

JANUARY

Inevitably, with Christmas and the New Year falling this year between Sundays, the impact on diaries early in 2023 meant that many people seemed ready to get back into routines in the following midweek. Clubs and Societies were able to open up with fresh events or speakers and the Parish Council could get back to business. As from January 23rd, the Parish Council has updated and renegotiated its website profile so as to appear on the Fressingfield Village Website, on which the public can explore all the relevant minutes and a wide range of parish information.

A number of our many Village Organisations (Clubs and Societies etc.) published their 2023 Programmes well before the end of 2022. Some have their own boards, whether in the Sancroft Hall or at the Sports and Social Club. Most also regularly submit articles to the Parish Magazine, printed in conjunction with the other parishes comprising the Sancroft Benefice. This month however saw the publication by 'Borderhoppa' of its 2023 outings available to the wider public. In addition to its role as a community service, providing transport on a dial-to-door basis, as well as being available for group hire, the following opportunities are typical of its new Programme:- trips to the coast, garden centres and boat trips across the immediate region of South Norfolk and North Suffolk. They prove very popular to many residents in that they are small vehicles and consequently everyone can get to know each other and are treated less like anonymous travellers.

In the light of a fresh initiative that is considering a Shed-type activity to be based at the old Scout Hut and about which a report is due to come out in March this year, it has been decided that January 2023 would be a good time to conduct a survey of all existing clubs and societies. Currently Fressingfield offers the public the following range of activities:-

Art Club, Arts and Craft Circle, Playtime Group, Toddler Group and Tiddlywink Nursery, Bowls Club, Scouts and all associated age-groups including Explorers, Cubs and Beavers, Church Bell Ringers, Coffee Break on Tuesdays, Croquet Club, Community Gardeners, Players 'Am-Dram' Amateur Drama Group, Fressingfield Local History & Archive Group (FLHAG), Mothers' Union (MU), Oily Rag Club, Royal British Legion (RBL), Sports and Social Club, Tennis Club, Women's Institute (WI).

It is with sadness that we record the death of Billy Vincent, a notable local character whose building skills and knowledge of local history has been second to none. Although ill for some time, Bill's continuing commitment to Christian values and support of both church and chapel are well-known and made him greatly loved.

FEBRUARY

Outline advertising has appeared on behalf of the Steering Group tasked with creating a Garden Festival in June of this year. Collaboration between the Parish Church and the Community Gardeners will produce a two-day Event from the 17th to the 18th June when gardens will be open, a Flower Festival held in the church, a special Produce Market on the Saturday and a Scarecrow Trail.

The Parish Council has decided to apply for funds to have a Grit Bin placed at the bottom of Church Street. It being the steepest of the slopes that define a hill in this part of the world (!) it makes sense to provide the means of combating ice and snow for vehicle drivers, especially since slippage on that stretch of road will run the risk of emerging uncontrolled onto Low Street or, in attempting to climb the hill, of running into the many cars that are parked opposite their owners' houses. The initial cost would be borne by the PC while the County Council would be responsible for keeping the bin filled up.

A recent article in the Village Six Sense Magazine carried an explanation from the Fressingfield Scouts of the breakdown in age-ranges and commensurate activities and services offered by the Leadership Team across the week. The youngest section is called a 'Squirrel Drey' for ages four and five, after which they move up to Beavers where the two 'colonies', called Ninjas and Warriors, run a more structured programme before the members move up to Cubs. Again there are two parallel groups called 'Tigers' and 'Wolves'. The next step is Scouts, with two 'Troops', referred to as 'Adventurers' and 'Pioneers'. The final age group for young people are called 'Explorers' which they belong to between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, during this time some of them work as Young Leaders. However, once the individuals are 18, whether helping as leaders or not, there is a further informal network of association, called 'Network' (!), in which members meet on a District basis.

On the 28th of this month, the Fressingfield Local History and Archive Group (FLHAG) held an initial afternoon Meeting, experimenting with the idea of afternoon winter meetings being more conducive for a predominantly retired membership. Judging by its success and providing speakers are themselves willing to travel during the daytime, it looks likely that the Committee will consider this to be the 'new normal' for the winter months November – February.

MARCH

It's disconcerting how particular days can sometimes become overloaded with village activity. This year the 4th March proved one such date. For several weeks prior to this Saturday repairs had been carried out to the Sancroft Hall, namely on the roofing to the entrance porch and to one of the large southern end windows, where a broken pane required repairs to lead work as well as glazing. Early that morning the Men's Breakfast held its first meeting since Covid stopped such meetings. As always the speaker is chosen to share something of their life story and faith. By 10.am the Hall was in further use for the initial meeting of 'Grave Talk'. This is a series of opportunities, along the lines of a Cafe Space, in which participants can share questions and plans for how they approach dying or how their family and loved ones might deal with matters after their death. More than just discussion around funerals, Grave Talk aims at opening up some of life's biggest questions in the hope that talking about such things makes their inevitability less anxious. Finally Saturday 4th March was the date of the initial Shed Meeting for those interested in developing the old Goodwin Hall, behind the Methodist Church, as a venue for activities and friendships.

This last opportunity was supported by an article in the March edition of Six Sense, setting out broad aims and objectives. It is hoped that a steering committee might be formed and able to report back during the early summer. (*see June 2023 for further information*)

The housing market is reported as being more buoyant than in recent months. Although the Cottage on Victoria Terrace is back on the market at £475K, of the 3 new-build properties on Harleston Hill, two are now sold ranging from £750K to £700K. Planning approval has also been given for two new town houses on land fronting School Road and immediately opposite the Baptist Chapel, following amendments by the developer to reduce the number of bedrooms and increase the curtilage at the front of the properties. This plot has been created by the purchase of portions of the rear gardens of three houses on the Stradbroke Road and will involve further clearance of vegetation and trees on the front border of the new site. The first occupant of a house on the extended School Road has moved in, with a further sale completed on the second of the four bungalows.

On Shrove Tuesday the Village was again invited to a Pancake Day Lunch, held in the Sancroft Hall. Proceeds from it, totalling £403, were distributed between the Waveney Food Bank and the

Salvation Army. During Lent this year, several opportunities existed within the churches for study and reflection. Alongside the more private or personal invitations to join existing House Groups etc., there were once more the inclusive opportunities for the village to join the Parish Church for three Lent Suppers held on Thursdays this month, namely 2nd, 16th and 30th respectively. Speakers from outside the Parish brought insight and challenges for many who attended, not forgetting the considerable organisation of providing wholesome food and preparing the Hall.

In anticipation of the new season starting on Easter Monday, 10th April, the Fressingfield Croquet Club launched a publicity drive this month, appealing for new members. The ground they are most fortunate to have the use of allows them to offer both golf and association croquet. Meeting on Saturday and Wednesday afternoons from 2.00pm, the club offers more than “getting coloured balls through white hoops” but, like many other organisations in the Parish, offers friendship and stimulation alongside the more formal learning of skills and taking part in challenging tournaments.

APRIL

Easter services were again held by the three denominations present in the village: Anglican, Methodist and Baptist. Some of these follow on from keeping Holy Week, while others are geared almost entirely at welcoming families and new attendees. All three combine for the Service at Sunrise, held at Weybread Lakes. Easter became a mixture of informality and more formal Communion on what is considered to be the major Christian Festival of the year, outstripping Christmas in its significance and scope.

In a break with recent tradition, on Tuesday 18th April the Fressingfield Annual Parish Meeting was held in the new Baptist Chapel. The appeal was that there should be a new venue for a new style of Meeting with the emphasis on informality, with various organisations each manning a desk or information point at which they can distribute leaflets or answer questions as to what they do, when and where etc. The enthusiasm is there for it to grow and develop, but ultimately it is about encouraging the wider population to join and support all these different activities. This would imply that more work is needed in inspiring potential membership to turn out and see what is on offer.

A growing number of keen singers from across the village are finding an outlet for their voices by joining the Harleston Choral Society. Their Summer Programme was announced this month, being on 1st July and consisting of Haydn's 'Stabat Mater' and several choruses from the operas of Mozart. Similarly there are quite a few amateur 'actors and drama buffs' who belong to the Harleston Players. Their performances of Agatha Christie's 'Witness for the Prosecution' this month, between 20th and 29th took place across the immediate region : from Halesworth's 'The Cut' to the Fisher Theatre in Bungay, with 5 performances on their home ground of Harleston Sancroft Academy.

MAY

For much of last month, behind the scenes, considerable preparations were being made for the major event of the Spring: the Coronation of King Charles III. This resulted in a wonderful programme of events and celebratory activity reaching into every 'nook and cranny' of village life!

The highlights on Saturday 6th May included a screening of the whole service and accompanying processions on the Big Screen at the Sports and Social Club. Many households had taken part in a Competition for the Best Dressed House while the same evening there was a Disco and refreshments also at the S & S C. In company with much of the country, many residents took the opportunity to gather together as family and friends. On Sunday, following a united church service

on the Sports Field, the day included a Big Family Picnic and a Talent Show organised by the Fressingfield Players, complete with Royal Fancy Dress Competition, many marketplace stalls and family activities. Given the novelty of watching the previous Coronation on television and holding Street Parties, albeit with very limited means and some rationing still in place, one can understand how the partying and general rejoicing on this occasion was altogether more commercial, expansive and accompanied by considerable amounts of food and refreshment. There are some in any community today who are not supporters of our royalty but in the nature of the democracy in which we live everyone was encouraged to enjoy themselves across the weekend in whatever way was most appropriate.

Among the initiatives was an invitation to the public to join in the national appeal for all parish bells to be rung. Opening for all comers on Bank Holiday Monday 8th May, the Tower Captain, Chris Barber, was offering to include any newcomer in a general ‘tolling’ of bells.

May also saw the reintroduction of the Fressingfield Community Produce Markets at which the public can buy a wide variety of meats and bread, cakes and pastries, vegetables and candles, soap and flowers, cards and plants. Held on the Fox and Goose Green, with extra parking made available thanks to the generosity of Chris Barber, these Markets are held across the Summer and Autumn with the exception of August.

This month saw several interruptions to traffic flow across the centre of the village, especially at Jubilee Corner where several pot-holes were needing to be filled and adjustments to kerbside levels made. This is where the sub-structure gives way under extreme heavy pressure from the largest and widest of lorries using our streets to gain access to farms and factories. Largely serving the agricultural industry, these vehicles are causing considerable damage on the smaller lanes too, where taking avoiding action, cars and cycles are forced into ruts and trenches caused by fallen verges or the breakup of the road’s foundations, which in turn can cause wheel damage to private vehicles. The situation at the very centre of our village is an extreme one where there are very tight turning circles and pedestrians are in considerable danger from the staggered four-way traffic.

Lying within the parish boundary with Metfield, this month Wakelyns opened their grounds for an Agroforestry Weekend on the 20th and 21st. Promoting better use of wilding and organic rotation, whether in large-scale farm situations or for serious gardeners/allotment holders, there was the opportunity to talk and visit areas where these principles are in use and applicable to any ecological future concerns. They also took the opportunity to advertise their short courses and mini-festivals across the rest of the summer: Community Butterfly Day on 22nd July and Apple Day on 30th September.

JUNE

A wide variety of initiatives and events feature in this month’s round-up of local news but perhaps first place should be given to the major event of the Village Garden Festival. Month’s of diligent preparation resulted in a whole weekend of activities and opportunities for visiting 22 Open Gardens situated far and wide across the Parish. In the end, with kind permission from the Baptist Chapel, there was a central Car Park allowing visitors to walk comparatively easily from School Lane to where the garden entry tickets and refreshments could be purchased. Over the weekend of 17th and 18th of June the organisers arranged a Country Living Market and Food Stalls, one of which served refreshments all day from 10.00am – 5.00pm. On the Saturday a ‘normal’ Produce Market was also held alongside the Sancroft Hall on the Fox & Goose Green. In addition to the Open Gardens themselves, some hosts were able to offer space within them for elements of a Sculpture Trail, with exhibits by 9 regional sculptors for sale, while there was also an enjoyable Scarecrow Trail involving 32 organisations or families and many children. Although there were a

couple of scattered showers, mostly welcome if you were a gardener, the weather obliged us with a slightly cooler temperature, perhaps contributing to the incentive for so many visitors from far and wide to venture to Fressingfield, rather than stay at home in unbearable heat. In addition to the gardens themselves, showing a great variety of planting and emphasis, size and history, some talented residents provided a Flower Festival in the Parish Church, several displays were on behalf of local clubs and societies.

With Entry Tickets at a nominal £5.00 per person and accompanied children going free, a total of 742 tickets were sold over the weekend. Many visitors came two days running! A Plant Sale provided by members of the Community Gardeners brought in additional funds £113.50 while a Raffle totalled up not far short of £200.00. With refreshments and a highly necessary Bar, the income was just over £4,000.00 and, while there are expenses to deduct, there will be considerable funds to disperse across the Parish Church, the Community Gardeners and the local charity Fressingfield Family Trust. Events like this one take a huge amount of effort and commitment from an increasingly stretched group of volunteers. In common with many villages across the nation, our own local band of voluntary helpers is not getting any younger. Replacements are seldom forthcoming and, while there are exceptions, the considerable number of people to thank for all they did and gave, not least those who did duty in their gardens non-stop for two days (!) remain drawn from the retired members of our community.

Recent retirements from serving on the Fressingfield Parish Council and the number of replacement Councillors bear this out, as there are still vacancies waiting to be filled. Many churches in the area are running seriously light on those prepared to offer financial and secretarial administration, musicians and regular singers, and across many branches of national societies and charitable organisations the scene is similar. All of which makes the Garden Festival even more remarkable. Perhaps being a one-off event and one in which 22 people were prepared to put a lot of effort into something happening 'at home', fostering the sense of justifiable pride and welcoming those who showed interest in their hobby or passion, goes a long way to explaining its success. The Organisers have been very keen to express their thanks to everyone involved and will furnish the public with accurate and final details as to the actual monies dispersed.

Elsewhere in the June diary, it has been a great delight to record new works being undertaken to the Children's Play Area, the culmination of work spearheaded by the Fressingfield Playing Field Charity. The layout of new equipment is novel and makes a better use of the area served by a Public Footpath as well as remaining accessed from the Sports Field. Comprising swings, climbing frame and the structure for a zip-wire, it has been a truly sterling effort over several years: applying for grant-aid, raising funds and keeping the project in the public eye.

The Housing Development occupying the site off New Street, fronting the new Scout Centre and alongside Carpenter's Yard has also 'leapt into life' this month. Although only initial ground-clearing, it is enough to realise that the developer is on track and will soon be starting ground-work. Many have commented at the depth of clearance carried out to the road-side boundary, questioning the need to uproot every inch of scrub and sapling and appearing to fill-in the ditch. Similarly, but for different reasons, some residents have been alarmed by the tree-thinning and scrub clearance above the ditch along the southern boundary of the School Road housing development. In this case the ditch is of paramount importance, carrying surface water from rear gardens, while the trees themselves are not protected in any way. This tree belt remains outside the registered site and individual plots, but it appears there is little our Parish Council or individuals can do to prevent new house-owners from demolishing the remaining trees that might deem to be obscuring views and causing shadow. Informal discussion between interested parties has again raised the matter of the nature of reciprocal woodland and the promised establishment of bat boxes and owl routes established as a condition of original planning permission. There is no evidence that these tasks have been carried out within the parish boundary.

Another initiative that has got properly off the ground this month has been The Shed. It has been reported on earlier in this column, since its inception meeting, but sufficient progress has now been made for the Project to go public. Sometimes known as a Men's Shed initiative, the one started in Fressingfield is strongly non-biased and gender friendly. Some 20 residents have got together to convert and adapt the Goodwin Hall behind the Methodist Chapel into a suitable meeting place. Once the home of our Scout Troop, it is planned to become a place for people to come and 'make and mend all manner of stuff' as well as sharing skills and generally getting to know and support each other. Not only is there a large Hall but also an equally large outdoor space that could be used for socialising, and working activities. A small Committee has been elected to promote its aims and generally gear up interest in yet another wonderful pastime.

Reflecting on the weather for the first six months of the year, it has been noted that February was considerably drier than normal, while March was wetter. As well as being windier, April was colder than the average temperature for the time of year. June however has been the hottest recorded since records began in the 19th century. All this explains why some fruit harvests are going to be minimal, the fruit not having been set by pollinators. It also illustrates why flowers have tended to "all come at once" with many either held back or, more recently, brought forward into an uncomfortable climate of high temperatures and therefore prone to rapid ageing of blooms or falling of petals. It is a tribute to the tenacity of quite remarkable people that our village gardeners managed to steer their gardens into bloom in time for the Garden Festival!

JULY

Over the past twelve months the Parish Council has been able to track and collate evidence from the Speed Indicator devices installed around the village. The results were published this month and reveal that overwhelmingly their effect has been to slow down vehicles approaching and leaving Fressingfield. Even when the units are switched off, data is still being recorded which adds to the evidence that speed variation and prompting from the read-out the panel produces really works and adds to the overall safety of pedestrians and everyone's well-being. There are exceptions and the Parish Council is considering requesting help from the police to install an automatic number-plate recognition camera for Harleston Hill where entry speeds vary considerably. The Parish Council is also considering the cost of purchasing two more SID's, one model of which can operate entirely from its own solar-charging capacity. The appeal from the PC to the public and all drivers is to remember there are parts of the village centre where there are no pavements and many other places where children or the elderly are especially at risk from speeding traffic.

At the end of the month the Fressingfield and District RBL held another Garage Trail and Car Boot Sale. Saturday 29th was not the best of days weather-wise but the garage element of the fund-raising initiative went well with over 20 homes taking part. Sadly the interest in purchasing pitches or stalls on the Sports Field was minimal but nevertheless, with the help of a generous public, a considerable sum of money was raised towards RBL Welfare Fund, from which the lives of veterans and beneficiaries will be further enhanced.

As befits the approach to the end of one school year and the beginning of a new one after the long summer holiday, our Village School held a series of Welcome Afternoons. This enabled pupils and parents to meet their new teachers and learn what life would include in the new class over topics, timetable and homework etc. Part of the need for all children to learn respect for other cultures and faiths resulted in the school visiting the new RIBA award-winning Mosque in Cambridge. It enabled them to experience not merely an architecturally innovative building but also to learn about its use and the ways many aspects of the Moslem faith are built into its structure. At such times as we all currently live in, this visit serves as a reminder that our school seeks to play a positive role in

preparing our future citizens for life in modern Britain. Finally, as Term drew to a close, the School held its Annual Sports Day and Summer Fayre on Friday 7th July, followed a fortnight later by the End-of-Term Service in the Parish Church on Friday 2^{1st} July.

AUGUST

Work has started in earnest this month on the building scheme at Red House, off New Street and alongside Carpenter's Yard. July had seen the area scraped and cleared of vegetation, including the removal of hedges and small trees along the road frontage. Now this month the ground-works to the front row of the housing development are being dug and prepared with concrete, with a large unsightly hoarding area established for the storage of all building materials and accommodation.

The Scouts meanwhile, whose HQ lies beyond the new estate, are continuing to develop their site with outdoor equipment at various locations for a multiplicity of activities. All contained within new weather-proof security fencing, the site also has features that are pleasant for sitting and socialising.

Many farmers have spoken of their frustration at the levels of dampness that have persisted into this month. Harvesting has been hampered and sporadic, dodging days when the weather featured heavy downpours or persistent rain. This July was the sixth wettest seventh month since UK records began, featuring the most rainfall since 2009 and more than 2/3rds higher than average. The cool, wet weather persisted into August due to the position of the Jet Stream while, across much of Europe and the Mediterranean in particular, temperatures have soared and held over several weeks across July and August; producing extreme heat and fires that have engulfed many of the Greek Islands and parts of Portugal. However, as mid-August approached in East Anglia, sufficient sunshine meant that crops dried enough for the remaining grain fields to be harvested.

Several houses in the village have been undergoing roof repairs in recent weeks: tell-tale scaffolding and boards at gutter levels are usually enough of a clue as to what is being required. For example major re-roofing and tiling has taken place over several weeks at Woodside, once Wilkinson's Farm, next to The Surgery on New Street and considerable high level repairs have been undertaken at both Clarence House and Peel House, both on the Stradbroke Road.

The Mothers' Union Garden Party was held on Thursday 3rd. Forced inside by the inclement weather, nevertheless the Branch hosted an area-wide Event, raising over £250 for Central Funds from which the MU supports families around the world in a variety of programmes.

This month the Rector has used the Parish Magazine to draw everyone's attention to the legal requirements regarding the reservation of grave spaces. Time was when it was possible for close relatives to be buried alongside one another, even in the same grave-space. However, not all types of soil or water-tables are suitable for more than single grave spaces and therefore it is not always possible to provide a family with what they have assumed would be the solution to an historic situation. She makes the point that a Faculty is required if a grave-space is to be reserved, costing £400 at current fee rates. Further information can be obtained from the Parish Office but, she warns, it is not always possible for the church to uphold what might have been a previous verbal agreement made between a family and a churchwarden or incumbent. This is particularly true in comparatively restricted churchyards like Fressingfield where there is no room to further expand the ground; which is why the new Cemetery, under the jurisdiction of the Local Authority and Parish Council, open on the Stradbroke Road, might prove to be a more appropriate location for some new burials.

SEPTEMBER

On Tuesday 5th the village was able to bid farewell to one of its stalwarts. Over a Celebration Lunch tributes were made to Keith Dobson who was about to move from Fressingfield in order to be nearer his family. In his time Keith was a tireless Chairman for FLHAG (Fressingfield Local History and Archive Group), a stalwart of the Parish Church Choir and member of other choirs in the area. Finally, into the vacuum left by the death of Valerie Chase, Keith had taken on the hosting of the Weekly Tuesday Coffee Mornings in the Sancroft Hall, so loved and welcomed by many of our older residents for whom he became a vital link in their connection with the community, leading the mornings with his humour and pastoral insight.

(Ed.: Keith died peacefully shortly after his move from Fressingfield. In conjunction with his family, the Village held a Memorial Service for him in the Parish Church on Tuesday December 5th)

This month saw the launch of a 'Cardboard Baler' located on New Street outside the Village Mace Stores. The baler is part of wider re-cycling facility across the area by Mardon Recycling Machinery Ltd., in partnership with 3B Recycling Ltd, crushing and packaging the material of cardboard waste into bundles before its sent off for recycling.

On Friday 8th September the postponed Annual Open Event & Awards Evening finally took place at the Fressingfield Scouts HQ, with a wide range of awards recognising various forms of community service and demanding wide ranging skills, alongside more internal achievements and responsibilities across the age-ranges.

Saturday 16th was yet another opportunity for the Produce Market to 'open its doors' and attract a wide range of stall holders who come to promote their crafts and products. Several new handcraft outlets have begun to appear, month on month, brought by individuals and groups. This particular Market also gave us an opportunity to enjoy the Halesworth Strummers Ukelele Band with a crowd-pulling programme, as people enjoyed some rare sunshine and enough warmth to sit and share refreshments from the Church Stall.

As well as the above, this same Saturday was designated National W.I. Day. The Fressingfield Branch laid on a display in the Sancroft Hall of items made by members, including photo-albums of meetings from the years gone by. A new W.I sign is being made in mosaic so that during the afternoon between 2pm – 4pm, the public were invited to help in its creation, adding glass and china particles with which it is being constructed.

OCTOBER

The weather continues to dominate our conversations, private and public and, although recorded in some detail in August's Report, yet again we have had one of the wettest months on record. Some places in Britain have had a year's rainfall in just 24 hours, resulting in dangerous flooding, loss of life and the collapse of land. Near to Fressingfield and along the Deben Valley and its feeder streams both Debenham and Framlingham have suffered from extreme flooding, with many businesses and homes out-of-action for weeks, if not months, and much equipment and cars rendered useless, requiring total replacement.

The most recent example here in Fressingfield saw water flooding the sewerage system on Low Road, with manhole covers lifted and seepage of foul waste into the Beck. While for months the various water systems renewed by Anglian Water have done their work, it is a sign of the times (*the rise in the ferocity of rain and frequency of storms hitting Britain from off the Atlantic*) that the best made plans and defences are under extreme pressure from rising temperatures, climate change and a

much more extreme weather system. Mention must be made of the diligence with which residents of Low Road and leadership of SAFE monitors these occurrences and brings them before the relevant authorities, involving complex and detailed correspondence supported by relevant photographic evidence. Meanwhile early winter flooding along the nearby countryside of the Waveney Valley will be a classic example of water-meadow merely doing what it ought to do. Having very little housing development on or alongside these fields, means that the natural course of excess water can be accommodated without undue disruption.

A different clerical hand produced the Editorial in this month's Six Sense, namely the Revd Bruno Boldrini who has oversight of the Methodist Chapel, within his wider area or Circuit of ministerial responsibility. With the Chapel celebrating its 150th Anniversary this year, it has been good to be reminded of yet another Christian denomination present among the residents of Fressingfield and which constitutes a vital part of our community life, especially with the Chapel being an official hub for Food Bank collections. On the strength of this Anniversary Year, it has been decided to invite a representative from the Chapel to take part in leading the prayers at the Service of Remembrance to be held at the Village War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday, November 12th.

There has been some concern expressed this month at the threats to trees which constitute the southern boundary of the new Housing Scheme on School Lane, none of which are listed or protected but which do carry conditions within the granting of Planning Permission. Mentioned among those views the NDP has listed, as being essential to the unique character-profile of the village, there is a widely-held view that these trees and hedging need to be preserved at all costs. The future of this tree belt (already severely stripped of brash and low growth which provided valuable eco-systems) does require care and further conversation between District and Parish Councils, together with home-owners and the Developer, spurred on by careful observation by SAFE. It appears that 'talks about talks' are under way. Meanwhile the public are being urged to write to the Planning Dept., Mid-Suffolk D.C. to state their concerns over the apparent ignoring of conditions by the Developers.

In addition to being heavily involved in forward planning for the Remembrance Sunday Service & Parade, the RBL Fressingfield & District Branch held another Open Meeting this month when the County Police and Crime Commissioner, Tim Passmore, was the Guest Speaker. With hindsight it might have been an excellent topic for an Event with a far wider catchment, in a larger venue, as the scope of his job and the sheer range of policing methods, which touch every aspect of society, contains information and wisdom that every household and family ought to hear about.

Alongside the flurry of site work at the Red House Housing Development site, the Fressingfield Scouts continue to develop their own site, improving their facilities, building new storage capacity and landscaping the grounds, including upgrading the wildlife area. Most importantly from a public point of view, they have developed a new web-site on which we can keep track on all their activities which, this month, features the growing number of opportunities for senior members, namely: the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award and the King's Scout Awards.

Another Produce Market was held this month, albeit with reduced stalls outside due to the weather. But, in terms of initiative and sales for charitable causes, pride of place this month must go to the Mothers' Union Fressingfield Branch who held their Annual Pop-Up Shop in Halesworth. From organising the collection of goods and donations of items for sale, including being on duty across the entire week, each of the five Branches in our Area played their part in helping towards the magnificent sum of £2,000.00 being raised for supporting families in the UK and overseas.

This month also saw the seasonal provision of Flu' Jabs and further anti-covid inoculations for the oldest in society made available at the local Doctor's Surgery or in nearby Practices.

A leaflet-drop by the Fressingfield Playing Field Management Committee this month makes it clear that the future of its infrastructure requires considerable funding and replacement. Despite having

had one their best years ever, in terms of the new Playground facility and the various sports clubs being well supported, there are huge challenges in funding and finding essential committee members. High on the list of concerns are repairs to the Access Road but, long term, the charity wants to replace the ageing existing building with a new pavilion serving the clubs and users of the main spaces. No planning or implementation of grant-application can happen unless the right people are in the right place, volunteering to help build a better community. To this end a Public Meeting was held on 18th October and the results of that will be published later.

NOVEMBER

This has been a colder month, anticipating winter temperatures with frosts and several days when freezing fog hung over the Suffolk landscape. There were also several periods of constant rain, rendering the field-systems remaining water-logged and becoming very heavy soil, with ditches that either overflowed due to blocked culverts etc., or that just failed to deliver the excess water to larger outlets.

In among the plethora of pre-Christmas Events, such as Craft Fairs and Activity Days, Fressingfield held an Angel Workshop on Saturday 11th. Held over both the morning and afternoon it managed to produce many items which were later hung at venues around the village, both private and public, reminding parishioners of the nature of an essential strand to the Christmas message.

Advance publicity was also delivered this month about this year's production by the Fressingfield Players. With the imminent retirement of the Mewse Family, it was decided to review the last thirteen years of pantomimes and shows, including the Summer Spectacular and Coronation Special. The Mewse Family have proved quite a Team, both on stage and behind the scenes while, in recognition of all their hard work ensuring the over 3,000 village residents and their friends had enjoyed a huge variety of sets and songs, the present company and several former players decided to get together and produce a medley of Fressingfield Players Greatest Hits as a Pantomime to end all Pantomimes! Performances took place on Friday 8th and Saturday 9th December at The Chapel Hall Arts venue in the Old Baptist Chapel.

Remembrance Sunday dawned with enough sunshine to dispel the gloom and leave the village able to assemble at the War Memorial at 12.00pm and in the dry. With road closures in place the Annual Service of Remembrance and Laying of Wreaths was conducted by Revd Canon Andrew Vessey (Hon. RBL Chaplain) assisted by Pastor Stuart Balmer. Unfortunately at the last minute the Revd Boldrini was unavoidably prevented from attending. Three places of worship each held appropriate services that same day, the Parish Church becoming filled to overflowing with representatives from various organisations and the Parish Council, members of the Fressingfield Scouts and children from the School. Thanks were expressed in numerous ways to the involvement of the RBL who also organised the Colour Party and ensured the necessary road closure notices were obtained.

DECEMBER

December in Fressingfield will always include a Parish Church initiative, lasting for the Advent Season. This year everyone was invited to make angels and to place them around the village, in windows and elsewhere. Some even hung from road signs and various noticeboards.

The day of the Fressingfield Christmas Market, while cold and damp with various definitions of what is meant by rain(!), still enabled those manning external stalls to enjoy having a good number of visitors. In comparison the inside of the Sancroft Hall, and despite fewer stalls than normal, was literally filled to overflowing, brought together by performances by the Fressingfield School Choir

and then with Father Christmas adding to the happy chaos. As a result proceeds were up on the Church's normal takings. Additionally the RBL held its Annual Christmas Draw and the Market was on the route of the Annual Scouts 'Santa Run' raising funds for their on-going work. Despite the weather being miserable, it proved a great occasion for them and, when later in the day they held their Christmas Fayre at the Scouts HQ on Priory Road, the intrepid runners were thanked and praised for their commitment and courage. This seemingly unfortunate clash would benefit from all parties sharing diaries earlier in the year.

In the run-up to the actual Christmas Festival itself, there were a number of 'special' meetings of Clubs and Societies, many of whom combined the occasion with distributing their Programmes for 2024. Among them, the Mothers' Union held their Advent Service and Tea on the first Thursday in the month, open to members and the wider community, many of whom came to simply enjoy the occasion and refreshments. On Tuesday 19th the weekly Coffee Morning, also held in the Sancroft Hall, combined coffee with carols, sung with due gusto as memories were stirred and favourites shared. On Wednesday evening the 20th, a determined group of Carol Singers met at the Baptist Chapel before setting off on a route around the centre of the village and encouraging homes to at least come to their doors to listen.

It's always good to report on the life of our Village School whose Headteacher, Mr Mark Taylor, has to balance his time in Fressingfield with responsibilities across the County and being also Headteacher of Charsfield School. As previously reported the school here publishes a regular fortnightly Newsletter. The final edition for this calendar year of 2023 carries several of the topics that have been subject to inclusion in other months, especially the creation of a polytunnel in part of the Garden Facility by which several members of the community are involved in inspiring children to gain knowledge and the joy of growing things, caring for the earth and having an alternative answer to the increasing culture of consumerism. Where help is now needed is in covering the bare structure with polythene. Saturday 14th January has been earmarked as a day for the community coming to help the school achieve this aim. The children have also been busy with a Nativity Double Bill in which performances of music, singing, dancing and acting out the Christmas story were highly appreciated, not least the narrators of Year 3 who told the story. At the very end of November the school had said goodbye to Mrs Foster who has been teaching piano for many years. She has entered a plea in the November Six Sense for someone to take over from her, including playing the piano for Friday Assemblies and taking pupils on from 'Beginners' and on towards 'Grade V'. The 18th December Newsletter, for distribution at the end of this term, also included an account of an incident outside school involving two vehicles within the turning circle. It highlights some of the inherent dangers involved when the 'dropping off zone' is confused with the 'no parking area'. As a result the school has reinforced its appeal for parents in cars to use the Baptist Chapel Car Park or further away on the Stradbroke Road. It underlines the fraught nature of the school having such a compressed entrance to which end the school will be monitoring the situation in the New Year. Other topics mentioned in the Newsletter involve learning about Anglo-Saxon building methods and the evolution present in the survival of the Ground Finches in the Galapagos Islands.

The final notes for this month emanate from the Parish Council Report. They initially reminded everyone that the winter is the best time for pruning and trimming those hedges and trees which abut public highways and roads. The Council then pointed to the work of their Planning Meetings. Ten such applications had been received over the course of 2023, each one considered against a background of the NDP and our unique local environment. Among them are a regular number of schemes for converting buildings into Holiday Accommodation. It is hoped that through this Parish Recorder's Report that thanks can be expressed to all our Councillors, for their commitment and hard work over the last twelve months; not least to the Parish Clerk Andy Parris, who has indicated his wish to retire in 2024, for his scrupulous attention to detail and seemingly endless patience.