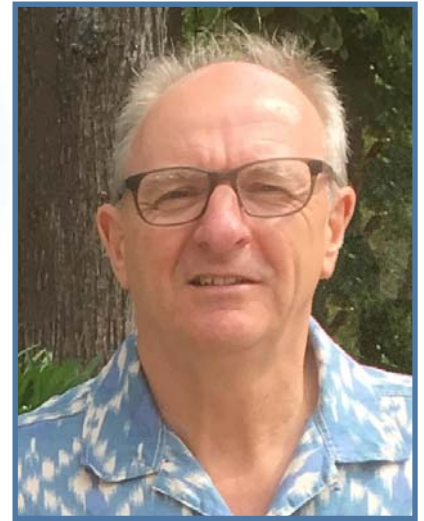


# Birdbrook Parish News



*Peter Smart, Chair, Birdbrook Parish Council*

## Our new parish newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the Birdbrook Parish News following the footsteps of the former 'Birdbrook News', bringing you news from the parish council, and Birdbrook Parish.

We have been very fortunate in that Richard Walker collated information and published the 'Birdbrook News' for many years, keeping us in touch with local developments. More recently the Birdbrook News had a boost when Albert Baxter came on board, adding his expertise to the local publication. Sadly, both decided to retire earlier this year. We wish to offer huge thanks to both Richard and Albert for their wonderful work keeping us informed and entertained, particularly within our parish where we are so widely dispersed and with few amenities in the immediate area. Enjoy your retirement guys.

The change in name of the newsletter reflects the new management. The newsletter is to be produced and published on behalf of the parish council. We have a fresh team, Councillor Steve Rhenius' wife Val has kindly agreed to take the lead for the early publications and she will be working closely with Councillor Katie Gentry who will eventually take over. The newsletter aims to keep us informed, to give some idea of how the parish council is working on your behalf (within our limited remit) and to ensure we have a real sense of community here in the parish. We welcome contributions so if you have something to say, do contact our editorial team as we shall be delighted to hear from you.

Peter Smart, Chair  
Birdbrook Parish Council

## Coronavirus Update

As of December 2<sup>nd</sup> the whole of Essex County has been placed as a Tier 2 High Alert. Full details of these are given in the contacts supplement.

The number of new cases in Essex per 100,000 people in the 7 days prior to 19<sup>th</sup> November was 151. With most cases being in the 20-49 years age bracket. That's 10 more than the previous 7 days.

If you can, please download the NHS COVID-19 app which includes contact tracing, local area alerts and easy venue check in. Stay safe and remember:

HANDS FACE SPACE

If you are self isolating or shielding and need help picking up prescriptions/shopping, the following are happy to help:

Jane Bennett: [janescakesandbakes@gmail.com](mailto:janescakesandbakes@gmail.com)

Katie Gentry: [katie\\_owner@hotmail.com](mailto:katie_owner@hotmail.com)

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**St Augustine's Church, Birdbrook is part of The Two Rivers Benefice, comprising churches in Sturmer, Ashen, Ridgewell, Helions Bumpstead and Steeple Bumpstead (where Jonathan Lowe is based) as well as Birdbrook.**

## **Christmas Letter from Revd Canon Jonathan Lowe**

### **Christmas Hope**

In difficult times, we all look for hope. It feels like it's hard to find it this year, though. Here's one sentence containing three truths that, as a Christian, I find helpful for reminding me that actually, there's real hope to be found in the story of the first Christmas: *"We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1 v 14).*

#### **1. He came from the Father**

Is this world a place that is essentially chaotic, or is it under control? This year has shown us that, as a human race, we certainly don't have things under control. And, if blind chemical processes are all there is—if there's nothing behind what we can see—then chaos is all we can expect. But if there is a divine being who made everything, then there is someone bigger than this life and someone able to direct this world.

The first Christmas says that there is such a God. It tells us that the God at the heart of the universe is a God of relationship: Father, Son and Spirit—and that "the one and only Son" has lived on this earth as a human like us—as the man Jesus. If that's true, then this is a world under control, not in chaos. But... if God is in control, what is he doing?

#### **2. He is full of Grace**

Our speech is now full of phrases never uttered before 2020. Social distancing. Track and trace. The R number. But what if 2021 could be shaped by a very different phrase: overwhelming unconditional kindness?

That's what the word "grace" means. And Jesus shows us that God is full of it. So, because he's full of kindness, God is preparing to remake this world into one without sickness, pain, grief or death. No more uncertainty or fear-only joy and peace. It's the life we're all looking for and yet feel very far from right now. That's what God is directing the world towards, even when, from our limited human perspective, the route seems very strange.

And because he's full of kindness, God the Son was born to do everything necessary to invite us into that future world. By dying and rising to new life, Jesus can offer the forgiveness we all need for our own failings: the ways we've lived as if this is a world in which we, not God, are in charge. We don't have to earn or deserve forgiveness (we never could)—all we need to do is choose to accept it.

#### **3. He is full of truth**

It's hard to find your way in the dark. 2020 has felt as if the journey of our lives has turned off a well-lit motorway and on to some dark, unfamiliar country lanes that we're expected to navigate without satnav. We've been confronted by the scary reality that we only have one life, and that it's often unclear how best to live it and how to make the best decisions for it.

Enter Jesus, full of truth: a man who claimed to be the God who directs the future, understands the past, and knows us better than we do ourselves. His truth is sometimes unsettling, because it's not always in line with our views. But it's always liberating, because he offers us the guidance we need. He knows the way we need to take.

This Christmas of all Christmases, we're in need of hope. The Bible's claim is that hope is what arrived at the first Christmas. Have you ever thought of investigating whether that claim is true?

If you have, or would like to, please join us at one of our services, either in person or online, or contact me for more information. Our Christmas services may be very different this year, but there will still be Christmas hope.

Wishing you a blessed and hope-full Christmas!

Jonathan

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Revd Canon Jonathan Lowe

01440 731687

[vicar@2rivers.faith](mailto:vicar@2rivers.faith)

The Vicarage, 3 Church Street, Steeple Bumpstead,

At the time of writing, our churches are currently closed for Sunday Worship and we are not yet in a position to plan Sunday Services during December. However, you are very welcome to join us for our online worship each Sunday at 10:30am. These services are aimed at the whole family and are also available afterwards so you can watch in your own time. Simply type the following links into your browser:

**Facebook:** <http://tiny.cc/7y6zlj>

**YouTube:** <http://tiny.cc/nx6zlj>

Please do regularly check the Two Rivers Facebook page or contact the Churchwarden for the latest information.

We look forward to worshipping together again soon.

## Birdbrook Wild Life Column

### A CURE FOR LOCK-DOWN BLUES?

Are you fed up with self-isolation and lock-down?.....I certainly am!

Then why not get your wellies on and go and discover the migratory birds that have chosen Birdbrook as a winter retreat. This time of the year thousands of birds from northern Europe come to the UK to benefit from our mild winter weather. Yes I know it may not seem that warm to us but it's much nicer than Norway or Iceland at this time of the year!!

So what migrant species should we be looking for? Whilst we associate Robins with Xmas not everyone is aware that some of the Robins we see in our gardens at this time of the year may have come from Norway. The Blackbirds gorging themselves on turkey left-overs may have flown in from Latvia or even further east and the tiny Goldcrest flitting around in your conifers could have spent the summer in Finland. Chaffinches and Starlings also travel hundreds of miles to spend winter amongst us!!

But it's the species that we don't see throughout the year that I find most exciting and there are many of them around Birdbrook at the moment. Redwings and Fieldfare, close relatives of Blackbirds and Song thrushes arrive in the UK in their thousands from Scandinavia and Iceland and are a regular sight around the village. The fields between Daw Street and The Street can hold mixed flocks of over 100 birds, and a good time to spot them is late afternoon as they grab a final meal before they go off to roost for the night. They do struggle to find food during a long cold spell and you can tempt them into your gardens with apples, normal wild bird seed or diced bread.

Another long-distance migrant that can be found locally is the Golden Plover. The British breeding population can be found on moorland in the North of England and Scotland but in the winter we get huge numbers of birds from the far north. These birds will usually spend the winter on marshes but can also be found on farmland.



*Golden plovers in flight, photo taken from Barry's garden*

The fields between the village and Ridgewell seem to be their favourite spot but they are easily disturbed and are mostly seen in flight and flocks of over 150 individuals are not unusual. It's possible that these birds have travelled all the way from Iceland or Scandinavia and should be around until early spring. These fields also hold large wintering flocks of Skylarks and of course Yellowhammers and Linnets.

If these birds aren't exotic enough for you there is of course the Waxwing which is another winter visitor but only appears in the UK during one of its periodical "eruptions". They are stunning birds and if anyone spots one of those in the village please contact me immediately!!!

*Barry Williams has always been a keen bird watcher. One of his school pals' uncles was a bird ringer. Barry went along one morning to watch him ring and that was it!!! Hooked for life!!! Upon retirement, attracted by the local countryside, and the pub within walking distance, Barry moved to the village from Roydon near Harlow in late 2015. He will be pleased to answer any readers questions about local birds, you can contact him by emailing: [baz\\_williams@hotmail.com](mailto:baz_williams@hotmail.com).*



*Redwing, caught and ringed in Barry's garden in Birdbrook on Sunday 22nd November 2020*

## Introducing The Birdbrook Plough

The Birdbrook Plough is at the heart of the parish so had to be our first choice for our new 'getting to know a local business' feature!

**Welcome Jackie, firstly we'd like to know what attracted you to running a business in Birdbrook?**

*Birdbrook is a beautiful, quiet little village with a pretty pub in its centre. It was a bonus that it was close to where my children were schooled. Seemed like fate!*

**What makes The Plough unique from other pubs?**

*The warm friendly clientele is a definite draw. The historic building is full of character and I never tire of hearing local stories of the Plough's ghost, although I have yet to meet her myself.*

**Do you have any plans for during the current lockdown?**

*During the last lockdown we completely redecorated the dining room making it a lighter and brighter place to sit and relax in. This lockdown we are enjoying D.I.Y in our own home.*

**What are your plans for the future with the business, do you have any Christmas or New Years Eve plans?**

*Unfortunately with the times as uncertain as they are at the moment we have no concrete plans in place for Christmas or New Year.*

**What's your favourite item on your menu?**

*Too many home cooked delights on the menu to have one favourite, although the traditional Ploughman's is popular as is the lasagne, slow cooked in red wine and beef stock. If I had to put*



*one meal slightly higher it would have to be our Sunday Roasts. These prove very popular and unfortunately we do have to turn people away. Booking is advisable.*

**Do you use any other businesses within the parish, if so who?**

*All our meat comes from Morgans butchery at Baythorne End. Our beautiful summer baskets came from Plants that Grow via a lady who works there who lives in Birdbrook. Occasionally we have guest Ales from Toppesfield Pumphouse also.*



**We hope this gives you a quick look inside The Birdbrook Plough and hope to see Jackie, her family and staff back behind the bar very soon!**

# Birdbrook Parish Council

What challenging times we are now living in. It is as if we have been transported to a science fiction horror novel where mankind is fighting against incredible odds. Through the Covid 19 pandemic the Parish Council has continued to function through on-line meetings and has made progress in a number of areas. Our Clerk, Debbie Hilliard has ensured we have held meetings and followed the new guidelines. A priority for us going forward is to help those living in the parish who are in need of support. Please make contact if you believe we could be of assistance.

The first lockdown brought about a host of restrictions and a good number of us went out and walked the local public rights of way. The Parish Council was contacted when some walkers strayed onto private land and caused issues with landowners and it is worth reiterating that it is incumbent on all of us not to trespass but observe the regulations that allow us to walk in the countryside on public rights of way. As a council we have contacted Essex County Council about the signposting of our footpaths but as yet little progress has transpired, clearly at present they have other priorities. Ordinance Survey maps are a good source of identifying our public rights of way and our clerk (Debbie Hilliard) holds the definitive maps should you wish to clarify anything in this regard. For information on "dos and don'ts on Public Rights of Way" go to <http://www.environmentlaw.org.uk/rte.asp?id=207>

The closing of our playgrounds was something we did with a heavy heart for we know that young people need to be able to get out and about and let off steam.

Unfortunately, the closures were a necessity for we couldn't comply with the new regulations ensuring the equipment was clean and safe for users. Additionally, some of the equipment at Birdbrook is now unsafe and had to be taken out of action. We are looking at ways and means of replacing our playground equipment and Councillor Martin Gilbert has been leading the way but hitting a brick wall everywhere he turns. It is going to cost £40,000 plus to re-equip our playgrounds so it is something we may have to undertake in a piecemeal manner. Normally, grants would be our source of funding for such capital outlays but it seems at present all grant money has to be Covid19 related. However, we are on the case and members of the community are becoming involved and we remain positive. Please support our fundraising campaigns and become involved.

The installation of a defibrillator at Baythorne End has been a long process. Councillor Steve Rhenius has explored many avenues for funding but again we have hit brick walls as we are either exempt from applying because of our Parish Council status or defibrillators are not regarded sufficiently Covid19 related to be eligible. We are anxious for a defibrillator to be in place therefore we

have commissioned one to be installed as soon as possible and we thank the Unwin Estate for their generosity and commitment to the community by allowing the defibrillator to be erected on their land.

Earlier in the year Katie Gentry was co-opted onto the Parish Council and she has brought with her a youthful perspective as well as some much-needed energy and enthusiasm. Katie is wonderfully proactive on a number of fronts including the Birdbrook Parish News and the playgrounds. There are still two vacancies on the Parish Council which we are really keen to fill. If you are interested in coming on board and making a difference to your community join the Parish Council.

One of the advantages of on-line meetings is that the Essex County Councillor David Finch (Leader of Essex Council) allocated to Birdbrook is able to attend more frequently and he gives us the County's perspective and what they are looking to achieve. His contributions are always fulsome and most informative. Similarly, Diana Garrod the Braintree District Councillor is highly supportive and always guides us in the right direction and promotes our ambitions at district level. We are fortunate to have two such dedicated people supporting and guiding us. Speaking of community spirit and making a contribution Charlie Richardson a student who was undertaking his Duke of Edinburgh Award refurbished the finger post just beyond White House Farm at the junction of road that heads towards Cootes Farm. The post is now back in place and what a superb job was done. Thank you Charlie, we are delighted.

We have had a number of highways issues in train for some time now and Councillor Alan Cook along with our Clerk Debbie Hilliard has been vigilant in keeping the authorities on their toes as we seek resolution. It appears Essex Highways take as long as two years to resolve issues for everything is undertaken by some form of priority listing. Being small and in a rural location may mean we are low on a list of priorities but we are on the case and we shall actively follow matters through.

## **Birdbrook Parish News & Local Contacts Supplement**

**are brought to you by your local parish council**

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**Publication dates:**

**Birdbrook Parish News:**

**February, May, September, December,**

**Deadlines for contributions:**

**15th of the preceding month.**

**An updated Contacts Supplement will be issued when information changes.**

**For all submissions, contributions and advertising please contact: [birdbrook2021@gmail.com](mailto:birdbrook2021@gmail.com)**

## Changes at the Community House

In the 1950s the Bryce Foundation gifted the Community House (CH) to Birdbrook for local people to use under the control of a number of appointed Trustees. The CH was at one time at the centre of village life and the present Trustees are determined for the CH to be used to a much greater extent and to bring some enjoyment to all of us. The Trustees have reinstated the General Committee to work alongside the Trustees Board. Its function will be to organise the day to day running, promote its hire and to arrange functions for locals to participate in and enjoy. The General Committee has a number of local volunteers who are working hard to establish what it is that the local population want from the CH. To help with this, a questionnaire was delivered to local residents during October. Many thanks to everyone who responded and gave useful feedback....and a special thank you to those of you who have volunteered to "get involved".

The results of the questionnaire are published below.

1. The questionnaire was distributed to Birdbrook and the immediate surrounding area during October.
2. Approximately 100 copies were put through doors. 17 have been returned, representing at least 26 individuals. Of these, 10 were in the 40-65 age group and 12 in the over 65 age group (where specified). Note; the questionnaire did not specify the number of people represented by each return. Therefore, the

## BIRDBROOK BOWLS CLUB Views from the green

Usually at this time of year I write to inform everyone how our season has panned out. Well, the good news is that we didn't lose a match, mind you we didn't win one either.

Due to the coronavirus no matches were played throughout the 2020 season. Social distancing coupled with lockdown put pay to any ideas of playing the ancient game of bowls. From a financial point of view the club was in a perilous state & was very near to closing the green for good.

On behalf of Birdbrook Bowls Club

I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Community House Trustees who donated the sum of £2000 to the club, an extremely timely, generous & life saving gift.

I would also like to express our grateful thanks to our

number of "votes" for activities is sometimes larger than the number of questionnaires returned.

3. The interest in potential functions that could be held at the Community House was:

Quiz Night	19
Cheese and wine / beer tasting	18
Disco	6
Coffee and cake/wine socials	20
Fitness activities <i>(with specific requests for evenings)</i>	16
Film showings	17
Community Trips	13
Classical Music	2
Bingo	7
Jumble sales	3

Further ideas suggested:

Auctions/ Antiques fair, Farmers Market, Dance Group, Horse Racing Night, Gardening Club, Play Group	
Interest in forming a Social Club	16

Overall, there is positive interest in working together to make the Community House into the facility that it was intended to provide for the village. There are willing volunteers to help to make it happen including those who are willing to assist in painting, decorating and general updating of the Community House.

The Community House is essentially a place for hire and the above findings indicate that in addition there is an interest in a range of activities including social functions that would be well attended.



District Councillor Diana Garrod who once again lent her support to the club by donating £210 from her DC Fund. But what would we have done without the generosity of our loyal club members. They all paid their club fees along with further donations in support of the clubs continuation.

A very big thank you to you all !!!

We must also say a big thank you to our green team led by Leigh, they are Andy, Barry, David & Martin.

They have maintained the playing surface & surrounds throughout the summer months, thank you gentlemen for your dedication during these trying times.

Without doubt this has been an extremely difficult & testing year. Lockdown has impinged on all of us, it has tested our resolve in more ways than one.

People are missing their families, social contact, entertainment & sport.

These are the lifeblood of our culture.

Perhaps once this Pandemic has passed we as a club can offer some assistance in creating a safe & friendly environment within the heart of our village.

We can offer you an extremely warm welcome should you come down to the club.

We meet during the season every Tuesday evening at 6. to 6.30pm behind the Community House.

It really would be good to see you.

Oh yes, the game of bowls is a great outdoor activity which helps your concentration, flexibility, socialising & all round well being, a game for all

Now for the serious appeal.

The lifeblood of any club is its members & we need new enthusiastic members of all ages & genders.

So why not come along & give the game of bowls a try.

Watch this space for details.

In the meantime.

KEEP SAFE            KEEP WELL            & KEEP the FAITH

Tomorrow is will be a better day.

Let us hope & pray that this Pandemic will be beaten with the introduction of a vaccine.

My very best wishes to you all

Here's to a happy virus free 2021

See you on the green !            Alan Cook

## Birdbrook Ladies Group

Dear Readers,

What a strange year. The last time that the Ladies Group was able to meet was in March, just prior to the first lock down. An interesting and varied programme of meetings, talks and visits has had to be been shelved, but we are hopeful that next year may allow us to resume our meetings and hope that some of you will consider joining us.

In the meantime, members send each other and all readers very best wishes for Christmas and for a healthy and less restrictive 2021.

Sue King  
Chairlady

## Christmas Fun

~

Can You Spot 12  
Differences in these  
2 Pictures?

You could also  
colour them in.

## Clements Surgery

Dr David Brandon issues a newsletter every few months.

You can see the latest news from the surgery at

[https://  
www.christmasandclements.  
co.uk/news](https://www.christmasandclements.co.uk/news)

## Dogs

We love our dogs—but please remember to pick up after them, and keep them on leads near livestock.



## Seasonal Flowers in November

Among several left overs from summer still in flower, a rose, the yellow buddleia, and a few others, there are also seasonal autumn flowers to cheer us up before the snowdrops, aconites, crocuses etc start to appear in the new year. Below are a few from the garden.



*Winter, or Chinese honeysuckle, Lonicera fragrantissima*



*Hardy cyclamen, Cyclamen hederifolium*



*Helleborus foetidus*

**For a stunning display of winter colour and scent, visit the winter garden at Anglesey Abbey, N Cambridge**

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey-gardens-and-lode-mill/features/the-winter-garden-at-anglesey-abbey>

## Suffolk Libraries

Our nearest branch library is in Haverhill.

For up to date information on opening times and facilities available, visit:

<https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/visit/locations-and-times/haverhill-library>

In this difficult year, the Suffolk Libraries team have worked tirelessly to support their local community. Whether it be the over 8,000 calls made to elderly and vulnerable people, 2,500 online events and activities or the huge increase in usage of web-based borrowing – it has been a defining time for our libraries. It is also heartening that we have been classified as an ‘essential service’ by the government in the latest lockdown, a well deserved recognition for what libraries across the country have done to look after others.

Things that you can do with your free Suffolk library card:

1. Borrow eBooks & eAudiobooks directly to your devices
2. Stream thousands of films for free
3. Take a course to learn some new skills
4. Download and listen to music
5. Start a reading group
6. Discover your family history
7. Read magazines online
8. Access millions of academic research papers
9. Get ready for school
10. Help with homework
11. Watch children's TV shows and films
12. Visit the Suffolk Owl Sanctuary

<https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk>

**Brighten up dull January days  
into the future  
SNOWDROPS**



**£5 per generous clump**

*mixed single and double, sold for*

**Friends of Haverhill Libraries**

*to enhance library facilities*

**Contact Val (in Jan/Feb)  
birdbrook2021@gmail.com**