

BLYTHBURGH PARISH NEWS



Issue 52

www.onesuffolk.co.uk/blythburghPC

May/July 2010

On the starting blocks for Olympic party

It is all systems go for Blythburgh Parish Council's London 2012 Olympic celebration on July 25 this year. Through the county council, Celebrating Blythburgh has been granted £400 for its part in the county-wide Suffolk Open Weekend. Additional funding is coming from the parish council and Blythburgh Latitude Trust.

The day, designed to appeal to young and old, will feature a wide range of events held in Holy Trinity, The Priory gardens, The White Hart, the Village Hall, the river and the river bank. The day starts with a community service in Holy Trinity, which will also host an art exhibition by Paul Bennett and an illustrated talk on the history of Blythburgh by Alan Mackley. There will also be guided tours of this historic church.

Nick and Susan Haward have kindly agreed that a number of activities can take place in their garden. There will be a barbecue – free to parishioners on production of a family voucher distributed in July's Parish News – a live band, 1940s disco by the Jive Bunnies, and a pay bar provided by the White Hart. There will be timed tours of the 12th century priory ruins and a number of stalls promoting local products in The Priory car park.

The Village Hall will concentrate on indoor sports - table tennis, pool, air hockey and carpet bowls. The hall will also show a video of Channel 4's *Time Team* excavation at the Priory and display the best in a free-to-enter photographic

competition organised by professional photographer and former Blythburgh resident Nick Catling.

The prize will be a day's photographic course. Details will be published shortly. For younger visitors there will be a

Raise a glass to Blythburgh

A new look annual parish meeting will be held in the village hall at 7.30pm on May 19. Please make a real effort to come. The purpose is to ensure parishioners are fully aware of what is going on and what is being done in their name. This year, all the parish groups have been invited to mount a small display of their year's work. There will be plenty of opportunity for informal discussions over a glass of wine and light bites provided by the parish council. It is hoped that this will ensure that everybody in the parish has an opportunity to see and discuss just what is available to them in the year when regular events are to be held in the village hall. The 2010 Villager of the Year will be announced at this meeting. He or she will receive a £50 voucher to spend in the Village Shop or the White Hart.

a bouncy castle in the White Hart, together with pool and boules tournaments. The Hart will also make a good starting point for guided river bank walks escorted by wildlife experts Cliff Waller and Adam Burrows with boat rides on the river provided by Natural England.

Goodbye and good luck

Blythburgh Parish Council has regretfully accepted the resignations of Binny Lewis and Robert Benson. Binny was the driving force behind Blythburgh Community Speed Watch. (see Page 7). Robert was chair of the planning sub-committee and worked hard to ensure that the council's approach to planning applications was clear and transparent. Steps are now being taken to find replacements.

Binny and Robert are to continue as CSW and Neighbourhood co-ordinators respectively.

David Tytler

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In praise of all those wonderful birds

Simon Barnes, of *The Times*, welcomes sea eagles to the skies of Suffolk

I had been in Australia covering Andy Murray at the Australian Open, and it was a long way to go for three sets of tennis. Paradoxically, I found myself as high as a kite when I hit the ground, a combination of relief and a couple of pre-dawn Bloody Marys, but all that wore off as we hit the A12 on the way back to Suffolk.

I was passing into the nightmare doze of long-haul travel. But then a drama. Instantaneous, and played to an audience of one, like so many of the best wildlife moments. There, nonchalantly cruising the skyways, much more at home in the air than me, a creature of wonder. A buzzard.

If you live to the west rather than the east, you'll be saying bah and pshaw and what's so great about that? Buzzards are a common daily site. I've seen them on visits away from my eastern stronghold. Fine



birds: too cool to flap, great raggedy wings, and a shrill valley-filling voice.

I saw one the other day just a couple of miles from my place, mantling over something dead, in the time-honoured bird-of-prey fashion, Bunny, I bet:

buzzards are great scoffers of rabbits. This one had a white breast; buzzards are not supposed to have such things, but they are notoriously variable.

Buzzards are just beginning to be a fact of life around Suffolk. When you see a buzzard out in the East, you are entitled to walk with a spring in your step. It means something, you see. It means that buzzards are on the way back: all over the country, birds of prey are doing better than they have been for years.

They were all hammered by DDT and other poisons in their system in the 1950s and 1960s; and they have been shot and poisoned without mercy. This is illegal, of course, but plenty of people are prepared to break the law for the sake of birds of prey. We are in supposedly

enlightened times, but it still goes on. In 2008 the RSPB received more than 200 reports of birds of prey being shot, poisoned or trapped: the tip of the iceberg. Illegal and yet the crimes are frequently carried out by people who consider themselves law-abiding. But don't look for rationality where birds of prey are concerned.

In my part of Suffolk, landowners have put up large signs demanding SAY NO TO SEA EAGLES. Er, why? The answer is because they'll eat babies, dogs and cats and they'll eat all the piglets from the free-range piggeries. The answer is because they're birds of prey, and that plays havoc with human minds.

There are 400 pairs of white-tailed sea eagles in Germany; somehow, life carries on. It is just possible that the same thing may be true in East Anglia. After all, the eagles' favourite foods are fish and carrion, and there is a process for dealing with compensation for loss of livestock.

They are ancestral; British birds, the fourth-largest eagle in the world, and they have been successfully reintroduced to Scotland in a programme dating back to 1975. There are now 42 pairs of breeding birds in the country: we're not exactly overrun with them. Even so, they have been the victims of illegal persecution.

While many people are overjoyed at the idea of giant eagles wheeling across the sky, others find the thought disturbing. They feel like Red Riding Hood knocking on Granny's door. All predators touch something very deep in us: birds of prey fly past all the rational circuits in the brain. When birds of prey come up for discussion, we leave our civilised selves behind. Some find a rich atavistic delight; others find only fear and loathing.

In Suffolk we have marsh harriers, birds that were once reduced to a single pair in the entire country. Every harrier I see is an inspiration. The harriers are here, the buzzards are on their way back, and now the big skies of Suffolk could welcome home the sea eagles. Bring 'em on.

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Blythburgh Suffolk

THE INN ON THE RIVER BLYTH

The White Hart Inn

Our restaurant boasts the best view around with a regularly changing menu from our new Chef Peter Smith offering fresh local produce.

NEW SUMMER MENU

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AROUND THE VILLAGE

Star of screen and cutting room floor

Blythburgh's History Man, Alan Mackley, had his five minutes of fame in *The Restoration Man* on Channel 4 at the end of April. He appeared alongside Scott Welch, owner and restorer of Thorington Gate Lodge. Former heavyweight boxing champ Scott Welch has been filmed with Brad Pitt. *Shades of I danced with the man who danced with the girl who danced with the Prince of Wales*. Our hero thought the programme was one of the better ones in the series. But he would wouldn't he.

He had as much work as unpaid consultant but no screen time to show for it when the BBC came to Holy Trinity earlier in April, filming from nine a.m. till after seven p.m. for one slot in a six-part series, *Reading Churches*, to be shown in the autumn on BBC4. The female director enthusiastically praised the presenter for his first take then did it again, and again, and again... It took five takes just to get him to walk n and look up at the roof. (For the best bit of the day read *Daisy Bank*, Page 12). Alan did get

Bystander hears that Alan was spotted recently with his head in a book. "Enjoying your read?" he was asked. "Not yet, I'm still looking for myself in the index."

lunch in the pub but the crew were so short of time they cut all the planned history bits – him.

Holy Trinity was the star of the show earlier in the year when it played host to 70 members of The Malcolm Saville Society. The group, which

included two Saville daughters, is fanatical about the children's author's books and goes around looking at locations he used. Blythburgh features in *Sea Witch Comes Home* published in 1960 based on the 1953 floods. Malcolm Saville was not the first or last author to use Blythburgh in his books. Henry Rider Haggard wrote *Red Eve*, a medieval romp about the daughter of Blythburgh Lords of the Manor, the Claverings, and P. D. James had her detective Adam Dalgleish spend some contemplative time in Holy Trinity before going off to investigate numerous corpses littering the district.

Bystander is sorry to hear that Henrietta and Richard Maslen are leaving Blythburgh for Halesworth. We will miss this pair. Evidence of their influence can be seen in the new bus shelter on the south side of the A12, a direct result of a suggestion from Richard. The Richard Maslen Memorial Bus Shelter?

The concerns of Parish Councillor Robert Benson that the new carports to be built in the grounds of The Priory could be converted into tea rooms (although this is as likely as the site being turned into a multi-screen cinema) sparked a thought in one parishioner who is now considering turning her disused garage into a tea room.

PS: According to the *East Anglian*, the helicopter will not be returning to Angel Lane, as it has been leased out.

Bystander

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS

Chair

David Tytler
01502 478521

david@dytler.freeserve.co.uk

Vice Chair/Chair finance sub-committee

Ro Williams

Chair planning sub-committee

Alan Mackley

Councillors

Lucy Clapham, Cliff Walled

Two vacancies

Parish Clerk

Jim Boggis. 01502 478687

BLYTHBURGH ASSOCIATIONS

Carpet Bowls
Beryl Stringer

Horticultural Society
Jenny Allen 01502 478314
Neighbourhood Watch
Rob Benson 01502 478047

Speed Watch
Binny Lewis 01502 478624

Village Hall
Henrietta Maslen 01502 478551
Bookings 07850 140581

MRS CLAPHAM INVESTIGATES

Two of Blythburgh's brightest stars

Congratulations to two of Blythburgh's star turns who have both celebrated their ninetieth birthdays this year - Margaret Marchant and Reg Watling.

Our bracing air and beautiful scenery obviously have a part to play in tending body and soul to a ripe old age, along with a measure of luck, but this pair also share something else - a decided twinkle in the eye.

A strong constitution and a sound mind are wonderful things but, as in Reggie and Margaret's case, it often seems that a healthy sense of humour, along with a constant curiosity about life and your fellow man have a hell of a part to play in that constant 'rage, rage against the dying of the light' battle.

I have an Auntie Phyllis (something I would recommend to everybody) who is of a similar age. She, too, has that twinkle.

Like Margaret, she has never married - though not for the want of admirers - yet has a very worldly view of life and all its goings on. There is honestly nothing you could say that would shock Phyllis (apart from stories of cruelty) - she may not have been there or got the T shirt but you can bet she knows somebody who has.

Maybe it's because their generation has seen so much change that they are so easy to talk to.

Being a child of the 'sixties, I grew up in a much more liberated society. It's almost impossible to imagine being born in to the formal world of the 20s, living through a world war, existing on rations, seeing the change from tea dances, big bands, through Elvis Presley and The Beatles to flower power, free love, to Heavy Metal and kids going to raves and taking weed-killer for a buzz.

Maybe they don't think that human rights mean teenagers should get pregnant in order to get free food and lodgings, and never do a days work in their lives, courtesy of the tax-payer. Funny that - very old-fashioned.

Yet Auntie Phyllis, who always worked to pay her modest way, tells me pensioners should stop moaning - as they have never been better off.

Free bus travel, health and dental care, a winter fuel allowance and constant care and help from the state if needed. Only what she is entitled to, in my book, having - like most people of her age - actually *earned* it.

Not to mention taking care of herself. Regular walks, a sensible diet and a strong conviction that you are responsible for your own well-being appear to be inbuilt when it comes to that generation.

Reggie was introduced to me as 'Reg the Veg' more than 20 years ago because of his allotment.

Ha! Forget fitness videos, a ruddy great field was his daily work-out, chock-a-block with enough fruit and veg to keep half the village in fresh produce. Something he did free-of-charge for many years, accepting the odd bottle of Scotch as a thank you now and then. One of my oldest boyfriends is our Reg. Another soul who, behind that no-nonsense exterior, has a very kind heart.



Always available if you're in trouble, a true gentleman who, in my single days, would insist he walk me to my door from the pub although, once or twice, I've then turned round to walk him to *his* door. And what a flirt. When I introduced Reggie to Phyllis, both in their early eighties, well, those two pairs of blue Suffolk eyes were twinkling so naughtily I almost felt I should leave the room.

I know people, some of them in our village, with those same qualities that Margaret, Reggie and Phyllis have in spades: a kind heart, a lust for life and a sense of humour.

Some of them are half their age, some twenty or so years younger but you have a feeling they will all live to be at least a hundred. Many Happy Returns.

COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH

County follows Blythburgh's example

Blythburgh's pioneering Community Speed Watch scheme (CSW), set up last year as a result of the dogged determination of Blythburgh Parish Councillor Binny Lewis, has been copied across the county. The *East Anglian Daily Times* and the *Ipswich Evening Star* both reported at the end of April that Suffolk Police are hailing the scheme a success after 160 approved volunteers recorded nearly 500 speeding motorists in the county. A police spokesman said that on three occasions it had been necessary to send out final warnings to drivers who transgressed a second time.

The county now has nine CSW schemes, with eight more on the way. Those in place include 37 parishes and one neighbourhood watch scheme funded from county council locality budgets, sponsorship, grants or parishes.

Blythburgh residents formed Suffolk's first Community Speed Watch Scheme in February 2009, with the assistance of the Safer Neighbourhood Team from Suffolk Police, in response to repeated requests from villagers following several minor road incidents and one major accident - all of which were caused by excessive speeding. The objective of CSW is not to catch motorists speeding; it is to secure a reduction in the number of drivers exceeding 30mph.



The response since the launch in Feb 2009 has been overwhelmingly in favour of the active role we have been taking, and following on from our success, several surrounding villages have now set up their own CSW Schemes. National police statistics show that an alarming 10 people die on Britain's roads each day and that the largest single factor contributing to these deaths is excessive speed. Speed Watch co-ordinator Binny Lewis says: "If CSW can reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on Suffolk's roads, then surely this is a step in the right direction."

Between March 5 and April 22, the Blythburgh team completed 12 sessions of monitoring, resulting in the registration numbers of 12 cars exceeding the 30mph limit being passed to Suffolk Police. The highest recorded speed was 50mph by a driver on the A12 entering the 30mph restricted zone. During this period, volunteers gave 24 hours of their time during the working week and weekends to make Blythburgh's roads safer. More volunteers are urgently needed to give one hour working in teams of two. For more information, please contact Binny Lewis, 01502 478624.

Picture: Speed Watch volunteer Ro Williams undergoing police training. *Picture Nick Butcher, Eastern Daily Press, Norwich.*

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SONIA BOGGIS introduces a new occasional series *THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD*

New York, New York, so good they named it twice

New York was my home for the last four-and-half years and I thought I'd share with you how I came to work in New York and some of the fantastic experiences and memories I have brought back to the UK. So how did I end up working in New York?

Picture a Friday afternoon in late April 2005: I am preparing to leave my office close to St Paul's Cathedral in Central London to catch a train home. The phone rings. It's a colleague who works for the same investment bank and is based in New York. 'Sorry to spring this on you,' he says, 'but I have an opening in New York that I would like you to consider. It is initially a two-year posting. You would be head of a team, working for me but supporting the chairman and CEO. Can you get back to me by Monday evening London time and let me know if you are interested.'

Well, conversations over the weekend with my family were interesting but given that the bottom line is that you only regret the things in life that you don't do, I found myself, a few weeks later, on a plane heading for New York.

We all have preconceived ideas and, more often than not, they are wrong. That was my experience. The first thing I didn't expect to have problems with was the language. Nobody told me that America and England are divided by a common language but, believe me, that is often the case.

On the subway (underground in London) all I wanted to do was get to WALL Street. Is that so difficult? It is if I think it is WALL Street and the person you are asking knows it as WAAAALLLL Street.

Lift became elevator. Rubber became eraser. Jumper became sweater. Pissed meant I was angry rather than a little tipsy. Trunk was no longer a piece of luggage but the boot of a car.... And so on and so forth. Endless amusement in most cases but more than a little embarrassing on the odd occasion, such as when I suggested popping outside for a quick fag ... ask me later.

When I was apartment hunting (flat in London), I discovered Cobble Hill. It turned out to be a fantastic and very real neighbourhood. Mom and pop stores, great cafes and restaurants but, most importantly, it is home to some of the most interesting people I have met anywhere in the world. I joined a wine class and through that started to meet local people, who embraced me as one of their own and, in turn, introduced me to others.

We have drunk wine and broken bread together. There are those with whom I have enjoyed theatre, jazz, classical music concerts and opera. New York's museums and galleries are some of the finest in the world and Friday night at the Metropolitan Museum is indescribably wonderful. I took all my visitors there.

I have also been fortunate to travel throughout America, a fabulous country, and found it as diverse and interesting as the people living in it. Probably the thing I value most, and that will stay with me forever, is the friendship, camaraderie and just thoroughly wonderful people I met in New York and will be forever grateful to call friends. I went to the United States for two years and was privileged to spend four-and-half years living and working there. I have come back home with friendships and memories that will last a life time.

BLYTHBURGH LATITUDE TRUST

The Blythburgh Latitude Trust makes grants to meet the individual needs of parishioners or to support local organisations and projects. Normally, grants will not exceed £200. Please make all applications to the honorary administrator, Jim Boggis, Marsh End, Church Road, (478687).

SOUTHWOLD GUIDES

Leading the way – after 100 years

In 1909, Robert Baden-Powell held his first Rally for Boy Scouts at Crystal Palace, London. Several groups of girls turned up and asked him for something for the girls, to which his response was: "I'll think about it." Less than a year later the Girl Guide movement was formed.

So the actions of a few feisty girls were to lead to the establishment of the world's largest organisation for girls and young women, a movement that was to transcend the barriers of background, race, nationality and faith.

Southwold was in the vanguard. A few ladies met in 1909 and decided to start a Company Girl Guides. The company was registered in



The founding ladies of Southwold Company

June 1910 and the first enrolments took place in July 1910 in the Town Hall. It was the first Company in Suffolk and one of the first in the country, and is still going.

Southwold Guides are fortunate to have inherited a wonderful archive of material telling the story of its first 100 years and this is the basis for an exhibition in Southwold Museum this summer.

It shows just how groundbreaking guiding was in the early days: the challenge for the next century is to keep that spirit alive. Camping was an integral part of Guiding from the earliest

days: there is a report from the Southwold Parish Magazine of a fortnight's camp that took place at Benacre in 1912. 1st Southwold Company carried on through the First World War with the Guides carrying out war work.

The first Brownie Pack, for younger girls, was set up in 1919 and, in 1924, the first Ranger Unit was formed for older girls. Companies in Wangford, Walberswick and Reydon were formed as part of Southwold District.

In the early days of the Second World War, meetings continued to be held in spite of the black-out. However, with the evacuation inland of all school children in 1940, the 1st Southwold Guide Company and Brownie Pack had to be suspended, though 1st Reydon Guides carried on.

1st Southwold Guide Company was reopened in 1945 and the Brownies in 1950. Numbers soon rose to their pre-war levels. Late in the 1960s both the programme and the uniform of the Guides were changed to bring them up to date.

In Southwold, major fundraising was embarked on to enable the old Guide Hut in Cautley Road to be replaced by a modern Guide Centre. This was opened in 1970, the Diamond Jubilee year of the Guide Association – and of 1st Southwold.

GirlGuiding UK is the largest organisation in the country for girls and women. We are still a girl-only environment because that is what our members want – a place where they can be themselves without external pressure, they can learn about leadership and take up roles – be daft if they want – in a way they can't in a mixed environment.

The basics remain the same – we enjoy all sorts of outdoor activities, with camping still being the favourite, we serve the community, and above all we have fun!

To celebrate their centenary Southwold Guides will hold a *Then and Now* camp on Southwold Common on Saturday 19 June. Please join us between 11am and 6pm.

Jenny Allen

VISIONS by JOHN ALLEN

The horror that led to the Red Cross

The Red Cross is so well known and taken for granted that perhaps we forget it was founded in 1864 (my grandmother was three) and hence all the Napoleonic and other European battles before then were denied its support. It has become one of the greatest charitable organisations in the world and the manner of its origin typifies the noblest kind of vision, initiated by one person and subsequently developed by the voluntary support from citizens of all kinds from all countries.

Its founder was Henri Dunant (1828-1910) a Genevese philanthropist and banker, who had assisted with the founding of the YMCA. During a business visit to Italy in 1859 he chanced upon the battlefield of Solferino. He was horrified by the sight of 40,000 dead and wounded, with little care or support. Assisted by volunteers he went to aid the dying and rescue the living. His subsequent book about these experiences *Un Souvenir de Solferino* of 1862 created a global sensation. As a sequel he suggested the formation of voluntary aid societies to act as helpers to the army medical services. These societies later became the Red Cross which was formally created in 1864. This was the first Geneva Convention.

It developed a comprehensive structure with three main bodies: The national Red Cross societies, The International Committee of the Red Cross and The League of Red Cross Societies. Various tasks are undertaken by countries such as the UK's Relief Services and the USA's Blood Supply Service. Although the 25 strong international committee is composed of

Latest planning decisions

The Parish Council raised no objections to an application to build a rear conservatory at Rushes Point, Dunwich Road, although the council said that the external finish should match that of the painted rendering of the existing house. Planning permission has been granted

Swiss citizens its activities are truly international in character. The Geneva Conventions are famous as the source of international agreements for such matters as treatment of prisoners of war, the conditions for civilians in war, regulation for the treatment of wounded and sick in times of war, and similarly at sea.

Its successes are too numerous to relate completely but examples of the sheer magnitude of their efforts are indicated by the forwarding of 83,000 tons of supplies from 1941 to 1946 to civilian war victims, mostly women and children. This material was valued at 340 million Swiss francs.

The Red Cross symbol is derived from the Swiss national flag which is a white symmetrical cross on a red background. This was interpreted in Islamic countries as a Christian symbol leading to the equivalent organisations of the Red Crescent in Muslim countries and the Red Lion and Sun in Iran.

But what happened to the founder, Henri Dunant? Unfortunately his business affairs failed and he had to resign from the Red Cross in 1867. He lived in destitution in Paris, London and elsewhere and virtually disappeared from society. In 1890 he was discovered, returning to his relatives and was cared for by them and the Empress Fyodorovna, living in comparative comfort until his death. What a sad episode for a unique person who had such a great vision leading to a voluntary organisation which brought untold blessings to many millions of people. But his efforts were recognised as he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901.

for the erection of two-storey side and single-story rear extension, plus garage at 2, School Cottages, Dunwich Road. Permission has also been given for the erection of a workshop and four car ports in the grounds of The Priory, Priory Road.

BLYTHBURGH CHARACTERS

Hugh de Cressy (d.1189)

Hugh who? You might well ask. This character, an important medieval administrator, reveals the closeness of the links between Blythburgh and the royal court in the 1100s. Hugh de Cressy came from a Norman family which had been granted lands in East Anglia and Surrey after the 1066 conquest. He prospered and gained influence through service to a brother of King Henry II.

Then Hugh joined the royal court in 1170. His big break came through a marriage arranged by the King in 1174 to Margaret de Chesney, heir to Blythburgh, and also hereditary claimant to the shrievalty of Norfolk and the custodianship of Norwich Castle. This placed Hugh among the wealthiest of the English barons.

The list of royal charters witnessed by Hugh de Cressy, in England, Ireland and Normandy, shows the extent of his involvement with the King's business. He supported Henry II during the war of 1173-4 against the King's rebellious sons. He provisioned Norwich Castle against an attack by the Earl of Norfolk and fought at the battle of Fornham. After the war he was active in the development of the English judicial system.

As a trusted royal servant he was given important responsibilities in Normandy. He was appointed constable of the Tower of Rouen, sat in judgement with the ducal court and commanded royal forces on expeditions in France. He is known to have divided his time between England and France but it was in Rouen that he died.

Had he forgotten Blythburgh? Certainly not. It was Hugh de Cressy's patron's grandfather, King Henry I, who had granted Blythburgh Church to the Augustinians of St Osyth to found Blythburgh Priory. As he lay dying, Hugh remembered Blythburgh Priory in a charter. He granted lands in Walberswick to the priory, for his own soul, the souls of his mother, father, ancestors, and those of Henry II and his brother.

But note the eminence of the witnesses to the charter: two archbishops and an earl. It is clear evidence of the respected position enjoyed by Hugh de Cressy within the royal circle and an indication of medieval Blythburgh's links with the Anglo-Norman kings of England.

Alan Mackley



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Notes from Daisy Bank XL

A few years ago a charity for the blind phoned to ask if we would sell some raffle tickets. In amongst the paraphernalia they sent, was one of those cardboard collection boxes. Putting one in the gallery it seemed to do well and soon filled up. Then suddenly, the money started to disappear and eventually, disgusted with the whole thing, we gave up and told the charity that we would no longer be collecting for them.

This year I decided to print and sell some cards in the gallery – not everyone can afford to buy a picture but can usually run to a card. Amazingly they sold well and, thinking that it would be more convenient if the purchaser didn't have to contact me for change or to give me the money, I left an empty jam jar on the shelf and a five-pound float in it. You can guess the rest.

For several years now the church has been plagued with what they call the glue man, who, with the use of a piece of string and some glue, steals money from their collection box. I despair. Am I looking through rose coloured spectacles when I look back to my own childhood?

As a little boy of maybe eight or nine, I remember walking to church, finding a silver sixpence outside a telephone box and handing it in at the local police station before continuing my journey. The policeman on duty took my name and address and more importantly, took me seriously and showed no surprise.

On one of my first trips to sea, I took a train to Liverpool to join a ship and on my way lost my wallet with £32 in it. When the ship arrived in Australia, I had a letter from home to say that somebody had found the wallet on a train at Glasgow and that it and its contents had been

handed into the police. It seems to me that the world has been taken over with greed and not a lot of altruism and care for other people. A proposed high-speed link between Birmingham and London is being muted that will ruin the life of many communities in its path and lots of our wonderful English countryside.

Watching one of those house auction programmes the other day, seemingly quite a nice polite and caring young man had bought a wonderful house in the country costing several hundred thousand pounds. A barn in the back would be converted and sold and two further houses built in the rest of the garden. When that was done he and his family, several hundred thousands better off, would move on. To me he is no better, and probably worse than, the glue man.

On a lighter note, the BBC making yet another documentary involving our wonderful church recently employed me to row up and down the river. Before launching the boat the director, the cameraman the presenter and myself donned lifejackets provided by them. Handing somebody the painter (the rope not me) while I put my own life jacket on, it was obvious that the word painter and its implications was not a familiar term to him because the next thing we knew, the boat was drifting quite nicely up the river. My partner and Alan Mackley sitting on the bench next to the creek were amazed and amused to see the boat drift around the corner with seemingly nobody in it. Luckily it ended up conveniently on what we call the beach and all was not lost. I dreaded the alternative, which would have meant your hero swimming after it – not good at this time of year.

Paul Bennett

REMINDER: Meet the village and find out what has happened in the last 12 months. Enjoy a glass of wine and a bite to eat at the annual village meeting in the village hall on Wednesday May 19 at 7.30pm. The next meeting of the Parish Council on Monday July 12 at 7.45. Raise concerns and questions at the Open Forum from 7.15pm.