

Newsletter Vol. 4
No. 1 – Winter 2014

Langford & Ulting News



The most familiar of all our wild fruits, blackberries are amazing. A relative of the rose, it is a great coloniser of wasteland. Its white or pale pink flowers give way to deep purple, almost black, fruit. Blackberries are abundant in September, and are not only decorative and beautiful to eat, but also provide unexpected medical and veterinary cures dating back to pagan times. Having one of the highest antioxidant levels of any fruit, they are also very rich in vitamin C. Blackberry cordial can ease upset stomachs or sore throats. Bramble leaves were often used as a remedy for burns and scalds – applied with the aid of a spoken charm. The berries, if gathered at the right phase of the moon, were believed to give protection against evil runes, and creeping under a Bramble bush was considered effective against rheumatism. At one time children were passed through a blackberry arch as a cure for rickets.

During the Great War, children were given time off school to collect blackberries to be made into jams or cordials that were sent to soldiers at the front, or recovering in hospital, and in the Second World War housewives were made aware of the great benefits of the fruit to eke out their rations and make food taste better. Sadly, following the trend to make fields bigger and bigger, many ancient hedges were grubbed out, and it is often only in areas that have been left fallow that you can still find good blackberry bushes.

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Current research is testing the use of blackberries as a protection against cancer. When we go blackberrying, we're doing something that our hunter-gatherer ancestors did thousands of years ago; indeed blackberry seeds were found in the stomach of a Neolithic man dug up in Essex. But don't pick any more – the saying is that 'the devil relieves himself on the berries on Michaelmas night' – which falls on September 29th, just a week after the Equinox. By that time the berries have usually turned sour, having picked up mildew or bacteria.

EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to our winter edition of the newsletter – a time of joy and of sadness. For the joy I am delighted to tell you that after extensive telephone calls and letters to Maldon District Council, they have finally agreed that the tiny little community shop in St. Giles' Church – 'Heavenly Supplies' does not have to pay business rates. It has been a very stressful time battling over this, but may I extend my grateful thanks to all who have supported me in this fight. In many ways it was a bit of anticlimax as I had rallied all manner of local and distant folk to the cause (even the Bishop of Chelmsford had promised to write in support) and I was all set to challenge the Council with the 'Big Society' argument. However, it is good to know that common sense has prevailed at last and our non-profit making venture for the community will not face having to pay this ridiculous charge.

For the sadness of course, there is the death of Alan Doe, and we print a tribute to him on page 7.

Places of Worship

St. Giles' Church, Langford

Rev. Peter Low – 01621 841274

Email: revbikes@btinternet.com

www.stgileslangford.org.uk

Services at 9 a.m. every week

1st Sunday – Holy Communion

2nd Sunday – Matins

3rd, 4th, 5th Sunday – Holy Communion

All Saints Church, Ulting

Rev. Stephen Northfield – 01245 380958

Email: SRNorthfield@aol.com

Services of Holy Communion at 9 a.m. on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays of the month

Chairman – Andrew Tween (Tel: 01245 381598)

andrewtween@btinternet.com

Vice-Chairman (and Newsletter Editor)

Irene Allen – (Tel: 01621 855447)

Irenea@lepra.org.uk

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Clerk – Jenny Clemo (Tel: 01245 380852) Ultingcattery@gmail.com
or visit www.essexinfo.net/langford-ulting

Thefts from Cars

As you will have noticed from the Neighbourhood Watch reports sent out by Councillor Vicky Anfilogoff, there has been a spate of thefts from cars recently. As Christmas time approaches can we urge you all to be extra vigilant when leaving your vehicle.

- **DON'T** tempt thieves by leaving any items on display.
- **DO** lock your vehicle at all times, even when parked on your driveway or when carrying out any work.
- **DO** try to park in a secure, well lit area where possible.

The following items are of particular interest to a thief so should never be left in your vehicle:

- Satellite navigation
- MP3 systems
- Mobile phones
- Laptops
- Wallets/ purses/ credit and debit cards
- Cash/ loose change / cheque book
- Electrical items
- Jewellery
- Power tools and work equipment
- Vehicle registration documents
- Sunglasses

If you see anything or have any information please contact Essex Police on 101 or 999 if you see it happen at the time. If you wish to give information anonymously call Crimestoppers 0800 555 111. [Note: if you ring 101 you will be charged for it!]

Empty your car before someone else does it for you

An important Reminder....

Can we please remind Langford parishioners and those living in the properties in Heybridge to send their signed petition forms back for the boundary change. It is very important that we get as many petitions as possible (signed by all those in the house eligible to vote not just the householder). This is especially important for those Heybridge properties whose benefit the boundary change is for.

Can we please also remind businesses to return the Neighbourhood Plan business survey too.

We aim to do the best for our communities, but we need your input!



Langford Hall

Listed Grade II on 10th January 1953, Langford Hall as we see it today was largely completed in the 17th Century with a red and black brick façade from between 1700 and 1748. It has two storeys and attics and is crowned by a hipped plain red tiled roof with three gabled dormers, and three red brick chimney stacks. It is an imposing building and its front elevation faces the rear of St. Giles' Church.

The Hall was not built to any specific architectural rules, but evolved over the years according to requirement, with three front rooms behind the Queen Anne façade – both upstairs and downstairs – and then a corridor parallel to the road with kitchen and other rooms downstairs and further bedrooms above. Originally it had been fortified and had a moated garden (part of which is still in existence) that ran down to the River Blackwater. Behind the Hall in the courtyard there was a large basin and fountain supplied by an artesian well.

At the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), the land on which Langford Hall now stands was owned by two Saxon lords named Gola and Agelmar. When the Domesday survey was undertaken in 1086 it was held by William Baynard, but he forfeited this land 'for entering into a conspiracy against Henry I'.

In the 1170s, during the reign of Henry II, the land was owned by Geoffrey de Ambli, and afterwards by the de Preyers family of Sible Hedingham. By the marriage of Margaret, the daughter and heiress of Sir Thomas de Preyers, it passed into the noble family of de Bouchier.

On 30th June 1461 Henry Bouchier was created Earl of Essex. On his death in 1483 his Langford estate passed to his grandson, also called Henry Bouchier [d.1539], second Earl of Essex. He was captain of Henry VIII's bodyguard, and it was probably on his instructions that Langford Hall was constructed in the 1520s, during the early part of the King's reign. The oldest part of the building stands to the east and runs

parallel to the road. In 1541 Anne, the only daughter and heir of Henry Bouchier, married William Parr (1513-1571) the brother of Catherine Parr (1512-1548) the sixth and last queen of Henry VIII. Langford Hall next passed to the Smith (or Smyth) family of Cressing Temple. From the Smiths the estate passed to Matthew Harvey, brother of the physician, Doctor William Harvey (1578-1657) the discoverer of the circulation of the blood. Matthew bequeathed the house to his nephew, Sir Eliab Harvey, who sold it in 1680 to Nicholas Wescomb whose descendants held it for approximately 175 years. The Wescomb family (all seemingly called Nicholas) who inherited Langford Hall, lived in Hertfordshire, so the building was frequently let out, usually on seven-year tenancies, to local farmers.

Although local tradition suggests that Langford Hall was acquired by the Byron family in 1720, it did not, in fact, pass into their ownership until the 1850s. The original family seat, Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire, was sold by the 6th Lord Byron, the poet Noel Gordon Byron (1788-1824) as a result of deprivations inflicted on the family's estates and fortunes by his profligate father, 'mad Jack' Byron. The Langford Estate, together with an estate in Nottinghamshire, was acquired when the 8th Lord Byron and his brother, the Hon. Frederick, second son of the 7th Lord Byron, both married daughters of the Rev. William Wescomb, Rector of St. Giles' Church, Langford, who lived in Langford Rectory.

Mr. Alfred Lomas was at Langford Hall, from 1894 to 1899 and was noted for setting up the 'Essex Cleveland Bay Stud' there and also for his prize-winning animals. When he left, Frederick Wakelin took up residency until his death in 1905.

Rev. Frederick Ernest Charles Byron (1861-1949) who was Rector of Langford from 1890 to 1914, owned Langford Hall and lived there for a brief period. When he moved to Thrumpton in Nottingham in 1914 to take up his seat as the 10th Lord Byron, the hall was taken over by the new incumbent – Rev. Charles Gough Littlehales. The Hall became the Rectory until Charles moved on to Allensmore in Hertfordshire in 1931. From 1931 to 1941 Major Claude Tritton and his wife were in residence and were very active war workers. The Hall then served for a time as the agent's house for Langford Park. Lady Anna Byron lived there from 1949 until her death in 1968 when the Hall became the home of Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Geoffrey Gordon Byron (1899-1989) afterwards 12th Baron Byron, who lived there with his second wife, Dorigen (d. 1985) and their two sons.

In 1983 Langford Hall was acquired by Mr. & Mrs. Watson, who live there still and run Watsons Farms Limited.

An Interview with... David Robinson

Luards Farmhouse, Langford



David and Hannah Robinson met in the 1960s when Hannah, travelling overland with a girlfriend from Bangkok

after working round the world for six years, found herself alone in Greece after her companion had to return home. David, with a flatmate, was also in Greece and met Hannah on a ferry to Mykonos. They married two years later and set up home in Terling, moving to Luards Farm, Langford in 1971 - a house large enough for their growing family. Hannah had studied agriculture at university and they relished creating their beautiful garden from a bare field. They have, David says, never regretted moving to the village, and two of their three children were born here. They now have eight grandchildren.

David's background is in accounting. His father came from Lancashire, left school at 12, worked in a dye works and a book binders, and then got a job as an office boy in a company in Manchester. He taught himself accounting and worked his way up in the Company to finally become its Managing Director. David and his sister were brought up in a happy family with old-fashioned values.

Educated in Cheshire, David went to Manchester University and studied economics, later being articled in a firm of Chartered Accountants in London. He qualified in 1959. He then served two years National Service in the Royal Army Pay Corps and was stationed in Germany. On leaving the army he joined a City firm of accountants intending to go into industry after a couple of years. The firm asked him to join their newly formed management consultancy unit where he stayed for the next 28 years. He was made a partner in 1969. In 1990 his firm merged with Deloitte and he took early retirement to enable him to concentrate on working as a non-executive director and advising clients on top management issues. During the next eighteen years he served on the boards of a wide variety of companies including in the shipping, airline, manufacturing and design consultancy businesses. He also chaired Plume Housing Association which took over Maldon's council houses and later became Vice Chairman of the Moat Housing Group of which Plume formed part.

One of his main interests has always been in the human contribution to business success believing that a company's staff was its greatest asset and should be valued and encouraged. Among several

books he wrote on management topics two, Human Asset Accounting and The Naked Entrepreneur took up this theme. David sums up his working career: "I've had a wonderful and varied experience with many businesses ranging from family firms to professional practices and government departments both in the UK and overseas"

It was Mrs. Parmenter, of the (then) General Stores in Langford, who persuaded David to stand for the Parish Council, and in 1974 he was duly elected to serve. David says that in those early days the Parish Council was run by 'village elders.' The late Harry Pipe was the Chairman when he joined, and it met in what was then the Village Hall - The Old School. David recalls that it was 'very orderly, very gentlemanly, and there were no female councillors.' It also had fewer regulations than apply today, and the meetings mainly dealt with such issues as street lighting and churchyard fences and the very occasional planning application.

David became Chairman of the Parish Council in 1990 following on from Peter Hedge after he retired from the Council. At that time the Council were in the process of buying the Cowshed in Langford to be the new Village Hall. With the change from the old rating system to the poll tax the Council was facing a financial "black hole" due to the loss of business rate revenue. The Council had borrowed a long term loan from the Public Works Loan Board, which had to be repaid but, by a stroke of good fortune, due to a change in interest rates the Council received a substantial "reverse premium" which enabled it to convert the Cowshed at very little cost to parishioners. David described it as a 'village enterprise' with members providing mirrors for the toilets, paint and labour to get it up and running. Villagers also gave freely of their time and expertise in planting trees, litter picking etc. and there was a real sense of 'community.' After 36 years on the Parish Council he decided it was time to stand down, and retired in 2010.

David has always loved travelling, and during a Sabbatical in 1987 he and Hannah walked the Pennine Way. But they have also been far more adventurous - back-packing round India, visiting Vietnam, Easter Island, Machu Picchu, Bhutan and many other off-the-tourist-trail locations.

At some point David and Hannah expect to move into Maldon where they have many friends and be closer to shops and other amenities. He says they will sorely miss the village after so many years, but they will start again in their new location - life has to move on. At 78 he is still a very active man, and both he and Hannah are very keen gardeners, walkers and readers. They still enjoy travelling and, of course, their family. Their eldest son is a lawyer in Hong Kong, their second son lives in Stroud and their daughter in Cambridge.

As and when they move Langford will miss a great champion on its behalf, but David says that although he may be out of the parish, he will always be interested in Langford and its affairs.

Is the 'Big Society' delivering rural services?



In 2010, the Prime Minister launched the 'Big Society', to herald a culture change in the way we faced problems. He felt people would no longer always turn to Local Authorities or central

Government for answers, but would help themselves and their own communities. With the future of many rural services under threat what is the 'Big Society' doing to delivering rural services?

The Government's agenda was to give people more control over the services they receive and open up delivery to new providers from public, private and/or community and voluntary sectors. The 'Big Society' was at the heart of this vision, and aimed to encourage organisations to develop innovative approaches to the delivery of rural services, best suited to local needs. The Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire (working with the Rural Services Network and Rose Regeneration) recently completed a research project for Defra on alternative service delivery models. They identified 11 'new' models. However, many of the delivery models are not 'new', and others have been hybridised in their application. What has changed, however, is their application and use for service delivery. The research found that no one model was better than the others; with the model/s chosen selected according to local circumstances. In many instances a key driver for changing the service delivery approach has been the need to reduce costs. Unfortunately there is little evidence to suggest the alternative model options are then considered systematically.

Regardless of the model chosen, for an alternative delivery model to work there needs to be full community and user involvement; adequate financial, business and user needs planning; communication on the part of all parties – including openness to user involvement and support for change; and capacity and leadership. These characteristics speak to the importance of accountability and diversity - but how are these principles recognised where service provision is being delivered differently because of cuts? And are these principles interpreted differently if new services are being set up rather than previously sector run/funded services?

It is clear in some instances that a Big Society approach can give communities and Local Authorities the ability to tailor services to local circumstances – in ways that generate economic,

social and environmental benefits. Avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach to services, alternative models enable a diverse range of projects to happen, but equally there are barriers to innovation. Those identified include: inflexible procurement and commissioning processes, finance, time pressures, service fragmentation, a lack of local assets and lack of community capacity or appetite 'to get involved'.

So what lessons can be learnt from both the successes and failures of alternative service delivery models? Firstly, they open up the need to think creatively in the face of budget reductions; and the relationship between short term necessity and longer term planning needs to be addressed. Tackling these issues requires building a shared understanding of the community's needs, ambitions and capacity, reducing wasteful conflict by increasing transparency and appreciating the pressures that different organisations face in reducing operational costs/generating finance, and assembling the right individuals to lead and champion the process. Alternative service delivery models need to be considered viable long term solutions rather than an easy, quick-win to turnaround performance and reduce costs.

Community Diary

October 2014 – January 2015

Sunday 5th October – Harvest Festival Services:
All Saints Ulting at 4.00 p.m. and St. Giles' Langford at 6.30 p.m.

Saturday 11th October – Harvest Supper,
Langford & Ulting Village Hall, 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday 21st October - Parish Council Meeting,
Langford & Ulting Village Hall, 7.30 p.m.

Sunday 26th October – Vintage & Antiques Fair,
Museum of Power, Langford 10.30-4.00 p.m.
tickets £2.50 (+ concessions)

Saturday 16th November – Christmas Fayre, St. Giles' Church, Langford 10-2. Free admission.

Tuesday 2nd December – Parish Council Meeting, Langford & Ulting Village Hall, 7.30 p.m.

Sunday 7th December – Santa Special, Museum of Power, Langford – Tickets £8 (includes gift)

Sunday 7th December – Candlelit Christmas Extraordinaire, 6.30 p.m. St. Giles' Church. Tickets £8.

Thursday 1st January – Crank Up – Museum of Power, Langford, Tickets £4.50

Community-owned shops are often performing better than major supermarket chains, says a rural review of the sector.

Launched by the Plunkett Foundation on 20th June, the study says 2013 was another good year for the community shop sector in the UK. Trading performance of established shops continues to grow with like-for-like sales growth at 1.9% outstripping that of major supermarkets for the third year running, it says. The report also highlights the resilience of community-owned village shops as the five-year survival rate of community shops is 99%. This is a very positive outlook and according to the Office for National Statistics compares very favourably with established UK businesses which have an estimated five-year survival rate of 45%. Turnover in 2013 varied from £6,500 to £1,103,653, averaging at £154,687 per shop, based on data from 163 shops that were prepared to share financial information.

Of course as Langford's own 'Heavenly Supplies' is a not-for-profit venture, simply there to be a service to the community, such eye-watering numbers do not apply – what comes in goes out again in fresh supplies. However, there has been a greater footfall in the shop during 2014 and this is very encouraging, so, if you haven't visited to see all the wonderful things on offer, why not?

That Book on Langford...

We are delighted to tell you that, following the launch of the book 'Langford – An obscure Essex Village Transformed' – sales have been brisk, and the authors have had to have it reprinted! So, if you have missed obtaining your copy of this excellent work, fresh supplies are available (and Christmas is coming on...) Get your copy from 'Heavenly Supplies' or from Patrick Chaplin (01621 856040) or Irene Allen (01621 855447).

Fireworks Event

For a plethora of reasons, including insurance costs, after much discussion and deliberation the Committee decided that this year we are not going to put on a big firework evening for all comers. There will be a bonfire night for residents of Langford and Ulting on Sunday, 9th November at the Village Hall, so bring some fireworks and nibbles. That way it is fun for everyone, and Committee Members with children (and husbands usually helping) get to talk to them and enjoy the evening as a family unit. We hope to see you there.



'Laterlife Challenge'

Have you done something new since you retired? Started a new hobby or interest, joined a club or planned an event or trip? The Laterlife Challenge is looking for entries from the over 60s to demonstrate how people are making the most of their retirement years. There are some great prizes and also the knowledge that your story may help inspire others who are finding their senior years lonely or difficult. Chief Judge is Blue Peter's former presenter, Valerie Singleton. Find out more by visiting: www.laterlife.com/challenge

This year's Challenge is going well but they have had no entries at all from Essex so far although last year they had quite a few. So log onto the website and tell them what you're doing. It will definitely be worthwhile and may well lead to others improving their lives as well. The challenge closes at the end of October.

To tempt you, the prizes include:

- A one night stay for two at one of the stunning Country House Handpicked hotels around the UK.
- Red Letter Experience Day Vouchers for your choice of experience!
- A lovely pair of soft leather Dents gloves
- The new Kindle Fire HD - a feature-packed HD tablet

All plus an inscribed plaque and bottle of Champagne.

So, what are you waiting for? Go online now and tell them about your activities.

Business in Focus...

C.J. Ashby Forestry Ltd

For four generations the Ashby family have worked with the natural environment. During the war years they cleared ash trees from fields suitable for



runways. As the older generation (pictured) retired and his siblings went into other spheres of work, Colin Ashby has been working on

his own. He set up CJ Ashby Forestry Ltd in 1991, when he left Writtle Agricultural College, and works almost exclusively harvesting English willow trees for cricket bats. Colin notes that willow is grown all over the UK, but due to the very favourable conditions here, the best trees are grown in Langford and Ulting, and indeed throughout the Blackwater valley because of the light, loamy soils and the availability of clean, fresh water. C.J. Ashby Forestry Ltd grow willow trees for various local farmers and landowners

Growing English willow is a long-term business. Saplings are planted as 3-year old saplings from December to March when they are dormant, and mature after 15 years – not a business for the impatient! The saplings are bought from nursery beds in Great Leighs, or grown locally in Colin's own beds. These 'sets' as they are called, are planted, non-rooted, 2½ inches in the ground with a surrounding guard to protect the young trees from animals. These young trees are visited twice a year to ensure that they are healthy and not damaged. Young shoots are rubbed off the trunk to ensure that it is kept straight with no



unnecessary branches which would spoil the wood for cricket bats. One willow tree can produce 35 cricket bats, and when cut, they are sent to India

to be finished off.

They are harvested after about 15 years when the tree is 60 inches round. They are felled, and all the additional greenery not used is either burned on site or goes into biomass to make woodchips for burners etc.

A licence is required from the Forestry Commission to undertake this work, and for every tree felled, three more are planted.

The firm also has its own saw mill for fencing and gate posts, but as most of the material is not available locally this is only a small part of the operation.

Colin (pictured below left with his team) is keen to employ local people (currently there are eight men in the 'gang') and his wife, Mary, who also comes from a farming background, deals with the mountain of paperwork required to run the operation. There is an enormous amount of bureaucracy to get a licence, and keeping up with



current legislation. Colin provides on-site training for new staff to NTPC standard (National Programme Training Certificate) in forestry and arboriculture, and inspectors come out to ensure that good working practice is maintained.

The business still maintains family connections as Colin's dad, John, drives the lorries and moves machinery and the timber when it is felled.

But there are problems with a job like this. At the moment there is an outbreak of 'Watermark disease' affecting some 200-500 trees each year which is posing a threat to cricket bat willow industry throughout the area. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Erwinia Sclivis* and results in a reddish-brown stain in the healthy white wood of the willow which makes them unsuitable for cricket bats. Colin and his team are alert to this threat and keep a watchful eye on progress.

It is wonderful to have a truly 'local' operation in Langford, and Colin is always happy to offer help and advice on trees to those who need it, and to keep alive the great tradition of English cricket.

Obituary – Alan E Doe (1929-2014)



It was with deep regret that we heard of the death of Alan Doe, who died suddenly on Saturday 26th July aged 85. Known to his employees as 'the Guv'nor', he was the grandson of the founder of Ernest Doe & Sons, after whom the company was named. He had a great love of farming from when, as a child, he used to drive the tractor at harvest with his grandfather behind the binder, and although farming methods changed considerably in his lifetime, he always kept up with the latest methods. Indeed, he himself had a prominent role in the development and production of the Triple D (Doe Dual Drive) and other Doe tractors in the late 1950s and 1960s as well as steering Doe Motors and other companies in the Doe group to success.

Alan Doe built the company, initially with his father and grandfather, and in recent years with his son Colin, by expanding the business into construction, groundcare and retail and by opening an increasing number of branches. The annual Doe Show, extremely popular with farmers and contractors, was built on the foundations that he put in place for the first show in 1960.

A service of thanksgiving was held on Thursday 28th August in a large marquee at Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd in Ulting, which was, as one participant said, "magnificent." We send our deepest condolences to his family – he will be greatly missed.

Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Great War

At 11pm on 4th August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany, ushering in one of the darkest periods in our history. As the moment approached, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, made the famous remark: "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." In a dramatic UK-wide event LIGHTS OUT was an invitation to everyone to turn off their lights from 10pm to 11pm on Monday 4th August, leaving on a single light or candle for this shared moment of reflection. A great many residents of Langford and Ulting took this to heart - there was an eerie blackness in Ulting Lane with houses showing only a candle in the window or on the front doorstep in solidarity with those who had gone to war. Many people sat in the soft darkness reflecting on those who had gone out to defend 'King and country' and, ultimately, to make the supreme sacrifice.



A small service of commemoration was held at the War Memorial in Ulting and the names of those who died were read out. In Langford an exhibition was held to honour the lads from Langford who went to war. We all owe those who went through that dreadful war a debt of gratitude and an apology that we didn't learn from the horror of the slaughter.

Heroes of Langford and Ulting

Do you have any information about anyone from Langford or Ulting who fought in the Great War? We are hoping to complete a booklet of all the lads of our two villages who went to war to keep us all safe. Any information and especially copies of photographs and letters would be greatly appreciated and will help us keep the memory of these young men alive for future generations. Please let Irene Allen have these (01621 855447, or irenea@lepra.org.uk or send to 11 Ulting Lane, Langford, CM9 6QB) so she can compile them into one volume. Thank you.