

Dersingham Village Voice

Issue No 18

October 2002



View of St Nicholas Church, Dersingham

Autumn is now upon us – the leaves are changing colour and nights are really drawing in. We shall see pumpkins in the shops ready for Hallowe'en parties, for pumpkin soup and pumpkin faces. Children are collecting conkers from horse-chestnut trees – they may not realise that the game of conkers was originally played with snail shells.

Once again, space has precluded the inclusion of some items sent in for publication but, where appropriate, these will be brought forward for December. We would still appreciate letters from readers with views, comments and queries that could be shared.

An important date for your diaries is Saturday 2 November when an Awareness Day will focus on what you would like to see happen in the village – your opinions will be recorded so please do come along to St Cecilia's any time between 10 am and 4 pm.

Items for Village Voice can be sent to me at 78 Mountbatten Road.

Teresa Southam, Editor

Parish News

All meetings of the Parish Council are open to the public. The full meetings begin at 7.15 pm and are preceded and terminated by a 15-minute session for parishioners to raise any matters. The next meeting will take place on Monday 28 October 2002 at the First & Nursery School.

Dersingham Surgery. In the September meeting a letter from the Practice Manager was available which set out the current position. The Practice is in discussion with the West Norfolk Primary Trust as options which may affect the use and placement of the surgeries in the practice are being considered to remedy the situation. The Council is pursuing the matter.

Fern Hill – Footway Assessment. It has been agreed in consultation with an NCC representative to request vegetation and foliage, at the junction with Chapel Road, be cut back to enhance the vision splay and to dig out undergrowth to widen the access. It was suggested that a white line be painted along the west side of Fern Hill to Pell Road to indicate a pathway for children walking to school.

Village Plan Meeting. The meeting on 9th September was attended by 91 residents of the village. Sue Ridgeway from the Norfolk Rural Community Council explained that the Plan would address local issues and sets out a vision for the future through local consultation. 21 volunteers signed up to join a Steering Group and the group met on 26 September. An Awareness Day has been organised for Saturday 2nd November (see insert). A questionnaire will be compiled and delivered to every household in Dersingham which everyone over the age of 11 years will be invited to complete. From the results of the questionnaire a final report and action plan will be produced. The whole process takes about 12 months. Funding of up to £5000 is available through the Vital Villages Scheme to produce the Parish Plan.

Extension of footpath from Station Road to meet 'The Drift'. Some years ago an agreement was reached in principle with Mr Suiter regarding the extension of the footpath. The exact alignment is to be agreed once the development has finished. The developers will then be able to install a bridge across the dyke at the appropriate location, subject to the consent of the water authority responsible for the dyke. They will be making every effort to formally install a path across the land at the appropriate time, but at the moment are unable to give a time scale on this.

Local Bus Service Variation. Service No 410, 411, 412, 413. Service 412 will operate to Sedgford and Wolferton every weekday. Queen Elizabeth Hospital will have an evening visiting facility from Hunstanton. Full timetables available at the Parish Council Office.

The activities took place between 22 July and 13 August, indoor activities being organised in the newly refurbished Scout Hut, which proved to be an excellent venue. The Scouts and guides offered their facilities free of charge but, because the programme was so successful in attracting support, a donation of £100 was made in lieu of hall hire charges.

On the field the children enjoyed flying kites and having mid-session breaks on the field. All the sporting activities (ie multi-sports sessions and football) also took place on the sports field with the availability of the pavilion. Four tennis sessions were coached on the all-weather courts. The co-operation of the Tennis Club and the Sports Club was much appreciated.

Space precludes mentioning all the helpers but particular mention must be made of parents who were very involved on the walk, trips to the pool and bowling and who often came to give their children encouragement on the field. It was wonderful to have them as spectators.

In total 78 children between 7 and 12 years old took part, mostly from Dersingham, with some children attending as many as 15 of the 18 activities. Throughout the fortnight of activities the children were enthusiastic and behaved beautifully. There were no accidents and no damage to property. Dersingham can be proud of its youngsters.

May Davey, Parish Councillor



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Dersingham Scouts and Guides Annual Fete

The Dersingham Scout and Guide Annual Fete was held on 29 June at their Headquarters on the Sports Field, Dersingham, and it was a lovely day for the occasion.

Stalls for games, competitions, sale of crafts, bric-a-brac and serious cake stalls together with a range of refreshments created the core of attractions for the afternoon. In addition, a fancy dress competition, although there was little support for it, did not detract from the work into costumes worn by Lilly Painter – Indian girl and Jack Melton-Doy – Fireman. Both were rewarded for their efforts. Splendid group entries from Dersingham Rainbow Guides, representing the Queen's Jubilee and 2nd Dersingham Brownies representing the Queen of Hearts, tied in joint first place. Maxine Martin from the Feathers Hotel very kindly undertook all the judging. Various sports and a tug of war supervised by Glo Cator was enjoyed by all who took part – including some courageous parents.

29 prizes were very generously donated for the Grand Draw, the £50 first prize going to a local resident.

Tremendous efforts and wonderful public support raised just over £800 for the ongoing maintenance and repair of the Scout and Guide Headquarters, a greater sum than last year. The Scout and Guide Fund Raising Committee wish to extend their deep appreciation to all who supported the Fete with time, effort, prizes, donations, mentioning in particular the Dersingham WI, St Nicholas Church and the Phobbies Club.

One plea that was regularly made at the Fete (and is still being made) was for a new Club Leader as the latest Leader and Assistant Leader had to resign from the position at the end of the school summer term. Unless a new Leader can be found, the Dersingham Cubs cannot re-open, the first time for more years than can be remembered. Enquiries to Roy Cator – 540434 or Terry Finbow – 540643.

A date for your 2003 diary – the Scout and Guide Fete for next year will be held at the Scout and Guide Headquarters on **21 June 2003**. Let us hope that we can match or even improve on this year's events.

Terry Finbow

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**Closing date for copy for December Issue
is Monday 25 November**

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TRAUBUS STEMPE

by

John Smart

Traubus Stemp had juggled badly half his life. I first spoke to him when he was brought in half dead with the cold. We kept him in for a while and got his clothes washed and his few belongings sorted out. Once he began to take an interest again I got talking to him. He spent a good deal of the night awake, didn't seem to need sleep so we'd sit and talk in the side room. He'd smile his wide smile showing his six remaining teeth, brown as bark with his tongue darted about after the remains of his supper. I asked him what he did.

'H'Im an intertainer.'

'An entertainer. What do you do?'

'H'I intertaines.' His mouth gaped into a grin. 'Ha'yer got nee whisky in this place?'

I shook my head. 'When did you get a taste for whisky?'

'Nineteen forty seven,' he gave his wheezy laugh, 'when me dad died. We had a wake. I drank a 'hole bottle.' He reached into his pyjamas and scratched his chest.

'Come on, you can't be itching, you're cleaner than you've ever been for a long time.'

'Too clean! You kin be too clean. H'I'm sterile! H'I could do with a little nip, celebrate the millennium?' His bushy eyebrows raised questioningly.

I steered the conversation away from whisky. 'Tell me about your Dad; what was he like?'

He squeezed his eyes tight shut and clamped his jaw closed so that his face seemed to fold in on itself.

'I'm sorry,' I said thinking I had touched a nerve. 'Tell me about your entertaining.'

His eyes snapped open. 'H'I juggles'.

I'd seen him juggle, his long coat twitching as he tossed the faded red balls in little arcs. His hands making passes like an old conjurer with a tired trick. He would stand at the back of the pavement, his old canvas bag by his side; a small guitar - guitar - I suspected it was a toy or a child's instrument - leaning against its bulk. He would drop one of the balls and slip the other two back into his pockets with a conjurer's flourish then stoop for the rogue ball,

pick it up, pocket it and retrieve the guitar. His left hand open on the neck he would strum the mis-tuned strings and gape his toothy grin. He never made eye contact; his eyes didn't smile from beneath the shaggy brows; seemed focused on some distant place.

Now they stared at me, opened wide; blue and edged with violet. He pulled his mouth down at the corners; the tragic mask of the theatre.

'My dad...' he stopped and his eyes focused on the distance. 'My dad played the fiddle. He would play his fiddle h'anywhere; on pavements, h'in concert halls.

rooms of gold with chandeliers dripping light on his bow and all the ladies swayin' and swoonin'.' His mouth gaped wide with his grin and his eyes turned full on me. 'But, best of h'all, best of h'all play beneath the moon an' I'd watch an'

listen and tap out the rhythms with a stick an' he'd play faster an' faster, music what'd make you want to dance 'n cry 'n leap for joy by turns. An' soon it'd fill the forest and I'd be tappin' and

en it'd happen; all the foxes would come out 'n dance 'n whirl about, their great red tails bushed out full 'n eyes as green as emerald stones 'n teeth like little needles in their grins 'n the dark pine smell forest would open out 'n let all the stars in; in among the trees, in among the notes of the music 'n Dad would spin 'n sway among the stars...'

He never spoke of it again after that. Oh he would witter on about whisky and juggling but he never opened out. It was as if he had broken a promise; as if the story were a secret. I questioned him but he would clamp his lips tight shut and squeeze his eyes closed.

He got better and we sent him on his way; couldn't keep him any longer. The last time I saw him he was juggling, badly, at the back of the pavement. He didn't make eye contact.

Hallowe'en

Hallowe'en is the evening before All Hallows. The Feast of All Hallows is on 1st November.

Hallow – to make holy

Golden Jubilee Seat for the Village

Dersingham Evening WI officially presented a seat they have provided for the village to Cllr George Pratt, Chairman of Dersingham Parish Council, on 19th September. This was to commemorate HM Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee and many WI fund raising events have been held to cover the cost of over £500. The seat was installed free of charge by Doug and Andrew North, local builders, on 18th July 2002, the day the Queen held her Jubilee Garden Party at Sandringham.

The WI presented a seat to the village to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 and 4 of our current members are on the original photograph taken then.



WI Members with Mr George Pratt

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The scheme commenced on 20th May, since when it has made good progress with a total of 300 passengers transported since that date. Volunteer drivers are still urgently required – if you can spare just an hour or two a week, please contact the co-ordinator on **544544**.

AWARENESS DAY IN DERSINGHAM WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Do you want the Surgery to stay in Dersingham? Would you like to see a modern community hall in the village? Are you concerned about facilities for kids or the future of our open spaces? How about traffic calming?

You will have your opportunity to register your views about the future of Dersingham at a special 'awareness day' that is being held on **Saturday 2 November** as the first stage in preparing a new Village Plan.

You can drop in that day at any time between 10 am and 4 pm at St Cecilia's Catholic Church where you will be able to see what ideas other people are putting forward and have your own views recorded. A large map of the village will be used for residents to indicate the location of their suggestions or complaints: for example, if you want a new village hall you will be able to show where you would prefer it to be.

The Village Plan is being prepared by a steering group set up at an open meeting held last month. The Plan will cover all aspects of life in Dersingham. The steering group will have access to grants for specialist advice and funding may also be available for projects resulting from the Plan.

Saturday 2 November
St Cecilia's Catholic Church
Everyone welcome!

Mrs Walker, 1 Orchard Close, has sent in the following message of appreciation

Thanks to all the residents and good friends of Orchard Close who gave prizes, donations and their time, who supported our Bingos and coffee morning, to all who bought raffle tickets. We were able to give Jessica a cheque for £600 for her to donate to the ITU at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, King's Lynn.



House sparrows

And He that doth the ravens feed,
Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,
Be comfort to my age!

As You Like It - Act 2 Scene 3

House sparrows have been living in and around our homes ever since nomadic hunter-gatherers first settled in farming communities along the fertile river valleys of the Middle East. Their range is now almost worldwide. They arrived in this country naturally by following the spread of agriculture and would have been a familiar sight to the first settlers in Dersingham. Anglo-Saxons knew them as sparra or spearwa. Another very old name for the house sparrow is spuggy. This word is still in common use in the north-east, despite the passage of a thousand years and the best efforts of an army of schoolteachers intent on teaching Geordie kids proper English.

The house sparrow was introduced into the New World over the past couple of hundred years either as reminders of home or as misguided attempts at biological control – it was hoped they would reduce the numbers of insect pests. A particularly bizarre introduction took place in New York's Central Park in the late nineteenth century. A philanthropist by the name of

Eugene Schieffelin decided that his fellow Americans would have their lives immeasurably enriched if they were to be surrounded by all the birds mentioned in Shakespeare. This mass release included house sparrows.

However, it was not the only or the most important introduction of sparrows to the US. In the early days, state laws were passed to protect the newly introduced house sparrows because of the belief that they would be beneficial to farmers. The current North American population of house sparrows is estimated at 150 million and they are a pest to agriculture and compete aggressively for nest sites with endemic species such as the tree swallow and eastern bluebird. Americans sometimes call them the English sparrow because the original introductions were all birds imported from this country.

House sparrows are related to the African weaverbirds and the details of their lives can rival the plotlines from *Eastenders*. A few years ago, a Danish scientist

decided to weigh the testes of a thousand cock house sparrows (winters can be very long in Denmark). What he found was that the sparrows with the heaviest testes also had the largest black bibs and were generally the fittest and most dominant individuals.

They are also the ones most likely to have extra marital affairs — sparrows are usually monogamous and pair bond for life. The black bibs of male house sparrows become invisible during the moult because the new feathers are edged in grey and need to be preened to show up their true splendour.

Sparrows with the largest bibs do post-moult preening of their fresh feathers much faster than their less fortunate rivals - who are happy to hide their shame for as long as possible!

House sparrows have successfully shared our living space for millennia. However, their numbers are currently undergoing an alarming crash with a 64% decline in this country over a 25-year period — some areas recording a 98% reduction. This fall is dramatically illustrated by figures from the annual census of 'Cockney sparrers' in Kensington Gardens. In 1925, there were 2603

house sparrows. The 2000 count found only eight. The house sparrow has recently been put on the UK's red list of 'Birds of Conservation Concern'. This means that the sparrows in your garden have the same conservation status as white-tailed eagles!

Research is under way to find out why house sparrow populations are plummeting. The answer may be of importance to everyone and not just 'bird lovers'. I was brought up in the Nottinghamshire coalfields where miners took canaries with them to the coalface. These birds were watched closely for signs of distress because they are very sensitive to poisonous gases. One theory for the decline in house sparrow numbers proposes a link with the chemicals in lead-free petrol which may be affecting urban aphid populations — a valuable food source for the birds. We should all be concerned if our global canary falls off its perch.



David Bingham

Space being limited and my last report having to be held over, this is, of necessity, a somewhat brief account of the Society's events since the June issue.

June Meeting: Michael Softley at the RNLI gave an interesting and informative talk with many personal anecdotes, both humorous and tragic, which vividly conveyed the sometimes life-threatening aspect of the life – boatmen's life past and present.

He emphasised that the RNLI is entirely funded by public donations and told us that Hunstanton would be the second station to be equipped with a hovercraft in 2003. This should provide a much quicker and more effective rescue service for the creeks, mud flats and sandbanks around the North Norfolk coast.

Strawberry Tea: The weather intervening, this event had to be transferred from the traditional garden to an indoor venue. However, this did not prevent all those who attended from enjoying the excellent food and the pleasure of being with and chatting to friends and fellow members.

Day Trip: This was to Otley Hall in the morning then on to Helmingham Hall in the afternoon. The trip was a great success. Good weather, a fine Elizabethan house, a listed Grade I English Heritage Garden, all enjoyed by an enthusiastic band of trippers.

July Meeting: On his return visit to our Society, David Grimes came to talk on "Victorian Farmers". A wealth of information about times past with many slides to illustrate the lives and working practices of those who tended the land in the 19th century made for an interesting evening.

August Meeting: the subject of Tim Thorpe's talk and slide presentation was "Savages of Lynn and Victorian Fairgrounds". Time, a member of the Norfolk Museums' Service was both enthusiastic and extremely knowledgeable about his subject. Many interesting facts emerged during the evening. One was that Frederick Savage left school unable to read or write and ended up being one of the very few people who was actually present at the unveiling of a statue erected in their honour. Another was the reminiscences of a member who, as a lad and young man, could remember visiting

the factory as it was depicted in some of Tim's slides.

The Annual Show. Steve Rowland from the RSPB gave members a wide ranging slide presentation on the work of the Titchwell Reserve, the most visited of all the RSPB reserves, receiving some 100,000 visitors a year. It is dedicated not only to birds but to the whole of the flora and fauna that flourish there.

Steve gave a rare insight into the much more complicated practices – physical labour, data recording, management techniques – that are necessary for the maintenance of a successful reserve.

Preceded by some really superb slides of some of the birds, both common and rare, which may be seen at Titchwell, Steve looked to the future and the plans already in place to protect this precious site from future environmental damage.

David Clark (543182)

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The new school year has started very well and we have welcomed two new teachers and twenty new children and their parents into our school this term. The summer holidays already seem like a distant dream.

The focus for our large hall display this term is books and authors and we have some colourful and interesting children's artwork on show. The display is part of the lead in to our Book Week starting on 14th October when we have some special visitors to enhance our Literacy lessons. Polly Howat, a local storyteller, will be enchanting the children with her stories and the Norfolk Children's Book Centre will be visiting classes and also having a sale of new books on Thursday 17th October from 2 - 3.30 in the school hall. The sale is open to everyone in the village, so do come and browse or buy and take the opportunity to see the children's artwork. Every class will also be visiting Dersingham Library during Book Week, the younger children will enjoy listening to stories and the older children will be learning library skills.

After half term we have our Bonfire Lunch to look forward to when Mrs Phimister will prepare a special meal for the children to enjoy and then we are into inspection mode for a week. Later in November we will be giving Mrs Richardson our best wishes as she goes on maternity leave ready for the birth of her second child in January.

So all in all it is quite a busy time for us at the First School and then it won't be too long before we start to celebrate Christmas! More about that in the next issue!

Jackie Austin
Headteacher

FEEDING THE BIRDS (not the rats)

The following advice has come from the Borough Council Environmental Department who confirm that there is a growing problem with rats which, especially in villages are encouraged and helped to breed in winter by bird feeding (in towns it is fast food remnants which are the main problem).

Points from Environmental Department's Advice

- Do not place feed on the ground
- Do not put out more food than would be eaten in 2-3 hours
- Sensible bird feeding is welcomed, ie NOT bread (inevitably non-welcome species will be attracted - ground feeders particularly will be attracted to food left on the ground for long periods)
- Put out small amounts in suspended feeders

GREEN BOXES

Some residents may wish confirmation of what is and is NOT permitted in the green recycling boxes. Here is the official version from the Council:

The following items must NOT be placed in the boxes:

Brown paper, greetings cards, envelopes, books, yoghurt pots, margarine tubs, meat and vegetable polystyrene trays, glass bottles, waxed cardboard drink containers, or any other plastic items.

The following items MAY be placed in the boxes:

Newspapers, magazines, junk mail, clean card and cardboard, food and drink cans, plastic bottles.



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