

# THE Cresset

February 2023



News, views and what's on, in and around Bottisham



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# Welcome to the second issue of The Cresset for 2023.



It is amazing how quickly we get over the hype and excitement of the festive season. For a few days into the New Year, we will still greet people with the “Happy New Year” bit, but that soon wears off and people we may not have seen for some time will soon get the same old “hello, how are you”.

Life gets back to normal or should I say as normal is it can be these days. More and more events and issues arise these days to interrupt that ‘norm’ as we get faced with more problems to solve. These can be at a global level or local, political or social. Whether that is the ever-present Covid threat which is still not over if China is anything to go by, or the even more threatening situation in Ukraine which could destabilise the whole of Europe, including the UK.

However, February brings its own bit of festivities in not only the romantic’s Valentine, but also the start of the 6 Nations rugby tournament, to name just two. I know there is football and rugby available to watch most weeks of the year, but the 6 Nations tournament has a particular feel about it for Rugby enthusiasts, which followers of any sport will recognise with international competitions in their own field of interest.

The other thing about February is hopefully the weather shows a slightly kinder side than the gloomy, wet and windy weather that is characterising January.

Enjoy the magazine this month. Our resident birdwatcher gives us his second contribution, focusing this month on the Song Thrush which is becoming a rarer sight these days than when we first came here. I have had numerous comments made about how enjoyable his first article was, so let’s hope there are more birds to come in the future from Bird Brain!

The bus service rightly gets another mention from several people this month, highlighting just how essential a good service is and how poor it currently is. This is all the more important as we wait to hear the outcome of the debate about the ridiculous ‘ring of steel’ aka. spy cameras being proposed to encircle the ghetto that Cambridge will become. Not that I am biased for or against you understand as editor. But the idea that people will be charged to go to Hospital. That businesses inside the ring will accept the demolition of their trade, and that people who will have the option to go elsewhere will not use it. Pure madness. If you want to invest in a business in Newmarket or Saffron Walden or St. Ives, now is the time to do it.

Thanks to John Overton for this month’s cover picture of the church and churchyard under the brief covering of snow which we had before Christmas. It also shows the scaffolding, erected to allow work to be carried out on the Church roof. The details of this work you can read about in Stuart Field, the church warden’s article.

*Enjoy.*

## *News From Holy Trinity Church Bottisham*

Churches in the Anglesey Benefice entered a new phase on 23rd January. With Revd. Sue Giles retiring we entered a period of 'Interregnum'. Sue took her last service (at Swaffham Prior) on 22nd January and a packed church and village hall afterwards said a fond farewell and thanked her for 10 years of loyal service in the Benefice and 40 years in the ministry. We wish Sue and Jonathan every happiness for their retirement in York.

In the 'Interregnum', when we shall be without a vicar for an unknown period (often a year or more), the Parochial Church Council, chaired by myself now Sue has retired, has the responsibility of organising all the church events including the services. I am delighted to report however that for the services on the first Sundays of February and March, Holy Communion will be led by Bottisham resident the Revd. Elizabeth Caswell. Sarah Maxwell will continue to lead the Morning Prayer services on the third Sunday of the month. All these are to be held at the usual time of 10.30am. We have managed however to get a minister to cover all the first Sunday Holy Communion services up to and including 3rd December 2023, including some senior clergy from the diocese – more next month! The Churchwardens from each of the churches in the benefice have started to meet to discuss Sue's successor and will be joined by the Archdeacon of Cambridge to discuss the Benefice Profile and the plans for advertising the vacancy and moving forwards.

After a very hectic and enjoyable December when we saw several concerts and services in a very full church, we enter a relatively quiet period as we enter the season of Epiphany – celebrating the time when the Wise Men visited the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. This is the time that the Orthodox Church celebrate their 'Christmas'

You may have noticed scaffolding up the side of the church and onto the roof back in December. This was there to 'patch' one or two holes (which turned out in fact to be numerous cracks) in the lead roof. Unfortunately, the news is not good. The contractors found extensive deterioration and corrosion on the underside of all the lead roof panels inspected, caused by damp from condensation made worse by wood-borne acids from the supporting oak beams. This was successfully repaired by our expert roofers but at a cost of almost £5,000. We have received a report from them, but it will probably mean we will have to look at replacing the whole roof in the not-too-distant future. This of course will be extremely costly and for which we will have to apply for grants from several organisations. We have installed a credit card reader in the church to enable those who are not carrying cash to donate should they wish.

Work has started replacing the halogen church floodlighting with LEDs to reduce the electricity costs. This work is kindly being generously funded by Rank Brothers Ltd through Peter Rank whose father kindly installed the original floodlights many years ago. The church and village owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Rank family.

You may have heard a quarter peal rung on the bells during the morning of 25th January, an event which vicar Sue hoped to join. Another quarter peal is scheduled for the morning of 1st February. These involve continuous ringing of the bells for about one hour!

Our toddler group for children and their parents continues to be held on a Tuesday morning – anyone is welcome to join us. The Faculty has now finally been obtained from the Diocese

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for permanent removal of the unfixed north aisle pews and this will give us a more versatile space. If anyone is interested in purchasing one of the non-damaged pews, then please contact me. The rotten pew which has been cluttering the rear of the church for months has now been removed and we hope to open this space in the not-too-distant future for an informal coffee morning for adults at the same time as the toddler group is meeting nearby.

*Stuart Field, Churchwarden*



**Copy deadline for next issue is 14 February.**

*Please send material to the editor at [BottishamCresset@gmail.com](mailto:BottishamCresset@gmail.com)*



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## *Services in the Anglesey Benefice*

<b>Wed Feb 1st</b>	<b>8 pm</b>	<b>C by C (a short contemplative service)</b> – online via Zoom
<b>Sun Feb 5th</b>	<b>9am</b>	<b>Online service on Zoom</b>
	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> - Bottisham
	<b>4 pm</b>	<b>Village Worship</b> - Quy Village Hall
<b>Sun Feb 12th</b>	<b>9am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> - Quy
	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Family Worship</b> - Swaffham Prior; also on Zoom
<b>Sun Feb 19th</b>	<b>9am</b>	<b>Online service on Zoom</b>
		<b>Morning Prayer</b> - Quy
	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> , Swaffham Bulbeck
		<b>Morning Prayer</b> - Bottisham
<b>Ash Wednesday</b>		
<b>Wed Feb 22nd</b>	<b>7.30 pm</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> – Quy (to be confirmed)
<b>Sun Feb 26th</b>	<b>9am</b>	<b>Online service on Zoom</b>
	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Holy Communion (BCP)</b> - Swaffham Prior
<b>Every Thursday</b>	<b>10.30am</b>	<b>Holy Communion</b> - Lode

You are very welcome to attend any of these services. Please check the Church notice board for current information; or email [admin@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk](mailto:admin@angleseygroupparishes.co.uk), which is also the address to request the Zoom link.

## *Bottisham WI*

No Christmas Party to report on I'm afraid as we needed to cancel at the last moment because of the icy, snowy weather. We are taking our Christmas presents to the January meeting when we will have a talk (hoping that doesn't get cancelled too) on Wicken Fen so perhaps we will celebrate then with a glass of wine.

**Our next meeting is Tuesday 17th February when Amanda Sutherland is making a return visit this time talking about "Make do and Mend"**

Meetings are held at 7.30pm in the Poppy Room.

Hope to see you there.

Remember we have gone back to meeting on Tuesdays not Wednesdays.



## **BOTTISHAM COMMUNITY SAFETY OPEN FORUM**

**SAVE THE DATE**

**WEDNESDAY 8TH MARCH 2023 at 7pm**

### **COME & HAVE YOUR SAY**

If you have concerns about any aspect of community safety in Bottisham, whether anti-social behaviour, road safety or anything else then come along to this meeting. It is a chance to meet and ask questions of representatives of some of the key groups and authorities impacting on life in Bottisham and working to keep us safe. The meeting is being hosted by your Parish Council, with support from East Cambs Community Safety Partnership."

If questions can't be answered immediately, the panellists will get back to you as soon as they can. After the forum, the panel will also take away the issues raised and implement a 3-month plan. There will then be a community update afterwards.

**So, Save The Date: 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

#### **SUPPORTING RESIDENTS**

#### **SERVING THE COMMUNITY**

**Location:**  
Bottisham Sports & Social  
Club

**Date & Time:**  
Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
Doors open at 6.30pm - 7pm  
start

**Meet Representatives From:**

Cambridgeshire Police  
Constabulary

Bottisham Village College &  
Primary School

East Cambs District Council

County Councillors

Road Safety & Highways



# *Parish Council Report*

There are a couple of key topics I would like to report on following the first Council meeting of the year - notably budgeting to purchase land for a play area and a call to action from residents to support the project, plus a new planning application for a solar park. But firstly I would like to draw attention to the planned Bottisham Community Safety Open Forum on 8th March. Although hosted by the Parish Council, it is facilitated by East Cambs Community Safety Partnership and follows on from previous successful exercises in other villages. If you have concerns about any aspect of community safety in Bottisham, whether anti-social behaviour, road safety or anything else, then come along to this meeting. It is a chance to meet and ask questions of representatives from some of the key groups and authorities impacting on life in Bottisham and working to keep us safe. In the March Cresset we will also be including a "Questions & Feedback" form for you to complete either on the day or subsequently. After the forum, the panel will take away the issues raised and implement a 3-month plan, with an update to the community via The Cresset.

Residents will know that there has been a search for increased play provision for many decades - a search hampered by the fact that our forebears did not secure open space for the village that we can build on freely. Resident working parties have "turned over every stone" exploring the matter, but have faced opposition from residents and landowners to all suitable options identified. As I have mentioned previously, the good news is that a new pre-school play area (plus allotments) has been secured as part of the new development South of Ox Meadow - albeit I know this will not be convenient for all families.

However, in discussions with residents, it has become clear how many look with envy at the generous multi-age play provision in neighbouring villages and would wish something similar in Bottisham. Recognising this demand, the Council resolved to budget in 2023/24 for the purchase of new land for a substantial play area. Once purchased, we are optimistic there will be sufficient S106 funds and other grants to build the play area itself at minimal extra cost. While Council will support this project, it will be best led by committed residents who have the vision and capacity to make it happen. The project will not go forwards without residents stepping forwards to help. If you are interested in volunteering to play a part, could you please contact the Clerk on [clerk@bottisham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@bottisham-pc.gov.uk)?

The Parish Council element (precept) of your Council Tax bill has historically been one of the lowest in the District, in part because we owned so little property. That will now change as we create the new cemetery and any play area. Fortunately we are able to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board at favourable interest rates, plus we have been able to secure a generous grant from East Cambs towards the purchase costs of the new cemetery. Thus we have been able to keep the increase to only 43p/month (for a Band D property) and still remain >28% below the average precept for East Cambs in 22/23.

Some of you will be aware of the planning application for the Six Oaks Renewable Energy Park (solar farm) south of the A1303 (note this is not the Sunnica Energy Farm near Burwell) which will generate enough energy to power circa 10,700 homes. You can view the details of the application on the East Cambs planning portal (Ref: 22/01291/ESF). After careful consideration the Council resolved to give its support to this application. Built on lower grade arable land and with limited visual impact on Bottisham, we feel this is a significant way in which the village can make a contribution to reducing climate change.

*Jon Ogborn - Chair of Bottisham Parish Council*



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#### OPENING TIMES

Monday and Wednesday

9am-3pm

Tuesday, Thursday, Friday

9am-12.30pm

## *District Councillors' Report*

The Combined Authority found £3.5m this year, to provide the funds to keep the number 11, and other buses running for 6 months when Stagecoach suddenly pulled the services. They will shortly be finalising their budget for 2023/24 and Charlotte was a substitute member on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to review the draft budget. She was disappointed to find that only the £3.5m was included – only half what would be needed to keep the buses running for a year. She raised this and the rest of the Committee agreed to ask the Combined Authority to find at least £7m for each of the next two years to fund our bus services. This just maintains the current position. We still need improvements not least to get the number 11 stopping at Bottisham.

The Combined Authority is consulting on its bus strategy, with a closing date of Friday 24th February at 5pm - <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/news/combined-authority-to-relaunch-6-week-bus-strategy-consultation/>. There have been a lot of consultations recently, but if we want better bus services we need to take every opportunity to make the case.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections 2022 consultation closed on Friday 23 December. Around 23,000 responses were received, and the Greater Cambridge Partnership expects to publish a final report on the consultation outcomes and next steps, for consideration by its Board in June 2023.

The consultation is about proposals for public transport improvements, and better cycling and walking options, as well as about the element which has been most talked about—a congestion charge. We expect the proposals in the consultation, including the proposal for a congestion charge, to be significantly changed by the public response to the consultation. Indeed, we hope they will be, as we struggle to support them as they stand.

In December the Licensing Committee agreed to consult on the installation of CCTV in Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles, as set out by the Department for Transport. The consultation opened on December 19th and will end at 3pm on Monday 13th March 2023 - <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/licensing/licensing-policies>

There were some missed/late bin collections in January, because of problems with vehicles. The crews have worked overtime to catch up with the collections. If your collections are missed, please report that at - <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/east-cambs-street-scene/report-missed-collection>

or call 01353 665555. You can also report it to us and we will chase it up for you.

Black bin bags are now being delivered to households. As we write, they have been delivered to about half of our villages – Lode, Reach, Swaffham Bulbeck and Swaffham Prior. They should be delivered to everyone by 31 January. If you haven't received yours, please report it to us and we will chase it up for you.

On the subject of waste, there is information about what can go in your green and blue bins and what needs special collections/disposal at - <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/east-cambs-street-scene/what-we-collect>

*Continued on page 11*

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For February, we will be holding our Councillors’ Surgery by zoom, to save people coming out in the cold and the dark. Our next Surgery Zoom will be at 6.30pm on Wednesday 15 February – Meeting ID: 865 7631 8040, Passcode: 490667. If you prefer to join by ‘phone, the number is 01314 601196. Or you can contact us directly at any time – charlotte.cane@eastcambs.gov.uk, 07976 607512; john.trapp@eastcambs.gov.uk, 01223 812120

**Editor’s note;** If you want to use the links above, but are put off by their length, then go to the on-line copy of The Cresset on the Parish Council website where the links will work directly.

## Planning Notes

- a) **Newapplications** - None
- b) **Planning Applications Approved by ECDC**  
22/01260/FUL-136HighStreet Bottisham, Construction of single storey rear extension.  
22/01430/TRE-1BottishamPlaceBottisham, T1Oak-Remove damaged sections, shorten over extended branches and reshape.
- c) **Notification of Tree Preservation Order**  
TPO/E/11/22 – \_Howgar House, 41 Bell Road
- d) **Notification of conditions discharged** – Information only  
21/00984/DISA/21/00984/DISBTo discharge a number of conditions related to the outline planning application for residential development of up to 50 dwellings, new vehicular and pedestrian access from Ox Meadow, public open space including allotments and associated infrastructure.

## Sales, Wants and Swaps



IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SELL OR WANT TO BUY OR EVEN TO SWAP, THEN THIS PAGE IS YOURS TO USE. Send details of Item, price and landline Phone Number to BottishamCresset@gmail.com. Max. 5 Items. Entries by 12th of the month for next months issue.

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## *A to B1102 Report*

First, I need to address an article that was in the January cresset. The 11 and 12 buses are only a temporary measure from the end of October until the end of March. After March the services could be considered not commercially viable and then be discontinued. I like many others have suggested improvements to the 12 service, but we have to wait until April to see what happens.

December for us was a quite month, nothing really happening until the 19 of December when the group was invited to have a face-to-face meeting with Peter Blake the director of Transport of the Greater Cambridge Partnership. Many other villages were there also. I took time off work to represent Bottisham. However, the meeting was very disappointing in the fact that every question on improvements to the bus service serving Bottisham came back with only one answer. And that was “do the consultation”. When I got home, I did go to the making connections consultation and filled it in as best as I could. However, there was no room to suggest on how to improve the bus service so it would be useful to us here in Bottisham.

For those that travel from Bottisham to Cambridge by car for work there is no viable alternative. Because the buses don't run in the way that makes it reliable for us to get to work and back home. Something that the A to B1102 group is all too aware! So, we will have to wait the results of the consultation which will be published in June.

*Steven ODell*

## *Bottisham and District Gardening Club*

I don't usually have to write the report of our December Christmas meeting as John and I have in the past put on a show of photographs of holidays that we have enjoyed in the year, before we tucked into our mulled wine and seasonal refreshments.

We did have a show prepared and had compiled a “nasty” quiz but at the last minute the meeting was called off due to the icy, snowy spell of weather we had. Let's hope that after the third Christmas in a row we have suffered cancellation we are luckier this year.

**We have Sharka Baxter speaking at our 28th February meeting about the “Forward Looking Gardener”.**

**We meet in the Poppy Room at the Club at 7.30.**

*Sylvia Overton*

Copy deadline for next issue is 14 February.

*Please send material to the editor at*  
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## **BOTTISHAM COMMUNITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

**A thought for the day or month.**

*"Reading gives us some place to go when we have to stay where we are"*

*by Mason Cooley.*

*Seen on a sign outside the community run bookshop in Bakewell on a recent visit.*

**And remember the library is somewhere to come and be in the warm.**

---

**BOTTISHAM COMMUNITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

# **QUIZ NIGHT**

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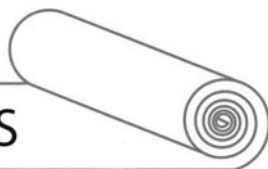


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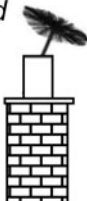
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## What's on

### **11<sup>th</sup> February – Pam is back**

An evening of music & dance – 8pm start - £3 members £5 nonmembers

### **18<sup>th</sup> February – The Library Quiz night**

A fundraising quiz in aid of the library

### **18<sup>th</sup> March – Bowling Club Race Night**

A fundraising race night in aid of the Bowling Club

### **8<sup>th</sup> April – Easter Saturday – Family Snail Racing Event**

Bring the children to enjoy the snail racing – 6pm start – Free Entrance

### **15<sup>th</sup> April – The Bowling Club Quiz**

A fundraising quiz in aid of The Bowling Club

### **6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> May – Coronation Weekend**

Details of events to follow

### **13<sup>th</sup> May – Big Band Night with Big Ten**

Join us for an evening of Ska music – 8pm start - £5 members £10 nonmembers

### **20<sup>th</sup> May -The Legionnaires 77 - charity night**

Please refer to the website. [www.bottishamsocialclub.co.uk](http://www.bottishamsocialclub.co.uk) for the latest information.

To be kept up to date with the latest news, please email [bottishamcsasc@gmail.com](mailto:bottishamcsasc@gmail.com) with your email address.

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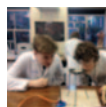
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## *News from Bottisham Medical Practice Patients' Participation Group*

**"NAAFI Break"** - ALL veterans are welcome to come along and meet likeminded veterans, 10 till 11am at Anglesey Abbey Cafe. We meet on the first Wednesday of each month.

Next date to meet: 1 February 2023. Come along, for a good old chin wag, meet new faces and feel connected within your local community. Gary looks forward to welcoming you.

He will wear a grey Help for Heroes T Shirt.

**The Patient Participation Group:** We are always happy to have new members to join the committee, all patients of this Practice are eligible. Please contact our chairman as below to find out more information and how you can be involved

**Regular Meetings:** Next meeting is Wednesday 22 March 2023 at 1.30pm. If you wish to join our Zoom meeting please email our chairman at [s.j.gilson@btinternet.com](mailto:s.j.gilson@btinternet.com) who will send you a meeting invite.

## *Burwell History Society*

Our February meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd when our speaker will be David Oates. His talk will be entitled

### **‘A History of Chivers Jam Factory.’**

Our society normally meets on the third Wednesday of the month at the Gardiner Memorial Hall in Burwell between

September and May. Visitors are welcome for £3 on the door. Further details from Judy Paxton.

*E-mail; [judympaxton@gmail.com](mailto:judympaxton@gmail.com)*

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# ***Bottisham Adult Learning Association (BALA)***

## **SPRING TERM COURSES**

We are looking forward to welcoming Stephen Poulter to Bottisham for two 5-week courses in the Spring Term of 2023. Stephen currently runs an on-line antiques business, and for the past five years has been delivering adult leisure courses across East Anglia both face to face and on-line for the WEA and other training organisations. Since 2010 he has given hundreds of one off talks for all sorts of community organisations including U3A, WI, Rotary, plus local history and church social groups. He has also created and taught new courses at Ravensbourne College and Kingston University.

We have had a very positive and interesting start to the new 5 week course this term. Presented by Stephen Poulter, An Historic Tour of Cambridgeshire from the 17th to 20th Centuries finishes on 9th February.

## **STARTING ON THURSDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 10.30am for 5 weeks**

### **STAND AND DELIVER – Highwaymen vs the Georgian Judicial System**

By 1737 Dick Turpin was England's 'Public Enemy Number One' with a string of house-breaking offences, highway robberies and a cold-blooded murder to his name. The forces of law and order seemed completely ineffectual in bringing him to justice, and it was only due to a lucky co-incidence that he was eventually tried and hanged – but for stealing horses, rather than for his exploits as a highwayman. This course will look in detail at the careers of a number of notorious highway robbers and reveal the cat and mouse games they played with the authorities who struggled to apprehend them with the very limited manpower and resources at their disposal.

All the meetings take place on Thursday mornings at Bottisham Sports and Social Club finishing on 23rd March after a break for half term.

The charge for both courses is £40 for the term or £20 for one course. There is a one off £5 charge for new members. We take a break midway through the session and ask that you bring your own tea and coffee but we provide biscuits!

We look forward to seeing you again. New members are always welcome. For more information email [Bottishambala@btinternet.com](mailto:Bottishambala@btinternet.com)

*Helen Cole*

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## *Public Transport Matters*

There have been some improvements planned regarding the changes to our bus services since Stephenson's who are based in Essex took over from Stagecoach. I had a chat with an 11 bus driver at the Newmarket bus interchange on Jan. 11th and he confirmed that the bus drivers would be quite happy to do the diversion through Bottisham but it is the problem with the various councils having to reach agreement re funding, etc. particularly after the end of March. However, Lucy Frazer, our excellent MP. is on the case. On the same day I, and others, received an email from her outlining all she is doing to sort out the problems which have been caused due to Stagecoach withdrawing provision of the local bus services.

As well as supporting the 11 coming through Bottisham as it did for so long, she has also asked that the 112 and 12 should be linked at Newmarket. You shouldn't have to change to 11 or 12. Both 11 and 12 buses used to go to Bury St. Edmunds.

She has spoken to the Deputy Mayor, Anna Smith, regarding funding particularly after the end of March. Let's hope things can be sorted out satisfactorily. We do need the linking of Bottisham and the villages restored - preferably before the end of March - jobs, schools' attendance, doctors, dentists Anglesey Abbey, etc.

The Mill Road bridge closure is still being debated. Having that traffic diverted through the narrow side roads is not a good idea in my view. Shops need deliveries. The Greater Cambridgeshire partnership are still promoting projects that will affect the wildlife and countryside and also bring rail noise to homes. Things are still being debated. There is also the debated question of the 5 pounds congestion charge. Will that affect shops in the centre as people will go to out-of-town supermarkets. Having to pay to go to work in the centre just adds more expense in these difficult times. Not everyone has access to a bus or park and ride.

Cambridge South rail station project has won approval. It will be at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus site.

The railway workers' continuing strikes are upsetting and annoying for travellers. To have cancelled trains when one is getting to work is bad enough but to have them at such an important time of the year - going to meet family for a happy Christmas and New Year together or off on a long looked forward to holiday. I appreciate it isn't just about pay. I wish to keep a ticket office, have a guard on the train not just the driver. That obviously does cost more.

**Happy New Year! And Happy traveling - take care. - Rail info - 08457 48 48 50**

*Paddy James*

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## *News from Wicken Fen Nature Reserve*

**World Wetlands Day is on 2 February**, when we always celebrate with a guided walk to look for wetland wildlife around the reserve. Wicken Fen is one of Europe's most important wetlands, supporting over 9000 species, including plants, birds and invertebrates. 35% of the world's wetlands have disappeared in the last 50 years, so we're working hard to look after this special place. It is not only special as a wetland because of its biodiversity, but also for its ability to capture carbon. Our work as part of the Fens East Peat Partnership will help secure the peat that is so vital for nature, carbon capture, and mitigating the effects of climate change.

**Mucky Pups is back after the Christmas break.** Parents and carers of pre-school children are invited to join us for outdoor adventures and nature exploration at the Fen. Pre-booking is advised for these sessions as spaces are limited. Sessions are monthly – the next 3 dates are: 24 February, 24 March, 28 April, 10:30am to 12pm. See our website for more details and to book.

**February half term fun** - There's lots of things at Wicken Fen to keep families busy over half term. From 10 February Follow our 'Birds at Work!' trail on the Boardwalk to find out which birds are work on which nature 'jobs', before collecting your prize - a kit to make a bird feeder at home! £2 per trail, normal admission applies (free for NT members).

Children aged 6+ can book for a Bird Collage workshop on 14 February – it should be a real tweet for creative people! Learn how to use marbling and collage techniques to create a fantastic owl picture to take home. All materials provided. 10.30 – 12.00 or 13.00 – 14.30. £6 per child, must be accompanied (accompanying adults free).

**Birdmania will arrive on 17 February**, in the form of indoor craft for families with children aged 4+. No need to book in advance, just drop in anytime between 11.30 and 3pm to enjoy a selection of fun, bird-themed crafts. £3 per child, must be accompanied (accompanying adults free).

For the latest reserve information, please visit our website [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen)

Details of our events can be found on our website at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen-nature-reserve/whats-on](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wicken-fen-nature-reserve/whats-on)

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## *Reasons to be Cheerful...*

- Just watched the first episode of “Last of the Summer wine. Strange name for the first episode.
- What did we do before Nostalgia?
- Whilst in Antwerp in December I had a Hotdog. It was the WORST sausage ever.
- Sunday 5th Feb. is National Yorkshire Pudding Day and World Nutella day. I prefer mine with Golden syrup.
- Snollygoster. What a great word.
- I’m glad that Dry January is over. Dry white, Dry red, Dry gin, Dry Vermouth, Dry sherry etc.
- I can’t believe its nearly Pancake day. It’s really creped up on me this year.
- Gammon steak? Pineapple, Fried egg or pickle?
- A Husbands place is in the wrong.
- My four year old nephew is learning Spanish. He can’t even say please yet.
- That’s poor for four. (Mel Rees).
- A large hole has appeared on the M25. Police are looking into it.
- Russian dolls are so full of themselves.
- I’m currently reading a book about anti-gravity. I can’t put it down.
- The ancient parish of Bottisham covered 5987 acres until it was divided in 1894 for civil purposes.

*Stay safe, keep smiling.*

*Peter Rayment*

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At the time of writing, we look forward to the start of our 2023 programme. This year we are linking with the regular Thursday morning Holy Communion Service at St. James' Church, Lode on the 19th January for our New Year Holy Communion. This will be the last service Revd. Sue Giles will lead in Lode before her retirement. Following the service, we will be serving a soup lunch in church to express our farewell and good luck to Sue and Jonathan.

Thank you to all of you who have donated used postage stamps to aid The Leprosy Mission. We began this project at the beginning of 2022 by placing a collection tray in Bottisham, Lode, Swaffham Bulbeck and Quy churches. Collection of postage stamps has been significant, with a total of four full carrier bags passed on to MU project co-ordinator. We hope this continues to be as successful in 2023.

Our meetings usually take place on the third Thursday of the month, at 2.30pm in Passage Hall, Lode. On 16th February we will be welcoming Ros Wright, who will speaking to us about Christ's Cross in the World. You are most welcome to come and join us.

*Ann Langran*



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## *Bottisham Bird Brain*

Last month I mentioned ‘Passerines’; not, perhaps a word in common parlance outside the birdwatching fraternity. The order of Passeriformes, which accounts for over half of all the world’s living bird species (some 6,000 species), encompasses all the well-known song birds – such as sparrows, finches, thrushes – which are able to perch. So let’s talk about ‘perching birds’ and their unique ability to cling to a twig or a wire, even when asleep.



Most perching birds are fairly vocal, though the ability to sing does not define a Passerine. Other common characteristics include: small to medium sized, colourful plumage, extensive nurturing of young, and mostly diurnal (daylight active) behaviour. But by far the most diagnostic and interesting feature is the (unwebbed) toe arrangement – three facing forward and one back. So how do they grip so securely? The small talons help, of course, but the really clever mechanics are in the leg, where a tendon called the flexor tendon runs from the thigh muscles to the toes, down the back of the tarsus (lower leg) bone and behind the backward-facing ankle. When the bird alights, its own body weight stretches the flexor tendon and pulls in the toes, giving the bird a powerful grip; and the more the bird relaxes, the tighter the claws are clenched!

Furthermore, birds have very few nerves in their feet so they are not seriously discomforted by cold temperatures of their perches but, when it drops below zero, you will sometimes see your garden birds crouching over their feet, using their body feathers to protect their toes from freezing.

The word ‘Passeriformes’, by the way, is derived from the Latin for Sparrow: ‘Passer’, so literally it means ‘sparrow-like’. Indeed, you may be familiar with the bird designated as ‘Passer domesticus’, which could be nesting under the eaves of your house in the Spring! But, after January’s homage to the Robin, we’re going to stick with the Thrush family for the time being.

Have you ever been pottering in the garden and heard a light ‘tap-tap’ behind you? You turn round to find a Song Thrush bashing the shell of a snail on a concrete path or large stone until it can grab the succulent, nutritious meat inside. The Song Thrush is one of the very few birds to realise this kind of use of ‘tools’ and even its close relatives, such as Mistle Thrush and Blackbird are content with simply digging in the earth for their lunch. Earthworms and grubs (as well as fruit, berries and scraps) comprise a large part of the diet and you might sometimes notice a Song Thrush on the lawn, stopping and cocking its head to one side. Don’t be fooled by this apparent ‘listening’, they can’t hear their catch coming... they are simply looking closely for food with their monocular vision. Remember that most birds’ eyes are on the side of their head and operate independently of each other. It’s pretty useful to be able to look for food and keep an eye out for predators simultaneously!

The Song Thrush is aptly named, too, for its song is also unique and memorable, comprising shortish phrases of mellow notes – not unlike the Blackbird in timbre – but less fluent and usually repeated two or three times. So, if you hear repeated snatches of melody

*(Continued on page 37)*

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*(Continued from page 35)*

above you, look up at the nearest treetop... it may be just a silhouette but you'll still know what it is.

Sadly though, the population of these remarkable birds has been decimated over recent decades. In the urban environment they are vulnerable to attack from Sparrowhawks, Magpies and, of course, domestic cats but the most significant impact on their numbers seems to have been farming changes resulting in fewer nesting and feeding sites. Hedgerows, wet ditches and permanent pastures, for example, have all suffered from the need to maximise farming yields and Song Thrush numbers fell by over 50% in a 25-year period from 1970. The RSPB reports a slight recovery since then, hopefully precipitated by the availability of government grants to encourage more sympathetic farming initiatives, such as hedgerow management and woodland planting.

A word of caution regarding identification: take care not to confuse the Song Thrush with the Mistle Thrush, which is also UK resident all year round. Both species may be more evident in the Winter as the local population is swelled by visitors from northern Europe seeking a less harsh environment, but they are fairly easily distinguishable, once you've registered them both in your mind. The Mistle Thrush is three or four centimetres bigger than the Song, and stands taller, more erect. Its plumage is generally a greyer shade of brown and the spots are not arranged in lines like those of the Song Thrush. You are also likely to encounter both Redwings and Fieldfares – both close relations – in the Winter months, especially in the fields, but we'll deal with those in a future edition of Bird Brain...

*TTFN - Gerry Daish*

"That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!"

Home-Thoughts, from Abroad - Robert Browning

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The snowdrops have been waking up since early January, and we finally have sprinkles of these delicate flowers across the gardens. Our specialist collection at Anglesey Abbey has grown from 120 varieties in 2001 to a staggering 400 now and is only available to view via one of our pre-bookable Snowdrop tours, head to our website to find out more. Snowdrops are very special to Anglesey Abbey, having a collection of varieties discovered within the garden such as *Galanthus nivalis* 'Anglesey Abbey', *Galanthus* 'Richard Ayres', 'Lode Star', and 'Hobsons Choice' just to name a few. Many varieties unique to Anglesey Abbey can be purchase from the Plant Centre, and starting you own collection is easy to do, if you'd like some advice on which winter plants go well with snowdrops, speak to a member of the team who will be happy to help. Snowdrops aren't the only garden highlight.

The Winter Garden hosts some of the season's favourites including the *Crinus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' and C. 'Winter Berry', two dogwood varieties that pop colour along the winter garden path, highly scented daphne and viburnum lure you nose along the route too, and chilly walks out into the wider estate help to blow away the cobwebs and refresh your senses.

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