

**March / April
2023**

Edition 192



USEFUL NUMBERS

Braintree District Council	01376 552525
Colchester Hospital	01206 744491
Doctors Car Service	07845 596092
Freshwell Health Centre	01371 810328
Hedingham Medical Centre:	
Castle Hedingham	01787 461465
Sible Hedingham	01787 460612
Kaaren Berry, Parish Clerk	07341264219
Little Chestnuts Preschool	079018 80914
Little Hedgehogs Toddlers	01440 785778
Pumphouse Brewery	07780 702293
Rev. Caroline Brown	01787 469161
St Margaret's School	01787 237354
The Green Man Public House	01787 237418
Toppesfield Community Shop	01787 236003
Toppesfield Village Hall Bookings	
Wendy Ames	07933743724

TOPPESFIELD COMMUNITY SHOP

Church Lane, Toppesfield. Tel: 01787 236003

Fresh Fruit & Vegetables, Milk, Newspapers, Confectionery, Pet Food, Dairy Products, Meat & Poultry, Coal and Kindling, Cards, Stationery and lots more!

Monday—Friday

8.30 am— 4.00 pm

Saturday—10.00 am—12.30pm

TOPPESFIELD POST OFFICE

Church Lane, Toppesfield

Wednesday - 10.00 am—1pm

Services include: Special Delivery, Mobile Top Up, Insurance Services, Household payments, Travel Money, Moneygrams, Savings Accounts plus more!

Toppesfield Parish Council

Councillors — Alan Collard, Amanda Smith, Chris Neale, Trisha Roberts and Kitty Bourlet. There are currently two vacancies for Parish Councillors, if you are interested in joining the Parish Council please inform one of the councillors or the parish clerk.

Parish Clerk — Kaaren Berry

Parish Council Meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of every month in the village hall. You are welcome to attend the Open Session which starts at 7.30pm.

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Newsletter

Published by Toppesfield Parish Council

Editor: clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com

Please see our online resources to find out what is happening

Facebook Pages :-

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Toppesfield Village Hall

Toppesfield Village Stores

The Green Man, Toppesfield

Pumphouse Community Brewery

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Neighbourhood and Development Plan

Twitter & Instagram— Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Website—<https://e-voice.org.uk/toppesfield-parish-council/>



From the Parish Council



Welcome to the Spring edition of the Toppesfield and Gainsford End Newsletter.

The sun is finally making some appearances and the temperature is slowly creeping up. Although, as you read this there may be snow falling.

There are some great events planned for the Spring, including events in the church and at Danaher Animal home to celebrate Easter. I know messy church is always popular in our house. The Parish Council are planning a First Aid course to be held in the Village Hall to give an overview of the Defibrillator and basic first aid. Please let the Parish Council Clerk know if you are interested in attending.

The village litter pick will be held on the 11th March, setting off from the Village Hall at 10am. All equipment will be provided. The more volunteers we have the more ground can be covered to help keep our community clean and free of litter. Thanks also to Councillor Richard Van Dulken who helped supply litter pick equipment to the school with the gardening club completing their first litter pick in February.

It's great to see 2 new beers from the brewery celebrating the Coronation. If you would like to be involved in planning a village event to celebrate the Coronation please contact the Parish Council Clerk, more details on page 9.

If you would like to be more engaged with the community, the Parish Council elections are being held in May. It's an interesting role and I have learnt a lot in the last 4 years. You don't need to have an in-depth knowledge of local government, but it is a great to have a say in the community and also make a positive difference. If you would like more information, please see page 12 of this newsletter or reach out to myself for a chat.

Chris Neale

Parish Council Information

A short summary of Parish Council goings-on at the January and February Meetings:

In January, members of the public attended with concerns regarding the closure of Finchingfield bridge and the impact this will have on both local businesses and those business in the surrounding areas. There are concerns that there will not be a bridge for 12 months whilst work is carried out. It was asked in the parish council could comment on a planning application for a temporary bridge once this has been made and could it be publicised via Facebook and the parish website to encourage others to respond as it will affect local business and local travel if a temporary bridge is not in place.

Members from Finchingfield and Wethersfield Parish councils were in attendance to discuss a Joint Neighbourhood plan to cover the Wethersfield Air base as it is in four parishes. It is hoped this plan will give local communities a say in what happens at the airbase. The airbase is in the parishes of Sible Hedingham, Wethersfield, Finchingfield and Toppesfield. Toppesfield Parish Council should only be needed to communicate/liaise with as the main work will be carried out by other parishes. The Braintree District local plan appears to ignore the airbase therefore there is no policy support for a prison. If the prison project does not go ahead there is still 85% of the base left to be considered. It is hoped the joint plan could be completed within 2 years.

In January, District Councillor Richard van Dulken reported:

- The BDC budget is close to being set. The green waste collection is not a statutory responsibility of the council and discussions are being held as to whether this should be a chargeable service. Staffing costs have increased by 6%, as well as fuel rising. Savings are being looked at and one saving will be that BDC will no longer be issuing the paper versions of the waste collection calendars – this will be available online. There will also be no increase in the Councillors allowance this year.
- Cllr Butland has sent a letter to the MoJ asking what the position is regarding the proposed Wethersfield Prison and about the concerns regarding contamination.
- Essex County Council Highway Rangers are no longer being subsidised by ECC so we now have to rely on Essex Highway Maintenance to address problems.
- Rural England Prosperity Fund – Braintree District Council have £580, 000 dedicated to funding various projects, one of which is open to parish councils and community groups for refurbishing heritage assets. Further details of the fund will follow in due course.
- Braintree Local Highways Panel – local councils can pay for traffic surveys at a cost of £350.00.

In February, he reported:

The proposals for the 2023/24 BDC budget have been made public and will be discussed at the 20th February Council meeting. We are all aware of the 10% inflation rate which has impacted BDC salaries and diesel fuel in particular, which has resulted in the

Parish Council Information continued

proposal to increase the BDC share of the Council tax by 2.5% for next year, less than the permitted 3%. To put this into context, for a Band D house this will mean an increase of £4.68 for the year, only 9p a week. It has also been announced by the administration that following the decision by ECC to not go ahead with the Millennium Slips at the A120 in Braintree, and subject to agreement at the Council as part of the 2023/24 Budget, the amount of £2.5 million put aside by BDC towards this project will be used to support the community in various ways, including a sum of £25 as a New Homes and Growth Dividend to be paid to all eligible Council Tax payers.

- From Wednesday 8th the Lighthouse charity will be able to collect unwanted large electrical appliances from the Braintree recycling centre in Springwood Drive, to refurbish them and sell at low prices to those in need.
- Love Essex/ Love Food - during February BDC is taking part in a campaign to reduce food waste - the average family with children apparently wastes £60 a month on wasted food, and this makes up an astonishing 25% of residual (grey bin) waste. A waste of money, of resources, and a major producer of methane gases at landfill sites. Sign up to the Pledge at www.loveessex/foodwaste and get many hints as well as a chance to win £60. 644
- The latest appeal by the owner of the Fishing Lakes to remain living on the site, and providing a takeaway food service, has been turned down by the Planning Inspector, and he has one month to find alternative accommodation and six months to remove the improperly situated mobile homes etc.
- Starting on 13th March there will be a trial for 9 months of a booking system for cars and vans at the Essex County Council-run recycling centres, including ours in Braintree. This new system has been trialled, apparently successfully, in Rayleigh, and is intended to reduce congestion (and pollution from idling vehicles) as well the misuse of the facility by commercial traders. ECC will be publicising the system in due course.
- Furniture and waste textiles including POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants), typically foam in sofas, can no longer be collected as part of the amenity collections arranged by the Parish Council - it must be collected individually by the bulky waste collection service of BDC.
- Councillors' Community Grants - he has distributed all of his grant funds for 2022/23 but is pleased to say that the scheme is intended to operate in the coming financial year

It was proposed that a training session to raise awareness of 1st Aid and using a defibrillator is organised. The cost would be £125 for 15 people to have a training session which would last approximately 3 hours. The proposal was agreed and Cllr Neale to progress and confirm a date for the training. This would then be advertised for people to sign up to.

The following Policies were approved for adoption and will be available on the Parish website: Freedom of Information, Document Retention and updated Travel Expenses Policy.

Parish Council Information continued

It was agreed the Parish Council would be supportive of a group to organise a street party for the 7th May to celebrate the King's coronation. An article will be placed in the Newsletter asking for volunteers to organise.

It was agreed to carry out the annual community litter pick on 11 March 2023 at 10am, meeting at the village hall as long as the equipment can be supplied by Braintree District Council.

It was agreed to engage Judith Fletcher to prepare the year end accounts.

As the landlord, the Parish Council is to insure the village hall and shop premises and re-charge costs to each organisation. Quotation was received and accepted and the organisations will be billed for the costs.

Essex Highways has submitted a planning application to Essex County Council's Planning team for a new replacement bridge at Finchingfield. This application *includes* the provision of a temporary pond crossing to support the community during our proposed bridge replacement works. The inclusion of the pond crossing follows previous engagement undertaken by the parish council which suggests that this is the preferred option by residents and businesses. The application is available for public comment by visiting: <https://www.essex.gov.uk/view-commentplanning-applications> comments to be submitted by 9th February. Finchingfield Bridge webpage which can be accessed at: <https://www.essexhighways.org/finchingfield-bridgeb1053-finchingfield> This planning application is still open for comments until the 28th February 2023.

The Post Office have asked if the Parish Council would support a prescription collection service to held in Post Office located within the village shop on a Wednesday morning. This was discussed and the parish council are supportive of the shop and post office should they want to supply this service.

Parish council meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of the month at 7.30pm with an open session for the public to attend from 7.30pm to 7.45pm.

St Margaret's Church



By the time you read this news I will have been on holiday and home again, that is a sad thought, I am off to Malta for a few days of winter sun and some culture.

Since Christmas I have had the dreaded flu and I know some of you have been unwell, had flu or contracted COVID yet again. I do so hope that as the days begin to be longer and warm up , we will all feel brighter and more positive, and especially fit and well.

As I type this, I can see 1 lonely daffodil has flowered on my patio, I do so love the spring and seeing all the different bulbs bloom.

We held another Messy Church session, in February half term and had a lovely group of children who were so enthusiastic. We explored the theme of Lent and Palm Sunday, we made palm leaves to wave, and models of what they thought Jesus looked like, as well as a surprise !

In our song and prayers, we celebrated the arrival of the King that had been long awaited, and we talked about how surprised people were at how he looked and behaved, and that he arrived on a lowly donkey.

In Lent we too as Christians wait, we reflect, and are encouraged to pray, fast and give, in all the guises those things can come.

Easter for many is a time to enjoy being with family and eating chocolate , but perhaps you too could reflect during this time of Lent , what you think could happen for you if you accept Jesus into your life.

I am holding a short Lent course on the Women of Holy Week on 4 Thursday mornings in March, if you would be interested in joining me, please contact me.

We are not just here funerals, but also for christenings and weddings. So, if you are thinking of planning either of those get in touch and we can have a chat.

And the normal pattern of services continues on Sundays with services starting at 11.00am.

In addition, the Church is open every day for private prayer. And as always if you know anyone in need of a visit, or you would like a visit yourself. Please get in touch.

revcarolinebrown@gmail.com: 01787 469161



St Margaret's Church

Upcoming Services

All at 11.00am unless stated otherwise

March 5th Morning Prayer

March 12th Holy Communion with Rev Caroline

March 19th Mothering Sunday service

March 26th Holy Communion with Rev Graham

April 2nd Palm Sunday. Morning Prayer

April 6th Maundy Thursday.service with Rev Caroline. Time tba

April 7th Good Friday service with Rev Caroline 2.00pm

April 9th Easter Day Holy Communion with Rev Liz

April 16th Morning Prayer

April 23rd Holy Communion with Rev Graham

April 30th Benefice Holy Communion at Sible Hedingham (to mark Rev Liz' retirement)

**The Next Village Markets will be held at
Toppesfield Village Hall on:**

Saturday 4th March 10.30am—12.30pm

Saturday 1st April 10.30 am—12.30pm

Saturday 6th May 10.30am— 12.30pm

Please pop along to see what is on offer from fresh meat, jams, pastries, and cakes to handmade crafts, cards, jewellery and more.

Or pop in for a tasty bacon roll and a cuppa with friends.



Toppesfield Village Hall

It looks as though the better weather maybe coming!

The Village Hall Committee held another warm hub coffee morning on the 18th February and we are pleased to say that a few more villagers came along for a variety of cakes, biscuits, tea and coffee, all provided completely free. It was good to see the table tennis table being used and some drawing being supervised by Debbie, who is a relative newcomer to village activities.

The hall can be used for all kinds of fund raising, although Covid put a stop to many of the activities previously held, we can now offer the hall for hire. Over the years many birthdays have been celebrated and events held so whatever you may wish to use the hall for, please enquire. The hall is fully equipped with tables, chairs, crockery, cutlery, microwave, hot water urn, two electric stoves and refrigerator.

We look forward to seeing newcomers who haven't yet had the opportunity to explore all that their village has to offer.

With all best wishes from Jean Bagnall on behalf of the Village Hall Committee.



Volunteers are needed to organise a Street Party and other small activities on the 7th May 2023 to celebrate the Kings Coronation.

The Parish Council are very small in numbers and so are looking for a group of people to organise this event. If you are able to help please let the parish clerk know on Tel: 07341264219 or email clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com

This would be a great opportunity for the village as a whole to get together and celebrate as we did many years ago for William & Kate's wedding.



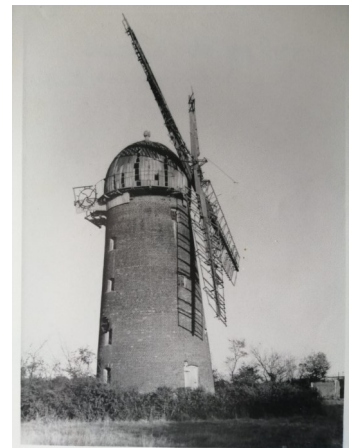
News from the Footpaths

Hi Everyone

I hope you are well and enjoying the lovely weather we have been having. It is so exiting to see the snowdrops, aconites, primroses and now the daffodils in bloom. Spring is definitely on its' way.

A few weeks ago I walked along the footpaths up to Gainsford End and then walked along Mallows Lane, coming out on the Hedingham Road and then on to Lewseys farm site, over the brook, up to Ollivers and back through the churchyard to complete the circle. It was a glorious day and having not had any substantial rain for weeks, the footpaths were dry, other than a few patches in Mallows Lane. Even the cross field paths were dry and not muddy.

I love Mallows Lane. I always feel it is a bit magical and could tell some amazing tales as it is a byway and less than 100 years ago there was a working Windmill and Forge in Gainsford End so Mallows Lane would have been a very busy highway. Added to that there was a farmstead called Mallows farm half way down. All the way I was serenaded by blue tits, great tits, robins, woodpeckers and skylark to name but a few and treated to the sight of a herd of deer quietly grazing in the sunshine. I know deer are not the farmers' friend but it was a truly majestic sight.



Unfortunately at the end of Mallows Lane there was a case fly tipping. This sight was not so great and such an abuse of our beautiful countryside.



Enjoy your walking. There is so much to see and hear.

Ann Read

PUMPHOUSE

BREWERY

Three, two, one, go for it!

Three new Shareholders, two new Beers and one new Committee member. Welcome to Chris, Peter and Adrian as Shareholders, to David Chapman who brings a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to the Committee and, above all, to our great new Coronation beers.

Coronation Ale ABV 4.5%

A fine, traditional English IPA style beer, created from a base of Maris Otter mixed with crystal and chocolate malt together with WGV hops. This dark, copper ale is packed full of flavour. A magnificent beer for a magnificent occasion, Coronation Ale will be available on draught and in bottles.

Coronation Imperial Milk Stout (Limited Edition) ABV 9.0%

A luxurious development of recipes used to produce stouts for the Court of Catherine the Great, this is a very strong and complex beer, with an established royal heritage. Special B malt gives it a full body and rich, smooth, liquorice notes, with a balancing bitterness from Carafa 3 hops.

To be savoured, ideally after dinner and certainly after the Coronation.

Available only in individually numbered 330ml bottles, in a strictly Limited Edition.

Both Coronation Ale and Imperial Milk Stout will be available from 20 March 2023 and can be pre-ordered now by calling: Paul on 07968 728281, Tina on 07801 271883, Richard on 07786 861009 or emailing: pumphousecommunitybrewery@gmail.com

Don't miss out on your Coronation beers. Reserve yours today!

Pumphouse Bottles are available direct from the Brewery

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at £2.50 each.*

*Coronation Imperial will cost £5 a bottle in the Limited Edition

We brew the beer for the Pub of the Year

LOCAL ELECTIONS 2023

In May this year the current Council will step down and a new Parish Council will begin its four-year term.

Toppesfield can have up to seven councillors; currently it has five after some resignations during 2022. Due to various reasons not all of these five councillors will be standing for re-election so this is where we need you. The parish council needs a minimum of three councillors to be able to run, if we can get back to the full complement of seven this not only helps spread the workload but brings a variety of knowledge and ideas.

Please think about becoming a Councillor.

What you need to be a Parish Councillor is:

- Time to care for your Community
- A willingness to represent others
- A desire to make a difference
- Be over 18 years of age
- Have lived or worked in the village for over a year



The parish council has been serving the community since the late 1800's and we would like this to continue.

We would urge you to seriously consider becoming a councillor and standing for election in May. If you would like to attend the next parish council meeting to see what's you are more than welcome.

Or if you would like to find out more information please contact the Chairman, Chris Neale (07540533611) or the Parish Clerk, Kaaren Berry(07341264219) who will be pleased to answer any questions you may have about the role.



Protecting yourself and your family from FRAUD

Unfortunately, fraud is increasingly becoming a part of daily life, but Essex Police is working hard to make sure people are protected from scams as much as possible.

There are three Fraud Prevention Co-ordinators working across Essex whose aim is to prevent frauds from happening by educating people and raising their awareness – if you are ‘fraud savvy’ you are less likely to become a victim. They also help to safeguard vulnerable victims who may be susceptible to further attempts to trick them out of money or personal information.

In the Braintree area, the efforts are led by Tammy Blest.

Tammy says: “It is surprisingly easy to fall victim to even simple frauds because we are so busy in our daily lives. If we don’t stop to read or listen to something properly and look out for the signs to tell us whether something is genuine or not, then it is far more likely that we will be tricked out of parting with our hard-earned cash or giving away valuable personal information.

“So, we urge everyone to **Take Five** to stop fraud – that’s **five minutes** to think about whether the request is genuine or to consult a family member or friend. It’s OK to say no and only a criminal will try to rush or panic you.”

People at greatest risk of frauds, scams and cyber-crimes are those over 75, repeat victims, people who have mental health issues or suffer poor health and victims of dating or romance fraud.

Essex Police, in partnership with Victim Support, is one of only three police forces to run a support group for victims of dating and romance fraud. The fraud prevention co-ordinators refer people who have fallen victim to this intensely personal crime and work with them to help them rebuild their lives.

Tammy and her Fraud Prevention Co-ordinator colleagues have developed good working relationships with partner agencies and charities to promote effective fraud prevention, raise awareness of current scams, provide general crime prevention advice and point the public in the direction of further advice and support.

So they are kept very busy giving talks to various societies, Women’s Institutes, University of the Third Age groups and disability groups, together with visits to sheltered housing complexes, markets, summer fetes, libraries and, indeed, anywhere they feel the public will gain some benefit from their knowledge and expertise.

You will regularly find them at Saffron Walden Market, Epping Market and Rochford Market or attending Coffee with Cops, Street Meets and other awareness days with your district’s community policing teams.

Protecting yourself and your family from FRAUD continued

Talking about frauds and scams

Tammy frequently gives talks to communities about Fraud Awareness and we hope to arrange a session in the Toppesfield in the near future; so, look out for information about this.

In the meantime, there are several resources available to the public about fraud and related criminal activities. These include:

- To report a fraud or a scam, you can do so online <https://www.essex.police.uk/ro> or by ringing 101. Always dial 999 in an emergency,.
- Read our advice on protecting yourself against fraud and scams: www.essex.police.uk/fraud
<https://www.essex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/fa/fraud>
- Take Five is a national campaign offering advice to help you prevent email, phone-based and online fraud: <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk>
- Knowledge is power. Help stop scammers in their tracks by learning their tactics and what to do if you think something is a scam. This Friends Against Scams online learning should only take you eight to ten minutes: www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/elearning/EssexPolice
- The Eastern Region Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) supports those who have borrowed money from a loan shark and also investigates and prosecutes illegal money-lenders: <https://www.stoploansharks.co.uk/who-we-are>



TOPPESFIELD ALLOTMENTS with NASLAG

Goodbye to Mick Francis who is hanging up his spade to make more time for loose women apparently. We will miss his cheery persona but will no doubt see him walking the dog and quenching his thirst on the occasional get together. We are given to understand that Mick is to undertake a Master Chef microwave course in the coming months and brace himself for the demise of Liverpool FC next season.

TOMMO'S TIPS

Hopefully by now we are standing on the threshold of Spring and the new gardening season. The days are beginning to lengthen and although it may not feel like it at times the temperatures are slowly increasing day by day. More importantly the longer days are the real trigger to new growth and you will find that with the help of a little protection you can really go for those early sowings. They might not all make it but it is still worth a try and you will still have plenty of time to resow any misses. Your best friend this month is the weatherman, try to keep up to date with the local forecasts, better still ask the advice of the gardeners around you who have years of experience to draw on.

Sowing and Planting

Plant out early cultivars of potatoes as soon as possible and follow on planting out at regular intervals with the second and first maincrops until the end of the month. A little bit of forward planning, don't be tempted to plant out more potatoes than you can protect from any frosty weather further down the line.

Transplant any early peas, broad beans, cabbages or lettuce you may have started off earlier.

Sow the seed of Brussels sprouts, summer cabbage, broccoli, onions and leeks in short rows on a "nursery seed bed". These will be grown on to be transplanted in April.

Sow in rows in the open ground seeds of round seeded spinach, Swiss chard, early types of beetroot, carrots, parsnips, lettuce, Spring onions, peas, broad beans and turnips. Try sowing the seed of the white form of Kohl Rabi towards the end of the month.



Plant out onion sets, if not already done, shallots and garlic before they start to produce shoots . If you are buying from a garden centre reject any that are shooting, they will only bolt during the summer. Transplant any onions that were grown from seed sown last summer into rows. It is best to treat these as a sacrificial crop to be harvested and used from August onwards.

If you can offer the protection of a greenhouse or poly tunnel, sow the seed of celery, celeriac, French beans (they are hardy enough to be planted out before the runners), cauliflowers to transplant on the open soil next month.

General

Complete any unfinished digging and winter pruning. Clear the old leaves off strawberry plants and clean up the ground in between the plants before giving them a top dressing of general fertiliser.

Keep some fleece handy to protect the developing strawberry flowers from frost. Any frost damaged flowers are easily identified as they display a tell-tale “black eye “ at the centre of the dead flower.

When the weather conditions allow it, complete the preparations of seed beds for direct sowing. Spread the job out over several days to allow the surface of the soil to dry out.

Watch out for Annual Agreements and Subs which Clare will be sorting this month.

Thanks to Linda Pritchard for her unstinting efforts in the Community herb Garden and fund raising department .

The Gazebo Shelter kindly donated by BDC Councillor Richard Van Dulken will be Assembled for the second season, ready for protection from April showers.

That's all Folks

Paul Thompson Chair 07824 665915





The parish council are looking at hosting a First Aid Awareness session shortly.

The date is yet to be confirmed. Please keep an eye on the noticeboards and Facebook for date confirmation.

The session will be approximately 2 to 3 hours where an overview of basic first aid will be given, along with defibrillator and resuscitation guidance.

The session will only be open to 15 people so if you would like to express an interest in attending please can you contact the parish clerk on clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com or by calling 07341264219





FUTURE EVENTS

MAUNDY THURSDAY6TH APRIL 2023

10.30AM

A SHORT SERVICE AND EASTER CRAFT.

How dirty are your feet ????



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed

**COFFEE MORNING
BOOK AND PUZZLE SALE
AND NEXT TO NEW TABLE**

SATURDAY 20TH MAY

START

10.30 AM



Affiliated to



Stambourne Chapel Care

***Matthew 25:40 (CEV) The king will answer,
"Whenever you did it for any of my people,
no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."***

Stambourne chapel care has now been running for 2 years. Our usual activities are befriending, helping with shopping, transport to appointments and social events.

We rely on donations, fundraising and grants and have secured a grant through Essex Community Foundation from the East of England Co-op and Rural Essex which means that we have funding to the end of the year but we will continue to fundraise and accept donations to secure funding post 2023. If you would like to make a donation or have an idea for fundraising let us know.

We have a Wednesday club for people with learning disabilities and/or mental health problems and we have more recently started an outings group. This group meets every 3rd Thursday of the month at Stambourne Chapel and we discuss future outings.

We have been to Haverhill Silver Band concert and the pantomime at Haverhill Arts Centre as well as to the Halstead Empire to see 'Sing-a-long Grease' and the film 'Elvis'. We will purchase tickets and provide transport. The person attending will pay for the tickets (as bulk purchase can incur a discount) and a small contribution towards the transport costs.

Outings for March are:-

Haverhill Arts Centre

Linton Jazz - 5th March at 2.30pm

Dreamcoat Stars- 11th March at 2.30pm

Cinema-Anything Goes The Musical- 15th March

Halstead Empire

Cinema-Footloose 16th March

If you would like to attend any of the outings above please get in touch for more details.

If you would like to volunteer, or can help with transport please get in touch.

Project Lead - Jill Holmes

email: holmesjill30@gmail.com

Tel: 07883423528

Community Litter Pick

Toppesfield Parish Council are organising their
annual community litter pick on

Saturday, 11th March 2023

Please come along and help clean up our village.
The more volunteers we have the more of our parish
we can cover.

We will meet at Toppesfield village hall at **10am** where
routes and teams will be allocated.

Children under 16 need to be supervised at all times by
a responsible adult.

Hi-viz vests, gloves and litter pickers are being loaned to us by
Braintree District Council



An update from SWAP and WASC March 2023

Following the testing of water samples taken from near the former air base at Wethersfield, SWAP asked Braintree District Council to demand a full contamination study of the land by the MoJ as part of any possible planning application. This has been done.

Given the widespread use of fire-fighting foams that are a major source of (potentially lethal) polyfluoroalkyl substances – known as PFAS or ‘forever chemicals’, SWAP asked the MoJ for details of contamination on the site. A Freedom of Information request was refused, astonishingly on the basis that the information would affect a ‘legitimate economic interest’ and ‘could also prejudice the Ministry of Defence’s ability to achieve value for money should they choose to sell the land’. An appeal was also rejected and the issue has now been referred to the Information Commissioner.

SWAP, concerned that the MoJ was putting its own commercial interest over public health, arranged to carry out its own testing, via an accredited laboratory in Europe. In one water sample tested by SWAP, the levels of toxic forever chemicals were found to be an extraordinary 454 ng/l (nano grams per litre). This is over four times the UK advisory limit for drinking water which is less than 100 ng/l. At Duxford where similar contamination was discovered, action was taken when the levels in the underlying aquifer were found to be almost 400 ng/l. The UK also has higher permissible levels than many European countries.

We know that the airfield sits on a slab of thick Essex clay and believe that should there is a risk of an ecological disaster if the site is disturbed. The site was comprehensively covered by fire-fighting foam used during real and practice fire-fighting of aircraft crashes over many years. Any leakage of dangerous chemicals into local rivers could lead to contamination of drinking water for millions of people. The chemicals have been linked to serious health risks, including cancer.

SWAP has written to the Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab, calling for him to scrap the Wethersfield prison proposals as a matter of urgency and asked Braintree District Council to instruct the MoD and the MoJ to undertake a comprehensive site testing to protect the local environment and the local people and not support further development of the Airbase.

SWAP issued a statement: “The widespread use of firefighting foam across large swathes of the runway and airfield are undeniable. The historical uses of the airfield are well documented and SWAP has photographic / video footage of its fire-fighting foam use spanning spanning several decades. It is highly likely that the

contamination we have discovered in water samples is just the tip of the iceberg, masking a much more serious threat of PFAS contamination currently trapped in the clay soil that the runway and grassland sits upon. To dig up 120 acres of the airfield and runway, and to disturb soil and grassland untouched for 80 years could unleash an unstoppable ecological disaster into our water courses. There is also potential contamination from a bomb dump and nuclear weapons were stored there – it is irresponsible to keep information from the public. To contemplate building on such land would be beyond reckless. The potential mitigation costs could be endless, potentially running into tens of millions. SWAP and the local communities will be holding the MoJ to account every step of the way if they decide to continue with this doomed-to-fail project. The sky-high contamination levels we have found should mean an immediate halt to the prison proposals by the MoJ who appear to be putting economies of scale over communities and their health. We urge the Ministry of Defence, which is selling the Airbase, to discuss with us our alternative proposals for the airfield which include rewilding, green jobs and a variety of community uses.”

Incidentally, in the USA, the Pentagon has set aside hundreds of millions of dollars to address the problems faced at former military sites identified as contaminated by PFAS by the US-based organisation the Environmental Working (EWG).

The resistance of the local community to the MoJ’s proposal to build Europe’s largest prison complex featured in several national newspapers and online channels in the last few months. The Telegraph, Sun and Express all carried articles, and Look East plus BBC Radio Essex also featured updates.

In the last few days, the Guardian has published an update of its long-running investigation into chemical contamination and Sky News also featured an article on PFAs, highlighting the EWG study which found PFAs in more than 330 species of animals across the world. Both articles highlight the huge dangers that these chemicals represent and how easily they are entering the human food chain and water sources.

WASC has just published a second report on the Government’s Mega Prison Strategy. The first report examined if Mega Prisons were in the National interest and the second looks at the local Socio-economic interest. The first report was distributed to persons of influence at National and local levels, and the second will be sent to local politicians. Both reports were written by Dr Richard Sidebottom, an independent economic consultant with degrees from Oxford and Cambridge Universities and London Business School, and 35years experience, including

consulting to the World Bank.

The report, which has almost 300 references, refutes the basis of the Ministry of Justice's proposals, and this will be distributed in late February/early March.

It is perhaps noteworthy that the reports appear to be the only research conducted in the UK into the whole Government mega prison strategy.

Three other prison site planning applications have been rejected by the local planning authorities at Market Harborough, Chorley and Ayelsbury. The MoJ is appealing these decisions and the Chorley case was turned down on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate and has been referred to the Secretary of State. We have been informed that Wethersfield is "a back-up site" so we are awaiting the final decision on the Chorley site.

It is now almost 18 months since the MoJ sent its initial letter to residents in Finch-
ingfield, Wethersfield and Gainsford End and no planning application has been submitted. WASC and SWAP committees believe that the only planning or policy guideline that the Wethersfield site is compliant with is the MoJ's own ideal that the land is flat. The proposal contravenes national and local planning guidelines, does not comply with the MoJ's own policies with regard to siting prisons and has been shown by research to not be in either the national or local socio-economic interest.

So, what will happen to the site? It is not covered by Braintree District Council's Local Plan and is hence designated countryside. A Community Interest Company has been formed by a small group of individuals to explore the possibility of establishing the largest decentralised (i.e. not feeding in to the National Grid) solar farm in Europe. Essex County Council is very supportive as it would be the showcase for its Climate Control Strategy, and hopefully, a feasibility study will be carried out very soon.

This is an enormous and difficult project that would form part of an overall plan for the base that would include a country park, community owned start up business units, some community housing, a heritage centre and museum and protected buildings commemorating the people who served there in WW2 and the Cold War. What is needed now is to establish feasibility and viability of the ideas.



BAR OPENING HOURS

Monday - Closed
Tuesday - Thursday 3 - Close
Friday - Sunday 12 - Close

KITCHEN OPENING HOURS

Wednesday & Thursday 5-8
Friday & Saturday 12-9
Sunday 12-4

Weekly specials

Sunday Roast featuring sirloin of beef and large selection of fresh vegetables

What's On

Fun Quiz - Last Sunday of the Month from 6pm
Proceeds to Air Ambulance

Open Mic - First Sunday of every month from 5pm
All welcome

For take away and table bookings please call 01787 237418



TOPPESFIELD



Community Shop



*Support your community
to enable them to support you!*

**We stock a wide range of
frozen and convenience foods
as well as many household products
alongside our fresh and 'to order' services
all at very competitive prices**



Weekly orders

Bacon
Ham
Sausages
Chicken
Lamb
Beef

PRIORS HALL FARM



Fresh Quality Meat

Prices dependent on cut and weight

Fine wines



TOPPESFIELD
Vineyard

OZES
cdp

*also available in
our freezer cabinet*

Specialty
CAKES
PIES
PASTRIES

Magazines & Newspapers

Do you have a favourite periodical? Albeit Daily, Fortnightly, Monthly, we can order it for you.

Eat In or Takeaway

***Coffee, Tea, Hot Chocolate, Cold Drinks, Ice Cream
Soup, Rolls***

OPENING TIMES

Mondays	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Tuesdays	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Wednesdays	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Thursdays	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Fridays	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Saturdays	.....	10.00am - 12.30pm

**POST
OFFICE**

OPEN
Wednesdays
10.00am - 1.00pm



Danaher Animal Home



This beautiful Beagle Bella is searching for a new, loving home and an experienced family!

Bella is an affectionate and loving girl and will make a loving companion around the home. Bella has been in two homes and through no fault of her own her needs weren't being met. It is important for us, and her, that she finds a home with Beagle experience to ensure that her needs can

be met through exercise and enrichment. If you have had a Beagle before and love the breed you will understand all their loveable traits and be able to give her the right level of stimulation she needs.

As she has been in a home before Bella is toilet trained and knows her way around a home setting, she also travels okay but is not used to being left alone for long. Bella can socialise on lead with friendly dogs but she isn't able to share a home with other dogs as she can protect certain resources from them.

Bella is very playful and enjoys toys, this can be fetch or tug, at times she can be bouncy and boisterous when she gets excited, so she will benefit from a little training around not jumping up. Bella is a medium sized dog and can be strong on the lead, she loves tracking scents on her walks and can pull when she is in the zone of following a scent! so does require a stronger walker.

Bella loves brain games and scent work, like free- work or hiding a tasty treat for her to sniff out! These are the types of actives that Bella will need opportunities to focus her energy and intelligence on in the home, as well as walks.

Bella needs some support when it comes to meeting new people, for reasons we don't know why, she can be a little anxious around new people and also in new environments. Bella needs an understanding owner who can coach her in those types of situations and help her feel safe and confident.

If you are interested in adopting Bella please let us know.

Danaher's Eggstra special Easter Event - No fee entry

Thursday 6th April 11am-2pm.

Meet the Danaher bunnies and smalls with
an educational talk

Face painting

Arts and crafts table

Guess the bunnies name

Easter egg hunt

Cakes and refreshments





LITTLE CHESTNUTS PRE-SCHOOL



TOPPESFIELD

**SPACES
AVAILABLE**

WEEKDAYS

8.30AM - 3PM

**CALL 07901 880 914
TO BOOK A VISIT**