

STANFORD PARISH COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 14 APRIL 2009

Welcome to the latest Parish Council Newsletter which is delivered free to all addresses in Stanford Parish.

The image is of Westenhanger Castle which is a scheduled Ancient Monument with a grade 1 listed house. It is possible that Saxon Kings inhabited the area and evidence of Roman occupation has been discovered here. Serious fortifications were built in 1343 and before that there was a large hall or palace with perhaps a moat and a wood palisade. The defensive towers and high curtain wall were built around 1400. In 1509 the two manors of Ostenhanger and Westenhanger which stood here were merged by Sir Edward Poynings. He began to build magnificently and his son, Sir Thomas, went on with the building, although he later exchanged Westenhanger Castle with King Henry VIII for other lands.

Later Queen Elizabeth I visited *'her house at Westenhanger'* and by the mid 17th Century it was one of the largest houses in Kent. However, in 1701 much of it was taken down leading to deprecation and neglect for nearly 300 years.

When the Forge family purchased in 1996 it was listed on the English Heritage 'Buildings at Risk' register. The Forge family took up the challenge to preserve the remains for future generations to enjoy and to appreciate its historical importance. Since 1997 English Heritage has helped with expertise and financial assistance.

THE STANFORD PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER IS SPONSORED BY HOLIDAY EXTRAS



CHAIR'S REPORT (by Ken Bultitude)

The Council has met twice since the December Newsletter and we are very pleased that we have been able to continue to use The Drum. Its temporary closure in January caused concern as to where we should meet. In the event, the kind offers we received from Holiday Extras, Westenhanger Castle, the church and neighbouring parishes were not needed. At the meetings there have been suggestions for action and in the weeks between there has been a great deal of activity – mostly by the clerk in many hours of unobserved work.

1 The appearance of the parish has been a matter of particular concern.

- We were joined by a few residents and some racecourse staff in a litter pick that produced 30 bags of rubbish from the verges of the B2068 and Stone Street and its related roads. This was organised by the clerk in conjunction with the Shepway representative of the Clean Kent Campaign.
- We have been communicating with SDC and Southeastern Railways about the damage caused to the verges along Stone Street Westenhanger by commuter parking. We thought that SDC had grasped this nettle in June last year but learn with dismay that the promises have been broken. It has been taken to more senior management.
- The grass verges will soon be cut again and this year, Holiday Extras have agreed to cut the grass at the southern entry to Westenhanger – for which we are very grateful. We have agreed a rota for the maintenance of our phone box.
- The unsightly properties in Westenhanger - Jesters and Hide'n'seek - have been a cause of concern and we have enlisted the help of the Enforcement Officer from SDC Planning in trying to get some improvement. Unfortunately the owner cannot be contacted but the action continues.
- The Village Hall which looks so sad (although the snow-drops and aconites planted around the old war memorial site have been lovely this year) has been discussed and we have advised the Committee to get planning permission and sell the site as quickly as possible. There are no funds for refurbishment or rebuilding.
- We have received a grant from SWAG for the purchase of a new Notice Board for the Stanford side of the parish. The old board is near the end of its life and the site outside the Village Hall will no longer be suitable when that has gone. This generous gift (for which we are very grateful) will pay only half the cost of a replacement board and so we will have to find an additional sum for this essential amenity.
- The severe winter has played havoc with road surfaces. Every one of the score or so of potholes has been reported by the clerk and action has been taken on many of them. She is still trying to get the surface of the B2068 close to Stone Street properly resurfaced with anti-skid treatment but Kent Highways funds are limited. The clerk and I spent a morning with Kent Highways recently learning about their new arrangements to offer a full range of highways services online. This will be available to all residents from 1 April (google 'my kent highways online').

2 We have been concerned that the parish boundaries do not match present realities. There are two particular issues. Firstly, Gibbins Brook is detached from the rest of the parish and in many ways the community there is more closely related to Sellindge. Secondly, Junction 11 and STOP24 have far more impact on the Parish of Stanford than on Saltwood or Postling – which is where they lie. We have suggested to SDC and to our neighbour Parish Councils that our western boundary should be on the stream that lies to the east of Gibbins Brook, and our south and easterly boundary should be the A20 and B2068.



Volunteers from the parish and Folkestone Racecourse help with the litter pick

This has not been approved but our research on the precise position of the boundary shows that Saltwood is responsible for part of the Farmers' Bridge and, even more oddly, that the whole eastern side of Stone Street in Westenhanger lies in Saltwood. The problems with the verges there are in fact Saltwood matters. The 2007 Local Government Act gives SDC the power to effect changes but they are reluctant to do anything.

3 The Westenhanger fire last December alerted us to the dangers of having no possible access over the Farmers' Bridge. At our prompting, the Highways Agency caused the removal of the concrete block and the re-instatement of the padlock. The key is held by David Holt at Yew Tree Farm but we are trying to get the bridge's owners (the Highways Agency) to arrange for a keyholder to be available 24/7.

4 For the last decade the need for probity in public affairs has been an issue for local councils and we are all bound to abide by a statutory Code of Conduct. The regulation of this Code has now been taken over by SDC, and Stanford councillors joined with those from Postling and Lympe for training, arranged with SDC by the clerk.

5 In addition, we have done the usual reading and consideration of planning issues and hope that we are serving our community well. We look forward to seeing you on 13 May at 7pm in The Drum for the Annual Village Meeting.

THE DRUM

Readers will probably be aware that our pub has reopened under temporary ownership following its shock closure at the end of last year. Greene King are actively seeking permanent arrangements.

The pub is open for meals seven days a week with lunch served from 12 to 2.30pm Monday to Saturday. Dinner is served on Wednesdays to Saturdays from 6 to 9pm. Sunday Lunch is served from 12 to 4pm.

Special offer on Fridays - Fish & Chips £5.00



Telephone 01303 812125 for reservations.



BILL FIFIELD (By Lesley Goodwin)

We are saddened by the loss of Bill Fifield; our oldest resident in Westenhanger. Christened William Richard Thomas Fifield (but known to all as Bill), he died on Tuesday 9th December 2008 - one week before his 96th birthday (the 16th of December which was also the day of his funeral). Our thoughts and condolences go out to his family and friends.

Born in Stanford, Bill moved to Westenhanger when he married lovely Esmie Foote in 1953. He worked on the land at local farms and the racecourse, then in later years in Ashford at Worgens seed merchants followed by Pledge's flour mill where he stayed until his retirement at the age of 70.

He served in the army during the war years and got up to numerous escapades. But like others who experienced these terrible times he had memories that badly affected him and none more deeply than that of being one of the group that liberated Belsen Concentration Camp.

He was a great story teller and his daughters Nicola, Frances and Catherine and family will no doubt cherish with affection the memory of his favourite, "the Christmas pudding" which grew as it was embellished with each rendition.

Seeds and nuts by the sack load stored in a corner of the kitchen is an old and personal memory of mine. He loved the wild life that visited his garden, especially the birds. In the years when he was able, he tended to all their needs with a passion.

It has been many years since Bill took a stroll down the road towards the racecourse. Gradually over the years his health deteriorated with the onset of Parkinsons disease until finally he became house bound and inevitably confined to his bed. Lack of mobility did not dull his sharp mind or his keen interest of all that was going on around him. A gentle man and a Gentleman, Bill will be missed.



We first moved to Lyvedenhurst in 1982. We have been blessed with having had Bill and Esmie as neighbours at Peckengel and Robert and Marye McCall at Twin Chimneys. As a family, each of us has cherished memories of them all. Graham and I and are pleased that we still have Nicola and Malcolm as our neighbours in Peckengel and as Twin Chimneys is yet to be sold we shall enjoy Andrew being there while we can.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT (By Cllr Ms Susan Carey)

Those who know me well know that I am a great wearer of hats so it is with real feeling that I take my hat off to those who get the village newsletter written, collated and delivered and, in Stanford's case on the web. I have been asked to make a contribution wearing my Kent County Councillor hat and my New Year's resolution is to do so regularly.

At the time I write (mid January) the draft budget from KCC has just been published. It has just 49 pages backed up by 130 pages for the Medium Term Plan and countless supporting documents for the £2,290,429,000 which is the proposed spend on your behalf in 2009/10 on services ranging from schools, highways, social services and libraries. Kent's share of central government grant means that only (only!) £557,626,000 of this is raised through council tax. If the budget proposals go ahead there will be a council tax increase of just under 3% which will be an extra £28.53 a year for a Band D property.

The increase is mostly swallowed up by care for the elderly and in particular the increasing number of those with dementia. There's also extra money for children's services and, in the wake of Baby P case, this is one area no-one wants to scrimp on resources. There are over 1,000 children from Kent who are in our care and many others who are considered 'at risk'. KCC is reviewing our procedures for keeping children safe - 'safeguarding' in the jargon - with the Chief Executive himself leading the review.

The latest independent assessments for KCC's services for Adult Social Care and services for Children and Young People judged both services as good or excellent in all areas with excellent prospects for further improvement. No-one likes to pay council tax but this is some reassurance that the money is being used well.

You may be aware that KCC has a Freedom Pass which gives unlimited travel on scheduled bus services in Kent for 11 - 16 year olds for just £50 a year. I have been pleased with the take up of the Freedom Pass in our area. It is a KCC initiative for which we receive no government grant and the cost (£9 million a year) is met from your council tax. It's worthwhile because it cuts traffic congestion around schools and removes cars from roads, it allows young people more independence and the chance to travel to events or facilities in their free time, it supports hard pressed families who often have two children to fund for a £600 season ticket each and it helps pay for off peak buses for everyone else. There are calls for the Freedom Pass to be extended to 16 - 18 year olds but it is only from 2009/10 that the scheme reaches all parts of Kent and we will need to evaluate the full impact. And (see above) there's the question of the budget...

Finally you will imagine my surprise and delight in seeing Cllr Martin de Wolf of Stanford Parish Council feature in the January edition of Kent Highways newsletter thanking KHS for the 'magnificent refurbishment of the village sign'. I sit on the Highways Advisory Board of KCC and give KHS a hard time on your behalf so it was good to be reminded that they do also deserve some praise!



Stanford and Westenhanger Activities Group (by Charles Getliffe)

At a special meeting of the Stanford and Westenhanger Activities Group (SWAG) committee on 16 March it was decided to end the group's activities. The decision was not taken lightly as it was first mooted at the AGM in November.

SWAG, as it was affectionately called, came into being as a result of the hugely successful Golden Jubilee celebrations organised by villagers at Westenhanger Castle. Since then the committee has organised numerous events including barn dances, quiz nights, race nights, darts, bowls evenings, cricket matches, a car treasure hunt, a 60's event with a murder mystery play and band, Burn's Night and of course the fireworks!

Some events generated money which was then used to offset costs of other events. Some were fundraising events, and we raised and donated to charity somewhere in the region of £10,000. The bank balance today stands at some £992 which committee members

have added to, making it £1000. It was decided to donate £500 to the Parish Council to replace the village notice board which will be erected in a new location at their discretion and the remaining £500 will go to much needed church funds. (If the cost of the notice board is less than £500 the balance will also go to church funds.)

Having been involved with SWAG from the beginning it has been a joy to be part of creating events which villagers, their families and friends have enjoyed. From anecdotal comments I know that without these events some villagers would not have got to know their neighbours, which in some instances led to long lasting friendships.

Over the years some of the committee have changed, but all of you who have helped in whatever way are long overdue a most grateful thank you.



WESTENHANGER CASTLE, JANUARY 2009

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACTS

Your Parish Councillors are:

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| • Cllr Ken Bultitude (Chair) | Tudor Cottage, Stanford North |
| • Cllr Mrs Marian Bebbington (Vice Chair) | Connaught Lodge, Westenhanger |
| • Cllr Martin de Wolf (Editor & Webmaster) | The White Lodge, Westenhanger |
| • Cllr Bill Eggleton | The Old School House, Stanford North |
| • Cllr Graham Goodwin | Lyvedenhurst, Westenhanger |



Parish Clerk

- Mrs Dorothy Bultitude Tudor Cottage, Stanford North. ☎01303 813810

This publication is sponsored by Holiday Extras and the Parish Council would like to thank them for their continued support.

