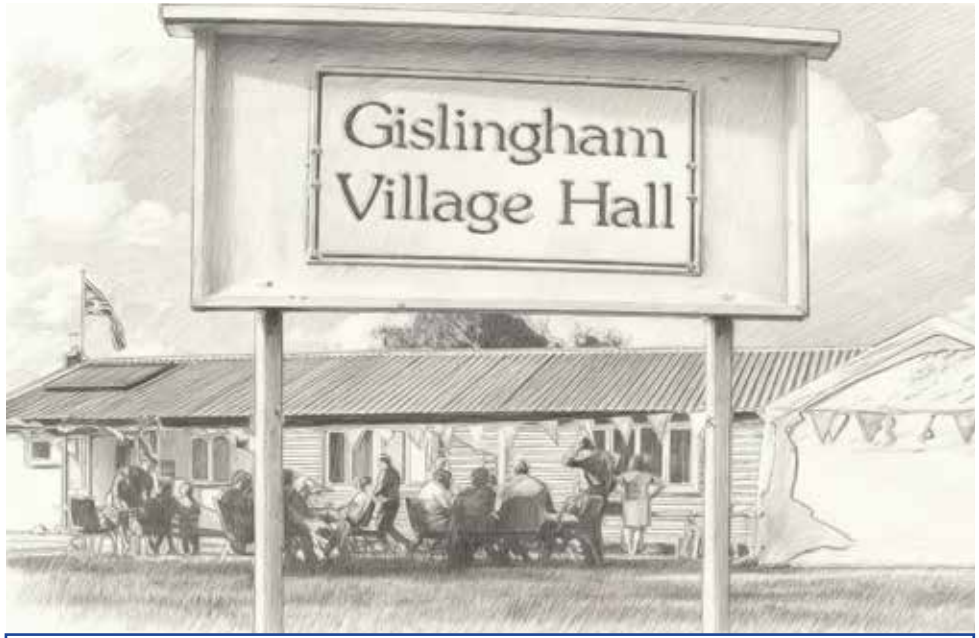
FUTURE EVENTS

Saturday 14th February 2026: Jumble Sale
- Bring items for the Sale to the Hall from 9.00am to 9.30am on the day.
- Only clean, quality items, please. Sale commences at 10.00am.
- Free Entry. Refreshments available.

Saturday 28th March: Music Quiz Night - Details to follow

Saturday 25th April 2026: Bingo Night - Details to follow

Saturday 27th June 2026: Gisfest - Details to follow



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.

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YAXLEY VILLAGE HALL NEWS

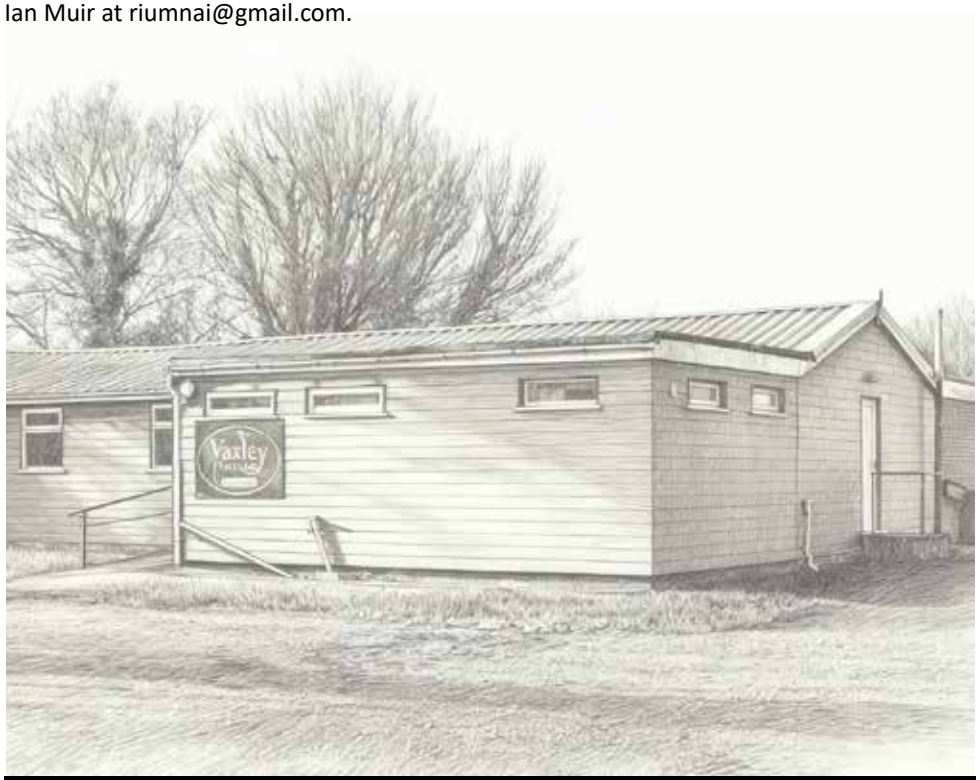


On the 26th November 2026 our Village Hall (which was originally a WW1 mess hut) will have been in Yaxley for 100 years. So, 2026 will be its centenary year.

The Hall is run by a committee currently made up of 8 members. As well as our usual events including Bingo and Quiz nights, Church run Strawberry Tea and Harvest Supper, regular sessions of Yoga and Pilates, as well as local clubs, we plan to add a celebration during the summer months for the whole community. Also, later in the year we will be looking back at the history and events the Hall has seen over its 100 years.

To make the 2026 a success, we would like to increase our committee numbers. If you feel you have something to offer, please get in touch. We meet once a month to plan and oversee the running of the Hall.

If you have any suggestions for other activities or require further information, please email Ian Muir at riumnai@gmail.com.



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



Enjoy a delicious breakfast in the warm and friendly atmosphere of our Sunday Breakfast Club together with a talk by local artist Reg Siger

Booking essential at breakfast@thornhams.org

NEWS FROM THORNHAM PARISH HALL



FUTURE EVENTS:

Sunday 8th February: Sunday Breakfast Club with guest speaker Reg Siger.
(Local artist from Gislingham) – please note the new date.
- 10.00am. Tickets £10.00. Booking essential at: breakfast@thornhams.org

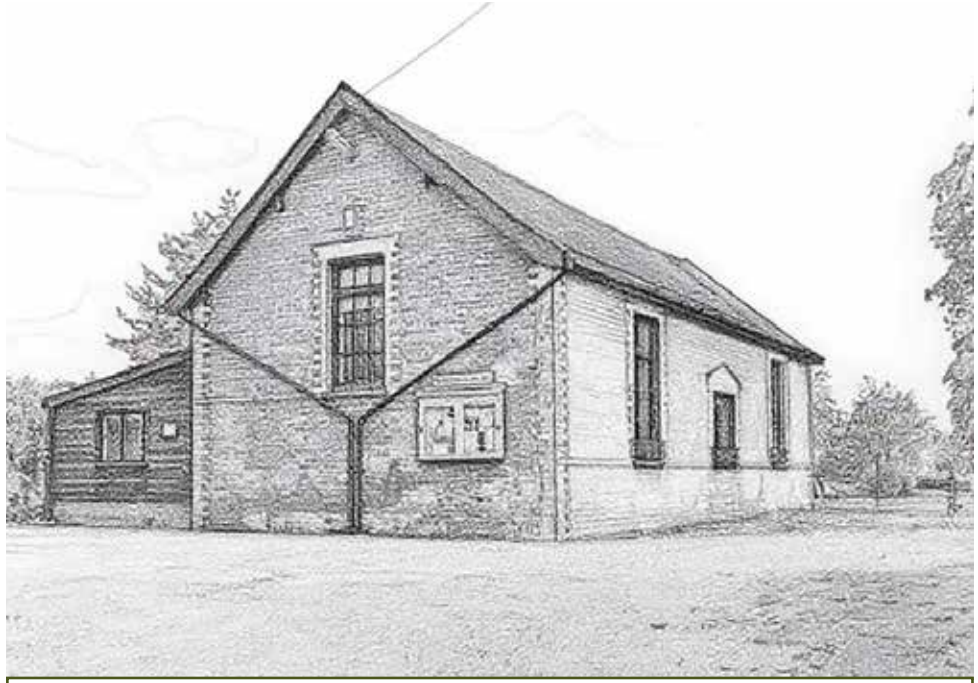
Friday 20th February: Film Night – 'The Roses' starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Olivia Coleman. Bookings: films@thornhams.org Tickets £6 pay on the door.

Friday 27th March Quiz Night - details tbc

REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS:

Pilates (gentle with no floorwork). Classes on Tuesdays 10.00am.
Booking is essential at hello@yapl.co.uk

EveryBody Strong, Stretch, Relax – mix of Pilates, yoga and functional exercise.
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To book please contact Beth Fredrikssen-Jones, the Booking Clerk, using hallhire@thornhams.org

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FEBRUARY

THE RAILWAY TAVERN

MELLIS

Thursday 5th February 7.30pm QUIZ NIGHT

Cash Prize & Free Snacks. Booking is Essential.

Saturday 7th February 8.30pm UNCOOL SAM

Former Makeshifts playing driving R&B in the style of Dr Feelgood . FREE ENTRY

Thursday 19th February 7.30pm QUIZ NIGHT

Cash Prize & Free Snacks. Booking is Essential.

Saturday 21st February 8.30pm KARAOKE & DISCO

Happy times with singing and dancing with Paul "On the Road Again" Draper.

FREE ENTRY

Sunday 22nd February 5.00pm DISCORD & RHYME

Step back to the 1980's with all the greats, Duran Duran, Soft Cell, Spandau Ballet & so much more.
Performed LIVE by the brilliant Discord & Rhyme. FREE ENTRY

Thursday 26th February 7.30pm BINGO NIGHT

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

Saturday 28th February 8.30pm COUNTRY & WESTERN

REDNECK RODEO with Live music from the fabulous BARHOPPERS. FREE ENTRY

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ABI RAINBIRD TO RUN THE LONDON MARATHON IN 2026 FOR MARIE CURIE

In April, Abi Rainbird will be running the London Marathon in support of Marie Curie.



Some of you may know Abi from her younger days living in Gislingham — whether that was working part-time in the village shop, performing in Gislingham Variety Club performances, or later running The Trowel and Hammer public house in Cotton for five years.

While she officially left Gislingham when she went to university, her parents, Karen and Mark, still live on the High Street, and Abi still spends plenty of time back in the village whether that's visiting them, walking the dogs over the fields, and now completing training runs down the country lanes, often accompanied by her mum. (Poor Karen!).

Ever since she turned 18, Abi has applied to the London Marathon ballot every single year. But unfortunately, each year, she has been was unsuccessful. However, this year, she decided she couldn't wait any longer and applied for a charity place instead, running in support of Marie Curie - a charity that has supported numerous family members, through some incredibly difficult times.

This will be her first ever marathon and to make things even more interesting, before finding out she had secured her place, she hadn't run for over a year! But Abi told us her training is now well underway, with distances gradually increasing, and while it's proving to be a huge physical and mental challenge, it's one she is determined to see through. As part of her place, she has a fundraising target of £2,500.

Abi said: "Every donation, no matter the size, helps Marie Curie continue supporting families through the toughest moments of their lives. If you're able to support my fundraising, I would be incredibly grateful. And if you happen to spot me running around the village lanes, a wave or a word of encouragement always goes a long way. Thank you so much for your support."

Abi has an online fundraising page at: https://2026tcslondonmarathon.enthuse.com/pf/abigail-rainbird

Marie Curie provides vital care, comfort and compassion to people living with terminal illness, while also supporting families when they need it most. Abi and her family have seen first-hand the difference their nurses and teams make at the end of life, so this cause is very close to her heart. To learn more about Marie Curie, go to their website at: https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/



Dance Evening for Adults in Gislingham



If your evenings have become a little too quiet, and your favourite music is still somewhere inside you - it might be time to dance

Saturday, 21st February, 5:30 pm – 9:30pm
at Gislingham Village Hall - FREE ENTRY

Time to take out those beautiful dresses, shirts and trousers that have been waiting patiently in your wardrobe as we're starting a friendly dance evening for adults — no rules, no pressure, just music, movement and good company. Dance however you like: energetic, relaxed, seated, or simply swaying to the music — it all counts.

Please bring your own drinks and a light snack — dancing needs energy!

This is our first trial evening, created by local residents for local residents. If people enjoy it, we'd love to make it a regular event.
Additional help would be very welcome, especially from anyone who is comfortable with music or equipment.

Please let us know if you're planning to come — it would really help us to have an idea of how many of us there will be. See you on the dance floor!

Any questions: email me (Svetlana Carter) at: Lanacarter0103@gmail.com

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WHAT IS GISLINGHAM UNITED CHARITY AND WHO DOES IT HELP?

Gislingham United Charity (GUC) is a local charity that can provide financial support to Gislingham residents in a range of different circumstances. Much of GUC's funds derive in origin from charitable giving by Gislingham residents over the centuries and are managed by volunteer trustees for the benefit of current and future residents.

There are 4 separate funding 'branches', of varying sizes, that can be accessed by Gislingham residents, organisations and institutions via a simple application process:







EDUCATION FUND: This is the largest fund and it is available to Gislingham residents of all ages, whether they are studying at primary school, high school, are in further education, are undertaking vocational training or are studying at university. Contributions can also be made towards the cost of educational trips and the purchase of study materials or equipment. GUC can also provide financial grants to residents undertaking educational activities with other institutions, such as the Scouts or Guides, and can help to fund extra curricula and out of school activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh awards.

1ST MOIETY FUND: For Gislingham residents who find themselves in hardship or need. In the past, GUC has supported residents by assisting with rent arrears, funding a grocery shop, contributing towards the cost of heating oil, paying a bill, or covering short term hospital travelling expenses or emergency childcare costs.

2ND MOIETY FUND: This is a small fund that can contribute towards the provision and maintenance of the village's recreation facilities.

ECCLESIASTICAL FUND: This is a small fund that can contribute towards the upkeep, repair and insurance of the fabric of the village church and the upkeep of the paths and the churchyard.

All applications are dealt with in the strictest confidence at bi-monthly meetings held in January, March, May, July, September and November each year.

Application forms can be downloaded from the "Organisations" page on the Parish Council Website: https://gislinghamparishcouncil.com/organisations/gislingham-united-charity/ or obtained from GUC's Clerk at Lilac Cottage, Mill Street, Gislingham, IP23 8JR. Tel: 01379 783380, Email: gislinghamunitedcharity@gmail.com

Applications, together with supporting documentation, should be **submitted to the Clerk**, *using the contact details above, 7 working days before meetings to allow trustees time to consider applications and request additional information if required.*

Gislingham United Charity. Registered Charity No. 208340. Registered address: Lilac Cottage, Mill Street, Gislingham, Eye, Suffolk IP23 8JR

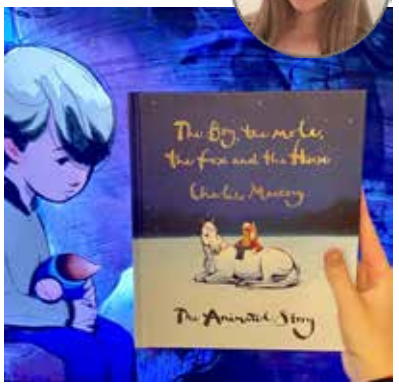


CHARLOTTE'S BOOK BLOG



The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse by Charlie Mackesy

★★★★★ 5/5



Hello bookworms! Happy New Year. I hope everyone had a lovely Christmas. This month I would like to review a book which has been one of my favourites since I discovered it in 2022. Published in 2019, The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse is a beautifully illustrated book which has since been released as a hand-drawn animated short film which can be found on BBC iPlayer or Apple TV.

The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse follows the journey of a boy who is on the search for a 'home'. On his travels, he meets a kind mole who he picks up along the way and forms a deep bond with. Along the way, they both encounter a fox trapped in a snare - a dilemma for the mole - however they agree to help him free. After a few twists and turns, a horse eventually joins the quartet and explores how the four of them differ in the ways in which they share their love for each other, as well as the similarities in the ways that they feel. The book follows the four new, unexpected friends as they navigate the world around them and overcome their individual challenges.

This worldwide bestseller is essentially a series of beautiful sketches, each accompanied by a handwritten snippet of conversation. This is a graphic novel; however, the images are delicate, whimsical and extremely elegant, whilst the writing is made up of nuggets of wisdom - honest, authentic and potentially life-changing in their power and simplicity. This is a book to remind us what fragile creatures we are and that the world can be tough place, as well as a beautiful one. However, it's also a reminder that the solution is perhaps equally simple – it's to focus on kindness, compassion and love.

Charlie Mackesy released a sequel to this book in October 2025, which I was fortunate enough to receive for Christmas - so I really can't wait to read that as this first one was so beautiful and is one that I have re-read on many occasions. Being a graphic novel, it takes me anywhere between just 40 mins and 1.5 hours to read depending on how absorbed I get within the gorgeous illustrations. I have both the original copy and also the animated movie copy of the book and both are stunning. So, if you're fancying a read that is fairly quick, and a step back from your normal go-to type of book then I would highly recommend this one purely because of how simple yet affective it is. The animation is also such a lovely adaptation of the book.

Have you read this? What did you think? I'd love to know! Head over to my instagram @charlottes.bookblog to find more of my book-related content and let me know what you're currently reading :) ***Charlotte x***

CHARLOTTES.BOOKBLOG

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CIRCULAR WALK AROUND YAXLEY

OS Explorer 230 Distance 4.5 miles/7kms

We walked this route about 3 years ago, however, on this Boxing Day excursion, we have changed the route slightly, which makes it a bit shorter.

We started our walk by parking on the grass at the entrance to St Mary's Church, Thornham Parva. St Mary's church dates from the 12c and is Grade 1 listed. It is quite unique as it has a thatched tower as well as the main roof. The 14 c wall paintings are very beautiful and includes on the north wall the martyrdom of St Edmund. Sir Basil Spence the architect and Dame Anne Warburton who was the first female ambassador are laid to rest in the graveyard.





Leave the car park and turn left until you get to the junction which is in a triangle. Look at the foot of the tree in the middle of the triangle, I was sure it is supposed to be a boat. This was my thought 3 years ago and luckily Stephen Schwartz sent me an email with an article explaining that the object is a snow plough, which was used by Jim Thurlow, who was a county road man who lived in the village. In the early days it was pulled by a horse, but later on it was by a tractor. It was thought it was last used in the big freeze of 1962/63.

Turn right and walk along the road for about 400 metres. Opposite Chapel Farm Lane, take the footpath next to Apple Tree Farm. Turn right here and keep the hedge to your right. As you walk along this path you will go under some power cables and have a good view of the wind turbines in Eye.



Continue until you get to the end of the path and you will see a bridge in front of you which you need to go over and continue until you get to the road. At the time of walking, several planks were broken, so be careful. Turn right and cross the road and take the road on your left which is Hall Lane and continue until you reach the A140 with the barriers in front. Bear left until the end of the barrier and be careful as you cross the main road and continue your walk up the road towards Hall Farm and Yaxley Hall. There is a large pond to your left.

Continue up the small road until you reach another pond in front of you and a 5-bar gate to your left opposite Woodhall Farm.

Go through the gate and turn immediately right. This continues behind the farm buildings. At the end of the buildings turn left onto a track which turns into a grass track. Continue along this track which is next to a deep ditch and stream to your left. You will now have another view of the wind turbines.

When you reach the wood, there is a bench to have a rest. The inscription on the bench is 'rest up yer ole legs'. Turn right opposite the wooden bridge and small ford onto Rapsy Tapsy Lane. This is a lovely tree lined path.



When you reach the road, cross over and head up the small road and continue through some farm buildings, check out the farmhouse with its lovely chimney stacks. Continue along this quiet lane until you reach a bridleway sign and turn right. This path continues for approx. 2 kms.

As you get near the end you will pass several houses. When you reach the road, cross over and bear left.





This is a busy road, but you are only walking a short distance. We were appalled at the amount of rubbish that had been thrown out of vehicles and left on the grass verge.

When you reach the A140 opposite the Auberge, cross over the road and continue down the quiet lane by the side of the Auberge until you are back at St Mary's church.

Emma & Martyn Bryant

Galloway

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The Postal Museum London - 20th February - £57pp
Oliver! at Gielgud Theatre - 25th February - £110pp
Kew Orchid Festival - 26th February - £66pp
Creative Craft Show at NEC - 14th March - £65pp
Ypres Day Trip - 21st March - £130pp
Highclere Castle - 20th December - £119pp

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CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR FAMILY HISTORY?



For decades I've been spending my spare time researching family trees. I started with my own family back in the days when you had to actually travel to the relevant Records Office and wind through through reel after reel of microfiche in a dimly lit room or trawl through original (and often barely decipherable) Parish Records to track down information. Times have changed and most research can now be done online - assuming you have the right software, the know-how and a fascination with the past.

Eventually, I found I'd gone as far as I could with my family tree so, as I was, by then, completely addicted to genealogy, I asked a neighbour if I could do their tree! They agreed, supplied me with their mother's and father's full names and dates of birth and I dived straight into the records. 30 or 40 hours later I'd uncovered Jewish/Lithuanian ancestry, a scandalous divorce, a renowned expert on the painter J. M. W. Turner, a thespian and a London neighbour called Dr. Crippen (yes, I mean *the* notorious Dr. Crippen!)

Not all family stories are so colourful, but even my working class ancestors had their share of skeletons in the closet, interesting occupations (e.g. mole catcher/scarecrow), fancy names (Zephaniah and Septimus are two of my favourites), not one, but two, Dutch Catholic nuns, a bona fide war hero and pioneers who travelled the Mormon trail to settle Salt Lake City.

Our ancestors' stories provide us with fascinating details about our own families and our wider social history.

WOULD YOU LIKE A CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR FAMILY TREE DONE FOR FREE?

It has long been my dream to turn this hobby into a small business so, to gauge interest and see what I can come up with, I am offering to explore one reader's family story for free. If you would like to put your name forward, please email jclifford2009@gmail.com by 14.2.26 to register your interest. If I get more than one response I will select someone at random. I will publish a summary of what I discover in a future edition of the Messenger.

Thank you, in advance, for your interest, Jo Clifford





NATURE NOTES by Darrel Charles



Hello everyone, welcome back to Nature Notes and Happy New Year!

It's fun to look out for early signs of spring but I wasn't expecting to see this clump of flowering daffodils near Gislingham's Village Hall on 26th December. I wonder if anyone has spotted any other early risers? Since my sighting, the weather has been "mixed" to say the least, although we have, up until now been spared the worst of what others in the country have had to put up with.



In the first week of January, I went along to Lackford Lakes hoping to see some interesting wildlife and to stretch my legs after the Christmas and New Year festivities. Since my last visit there about a year ago it's plain to see the results of the good work done by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust volunteers. The paths and





numerous hides around the site are in good order as is the well stocked cafe with efficient and enthusiastic staff. At this time of year it is to be expected that out on the lakes there would be many kinds of water fowl and I wasn't disappointed. In the photo above we have a handsome pair of Widgeon and I saw many other species including Mallards, Tufted Ducks, Cormorants and Canada Geese. During my walk around the lakes I came across a place where a tree and fallen over and which turned out to be a very popular place for song birds to gather. In truth, this was helped by bird photographers encouraging this behaviour by placing handfuls of seed at strategic places where a pleasing photo could be taken. My shot of a Great Tit was taken at this spot where I also saw Blue Tits and Robins. During previous visits to Lackford Lakes I've also seen Nuthatches and Kingfishers but no luck on this occasion.





A few days after my visit to Lackford I set out again, this time to Somerleyton, just inside Suffolk by the Norfolk border. The purpose of this trip was to revisit a partially restored windmill at nearby Herringfleet. When I set off the roads were clear but as I got closer to my destination the amount of snow increased considerably and the roads became tricky. In the end I decided it would be unwise to continue and headed home but not before I'd had a short walk to admire the scene, including these snow-capped thistle heads.

Back home in the garden there's been a lot of bird action around the feeders and pond. The regulars have been joined by a couple of Moorhens and a particularly proud-looking Pheasant. And it's been good to see a Greater Spotted Woodpecker in the garden again.



Finally, it wouldn't seem right not to have a photo of a Robin in this winter edition, so here we are!





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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SAM RYDER - HEARTLAND

MUSIC NOTES

After becoming the UK's most successful and beloved Eurovision entry in decades with his 2022 track 'Space Man', BRIT and EMMY-nominated singer Sam Ryder has since taken some time to withdraw from the industry and the public eye before re-emerging with his latest album, Heartland.





After increasing in popularity at an astronomical rate on TikTok in 2022, Ryder was selected to represent the UK in Eurovision and amazingly finished 2nd with 'Space Man'. Later that year he released a #1 debut album 'There's Nothing But Space, Man!' and toured the country performing intimate gigs to accompany the album launch. I was fortunate enough to see him perform one of these at The Waterfront in Norwich which was such an incredible evening - and an amazing way to see a star in the making before they get too famous!

After 2-3 years of non-stop gigs, busking, tv work, festivals, stadium shows and various other publicity events as he sky-rocketed in popularity, Sam took some time to withdraw and settle in his new cabin in Nashville, to write a new album having just left his record label to become and independent artist.

Said album, named 'Heartland', was released in October 2025, starting his bold new chapter as he steps into a more intimate and emotionally raw phase of his artistry. This album showcases his unique new sonic identity, which he calls 'Frontier Soul' - an emotional blend of Hollywood scores, soulful Americana, and heartfelt storytelling rooted in memories of his childhood and creative sessions in Nashville.

My favourite two songs from this album are 'OH OK' and 'Suffer in Silence' - they really highlight his new style of music which I totally wasn't expecting to hear when I bought this album, but was a very welcome and pleasant surprise. As much as I love his original style in his first album, it's been very exciting for me to get to know this newer sound that he's achieved in album 2.

If you're a Sam Ryder fan, I'd highly recommend this CD. My dad still needs some convincing, but even he doesn't dislike it!

Charlotte

Author's Rating: ★★★★★ 4/5

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CARAMEL SHORTCAKE

BAKE OFF

I first made this recipe 35 years ago, before it became known as "Millionaires Shortbread" and I still use this recipe today!



Ingredients:

Base:
- 4 oz. margarine or butter
- 2 oz. castor sugar
- 6 oz. self-raising flour

Filing:
- 4 oz. margarine or butter
- 4 oz. castor sugar
- 2 tablespoons golden syrup
- 1 small can sweetened condensed milk

Topping:
- 6 oz. chocolate







Method:

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees F, 180 degrees C, Gas mark 4. Grease a 7" x 11" swiss-roll tin.

To make the base:

Cream the margarine and sugar together until light and fluffy, sieve the flour and fold into the creamed mixture.

Press the mixture evenly over the base of the prepared tin and bake in the centre of the pre-heated oven for 15 to 20 minutes until golden brown.

To make the filling:

Place all the ingredients in a saucepan, heat until dissolved.

Boil for 5 to 10 minutes, stirring continuously. Spread over the cooked base and allow to cool.

Place the chocolate in a bowl over a pan of hot water and allow to melt over a low heat. When melted, quickly pour over the caramel and spread evenly.

Mark into portions before the chocolate sets firm.

Debbie

Remember, this page each month is open to any reader who would like to submit and recommend a recipe to our readers. Please email me your recipes and any photos you have of your recommendations.

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SUFFOLK POLICE - MULTI-AGENCY DAY OF ACTION ON EYE AIRFIELD

Back on November 5th, if you were passing Eye airfield, you could not help but notice the activities of police and partner agencies conducting checks on vehicles. This was with the aim of disrupting the activities of criminals, including organised crime groups, who commit offences across county borders whilst using the road network.

Four people were arrested, more than 50 vehicles were stopped and over 25 Traffic Offence Reports were issued, during a multi-agency day of action in Eye. This was intelligence-led and involved vehicles identified as being potentially involved in criminality being brought back to a check site at Eye Airfield. Officers are also focused on all-round road safety and the fatal four offences of: drink/drug driving, driving whilst using a mobile phone, speeding, and not wearing a seat belt.

Anyone suspected of committing any of these offences was also stopped, along with people driving vehicles which were unroadworthy or had a defect. All of these actions serve towards making the county's roads safer and reduce the likelihood of someone being killed or seriously injured by an illegally/unsafely driven or defective vehicle.

The Joint Roads and Armed Policing Team were assisted by officers from the Road Casualty Reduction Team, Commercial Vehicle Unit (CVU), Response Investigation Team, Community Policing Team and the Intelligence Development Unit; along with police staff colleagues from the Modern-Day Slavery Team and the Safety Camera Team. Partner agencies present included: Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA); HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC); Home Office Immigration Enforcement; Environment Agency; Mid Suffolk Council Taxi Licensing; Tilly Pass trailer inspections; and Marston debt recovery.

Four people were arrested as follows: one on suspicion of handling stolen goods, driving whilst disqualified and driving without insurance; and three for immigration offences.

In respect of the arrest for handling stolen goods, officers had cause to search the suspect's vehicle and nine brand new smartphones were found inside, with no explanation provided as to where they had come from. The investigation is currently ongoing with enquiries being made with partner agencies and other forces.

55 vehicles in total were escorted back to the check site, with 23 leaving clear of any offences. 27 Traffic Offence Reports were issued at the check site, including: six for tinted windows; five for number plate offences; three for insecure loads; two for excess loads; two for no insurance; two for no driving licence; two for not wearing a seat belt; and one each for not being in proper control; careless driving; no MOT; and a wide load not correctly marked.

The CVU dealt with several HGVs for various offences and issued fines totalling £5,400. Three vehicles were seized, two for no insurance and one for being in a dangerous condition.

The Safety Camera Team conducted speed checks in Eye and the surrounding villages and detected 24 offences. Immigration Enforcement arrested three people of overstaying their visas; DVSA conducted checks on 43 vehicles. Checks were conducted on four trailers and Marston debt recovery stopped three vehicles and collected £3,500.

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GISLINGHAM COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

If you're passionate about road safety and want to connect with your neighbours, consider becoming a Community Speed Watch volunteer in Gislingham. It's a rewarding experience that can have a lasting impact. Contact Steve Critchley at: s.j.critchley@btinternet.com

MELLIS PARISH COUNCIL

There are currently three councillor vacancies, so if you are looking for a rewarding role, would like to be involved with positive changes to improve the local community, and can commit to attending the monthly meetings, we would be very pleased to hear from you. To express an interest, or request further information, please contact the Clerk via email: clerk@mellisparishcouncil.gov.uk, or by calling 07796 410694.

YAXLEY VILLAGE HALL

The Village Hall committee are local for more committee members. If you feel you have something to offer, please contact us. For further information, please email Ian Muir at riumnai@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEERING AT THORNHAM PARKRUN

The Thornham parkrun takes place every week and everyone is welcome to volunteer. There are plenty of opportunities to try new roles, apply your skills or learn new ones, be with friends and family and be a part of the parkrun community. You don't need any experience of parkrun, or of volunteering. Anyone wishing to volunteer can email thornhamwalks@parkrun.com or look on our Facebook page.

EYE BROWNIES

Join Eye Brownies as a Brownie Leader! We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to join our team. We meet in Stoke Ash. Contact Sandra at: clellandfram@hotmail.com

MENDLESHAM SCOUTS

Currently looking for the following:

- Adult Leaders/Assistant Leaders for Beavers, Cubs and Scouts
- Fundraising Team - to help raise funds and organise events
- Secretary/Group Administrator

Contact: Lil Evans – Chair of Trustees 07545 322087 Elizabethevans81@hotmail.co.uk
Martyn Bryant – Group Lead Volunteer 07900 147912 Martyn_bryant@hotmail.com

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1ST EYE GIRL GUIDES

CLUBS 4 KIDS

1st Eye Guides meet between 7:15 pm and 8:45pm on Wednesday evenings during term time at the Stoke Ash Centre, Mill Lane, just off the A140.

During the past 12 months we have enjoyed a wide variety of activities and welcomed a number of visitors to the Centre. We are grateful to all our visitors who have taken the time to inspire the girls.

During the Autumn term we had a visit from a volunteer from East Anglian Air Ambulance. The girls learnt how to call for help in the event of an emergency and practised CPR- vital skills which may prove life changing one day.

In January we celebrated Chinese New Year by making spring rolls and creating snakes out of paper plates. The spring rolls were delicious- cooking with one of our volunteers Lynne is always a favourite with the girls.



Summer term brought visits from Guide Dogs and an archery lesson in our field. We are so lucky to have such a fabulous site at our disposal.

This term we have been working on the Love Rugby Challenge Badge which was designed to coincide with the Women's Rugby World Cup. Louise Rickard, who is one of the most capped players in the history of women's rugby, put the girls through their paces and we look forward to practising our skills in the Spring when we can go outside.

In October we joined 4000 members of Girlguiding from across Norfolk and Suffolk in a takeover of Banham Zoo. Seeing so many members of the Girlguiding community in one space was very inspiring and the girls even learnt a new song from some of the younger members we met.

We are starting to work on the new badges released by Girlguiding in the summer. We aim to be led by the girls and rightly predicted that they would want to complete the Food Critic Badge. Codebreaking and Music are also on our list to complete later in the year.

We are very grateful to Councillors Lucy Elkin and Tim Weller for their support of the Unit which has enabled us to purchase arts and crafts and cooking materials without increasing subscriptions.

For more information contact Nicola Wheeler, Leader: eyeguidessuffolk@gmail.com

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JEAN ARCHDEACON

Many of our readers will be aware that Jean is leaving Gislingham and this is a small tribute to her service to this community.



Jean came to live in the village in 1978, with her husband, known as Pete, the Yank, and their two children, John and Elisabeth. Jean quickly became involved in village life, joining the WI and helping run the playgroup, which met in the village hall. For some years she was also a member of the Wives' group. Jean also became an active member of the Parish church, St. Mary's, becoming a member of the PCC. when Rev. Robert Lee was Rector. Her children attended school at Finningham.

Sadly, Peter died in 1996 and Jean particularly remembers being supported by friends in the WI Drama Group, of which she was part, and recalls the value of being able to focus on something outside at the time.

Jean's profession is that of a librarian and she went on to work for Norfolk Librarian service, being responsible for local studies in Breckland and South Norfolk, with contacts in Long Stratton and Poringland, and later in Thetford. She retired in 2012.

Two years previously in 2010, Jean began to train as a Reader in the Church of England, and was licensed as a Reader in 2013 in Bury St. Edmunds Cathedral. Since then, Jean has officiated at services in the parish church and across the South Hartismere benefice. Her ministry has also included taking funerals for many local families and has found this a privilege. She has also led the local Service of Remembrance and the Carol service in recent years. As a Reader she became a member of the chaplaincy team at the Cathedral and will continue in this role as a Lay chaplain in the future. Jean also became an Assistant Warden of Readers in the Diocese.

Jean's son, John, sadly died in 2018.

Jean has also served as a trustee of the Gislingham United Charity, as a leader of Café church for several years, has competed in the Produce Show and been a regular flower arranger in church and taken part in the annual Flower Festival.

Her love of history led Jean to become the local recorder for the village and to speaking on the history of the church to members of the Friends.

Many readers will miss seeing Jean out walking her dog 'Jasper' who will be moving with her to Dickleburgh to share a house with members of her family. We wish Jean well, and her family, in the next chapter of her life and hope to see her in the village from time to time.

Jean's favourite Bible reading is 1 Corinthians 13.

Ann Cottee

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A WORD FROM ROSEDALE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT...



As a family, 2025 brought us many changes. Amongst other things, our eldest son has now flown the nest and the younger, having finished schooling, is now moving onto the next phase in his life.

Whilst it is a cause for celebration to watch your children grow in independence and begin to live their own lives, as a mum it can also be tinged with some sadness. Major life changes are seldom straightforward and are often accompanied by many conflicting emotions.

Life is full of change, sometimes exciting and self-instigated. Other changes such as bereavement can be shocking, unwelcome and out of our control.

Perhaps 2025 brought you a major life change – house move, retirement, changing job, moving house or a bereavement?

As we know, bereavement is a unique experience and different for everyone. Perhaps the relationship we shared with the person who has died was difficult. We grieve for what the relationship might have been but now never will be. We may have regrets or unresolved issues that can lead to prolonged grief.

Marriages and relationships within families are not always filled with love and harmony - this is reality.

For those whose loved one has died from dementia or a similar condition, they may have already started the grief process when they 'lost' the person they knew, the first time. This can feel like a double bereavement.

If the death involved long, painful suffering, some people can feel relief when it is finally over and their loved one is released. This can be accompanied by feelings of guilt.

We begin to feel less alone when we meet with others who are bereaved and talk through the issues that many people face.

If you've had a bereavement in 2025 (or at any time in the past) and would like to talk to others in a similar position call 01379 640 810 to reserve a free place on our next bereavement group.

Rosedale's Bereavement Support Groups are safe, confidential and local to Norfolk and Suffolk.

More information about support following a bereavement can also be found at: rosedalefuneralhome.co.uk

Rachel Allen, PA to the Management Team
rachel.allen@rosedalefuneralhome.co.uk
01379 640810 / 07785 991804 (private mobile when homeworking)
Working days are Wednesday and Thursday

Gislingham United Charity

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Gislingham United Charity continues to welcome applications for short term support from **Gislingham residents** who find themselves in hardship or need. We also consider requests for educational purposes, for **Gislingham residents** of all ages, whether at School, in further or higher education, or undertaking vocational training.

All applications are treated in the strictest confidence and in accordance with GDPR Data Protection Regulations.

GUC Trustees meeting dates for 2026 are as follows: 13 March, 8 May, 10 July, 11 September, 13 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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TERRAPIN NEWS



On the 18th December 2025 the Leader of Suffolk County council, Mathew Hicks (Cons.) received an invitation from Alison McGovern MP Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness, "We have listened to councils telling us about the constraints they are operating within, and the work that reorganisation introduces on top of existing challenges. Now that we have received all proposals, it is only right that we listen to councils who are expressing concerns about their capacity to deliver a smooth and safe transition to new councils, alongside running resource-intensive elections to councils who may be shortly abolished. We have also received representations from councils concerned about the cost to taxpayers of holding elections to councils that are proposed to shortly be abolished. I am therefore inviting you, by midnight on Thursday 15 January, to set out your views on the postponement of your local election and if you consider this could release essential capacity to deliver local government reorganisation in your area and so allow reorganisation to progress effectively."

That the Leader should respond to this invitation was debated at a Suffolk Council Meeting 13th January 2026. An amendment to this was first proposed by the Green, Lib Dem and Independent Opposition Group proposing the motion that, "This Council supports the postponed 2025 county council election going ahead in 2026 as scheduled ." Every single Conservative Councillor voted against this amendment and supported the original motion.

The result will be that after Cabinet, Matthew Hicks will be replying to the Secretary of State, with words to the effect that "it's up to the government to decide but cancelling local elections will undoubtedly free up significant officer capacity for us to better deliver LGR on time....."

The last County Council election was on 6th May 2021, it was first cancelled in May 2025 denying the public the opportunity of voting on its performance and perhaps its unmandated decision to join the fast track to Local Government Reorganisation. Since then SCC has developed and marketed its proposal for a single unitary authority to replace the County Council and the District and Borough Councils by a single unitary authority.

The District and Borough Councils independently have developed their own proposal for Suffolk: Three Unitary Authorities, a proposal that they consider to be a more democratic and locally focused solution. These two proposals have been submitted to the government, and the Secretary of State will declare their preference for which model to implement by March 2026.

Should the County Council elections be cancelled in May 2026 then it will mean that the current County Councillors will be in post unchallenged until April 2028, their term of office extended by one month short of three years.

The Electoral Commission has firmly stated that, ""As a matter of principle, we do not think that capacity constraints are a legitimate reason for delaying long planned elections. Extending existing mandates risks affecting the legitimacy of local decision making and damaging public confidence. There is a clear conflict of interest in asking existing Councils to decide how long it will be before they are answerable to voters."

Elsewhere, it is the District and Borough Councils who manage elections, setting aside an appropriate amount each year to cover the costs, not the County Council. In Norfolk, Labour led, Norwich City Councillors are expected to back plans to postpone local elections in Norwich. However, Kay Mason Billig Norfolk County Council's conservative leader has reiterated she has no intention of delaying next year's County Hall elections.

Rowland Warboys Mid Suffolk District Cllr. January 2026

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ONLINE SHOPPING THE TOP SCAM



More than seven million people are estimated to have been deceived by a scam in the past 12 months, Citizens Advice has revealed. While another seven million adults said they know at least one other person who has been deceived by a scam.

The charity's research shows more than a quarter (26%) of those personally deceived were duped while online shopping - with these types of scams including the likes of fake websites and counterfeit or non-existent goods.

The analysis shows the effects of being tricked by scammers are wide-ranging - including serious financial struggles. One in five (20%) of those caught out by a scam said they were significantly impacted by the financial loss they suffered.

Around one in eight (12%) said they fell into debt or had to borrow money, while one in 10 (10%) said they had to use emergency savings. Some (20%) were unable to carry out their work or caring responsibilities as a result of being scammed.

Almost a quarter (22%) transferred money after being pressured or convinced to, and with many devious scammers hiding behind messaging apps, 42% were contacted through social media.

Among those who Citizens Advice has supported with online shopping scams in the past year include consumers who have forked out hundreds of pounds for items like clothes, mobile phones and furniture - only to receive products that are counterfeit, not as advertised, unsafe - or nothing at all.

Faced with the stress of trying to get their money back, many people reported that the company they bought from either took more money from their bank account, didn't respond, or disappeared online altogether.

As part of its annual Scams Awareness Campaign, Citizens Advice is revealing the top five scams' people have unwittingly fallen for in the past year.

1. Online shopping scam (26%) - Includes fake websites and counterfeit or non-existent goods
2. Investment scam (18%) - Like 'get rich quick' schemes and cryptocurrency scams
3. Other financial scam (18%) - Such as banking, fake loans, card and bank account fraud
4. A friend or family member 'needs help' scam (16%) - Tricked into thinking someone you love needs money urgently
5. Mobile network scam (14%) - Includes being scammed into taking out a new contract or paying for a new handset

Criminals can lure people into taking a number of actions in a bid to steal their money. Financial information, like card or bank account details, was handed over by 17% - and around one in eight (13%) admitted to divulging confidential security details like passwords, pins or codes.

More than a third (35%) said they fear being scammed again.

If you need support, you can call the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on: 0808 223 1133

THE MESSENGER NINE LETTERS QUIZ

Below are eight clues as to my identity. The answer appears at the foot of page 63.

- I first appeared on UK TV screens in 1965.
- I lived in Bubbleland.
- I was an aspiring musician and entertainer.
- I had my own segment in part of the 'Atom Ant/Secret Squirrel' TV show.
- I also appeared on the Yogi bear show along with my keeper, Chief Winchley.
- I resemble an Octopus but I only have six tentacles.
- In the British comedy 'Only Fools and Horse's Christmas Special 1989 "The Jolly Boys' Outing", I was cited by Del Boy as the reason for the failure of his seafood stall, since people were unwilling to consume creatures they had become fond of.
- Simon Cowell has two dogs named after me.

Answers appear on page 63.

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

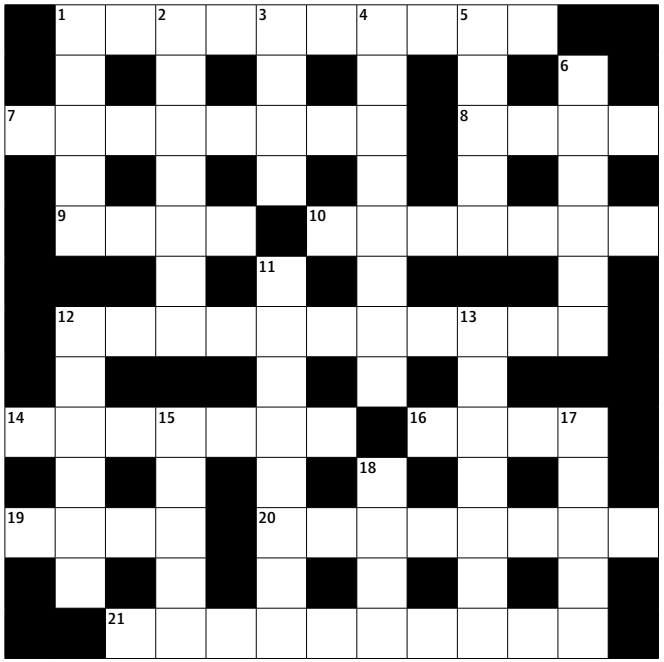
8	7			6				
9		2	1			8		
			5				3	
2					6			
		1		3		7		
			8					5
	9				8			
		3			1	5		9
				5			6	3

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

Last issue solution

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

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE



Across

1 Retort (6,4)
7 To the point (8)
8 Pudding – not sweet (4)
9 Lacking in substance (4)
10 Drain cover, say (7)
12 Work together (11)
14 Virgin Mary (3,4)
16 Downsides (4)
19 Strike – rate (4)
20 Maritime (8)
21 Of doubtful authenticity (10)

Down

1 Accomplished (5)
2 Uncommon (7)
3 Testing experience (4)
4 American loo (8)
5 Be good enough (3,2)
6 A Clockwork ____, Anthony Burgess novel and Stanley Kubrick film (6)
11 Scornful (8)
12 They're an item (6)
13 Scrap (7)
15 Eagerly receive (3,2)
17 Delay (5)
18 Feeble (4)

Last issue solution

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

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NOTICES



THANK YOU

In aid of TEENAGE CANCER TRUST

Thank you to everyone who came along and supported the quiz night on Saturday 10th January at Gislingham Village Hall in memory of Jack and to raise money for the Teenage Cancer Trust.

We would also like to thank everyone who attended, local businesses who generously supported our raffle and Malthouse Security for kindly sponsoring the event.

We raised a fantastic £1,402 which will be used to help and support teenagers in East Anglia. This year is the 11th anniversary of Jack's passing and since we started fundraising for TCT we have raised a total of £31,676 - all given in Jack's memory.

We would also like to thank the businesses who supported our raffle on the night: The Four Horseshoes at Thornham Magna, Half Moon Salon, The Fox & Goose at Fressingfield, The Chestnut Group & The Angel Café in Diss as well as friends and family who also donated prizes. Malthouse Security sponsored the whole event so we could donate every pound to TCT. We are very grateful of the support we receive from everyone who supports us.

Kevin & Julie Cook



POPPY APPEAL 2025

The Poppy appeal was a success again this year with £2096.04 being raised from the collections in Gislingham, Finningham and Westhorpe. A big thank you to all the volunteer collectors and also to everyone who made a donation.

Shirley Brimelow, Poppy Appeal Organiser

GISLINGHAM ALLOTMENT AND GARDEN ASSOCIATION (GAGA)

We still have one remaining vacant plot available. If you live in Gislingham and would like to have fun growing your own produce, fruit, veg or flowers, with like-minded, helpful and friendly neighbours, please give me a call on: 01379 788998 or by email: emma-ed@hotmail.co.uk

Emma Bryant

Answers to the Who Am I? Quiz on page 60. *Squiddly Diddly*

SOUTH HARTISMERE BENEFICE



'February fill the dyke, be it black, or be it white, but if it be white, it's the better to like,'

The above verse is something I remember as a child, but being a suburbanite then I had no idea what a dyke was! It was only coming to rural Suffolk thirty years ago, that I found out that February is a month of precipitation, either rain or sometimes snow.

Neither of those meteorological possibilities thrills my soul. For something of a "glass half full" sort of person generally, February can have a draining effect on my outlook on life though I do try very hard not to let it show! Whilst snowdrops are the first harbinger of an awakening natural world, I long for the first colour of daffodils as the leaves pierce upwards through the earth and reward us the glory of their nodding flower heads. That and the promise of longer daylight hours and that first embrace of the Sun's increasing heat on one's face.

We are all aware of the changing seasons of the year but many of us are not so aware of the Church's seasons. Christmas and Easter are celebrated widely as times of rejoicing and all the colour and joy they bring to us all. Even to those who do not attend churches or have a faith. Lent, which starts, on Ash Wednesday, 18th February this year, is not such like that. It is a period of reflection, rediscovery and looking ahead. Advent, before Christmas is likewise.

The Church year spends quite a bit of time referring to some of the negative matters of Human life and we are criticised for never enjoying the good times! Would more people find their faith if we did? Who knows but our lives are not all a bowl of roses and the Church needs to be relevant to all by reflecting the "ups and downs" we encounter.

It was the same for Jesus, perhaps more so. He was rejected, reviled and hated by some. His miracles were met with hostility from those who should have understood what Jesus was about. However, there were so many who followed him with unerring faith and devotion.

Lent can be an extraordinary difficult time for many, coming as it does in what might be the coldest and dampest time of the year. However, it does give us a chance to follow Jesus on His journey from baptism to crucifixion and, on a parallel course, we can think about our own lives, the ups and the downs.

If things are not going so well for us, it doesn't help if all who are around us are jolly and overly positive. But this is a time when we can look Christ in the eye as he faced the cross, the vitriol of the Pharisees and the betrayal of His friends knowing that He has experienced such anguish and despair and is right there, listening and supporting. And, most importantly, loving.

Lent gives an opportunity to vent our innermost grievances, all that we find unjust and unfair in a world which seems to be challenging our resilience every day. At least to those who can look outwards beyond their immediate surroundings. It allows us to be angry to despair and to cry. We can do all this knowing and feeling that through all our blackest, awful moments God is there ready to walk alongside us, to nurture us and love us whatever ails us and however long it takes us to recover and flourish again.

May God bless you all.

David, Reverend David Mulrenan, Associate Priest, Hartismere and Hoxne Deanery

FEBRUARY 2026

SUNDAY 1ST FEBRUARY	Thorndon	10.00am	Worship for All
4th Sunday of Epiphany	Gislingham	10.30am	Holy Communion
SUNDAY 8TH FEBRUARY	Mellis	10.30am	Worship for All
2nd Sunday before Lent	Stoke Ash	10.30am	Holy Communion
SUNDAY 15TH FEBRUARY	Thorndon	10.30am	Holy Communion
Sunday next before Lent	Thornham Parva	10.30am	Holy Communion
	Gislingham	3.00pm	God and Play
WEDNESDAY 18TH FEBRUARY	Redgrave	6.00pm	Deanery Holy Communion
Ash Wednesday			
SUNDAY 22ND FEBRUARY	Thornham Magna	10.30am	Mattins
1st Sunday of Lent	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

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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:
Gislingham
Fridays at Village Hall:
12.15 – 14.15

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



Mobile Library: Gislingham
2026 visits will be on the following Wednesdays: 25 Feb, 25 Mar, 22 Apr, 20 May, 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	01379 640530
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 Jessica Fleming jessica.fleming@suffolk.gov.uk	01449 711065
Samaritans – for everyone:	116 123

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