

ANNUAL PARISH RECORDER'S REPORT FOR FRESSINGFIELD, 2024

JANUARY

Following hard on the heels of a report declaring that July to December 2023 had been the wettest six consecutive months on record, much of our countryside remained thoroughly waterlogged throughout this first month of a new year. It may be that the ancient water-meadows, some of which are reasonably near to us on the Waveney Valley, are doing exactly what such environments are meant to do over many centuries absorb the water and protect higher ground. Nevertheless on many of the lanes in and out of Fressingfield, the disruption caused by all this heavy rain and flooding has been considerable. In places this has been impassible. Here in the village both the Harleston Hill and Buckingham Hill routes have suffered from flooding, brought on by sudden downpours, exacerbating the resulting surges in our secondary water system where it joins the principal foul-water drains and sewerage network along Low Road. This has been reported several times before but, despite repeated investigation and the lining of the pipeline being carried out, there remains a continual threat and evidence of manholes being lifted and raw sewerage entering the water of the Beck itself. Flooding was also reported at Jubilee Crossing by residents on several occasions.

At the start of this year the Parish Council membership consists of:- Di Warne (Chair); Nick Stolls (Vice Chair); Garry Deeks; Tom Lindsay; Rachel Troughton, Stuart Balmer and Hilary Day. Notice of his retirement has been lodged by Andy Parris (Parish Clerk) so that, in addition to Fressingfield requiring more Councillors we have the prospect of needing a new Clerk. Notice has been sent to all the village organisations and clubs that the Parish Council intend to hold its Annual Parish Meeting on Tuesday 14th April, to be held at the Baptist Chapel with the format as in 2023. With opportunities for a 'Club Market', the hope is that more residents will be attracted to consider joining our clubs and societies some of which are troubled by lack of members and therefore their ability to have a proper and formal leadership structure. Opinion will also be sought from the public regarding the spread of upwards of £60K Cill Money, which, thanks to recent building developments, will be spent on providing new initiatives and support which can be shown to benefit the whole community. With the evening's accent on 'entertaining, enthusing and informing' it is hoped the information about it will be widely circulated, particularly on the Parish Website, the 'Next Door Fressingfield' site and that recruitment of new members will bear fruit.

After the public voicing of concerns about hedge-stripping and 'unnecessary' tree lopping along the southern boundary of the School Lane development, it is pleasing to record that new planting has now taken place alongside the public footpath which follows the same boundary. This comprises a wide variety of species which carry the ability to fill-in much of the lower cover which attracts wildlife to the ditch lying at the end of a series of wide and totally open fields. Thus it is a vital eco-systems area for plants and small mammals. In contrast there has been the overwhelming need to prune the willow trees overhanging the Village Pond beside the Fox & Goose Car Park. Some confusion remains however as to the purpose of the heavy pollarding of the single tree sitting on ground above the Swan Inn. Opinion across the community seems divided as to whether the work is but a prelude to its complete removal or merely an example of believing and trusting that, however hard one prunes, there will be plenty of new growth in years to come!

Fressingfield W.I. have begun the new year by electing two new Presidents, who will share the role, namely Wendy Philips and Christine Lindsay who expressed their thanks to Mary Newton the outgoing post-holder. Shirley Kalinauckas was also thanked as the retiring Secretary along with Kerry Cameron, retiring as Treasurer. They have pledged to continue arranging visiting speakers,

organising the popular Book Club and enjoying planned outings. The W.I. meet on the second Tuesday of the month in the Sancroft Hall.

Fressingfield Scouts led us into 2024 with a report on their activities at the end of previous year, one of which involved Explorers working for an Engineering Badge at our local Cowhams Garage. Included in the brief was the ability to change a wheel, do some soldering and learning about the importance of undertaking regular vehicle maintenance. A novel idea was the production of a fund-raising calendar using photographs of the Scouts across the year, sponsored by local businesses and available for sale to the wider community.

FEBRUARY

Yet again the weather continues to break records and be the major topic of conversation, largely due to its impact on the village roads and surrounding farms, with many concerns over the state of fields affecting harrowing, seeding and the late harvest of sugar-beet. More often February is a dry month, with average rainfall of 43 cms precipitation. This year following our wet Autumn and High Winter the ground is saturated, ditches full and extreme river levels with the water meadows themselves flooded in many places. Not surprisingly many roads have been impassable with several locations across the region recording 200% higher than average rainfall figures.

The Water Authorities have again been investigating Church Road over concerns expressed at leakage from the Pond outside the Fox & Goose Green, itself fed by extreme conditions bringing it up to near-equivalent height to that of the road. An extreme scenario happened on Sunday 18th when, once more, manholes were blown, spilling sewerage and sanitary material onto the road surface. It would seem therefore that, despite significant work being done over the past two years, including re-lining of the sewer pipework, the whole system remains overloaded; a principal cause being too many of the older houses discharging surface water into the sewers. This time, with flood water estimated at approx 2 feet, when the Beck itself became full from agricultural run-off, higher up the road, the whole drainage system failed and flooding occurred.

An informal group of choral music devotees have been meeting this month at the home of Andrew and Anna Vessey, listening to music specifically composed for Passiontide or with Lent in mind, along with some classic visual images which married the themes of the compositions themselves.

Fressingfield Parish Council held a 'Sustainable Saturday' on the morning of February 17th in the Sancroft Hall. Chaired by Garry Deeks and supported by several Councillors, it allowed for a general discussion around some of the issues which will have a chance of further exploration as the Parish reviews its own Sustainable Projects and seeks to disperse Cill Monies arising from Housing Development over recent years. Topics discussed included: Housing and Infrastructure; Energy and Heating; Food and Farming; The Environment and Water Issues, Economics and Transport together with Health and Well-being. The Attendees were addressed by the Green Party spokesperson and encouraged to think of the implications within these subjects for reviewing the Neighbourhood Development Plan. This we were told needs to begin to happen over the course of the next few months. Following on from Discussion Groups, summaries of their thinking were then taken to be incorporated into yet further exploration of the issues. (*see MARCH for a report on the Parish Council Meeting of Tuesday 5th March*)

With sadness I need to report the death of yet another village stalwart, local raconteur and key member of many of our societies, sports associations and the Parish Church. Donald Savage leaves a widow Rose – herself heavily involved in several Parish Groups and Church – having lived here for all their married lives in the former Pub' on New Street. Donny, as he was affectionately known, was known to many across this area of Suffolk, especially through his earlier sporting prowess; with

many travelling for his funeral on 23rd of this month and swelling the already large congregation. The weather was not kind however, resulting in a delayed burial in the Churchyard due to the impossibility of opening a grave in ground so wet.

MARCH

Another strong turnout for the Parish Council Meeting held on 5th March in the Sancroft Hall. This was as a result of the fallout from the Sustainable Saturday Meeting held on February 17th, with unofficial reports and rumour fuelling the residents' genuine concerns over planning and the status of the NDP. While the Saturday Meeting had not been well attended and therefore the views expressed were only from relatively few members of the public, there was considerable disquiet over the way elements of that previous discussion had been reported/minuted especially in conjunction with the announcement that the Neighbourhood Development Plan was due for revision. As it happened the NDP Convener/Consultant was present on the 5th and able to explain the terms for reviewing it and, consequently, the options now facing the Parish Council regarding its in-built timetable for updating. Nevertheless, with talk about relaxation of housing regulations and building targets being revised, public disquiet became focussed on the levels of trust with which the Parish Council are called to operate. Largely over the manner in which the Saturday Survey had been carried out and questions as to its validity, the public called for the values and principles enshrined in its NDP to be upheld. The Council was reminded that the NDP is not theirs but belongs to the whole community who value its protection against any national relaxation of planning consent.

The first part of the month was also marked by frantic crews and short-term road closure, filling in potholes before the end of the budget. These took place especially on Low Road and Jubilee Corner and further out of Fressingfield beyond the Water Tower and along stretches of the Cratfield Road leading to Metfield.

On March 18th it was noted that the site of two further houses destined for construction opposite the Baptist Chapel had been subject of further clearance, used as an adjoining overflow for the developers now entering the final phase of the School Lane Site with a pair of semi-detached town-houses. Tree pruning has continued around several sites in the village, especially at the School Staff Car Park removing dangerously low branches.

Easter was relatively early this year, not as early as it can be but early enough for the cold to still bite and the winds damage the earliest of flowers and blossom. With global warming bringing on the seasons it is disturbing to note that more often Spring is being compromised by extreme weather and that consequently the temperatures are no longer conducive to insects and pollinators. Blossom either remains un-pollinated or battered by late wintry storms. This year has seen several such events crash into Britain from off the North Atlantic bringing heavy flooding and rendering land unable to be drilled and seeded.

Another first for the Fressingfield Shed this month when, on Saturday 23rd, they invited the public to an opportunity to discover the Art of Rug Making, crafting with recycled materials and generally making the most of environmental sensitive ideas. The day-course was held at the Chapel Hall Arts, the former Baptist Chapel on the Cratfield Road.

Easter Services were prolific across each of the denominations, with many additional services and Holy Week events. A special Deanery Maundy Thursday Service was held in the farthest area of the newly enlarged Deanery at Gislingham. The themes associated with Good Friday offered opportunities for craft work and food while the normal ecumenical Dawn Service started even earlier than usual due to Easter Night also being the occasion on which the clocks all went forward!

It is sad to report the death of yet another significant public figure in the life of Fressingfield. Philip Eastgate had been a Church Warden, Parish Councillor, Chairman of FLHAG, unofficial village photographer and a strong supporter of the Bowls Club and local Fishing Lakes. He possessed

hundreds of photographs of events such as the Open Gardens and Fetes, as well as assisting in the management of the Archive. Everyone benefited from his genuine love of serving his neighbour and deep knowledge of all matters visual to do with computers, not forgetting sound-systems.

APRIL

Major shifts in global temperatures of our seas, now warmer than before record began, even here in British waters, doesn't necessarily mean rising levels of air temperature. Warmth this month has been really elusive, with Suffolk colder and wetter than for several years delaying pollination and will certainly affect future harvests and their prices. Our farmers talk of too many irregular and sparse areas of seed in our grain fields where flooding and water retention means irregular or sporadic growth. I'm reliably informed that late harrowing and seeding is not going to be without a significant cost.

Good news this month in the granting of a TPO (Tree Preservation Order) on the tree-line which constitutes the southern boundary of the new housing development on School Lane. The unnecessary removal of some trees and ground cover by the developer had given concern to many individuals across the village, some of whom use SAFE as their mouthpiece. Concerns moved into action with some re-planting taking place and a strong representation to Mr Pizzey, the MSDC Tree & Arboreal Officer. As a consequence, alongside all the positive reactions to this news, there has been a single objection to the Order and consequently an Appeal is to be heard on 28th June. Although some residents have already registered their objections to any such move to relax the TPO, the public are also due to be invited to that meeting and will be granted the opportunity to voice their objections in public.

An article was aired in Six Sense this month regarding the formation of a Community Speed Watch Scheme. This is one of the objectives in the NDP and needs to be promulgated in order for the Plan to be properly observed. Any volunteers would be trained by the police in that the Scheme uses police equipment and information gained from speed-assessment is passed on to the police. A co-ordinator has volunteered but requires several other members to operate efficiently. With the backing of the Parish Council it is hoped to have this initiative up and running shortly, before the increase in summer visitors to the area.

On Tuesday 16th of this month the Parish Council had invited all the various clubs, societies and organisations to its Annual Parish Meeting, held at the Baptist Chapel. Formerly this took the shape of reports being read or presented. Like last year however, this year everyone was invited to display material that described their broader aims and programmes and to use the occasion to attract new membership and 'sell' their wares. Consequently the occasion consisted of a number of table-displays and representatives talking to the public about membership. Numbers attending were certainly up from both organisations and members of the public, including your Recorder who used the occasion to display previous years' reports and show how various notes and jottings were worked up in to each month's diary. Part of the evening was also given over to inviting the public to propose how best to use the CIL funds derived from recent housing development.

In a recruitment drive, the Fressingfield Bowls Club held an Open Day at the Sports and Social Bowling Green on Saturday 27th April. The invitation included the aspiration that such activity is a fun and gentle way of staying fit, as well as meeting one's neighbours.

Another sort of Appeal was launched this month to save the Annual Pantomime. As an Amateur Dramatic Group they have been instrumental in providing the village with a huge amount of fun and opportunity for all ages to benefit from becoming involved in a wide range of activities: acting, singing, administration, choreography, scene building and painting, marketing, sound, stage management and even selling raffle tickets. The advert also stresses the beneficial opportunities, such as being a tonic and the means of reducing stress, while in the past the Pantomime has been

used to guide a member through her D of E Award. Being fun and free and friendly it would indeed be a great shame if it all came to a shuddering stop in 2024.

MAY

As well as being a pretty month in a village like ours, with hedgerows and verges full of growth and the colours of blossom, this month tends to be looked forward eagerly by those who are involved in the Produce Market. This is held on Saturday Mornings on the Fox & Goose Green during the summer and autumn. As well as providing spaces for stall-holders, many of whom are the actual producers of the produce (!) it remains a wonderful chance for people to mingle and meet each other. Those attending include bakers of all sorts (bread and cakes) and knitters, embroiderers, soap-makers, card-creators, artists and gardeners, meat and sausage producers, those selling cleansing products, gardeners and plantsmen and women as well as a regular Parish Council Drop-in stall at which questions can be asked and opinions sought. Some of the stalls raise funds for the church (such as the refreshments) while, judging by many occasions last year, people just want to linger and chat. Having supported all this locally produced food, such as local honey and organic vegetables, they then go home laden with goodies and presents. The sequence of third Saturday mornings runs across May, June, July, September and October, while there is also a Christmas Market in December at which the range of produce widens and entertainment is seasonally appropriate!

Yet another Fressingfield stalwart and colourful character has recently passed away. Donny Savage had restored the house he and his wife Rose have been living in, from being a former 'pub to becoming their home for almost all their married lives, raising their family and keeping an eye on the village as residents passed by on New Street. Always ready for a good chat, Donny was one of those who we rely upon for keeping local history alive: a great custodian of the stories which define our community and a man who for many of us made sense of the world we live in.

In yet another example of the broadening of their original purposes, the W.I. reported this month on an Easter Holiday Event they had held back in April at the Sports and Social Club when a number of families and around 40 children took part in a variety of activities, games and competitions suitable for Eastertide. These included lunch and refreshments. However, this month also saw all sections of the Fressingfield Scouts away for their Annual Weekend Camp held at Eaton Vale Scout Activity Centre, near to Norwich, reports of which can be found in the Parish/Benefice Magazine and on the Scouts' own Facebook page and website.

The local Company called 'Wakelyns' regularly provides the community with opportunities for courses and classes, often spanning a weekend. One such weekend was held this month on 18-19th May, entitled 'An Agro-Forest Open Weekend' when the whole Farm was open to visitors, seeing how trees, crops and livestock can combine in new and safe ways. This points to the means of such practical ways for helping us tackling climate change, so much so that the Government has decided to encourage more farmers to implement agro-forestry principles. By the envisaged date of 2050, this should equate to 10% of all UK farmland becoming devoted to this balanced and realistic way of harnessing the best of agricultural practice which, in many ways, is not new practice but the revision of ancient practices.

JUNE

Regular meetings of interest groups continue this month before the interruption that can sometimes happen for holidays and busier diaries. Among those many possibilities is the highly successful Fressingfield Book Group, held at the home of Shirley and John Kalinauckas, which continues to

meet on a monthly basis at their home on Victoria Terrace. The literary interests of the village are also met through a Poetry Reading Group meeting monthly in members' homes and enjoying discussion of the poets and their verses. For the more active, an appeal went out this month for people to come and experience an 'Open Afternoon' with the Tennis Club. Held on the 1st of the month, which happened to be a Saturday, the day included competitions and opportunities for anyone to get involved, appealing to those needing some coaching to get back into shape !

There has been a positive reaction to the news of Live Music returning to Fressingfield later this year. In the guise of an evening concert in the Parish Church, it is planned to welcome 'The Marmen Quartet' who will play works by Haydn, Maurice Ravel and Beethoven. As an inaugural concert, there will be lots of encouragement and advertising by 'Fressingfield Sounds', a new collaboration of residents keen to see music of different genres coming regularly to the village offering educational projects and lectures, as well as concerts.

In the June Six Sense the wider public were able to read about an event brought to the members of the RBL Branch earlier this year when the Scouts gave a presentation of their visit to Africa and the regular support they give to the Mothers Mercy Home, as well as showing pictures of their recent Trip to Iceland. This entailed travelling over the Easter break, staying on the island for a five-day Expedition, based at the most northerly Scout HQ in the world and enjoying a huge range of activities that are impossible to undertake in the calmer, warmer climate of Suffolk! Known as the 'Fire and Ice Expedition', these sorts of experiences for those Explorers Scouts, aged 14-17 years, provide a huge incentive to care for and respect the earth and, at the same time, gain a working knowledge of other cultures to one's own.

On Saturday 15th of this month the 2024 Village Fete was held on the Sports & Social Club Grounds at which several of our Village Organisations described above had a pitch and used the occasion for advertising their programmes and encouraging new members. Appealing to the whole village, but especially to families, the Fete involved many stalwart volunteers, coping with the vagaries of the weather and included lots of fun events and games. On the Sunday morning the marquee was perfect for holding a joint Church Service at which the Baptist and Anglican congregations shared resources and gave thanks for the many communities of faith and service that exist within the village enabling ties of friendship and interest to bind us together in common purpose.

Sometimes a speaker at one of our many and varied monthly interest groups across the parish will spark a far wider interest. One such example was the speaker for MU this month, coming from 'Tools with a Mission' (*TWAM*) who outlined the way their renovation of second-hand implements and tools, all manner of machines and materials can be sent to those whose very existence can be transformed by having these 'tools' in their hands. As such the effect can be utterly transformative; gifts from those of us who have such things lying around in garages and garden sheds, in lofts and forgotten drawers. Your Reporter/Recorder has offered to become a Village Collector for such items and has now made contact with the Centre in Ipswich where volunteers refurbish and package the tools which then wait for transportation to others overseas who can benefit from proper self-sufficiency and a steady income stream.

A different sort of appeal, namely a formal Appeal to the Mid Suffolk Planning Committee, was heard in the Sancroft Hall on Friday 28th at the end of this month to hear an Appeal against the introduction of the Tree Protection Order, as reported here in the April edition of your Parish Recorder's Report. The Committee members visited the site earlier themselves, before being taken through the evidence and relevant material, citing references which had been made to those objections already submitted in writing. After further deliberation by the Committee, a vote was taken in which the Appeal was refused and thus the TPO remains in force. It must be recorded that

this Appeal was more to do with requesting an extension of the TPO to include whole of the length of this southern boundary and thus to include the border which defines the gardens of housing in The Laurels. However, advice to the Planning Committee from the Tree Officer took the view of there being no significant trees worthy of such preservation along this initial stretch of the public footpath and those gardens at the rear of numbers 1-3 The Laurels. His view was that the Preservation Order was in the right place and covered an appropriate area of the land which, while falling beyond the boundary of the new bungalows and housing on previous woodland, was all-important in the support of habitat and village profile when approaching from the south. This TPO is also necessary as the protection it covers extends to land not actually considered to be on the public footpath or include that which directly belongs to the owner of the ditch and adjoining field.

JULY

During these summer months several of the village societies have enjoyed their trips and out-of-doors activities which have been especially welcome this year when the weather has been so inclement, remaining regularly wet and cold. The RBL had a trip in mid-May to the RAF Regiment Museum at RAF Honington, where a relatively small number in the party were nevertheless given an excellent tour and an experience which, for some members, brought vivid memories to mind of life in the services, particularly when being abroad in danger zones was part and parcel of one's daily existence. Our Local History Group, FLHAG, met at the end of June with a programme that took members on a trip to the Long Shed in Woodbridge. This is where a replica of the Sutton Hood Longship is being built by enthusiasts, using the traditional tools of the Saxon period which amounts largely to a variety of axes and blades in order to split tree trunks and then hone down the planks to become more pliable and capable of being shaped. The Shed lies alongside the new Woodbridge Museum so some members took advantage of remaining on site and learning still more about the story of boat-building and river craft on the river Deben.

The Fressingfield WI have reported on several trips this summer. In addition to their Bring-and-Share Summer Meal at the home of Wendy Philips and for which the weather for once complied, allowing members the pleasure of sitting in Wendy's garden, they have also had a day out at Peter Beales' Roses, the famous rose-grower, a barge-trip on the River Orwell, and a trip to the Southwold Theatre. The Mothers' Union Branch – which covers the whole Sancroft Benefice – were treated to a Guided Tour of our Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds with refreshments provided by the Cathedral's own Branch and will be continuing the stream of activities over the summer with their Annual Afternoon Tea. Inclement weather meant it had to be held indoors and, while support from the community was down on numbers over recent years, those who came as guests of members enjoyed a fabulous menu and lingered long after the tea things had been cleared. This meeting also raised funds for the MU's Summer of Hope Appeal, specifically targeted at an MU Literary Project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On July 11th the postponed evening of Films featuring archive material depicting rural life in Suffolk from the 1930's to the 1970's was held at Chapel Hall under the umbrella of the Creative C.I.C. As a Community Cinema this venue yet again showed itself capable of hosting a wonderful programme, alongside its other uses by the wider village. Claire Sullivan has a clear vision as to how she wishes the Old Baptist Chapel to become a rich resource for creative activities with opportunities for learning and celebrating a range of interests and skills. She and her business partner have made history this year by harvesting their first major crop of hemp, piloting its use for both weaving and as a building material. (*She gave a fascinating talk to members of FLHAG on this same subject at their meeting in July*) These trials are proceeding on land at Wakelyns Farm, the Organic Centre which lies on the border with Metfield Parish and where its Agroforestry Farm produces organic crops and offers a wide range of educational resources.

Urgent work on the connection of drains and water systems from the Red House Housing Scheme has closed New Street this month. While traffic can get as far as the Doctor's Surgery, beyond this point the road has remained closed for many weeks, resulting in diversions through to Wingfield, Hoxne and beyond having to use the Stradbroke Road whether travelling 'out' or 'back'.

The Village Magazine has reported on the very successful SIAMs Inspection at our Primary School. Such events are statutory for all Anglican and Methodist Schools. Highlighting his report, the Inspector has commented on the school's strengths as those being earthed around a culture of encouraging a sense of aspiration, nurture and support, offering an ambitious curriculum, ensuring parents and the community at large being welcomed and feeling involved. It also highlighted the ways pupils are encouraged to talk widely around the moral and ethical issues of our times and, finally, praised the very well-directed RE syllabus. In all it earns the school a 'very successful' and 'most impressive' grading and, while such single phrases have more recently come under the Government's radar of concern, warranting removal from Ofsted Inspections and needing much further explanation, this particular SIAM's Report is a full and rich survey, leading to an even greater ambition by all members of the school community to "*make the world a better place*".

AUGUST

It's not always the month of November that becomes a Season of Remembrance. August this year has seen an Event held at the Old Baptist Chapel on Saturday 10th August, celebrating VJ Day at which the cost of 'peace' and 'victory' were recalled and celebrated. Exhibitions and memorabilia of the Burma Campaign, in which the 'forgotten army' gave so much in halting the progress of Japan across the Far East, were accompanied by a wide range of family-orientated activities such as poetry, readings, gifts and face-painting, all on offer in the Chapel during the afternoon. Tributes to Cpl Ernest Flounders, who along with 28,000 others who were killed and lost-in-action while fighting in Burma, was included in the programme; alongside others such as local Land Girl Edna Girling who died as a result of a tragic accident on Pinkney's Farm., These combined to fill out a fascinating and well-supported programme. Thanks were expressed to Claire O'Sullivan for hosting this village event

As far as your reporter has been aware Tuesday 27th August finally saw the end of the weeks long closure of New Street, allowing for Anglian Water to conduct urgent works but preventing direct connection with Wingfield and through to Hoxne. The programme of works had been extended by several weeks due to re-routing of the waste and foul water system of dispersal from the Red House Farm Estate site. To the concern of many residents and especially to neighbours close to the building site, what has now been revealed is the sheer scale of the Actuation Pond, dug much deeper than many had been given to understand. Lying within a wedge of land between the estate's boundary to New Street and the initial road serving the front line of housing, it is clear that even in the dry season we have enjoyed this August, this pond remains half full of water. With the potential for flooding coming again, once the weather brings us winter rain and water tables across the parish are raised to their recent levels, local concerns are being widely expressed as to the viability of this essential catchment. Following the line of new tarmac along New Street it is possible to trace the 'new' route of pipework into the entrance of Post Mill Lane, before it runs through the boundary hedging and joins the principal run northward and down hill out of the village.

Representations and conversations have been happening regarding the fate of the ash trees at the front of the last remaining site for two further houses to be built on School Lane, directly opposite the new Baptist Chapel. The envisaged front drive has been for an 'in' and 'out' semi-circle, thus avoiding the loss of the principal tree which is a mature specimen. The recent public call has been for a further Tree Preservation Order (T.P.O.) to be served, preventing the felling of the tree(s) should it be deemed possible by the developer to take an easier option and create a driveway that becomes a simple single access on a T-formation serving both the house frontages. Interestingly

there are a number of further ash trees growing within this broad area, both the actual plot and across the rear gardens of properties on the Stradbroke Road, all of which help preserve that sense of this area remaining a natural resource and an appropriate backdrop to the new housing. The whole area is pertinent to the collection of key views as enshrined in the Neighbourhood Development Plan, in this case the views from out of our Village School as well as those granted along the public footpath through to Sancroft Way.

On the very last day of this month the Bowls Club wound up their Summer Season with a Finals Day. Five hotly contested final matches filled the meeting and, while informal meetings continue on Tuesday afternoons until the end of September, the Bowls Club is hoping that their AGM in October will bring fresh members and allow all to enjoy social occasions across the winter.

SEPTEMBER

For several months now the tempo of work being undertaken by members of THE SHED has steadily increased. From the initial requirement of providing toilets and additional power supplies, the successful applications for grant assistance which has funded considerable investment in power tools and standing equipment, the agenda has now focussed on completion of the outside extension. This takes the form of a glazed veranda along the east face of the building, built on a new platform of resin decking. This month has seen the basic structure put in place, awaiting the 'glazing' panels which will flood the area with light and enable more delicate tasks to take place outside of the main workshops. Membership of THE SHED continues to rise, with the anticipation of a whole range of opportunities for gardening, making and mending in wood and metal work, using fabric and other craft materials to enhance furniture and create original objects. Members are also available for helping village residents in their own projects which require specialist equipment and advice.

The anticipated inaugural concert promoted by Fressingfield Sounds went ahead in the Parish Church on Saturday the 14th of this month. Featuring the 'Marmen Quartet' the audience enjoyed works by Haydn, Ravel and Beethoven, filling the church with enthusiasm for such events and, we learn, anticipating a wide range of musical styles and content over the coming years. Staging for the musicians was provided by the church itself and, despite a degree of discomfort in the front pews, the performers all expressed their appreciation for the venue and thanked everyone for the warmth of their welcome. The Committee, consisting of Robert Stein, Nick Stolls, Virginia Skoyles, and Warren Albers are now in the process of planning more concerts !

Among the meetings and events held in September, and after a month's break in August, this month saw the return of the Fressingfield Produce Market held on the Fox & Goose Green. A good number of stalls and suppliers were present, not least from among the high level of local, talented craftsmen and women making cards and attractive textiles.

The Fressingfield Scouts have let it be known that there are vacancies in their Leadership Team with several long-standing members leaving for further work in the Norfolk County Scouts Team. As always, such a role involves a considerable amount of time and continual training but the rewards from working with motivated young people always outweigh the personal cost. There is a wide range of roles available so members of the public are encouraged to explore availability and its demands by visiting their website and emailing the Group Lead Volunteer.

In the early hours of Sunday 30th of this month, yet another village stalwart died. Stephen Willis had long been a local character, known by many for his generous hospitality and dapper appearance as much as by his serving the regional agricultural industry in the course of his daily work. Fressingfield has benefited from the B&B business he and his wife Rosemary have run from their historic home, Priory House. In keeping with many husbands whose wives become key members of their communities, Stephen gave invaluable support to Rosemary in her own commitment as a

voluntary priest within the local Church of England, as well as supporting the considerable time she has given to investigating and writing local history. The old saying can be reversed and equally true: "Behind every great woman is a great and gentle man!"

Records from National 'Weather Watchers' tell us that September was the wettest September in southern England for more than a century. While not geographically identified as part of that specific region, the rainfall here in the latter part of the month has been far higher than normal. Parts of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire experienced wide-spread flooding while, nearer to home, many of our Parish ditches and surface ponds are full. This has also been a cooler summer with temperatures 0.22C below the long-term average. One result has been the delayed harvests, running into associated problems with preparing the ground for sowing. The prospect is for the unsettled weather continuing, with windier and wetter systems lingering across much of our region; slowing the rates of building works and frustrating many local gardeners wishing to get ahead with preparing for the winter.

OCTOBER

It has been reported the proceeds raised by last month's Cake and Tea Fundraiser, on behalf of 'Breast Cancer Now' and 'Little Lifts', has totalled an amazing £1,690. In a comparatively small village it remains a staggering truth that considerable sums of money are raised each year for such causes, many of which carry personal meaning for members of our community.

The public were invited to a Public Meeting held in Stradbroke Community Centre for the Energy Company 'Octopus' to present their plans for a giant wind turbine to be constructed on farmland adjoining properties at Pixey Green. Schemes like this are bound to be on the increase as Government initiatives and targets for developing Green Energy and, while some have been horrified by the scale and size of this Application (a single large wind-turbine on a par with those installed at Eye), the attitude of others in the community is that we should do all we can to embrace new methods of powering our homes. Further public consultation will take place in the New Year.

A small but important meeting was held on Saturday 6th October to discuss the future of the Six Sense Magazine, serving all six villages in the Sancroft Benefice. There was an overwhelming determination to continue as a Community Magazine, rather than for it to become more of a typical solely Church Magazine. There remain concerns over its considerable financial constraints and, to some degree its capacity to respond to competition from electronic and on-line variants. However, plans are being made to explore an alternative printer which should give the Magazine a better outlook and lower budget. As if to underline the need for financial acumen, the Magazine are currently advertising for someone to become Treasurer, manage its finances and deal with advertising invoices.

The President of the Suffolk British Legion, Mr George Watson, gave a Talk at this month's Meeting to members and their guests. Titled 'My life on H.M. Yacht Britannia', Mr Watson gave the audience a fascinating and humorous account of his life in 'senior service' and seeing duty close to the Royal Family. The Fressingfield & District Branch is hoping that such talks and events will help them find new membership and raise the profile of the RBL.

This month also saw the local W.I. organising a 'Soup and Cake Village Lunch', held in the Sancroft Hall on Friday 25th at which donations were also collected for the Waveney Food Bank. That it should be necessary to provide this level of support to so many across our communities is itself a scandal but nevertheless one which the residents of Fressingfield and neighbouring villages see as a real challenge and take very seriously.

(Your Reporter apologises for a shorter than usual report this month but he was ill with Covid for a couple of weeks)

NOVEMBER

While the large housing development at Red House continues to dominate the skyline and, despite an initial rapid start, threatens to continue well into 2025, the pace of building on School Lane has become even slower. With reductions in numbers working on site and no work beginning on the two remaining plots to be built (we understand not by Sprake and Tyrill) directly opposite the Chapel Car Park, it appears that this building construction timetable has now been stretched still further and the inconvenience will continue well into next year. One result of these delays is that the final road surfacing, pavement completion and general landscaping is also incomplete.

Grave concerns continue to be aired by members of the public over the appearance and general safety of the Attenuation or Storm Water Pond serving the Red House Development. At the time of writing it lies almost empty, there having been little or no rain for three weeks. We know however that at times of downpour or even steady rain, the pond rapidly fills and, while designed to disgorge into drains and flow northwards into a wider network, experience from earlier in the year shows the constant threat such a large contained area of water provides, in danger of spilling across New Road and disrupting pedestrian and vehicular movement.

A walk around the heart of the village is a forcible reminder of the steady flow of repair and replacement going on in our homes and a wide range of structures across the village. To name a few, we have seen new guttering fitted to 'East Cottage' on New Street. Also on New Street the end cottage opposite the shop has sold and is undergoing refurbishment while scaffolding being fitted to the elevations around the principal housing element of the The Old Forge has indicated that work will be proceeding to adapt the roofing level and guttering to accommodate a new lining of external walls with a material that will further insulate the house and which will in due course itself be rendered to further protect the walls on the main building. Meanwhile on the Stradbroke Road a new two-storey extension has been completed to the semi-detached property on the corner of Broadway while, next to it, at No 20 Stradbroke Road there has been a new tiled roof fitted with inserted solar panels rather than those normally seen as attachments. Almost directly opposite this work, the long project of replacement wooden sash windows around most of the elevations at 'Eastlands' has gone on to include new guttering, new barge-boards and a complete repainting.

On Remembrance Sunday the whole community once more came together to remember and give thanks for the sacrifices made by earlier generations. Led in the Parish Church by the Rector, Revd Susan Loxton, assisted at the War Memorial by Pastor Stuart Balmer, the parade was led by the Scouts and all its attended age-groups while wreaths were laid by representatives of the Parish Council, Royal British Legion, Local History Group (FLHAG) the W.I. and pupils from the Primary School.

On Tuesday 26th the Parish Council held a Discussion Evening on the potential Design Codes which will be incorporated into the re-drafted and Updated Neighbourhood Development Plan, itself to be the subject of a major report by me early next year. The same evening the Local History Group (FLHAG) held its Annual Party and once more were entertained by the incorrigible Charlie Haylock. Given his expertise in discerning the history of languages and dialects it had promised to be a fascinating time of uncovering social history and how the seeds of English were sown. Held once again at the Old Baptist Chapel, with refreshments provided by members of the FLHAG Committee, the audience were not surprised that the evening proved to be quite so hilarious as well as thoroughly informative.

At our Primary School, November has also seen three thematic days each touching similar themes to do with safety and caring for others. Tuesday 12th saw a special 'Odd Socks Day' when, as part of Anti Bullying Week, pupils thought particularly about bullying and the steps taken by their school to challenge that sort of behaviour. To quote the School Newsletter it reinforces the sense of everyone being responsible for everyone else's acceptance and deserving our respect. At a broader, global level, on Friday 15th that same week the school held its own Children in Need Day, also promoting inclusion and understanding. The pupils all wore fun clothes (spots and stripes were suggested!) and a collection was taken to raise funds for the BBC Appeal. Finally, to round off the trio, a week later the children who serve as Junior Road Safety Officers organised an Assembly on the theme of 'being seen and staying safe'. Hence the children were invited to wear their brightest and most visible clothing as well as taking part in a competition to design the brightest hi-viz jacket that will keep the cyclist safe on our roads.

DECEMBER

On Saturday 14th December, after a week of depressingly gloomy and damp weather, we were blessed with a dry and even sunny day on which to hold our Annual Christmas Produce Market. The Royal British Legion had already set up the Christmas Tree and so the programme included the Switching on of the Christmas Lights. There were plenty of stalls set around the Yard/Car Park in front of the Sancroft Hall, continued inside with many more, to welcome the visitors and supporters. The Scouts held their Santa Fun Run and provided hot refreshments, alongside the church who served masses of cakes and dozens of cups of teas and coffees. The RBL Draw ended the morning on which many folk enjoyed buying last minute Christmas gifts and wandering through a medley of crafts, meat and honey stalls, cards, stained glass, garden plants, jewellery and leather-work, tables groaning with cakes and pastries as well as several Tombola's.

Your Parish Recorder, who is also a retired priest and active artist, is pleased to record that his recent Art Sale, to raise funds for the charity Embrace, raised over £1,000.00 from selling his local ink drawings and cards. Embrace serves the Middle East as a conduit for artists and craftsmen and women, supporting those working under insufferable conditions and for whom an income stream, however meagre, is a vital lifeline. So it was gratifying to be able to send a significant donation.

Friends of Methodist Chapel held their Carol Service on the afternoon of 15th December, drawing from across different denominations and many of the Village Groups for the lesson readers. Other such services were held nearer to Christmas on Sunday 22nd at the Baptist Chapel and on Christmas Eve at the Parish Church itself. Much of the energy within the community is being directed at rounding off the year, whether parents supporting School Plays or Scouts raising funds for future activities, members of the many Clubs and Societies meeting for parties, lunches and dinners with churches preparing for additional services held in the run-up to Christmas.

This time of year brings the many opportunities for reflection and identity with what goes on in the world, including concern for the many in our own nation who have been battered by storms this Autumn/early Winter. Being subjected by flood and wind damage towards real threats to our village's infrastructure, concerns are being expressed locally as to how we might fare in the event of a major wild-weather storm. These are clearly no longer just freak occurrences but becoming more and more regular. A small body of opinion is again seeking assurance from the Parish Council that the need to restore the pattern of help and advice, seen in action during the worst Covid Lockdown periods, should be brought back into play as and when the need arises.

There have been too many deaths this year, men and women of importance to the village, with significant skills and lives lived as gifts to the community. Good records of outstanding public service have been exemplified in the life of Garry Deeks who passed away on Sunday 29th of this

month after a final, short illness following months of declining health. What follows is the tribute your Recorder was invited to submit for the February 'Six Sense' Parish Magazine and I include it in its entirety as a fitting end to the Old Year of 2024 :-

HOMAGE TO GARRY DEEKS

Over recent days I've found myself talking about Garry as a giant of a man: a giant who's left a very large hole in our community and many other places in which he shared himself and followed his career. What do we mean by a giant? Someone who, because of their stature, sees further than the rest of us. You knew when Garry was in the room. As a man who saw the bigger picture it meant we had someone looking after our needs through their own ability for envisioning. I suspect that meant kids in his schools were encouraged to look beyond subjects and a timetable to begin experiencing their potential and developing broader interests.

In retirement he himself came to weave several interests together as School Governor and Parish Councillor, not just doing the essentials but becoming properly informed on matters to do with governance, whether curriculum development, the environment, planning or conservation. He not only planted trees but he grafted them. He not only grew willow but he wove it. He not only cared about the appearance of our village but took steps to protect it, spring cleaning it, mowing its verges and clearing its ditches. This giant of a man had big hands and enormous energy for labouring, not merely on his own considerable acreage of allotments and vegetable gardens, but in our Cemetery and land along Victoria Terrace.

Garry had strong views politically which, as many of us got to know, were always about fairness and inclusivity, about responsible governance in ways that produced hope and good prospect to all. His and Paula's support of their African Charity was every bit as important to him as was his passion for affordable housing! Like many intensely busy people, Garry was a private man, as if the huge range of commitments and responsibilities needed a refuge and safety net. For years, until that became increasingly compromised, it was Paula who provided the necessary shelter and guidance. Then, as her illness and incapacity took its toll, this giant had to also be a man of limitless selflessness, of compassion and care for the love of his life.

Whatever manifestation it takes, grief will always be hard. Whether one buries it or allow it to become more obvious at times, Garry's loss of his beloved Paula became the cross he had to bear. There's no shame in becoming a giant who struggles, who acknowledges what it means to be human. We have had such a giant among us and we are the poorer at his passing.