

**Bletsoe**

**Gazette**

**2008**

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## **PARISH COUNCIL**

### **Planning Application for Gypsy and Travellers Caravan Site**

Parish councillors are required by law to sign up to a strict code of conduct, which requires them to declare any personal and prejudicial interests they have in any matters that the council is required to discuss and to withdraw from subsequent discussion and voting where they have such interests. As the application site was close to the properties of all of the councillors, they were advised that they should declare an interest and abstain from any active participation until the Standards Committee of Bedford Borough had granted written dispensations.

Fortunately these were quickly obtained and the Council were then in a position to discuss the matter and increase the annual village precept in anticipation of additional expenditure that might arise from the planning issues.

Chairmanship of the quarterly Parish Council meetings has recently been rotated but in the interests of continuity it was agreed that I should continue in the chair whilst this planning application remains an issue. The Planning Advisory Group, chaired by Edward Bean, has also been meeting more frequently in order to respond to the planning application, work on a number of associated planning policy issues and to keep the situation under review. The Council have been in close and regular contact with neighbouring parish councils who are concerned as to the impact that a site in Bletsoe might have upon their communities and the precedent that may be created, which could encourage similar proposals within their villages.

### **Conservation Area**

The majority of the village was designated a Conservation Area in April and our thanks go to David Baker for all the work he has done over the last three years.

## **Meanwhile**

Our Parish Clerk, Bill Rowland, has been working to resolve other outstanding matters: -

### **A6 Bus Shelter**

This was demolished during last October in a road accident. Following lengthy correspondence with our insurers our only option was to re-instate and the work has now been done. At present no buses stop here but this may not always be the case.

### **New Bus Service**

In anticipation of the interim free taxi service being withdrawn by the County Council, Bill Rowland has negotiated for a limited service to and from Bedford. The new bus timetable is on the village notice boards and also published below as it affects

Bletsoe.

### **Multi-sports Play Area**

Funding difficulties have arisen due to the phasing out of the County Council. However the tarmac base has been laid in the centre of the playing field and we are hopeful of being able to place an order for equipment before long.

### **Bourne End Notice Board and Footpaths**

The old vandalised wooden notice board inside the bus shelter is to be replaced with a free standing metal board using funds provided by the County Council. Highways Partnership funding has been used to repair the well-used but often water-logged

footway to the Falcon Inn as well as some overdue work in Old Way which will commence shortly.

**The Parish Councillors are:** - Mike Grimes (Chairman)

781183

Edward Bean 781372 Ann Binder 782362 Paul Caves

781812 Matt Cox 781917 Ann Gibbons 781161 Debbie Hall

783063 **Clerk**, Malcolm (Bill) Rowland 781646

*Mike Grimes*

**CEDAR COACHES BUS SERVICE 152**  
**As it provides travel from Bletsoe to and from Bedford**

Mondays to Saturdays ( except bank holidays)

	<b>NS</b>	
<b>Bletsoe Church</b>	<b>08.55</b>	<b>10.12</b>
Thurleigh, Baptist Chapel	09.05	10.22
Ravensden Crossroads	09.11	10.28
Bedford , Harpur Street	09.20	10.38

				<b>SD</b>	<b>SHol</b>	
Dame Alice School				16.10		
Bedford Harpur Street	11.15	13.15	14.15	16.15	16.15	17.45
Ravensden Crossroads	11.25	13.25	14.25	16.25	16.25	17.55
Thurleigh Baptist Chapel	11.31	13.31	14.31	16.31	16.31	18.01
Bletsoe Church	<b>RR</b>	<b>RR</b>	<b>RR</b>	<b>RR</b>	<b>RR</b>	<b>RR</b>

**SD** operates on school days only

**SHol** - Operates on Saturdays and school holidays **NS** Not Saturdays

**RR** - These stops are served on request to the driver

No service on Sundays or Bank Holidays

Full information on the service 152 between St.Neots and Bedford will be found on the notice board outside the School House.

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### **October**

Mon 6<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm Village Hall Meeting of the  
PARISH COUNCIL (Open to the public)

Sat 18<sup>th</sup> 7.30 pm Village Hall  
sing along with COCKNEY PRIDE  
Tickets £12.50 from Barbara

### **November**

Sat 1<sup>st</sup> 10am – 4pm CHURCHYARD TIDY  
All welcome, lunch and drinks provided

Sat 1<sup>st</sup> 6.30pm in the playing field BONFIRE NIGHT  
Followed by hot dogs in the village Hall

Sat 8<sup>th</sup> SAFARI SUPPER – details from Paula

Sat 29<sup>th</sup> 10 am Village Hall, Church COFFEE MORN-  
ING  
Various stalls – cakes, jam, Christmas cards,  
bric-a- brac

### **December**

Tues 2<sup>nd</sup> W.I. CHRISTMAS LUNCH for the pensioners

Sat 13<sup>th</sup> 7.30 Village Hall CHRISTMAS DANCE to  
“Fair Exchange” Tickets £12.50 from Barbara

Sat 20<sup>th</sup> 8 pm Village Hall CHRISTMAS FAMILY SO-  
CIAL  
Entrance £2.50 children under 11 £1

Sun 21<sup>st</sup> 4pm St. Mary’s Church  
CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> 9.30 am St Mary’s Church CHRISTMAS DAY  
FAMILY COMMUNION

Wed 31<sup>st</sup> 8 pm Village Hall, New Year’s Eve  
ENTERTAINMENT with Tim Copping

## DIARY OF EVENTS (continued)

### 2009

#### January

- Mon 5th     7.30 Village Hall Meeting of the  
PARISH COUNCIL (Open to the public)
- Sat 10<sup>th</sup>     7pm Village Hall  
SUPPER WITH HORSE RACING  
The thrills of the turf brought to your very table  
Tickets £25 from Jonathan
- Sat 24<sup>th</sup>     Village Hall DANCING to “Dale Andrews”

#### February

- Sat 14th     CURRY NIGHT Tickets from Colin
- Sat 21st     SUPPER DANCE with singer Craig Powell

Sat 18th **April** (probable date) PERIOD DINNER  
tickets from Evelyn

Sat 16th **May**     SINGING AND ENTERTAINMENT  
from Barry Gold

Sat 20 June     BLETSOE COUNTRY FAYRE

#### Regular Weekly Events

Wednesday 7.30 pm Village Hall YOUNG FARMERS

Sunday             9.30 am CHURCH SERVICE

#### Regular Monthly Events

Second Monday 7.30pm Village Hall WHIST DRIVE

Second Tuesday 7.45pm Village Hall WOMEN’S INSTITUTE

Second Thursday 10.30 am Village Hall COFFEE MORNING

Third Friday 7.30 pm Village Hall BINGO

Contact numbers

Barbara 781813 Paula 781958 Jonathan 782230

Colin 781919 Evelyn 781179 Bill (Parish Clerk) 781646

## **THE FRIENDS OF ST. MARY'S**

This year, the Friends of St Mary's Committee has been planning the work, which is finally to get underway after the past two years of uncertainty over the condition of the West End wall.

Following twelve months of monitoring and measuring the movement of the wall caused, we think, by dry weather (we did have quite a lot of that a couple of years ago!) and good old Bedfordshire clay plus a bit of tree root thrown in, two different consultants came up with two alternative answers. So the Friends have decided to play safe and take the repairs one step at a time.

Therefore, shortly, you will see the crack in the West wall being patched and new plaster applied to make good. We are also completing all the outstanding work from the last five-yearly inspection and beginning the work with Lord St John on the family chapel. And we are now looking at the options for redecorating the rest of the inside of the church and the vestry which are beginning to show signs of wear after twenty years since the last lick of paint.

Thank you to all in the village who support our events in St Mary's and in the Village Hall - we've had concerts and quizzes, food and music evenings and much more over the past year. We are especially grateful to the Fete Committee for their tireless work on our behalf each year to raise the biggest contribution to funds, particularly this year with a week of activities which made for a great community spirit.



I was reminded by an article in the national press recently about a church closure in a city parish where the reported reason for the inability to continue was given as lack of support and said how you need a congregation of 200 to be viable. We should not be complacent but in a village of that total size, it is good to reflect on the level of support for those landmarks in village life and the way in which that translates into active help for the church building. The Friends Committee is very grateful for that and our thanks go to you for all that you have done in the past and, we hope, will do in the future, be it in eating, enjoying, listening, participating, donating or spending your money

*Mike Gibbons*



## BLETSOE COUNTRY FAYRE 2008

2008 being the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fete in its current format, the committee decided to make it a little bit bigger!!!!

The Flower Festival in the church was the first event. People came from all around to look at the displays in the church and at pictures of Bletsoe in ages past and enjoy a cup of tea! We also raised some money into the bargain! Huge thanks are owed to Dawn for her amazing talent and enthusiasm getting lots of people involved and making this such a successful event. Thanks also to Edward Bean for showing his collection of village photos which always raise interest with old and new alike - everyone is keen to see a bit of history about where they are living.

Then there was the concert on the Sunday afternoon which, once again, demonstrated how much talent there is in the village some hidden and some new. We were able to bring back many of the performers from the first Fete concert 20 years ago including several of the then children, now very much adults, playing again together with surprises and even multi-lingual European contributions. A great afternoon and thanks to all who both came & performed – even the weather held up and we had drinks outside in the churchyard!

The Wheelbarrow Race on the Tuesday was a first and a great triumph! The Avenue was closed to traffic and we saw around 12 barrows charge up the village, coping with the various obstacles on the way. Lots of effort was put into the barrows and lots of fun was had both by participants and by the spectators. It was great to see so many people turn out and cheer the barrows on! The barbeque which followed was another first as the Memorial Garden had not been used before for any social event. It proved to be a great area for this purpose.



After the race the potato crop was weighed in and won by Bill Rowland with the heaviest crop – stunningly good – just shows you what practice can do!

Friday evening saw the setting up of gazebos and ticket folding with both young and older villagers all lending a hand. The forecast for the Saturday was not good at this stage but we are never deterred in Bletsoe!

Saturday morning did see rain, so setting up was a pretty wet affair and there were very damp villagers all over the field wondering if the committee had lost their marbles when we should all be indoors with a cup of cocoa! We soldiered on hoping that we might be lucky to have a window of fair weather. Alan Dedicoat and Sarah Kennedy duly arrived to open the Fayre at 2.00pm and they entertained a large crowd. We were hoping for a Spitfire flypast but sadly the cloud was too low to allow this although Alan and the crowd did for a brief moment mistake a passing aircraft for a Spitfire!!!

The afternoon went with a great buzz, people enjoyed a lively dog show, games & races, a great Pets' Corner, the Ouse Valley Swing Band, teas, stalls and the lovely chocolate fountain. It was again great to see so many villagers taking part and lending a hand with the day and as always, it was a great community event. In the evening the fish and chip supper went down a treat and the smell of 96 portions has just about gone from my car...

We finished the week of festivities with an open air service on the village field on the Sunday morning when a congregation of over 100 enjoyed the sunshine, a (short) sermon from the Rector and singing in the open air. A number of people picnicked into the afternoon heralding the end of a magnificently good week.

Thanks must go to the committee for their hard work, commitment and ideas. Any suggestions for next year's Fayre will be welcomed by any committee member! The date for next year is already set for Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June – put it in your diaries!

*Ann Gibbons*

## WILD BIRDS

In September the swallows, swifts and house martins gather for their migration to sunnier climes. Look forward to seeing them again next April.



It has been said that a large variety of birds are getting scarcer each year. I believe the corner has been turned and numbers, as well as types, are increasing. For instance, seen on a regular basis over the fields are three newcomers the area - the red kite, the buzzard and, most impressive of all, a pair of peregrine falcon. Stand and watch all three types, if you see them, as they are fascinating aerial artists.

An annual “audit” on a local farm this year counted 72 species of birds from wood pigeons to peregrine - a healthy number. One only hopes, with the demise of “set-aside”, that numbers do not regress



*Hirondelle*

## BLETSOE CONSERVATION AREA

Well over a decade after first proposed in the Bedford Local Plan, the Bletsoe Conservation Area was designated on 19 March 2008, becoming the 25th in the Borough. In 2007 an appraisal of the village's special architectural and historic interest and proposals for boundaries were the subject of informal village-wide public consultation. Responses suggesting both a larger and a smaller area were considered by the Borough Council before making their formal public consultation in early 2008.

The designated Conservation Area reflects the historic core of Bletsoe, arranged around its 'Great Green' lying below the parish church and the site of Bletsoe Castle. The plan of the village reflects probable Norman origins; its distinctive character reflects its history as an estate village of the St John family from the 16th to the mid 20th centuries.

Designation celebrates qualities of the village and aims to safeguard them for the future, encouraging improvement. It is not intended to stop changes but to control the unsympathetic ones that can be so so cumulatively damaging. The Borough Council has to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the village's character and appearance when considering planning applications; controls over the demolition of unlisted buildings and structures are increased. Planning permission is also required for the exterior cladding of a building, the alteration of roof shape, most small extensions and garden sheds, and in some cases the addition of satellite dishes. Owners of trees have to give the Council six week's notice in writing of their intention to lop or fell any with a trunk over 75mm in diameter measured 1.5 metres above ground level.

The contacts at the Borough Council are:  
(phone) 221729  
(letter) 'Head of Planning'.

Copies of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy and the Conservation Area Map can be obtained from the Borough Council Planning Department

*David Baker*



## BLETSOE HISTORICAL MISCELLANY

### **PFI, the Turnpike Acts, and the demise of the Castle Inn.**

At one time Bletsoe boasted two hostelrys, the **Falcon Inn** and the **Castle Inn**. Whilst many people are (regularly?) acquainted with the Falcon Inn, the Castle Inn is likely to be less familiar, now being better known as **Bletsoe Cottage**.

Until the early 1700s each parish was responsible for the upkeep of all the roads passing through it, and those parishes on heavily-used routes could find themselves hard pressed to keep up with repairs, particularly in the winter months when major roads often became heavily rutted or impassable. Even in the summer months it could take nearly a week to travel by road from London to Lancaster. At that time much of the traffic between London, East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, and Scotland was being carried by sailing barges or packet ships up and down the east coast, and what is now the A6 was one of the major routes to Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, Sheffield, Manchester and the north-west.

In 1707, with a desperate need for better roads and bridges in order to improve trade and transport goods and farm produce to growing towns and cities, the government of the day turned to a form of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to provide the solution. The formation of 'turnpike trusts' was encouraged in order to rebuild and maintain the major trade routes in exchange for the right to collect tolls from road users, much as our modern day governments turn to PFI to build or refurbish motorways, tunnels, bridges, and railways by allowing the promoters to collect tolls or usage charges. Turnpike trustees were usually appointed from the landed classes many of who could foresee the financial benefits that good roads could bring. This was certainly the case here with Lord St John and the Duke of Bedford being prominent among the promoters of a number of local turnpikes. The Turnpike trusts frequently mortgaged future toll income to pay for rebuilding or franchised the toll collection for a fixed annual fee, practices shared by modern PFI schemes.

Roadside inns, which offered accommodation, refreshment, food and fresh horses, were the equivalent of today's motorway service areas and could be very profitable enterprises, particularly if they held a monopoly position on a lengthy stretch of road.. In 1720, with a local turnpike in the offing, Lord St John, who owned the Falcon Inn, probably recognised the opportunities but realised that the potential profits could be undermined by the competing Castle Inn on the other side of the road and promptly purchased the freehold from Thomas Battison and Essex Archer. By 1727 the Bedford to Higham Ferrers Turnpike had taken over and improved the road. As traffic increased the St John Estate benefitted from the improved roads and increased trade at the Falcon Inn and the profits from the food and feed supplied from the farms and mills on their estate.

Following its purchase by Lord St John, the Castle Inn was converted into a domestic house and became Bletsoe Cottage. Over the years it was let to various relatives, acquaintances or employees of the St. John family before passing into private ownership. Today many of its original features still remain, including the barrel drop and vaulted cellar.

As time progressed the turnpike PFI schemes fell into disrepute as the railways took long-distance traffic away from the roads, toll income declined dramatically and the debt-laden turnpike trusts failed to adequately maintain the roads and became resented by local people. Whilst a very few of the old turnpike PFI schemes do still exist in the form of private toll bridges or toll roads, from 1873 the turnpike trusts were gradually wound up by a series of Parliamentary Acts and the roads returned to public control. Finally, the Local Government Act of 1888 made county councils responsible for the upkeep of main roads and the costs inevitably fell on the local taxpayers.

What does the future hold for modern-day PFI schemes?

*Edward Bean*

## VILLAGE HALL

This year we have enjoyed entertainment from a talent night, "Time of our Lives", dances with "Free Express", Tim Copping and the amusing singer Barry Gold. The fashion show was our last event and, like the others it was very successful. The money raised has gone towards a new beaver shed, curtains and all of the hall's internal walls and woodwork have been painted.

I would like to thank the Fete Committee for the donation they have given to us. The hall would struggle without it, thank-you. Also thanks to the Village Hall Committee for all the organising and maintenance they do. Forthcoming events are listed in the diary of events on pages 6 and 7

Maria Caves

## THE TREE WARDEN

Once again the time has come to think about autumn tree and hedge planting. The County Council are again running a scheme which provides valuable education for young people, as well as hedge and tree plants for local needs. The one proviso is that planted trees etc. are visible from roads or public footpaths.

Please consider what you may need and let me know as soon as possible. Last autumn's plantings appear to be growing well. If you know of any major problems with trees in the parish, please give me a call.



*Paul Forster*  
07979596913



## **KRISTIAN ROLLS' SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE**

I have recently been on a ten day working trip to Cape Town in South Africa to build two houses for people in undeveloped areas. I went with Sharnbrook Upper School, accompanied by 13 other students and six teachers. We raised £14,000 as a school for the build and another £1,400 per student for the trip. While there I had to do a lot of hard work, including cement mixing, laying blocks and helping to do the roof with jobs like positioning the trusses.

While building I was able to meet many amazing people from many different backgrounds and upbringings than myself. I would spend ages playing with the ever growing number of children that would collect from around the town ship. The thing that amazed me the most about the people I met; no matter how unfortunate the people were, they would always look really happy.

The thing that struck me the most while in South Africa was visiting a children's home. When we were getting our meals served they were all so polite. Most of these children had been found dying of starvation on the streets.

I will always remember how good the food was over there even if there was not much to go round. For example when we were on the build we would have our food made and prepared by the family whose house it was that we were building. This food would be made out of the most basic of things but would always taste great.

I would like to thank the people who supported my working trip to South Africa, especially to those in Bletsoe.

*Kristian Rolls*

## COUNTY COUNCIL NEWS

### **Handing Over to the Borough Unitary**

In last year's newsletter I talked about the government's decision to abolish the County Council in favour of a new unitary authority at the Borough Council. This is now happening across all services with the date of 1st April 2009 set as the vesting date for the new council, from when the Borough Council will run all services in this area and there will no longer be a County Council in Bedfordshire. This should make it easier for residents and the Parish Council as there will be only one council to contact and it will be able to deal with problems from start to finish.

I am currently part of the executive on the new unitary which has been set up to implement the policies and services, which are to be in place by 31<sup>st</sup> March. Progress is slow because of the complexity of disaggregating existing countywide services from other parts of the county, which will have their own unitary. However the service design groups are working hard and beginning to report back to the executive on their discussions.

One of these decisions will be around the future of our schools in the Borough. The Sharnbrook Upper Pyramid of Schools was not initially included in these discussions, as has been reported in the press. However Sharnbrook is now included in a study to decide on the best way forward, in order to propose a borough wide policy on education. Our schools in this area are a very important and are a large part of the Borough's education plans. They must be included at the outset to ensure that the issues around rural schools are considered.

## **Twinwoods Business Park**

There is a lot of activity at the moment on the Twinwoods Site at Milton Ernest/Clapham. Proposals for a power station at the Thurleigh end of the site are currently being prepared and an application for a large computer data centre has already been submitted to the Borough Council. Along with this the Border Agency has been talking to local representatives about

re-building (albeit to a higher standard) the second wing at Yarlswood. We have been assured that both the power station company and the Border Agency will be putting on exhibitions for local residents to see the plans and ask questions of those involved. These exhibitions are expected to take place in the autumn, so please watch your village notice boards and the local press for more details.

## **Contact Information**

Elections to the new council are expected to take place in June next year. I will be your county councillor until 31<sup>st</sup> March but as a Unitary Executive member; I will still be a councillor until the June election. If you have anything that you would like to discuss with me or any problem that I can help with, please contact me on 07952 879587 or by email at [jane.walker@bedscc.gov.uk](mailto:jane.walker@bedscc.gov.uk). I attend every parish council meeting so you can speak to me in person there or please look on your notice board for dates of my forthcoming councillor surgeries in the village hall.

*Jane Walker* County Councillor for Bletsoe 18.08.08

## **Acknowledgement**

to our honorary illustrator, Malcolm Winram of Kirklington

## Michael Turner Electrical LTD



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