

# Upwell

A Quality

Council Aiming

to Provide a

Quality Service

## PARISH COUNCILLORS

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Neil Morgan 01945 773865

### Deputy Chairman

Andrew Harrison 01945 773735

### Councillors

Chris Crofts 01945 773519

Jill Gooch 01945 773301

Keith Harrison 01945 772661

Frank Humm 01945 773595

Prue Lester 01945 772234

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Cllr Vivienne Spikings

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### Assistant Parish Clerk:

Ms. Kate Bennett

Hillegom

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Friday Bridge

PE14 0HU

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## UPWELL PLAYING FIELD

UPWELL PLAYING FIELD will be holding its Senior Football tournament on Saturday July 3rd at Upwell Field, organised by Upwell Town FC. There will be a BBQ and soft drinks available and trophies will be presented by the Chair of Upwell Playing Field Committee at the Bowls Club at the end of the day.

**August 8th** is Upwell Playing Field's annual summer fayre. There will be a BBQ, classic and vintage vehicles, trade stands and more – see notices and local press for further details closer to the time. If you wish to have a stand at the summer fayre or would like to enter a vehicle to the vintage vehicle show, please contact Christine on 01945 774060.

**October 30th** sees the Annual Pumpkin Ball held at the village hall. This is a black tie event and the

evening, which includes a three-course meal, live band and dancing, costs £25.00 per person. (same price as previous years). Contact Ros for tickets or more information on 01945 773604.

The Upwell Calendar will be produced again at the end of the year. Have you sent in your photographs of the village or perhaps a favourite spot in the Parish (Upwell, Three Holes or Lakes End)? Photographs should be landscape and please note that photographs of children will not be considered. The Christmas raffle will be drawn at the 5 Bells Inn on December 17th. All donations of raffle prizes would be most gratefully received (of a Christmas nature please). Contact Pat Moat on 01945 772257 for more information and tickets. Submitted by ROS SHORTING: 01945 773604  
UPWELL PLAYING FIELD SECRETARY.

## UPWELL VILLAGE HALL

### Quiz Evening

At the time of writing, with only days to go before the quiz evening, it came dangerously close to being cancelled. It seems we were no competition for the World Cup! Happily there are some who, like me, want England to win but simply have no interest in soccer (for me it is altogether the wrong shaped ball – and to be absolutely clear it is Union, not league!). So, with a flurry of last minute entries, the quiz is going ahead.

### Summer

After the Craft Fair, Open Gardens and St. Peter's patronal festival which, by now, will have taken place (fingers crossed for good weather), the hall goes into its usual summer hibernation while we all go on our hols. We will awaken in September.

### Future Events

**5th September:** Car Treasure Hunt. Watch for the posters around the village and when they appear lose no time in booking your entry because the total num-

ber of entries is limited for insurance reasons. Always an interesting event, it inevitably finishes at a hostelry. I blame the chap who plans the route (and it's not me!).

**26th September:** Table Top Sale. 9.00am – 12.00 noon (provisional date).

**27th September:** Strictly Upwell ballroom dancing lessons will commence under the expert tutorship of Mr Boyd-Tuck. Date subject to confirmation.

**23rd October:** Race Night

**7th November:** Christmas Craft Fair

**31st December:** New Year's Eve Ball

Hall bookings, private events and functions: remember, if you wish to hire the hall or enquire about its facilities, call Dee Harrison on 01945 773735. For other information or enquiries, contact me, Dave Short, on 01945 774443 or email dave.toad@tiscali.co.uk and I will forward your enquiry to the appropriate committee member.

## MEETING DATES

As we pass the half way point in the year, I thought it might be useful to remind people about the dates and times of council meetings. All meetings are open to the press and public and residents have the opportunity to address the council at all except the Finance Committee meeting, which is necessarily brief (being held immediately prior to the full council meetings most months). If you are interested in how the council works, what it does for the villages, or if you have a concern about a local issue, please do come down to Upwell village hall and join us.

Kate Cobley: Clerk

### July

5th Finance 7.00pm

5th Full Council 7.30pm

21st Environment & Leisure 6.15pm

21st Planning & Transportation 7.30pm

### August

2nd Finance 7.00pm

2nd Full Council 7.30pm

18th Environment & Leisure 6.15pm

18th Planning & Transportation 7.30pm

### September

6th Finance 7.00pm

6th Full Council 7.30pm

22nd Environment & Leisure 6.15pm

22nd Planning & Transportation 7.30pm

### October

4th Finance 7.00pm

4th Full Council 7.30pm

20th Environment & Leisure 6.15pm

20th Planning & Transportation 7.30pm

### November

1st Finance 7.00pm

1st Full Council 7.30pm

17th Environment & Leisure 6.15pm

17th Planning & Transportation 7.30pm

### December

6th Finance 7.00pm

6th Full Council 7.30pm



# Upwell Parish Council

Council and Community Newsletter

Summer 2010



QUALITY PARISH COUNCIL

## Summer Edition 2010

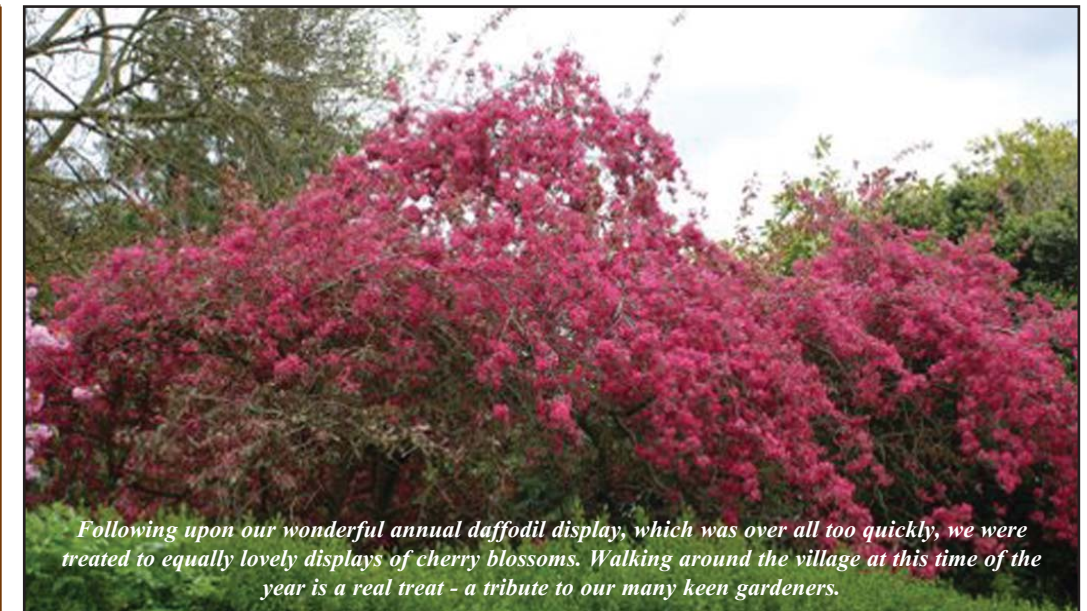
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### Find us at

[www.upwellpc.co.uk](http://www.upwellpc.co.uk)

If you have a comment or contribution please send it to:  
Kate Cobley  
29 Listers Road  
Upwell  
Wisbech  
PE14 9BW  
01945 772260  
or  
to any Parish Councillor listed on back page.



*Following upon our wonderful annual daffodil display, which was over all too quickly, we were treated to equally lovely displays of cherry blossoms. Walking around the village at this time of the year is a real treat - a tribute to our many keen gardeners.*

## ATELIER EAST IN UPWELL

Atelier East is an independent Arts organisation, working with district and county councils, schools and community groups to promote and support the Arts in the Fenland area.

The group is currently working alongside Upwell Health Centre to provide a beautiful and intriguing exhibition of work by local artists. At the moment, the walls are full of work by Penny Carkeek, Rosemary Harvey, Fabia Claris, David Lewis, Colin Watson and Louise Stebbing. When the current exhibition finishes on 22nd June they will be replaced by a new set of inspiring pieces by artists such as Neville Palmer and Richard Allen - who are also local. The objective is to provide a beautiful and intriguing exhibition to brighten up the health centre with colour and interest while showcasing local talent. The current exhibition is a mixture of art forms, includ-

ing photography, and the works are available to purchase should you spot something that really appeals!

Atelier East runs a Young Artists' scheme in several local schools and, aside from our popular after-school Creative Club sessions, we also offer workshops during the daytime to schools, pre-schools, children's centres, businesses and community groups. Regular Life Drawing sessions are held at the Octavia Hill Birthplace House in Wisbech and in other locations other arts sessions are hosted, such as Art Therapy: an expressive art workshop for adults.

The exhibition at Upwell Health Centre is open during normal opening hours. The group organises exhibitions across Fenland and more information can be found in the 'What's On' Section of their website at [www.atelier-east.co.uk](http://www.atelier-east.co.uk).

## TOWN STREET SATELLITE DISHES

The Parish Council's Planning & Transportation Committee is concerned about the growing number of satellite dishes appearing at the front of properties on Town Street in Upwell. The road forms the major part of Upwell's conservation area and any changes to properties require planning permission.

Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. The designation of a conservation area seeks to enhance the character of the area as a whole, rather than individual buildings. The character of a conservation area may be formed by groups of buildings, open spaces, trees, historic street patterns, walls or features of architectural or archaeological interest. It is this special character, rather than individual buildings, that conservation areas seek to preserve and enhance.

In Upwell, the conservation area runs from mid way along School Road along both sides of the river to just beyond Ransomes Close. Following proposals to extend the area, land around Workhouse Lane, New Road (to the War Memorial) and along parts of Low Side and Small Lode as far as the pathway to Townley Close are now also included.

The Planning Department at the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk have the following statute: within a conservation area satellite dishes "should not be installed on any roof-slope, chimney or wall with faces onto, or is visible from a highway", anywhere else they're permitted development but you may wish to check that with District Council or via the Planning Portal. Dishes on any listed buildings require consent and if they're highly visible any such application would be refused.



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By Neil Morgan, Council Chairman.

Parish Councils are legally required to hold an annual Parish Assembly, during which the Council Chairman presents a report on the Council's work and business during the preceding year. This year's Assembly, held on Monday, 12th April, was well attended and those present were able to hear reports from the Borough Council and County Council as well as the Parish Council Chairman. Also present, exceptionally, were 3 of the candidates for this year's general election so that those of our residents present were able to see the candidates and put to them any particular questions which they felt to be important. Representatives of local clubs, societies and action groups were also present, willing and able to share with others the details of their work and activity. The Parish Council report has, however, to be available to everyone and this year's version is therefore quoted below.

### ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2010

We approach the end of the 3rd year of this Council's tenure, thankful that a difficult winter appears to have come to an end and that the hours of daylight are lengthening. The Council has had another busy year and it seems to have flown by more quickly than ever this time. After our Annual General Meeting in May, it will be time to review once more the Parish Plan, put in place in 2006, so that we can determine what will be the principal areas of work and consolidation for 2010/11, the last year before the election of a new Council. Fully aware of the implications of the sudden downturn in our national economy, we decided to try to help our residents by ensuring that the precept was held at the same figure as for 2008/2009. That means that we did not ask the Borough Council at King's Lynn for any more money to run our services this year, which meant, in turn, that the Borough Council did not have to add anything to local council tax bills on our behalf. One of the interesting developments of this last year has been the opening up of a garden allotment area. With more people wanting to grow their own fruit and vegetables, for reasons of economy, as well as being eco-friendly, we rented a section of land adjacent to the cemetery in order to provide allotments of appropriate size. The site, accessible from Stonehouse Road, was up and running at the end of last April, and from the outset, the allotments were oversubscribed, with a waiting list. The venture has proved to be very successful and we have been able to see what appeared to be wasteland just a few months before very quickly holding an abundance of fruit and vegetables. This we see

as a prime example of how parish councils work to support their local community by responding to residents' needs in a tangible and effective way. As further examples of this response to parishioners' needs, I would quote the provision of a new street light in Lakes End, administering a scheme to have the houses and businesses in Town Street renumbered, improving the condition of the cemetery, the churchyard and the War Memorial gardens, and also continuing the ongoing battle for Norfolk County Council to resurface and improve the condition of the roads around the Parish, not least in Town Street. Erecting a new street light in Lakes End may not seem a huge achievement, but, apart from there being quite a substantial cost involved, it has meant that people who were previously wary about leaving their homes after dark are now able to venture forth and take part in community activities or just visit friends. Keeping people mobile and active, included in the community, is an important contribution to any individual's personal health and well-being. The Council had received repeated complaints from residents in Town Street about delivery problems, and there have been constant enquiries made in local shops and businesses as to where a particular house or family could be located. The emergency services in particular were anxious at delays in locating addresses. Therefore, when a scheme to give fresh house numbers to all the properties along the road was suggested by the Borough Council, the Parish Council was keen to support this initiative. Residents were given several opportunities to let us know what they thought of the scheme, and they certainly did not hold back! However, having been assured that they could keep their house names as well as the numbers, the vast majority were in favour and the scheme was finalised just after Christmas. Residents should by this date, have been given their numbers and asked to display them. Both the cemetery and the churchyard have had a major facelift this year, and their appearance now is very different from that of even 12 months ago. This has been largely due to a dedicated team of local councillors and residents, together with a great deal of work from the Community Service teams, who have cleared weeds, cut back overgrown shrubs and trees, cleared land and generally helped to turn both these areas into places which can be visited without fear of being attacked by nettles and brambles. A number of local Parish and Borough Councillors recently met with Borough Council officers and the appropriate portfolio holder to attempt to establish a clearly defined structure of proper care for these two areas.

The War Memorial garden has also had a major overhaul. The large conifers near the front of the garden have been removed, new borders cleaned and dug, roses planted and paths cleared. This work is still ongoing, as we presently await the arrival of plants ordered, whereupon the team of volunteers will complete the scheduled work. This team is led by our Landscape and Gardens sub-committee, who are also presently engaged in clearing and replanting the containers in the Community Garden and in the two raised beds at the front of the hall.

The condition of our roads and traffic management are both still of major concern to councillors and residents. This is a subject discussed at virtually every meeting, and the Council endeavours to keep up the pressure on the Highways Department of Norfolk County Council to improve our situation. Despite almost constant requests to this Department, and a recent petition raised about the resurfacing of Town Street, there has been limited response. A section of Town Street was surface dressed during the year, but this did little to improve the generally poor condition of this road. However, we shall persist, and we have to hope that our continuing efforts will raise the profile of Upwell Parish sufficiently for the long overdue improvements to be made.

At the end of 2009, we again managed to achieve Quality Council status. This national accreditation is not easily achieved, and is preceded by a rigorous in-depth examination of all the Council's affairs. It demonstrates that the Council is working efficiently and effectively to support the local community, and is providing best-value service to local residents. It shows that we have a deep involvement within our community, and are responding to its needs wherever it is right and possible to do so. I have one other encouraging fact to report. Following a recent resignation from the Council, advertisements for a replacement have brought in no fewer than 7 applications to fill this vacancy. Interest at that level is rare in parish councils, and unprecedented in Upwell. After due process, Mr Brian Carr was chosen as the new councillor and he has already been actively involved, attending committee meetings and finding out what the council does around the villages. We look forward to another active year into 2011. We have already pledged once again to keep the precept at the 2008 level, and we hope to increase still further our involvement with the community, and indeed its involvement with the Council. We shall continue to use our ever-popular newsletter to this end, and we intend to upgrade the Council's website to carry as much information as possible. With a general election looming, it should be an interesting year, and we would once again encourage everyone on this community to be sure to register their votes, to take part in community events and let the Council know if there is anything in our villages which gives cause for concern.

This Council is committed to doing its best to improve the area for everyone living in the parish. We can only do this with the community's support. The Council and its committees meet several times a month on a purely voluntary basis and I congratulate and thank them on their achievements this year. I also acknowledge with sincere thanks the support and interest of our local Borough Councillors Vivienne Spikings and David Pope, together with that of our area County Councillor Harry Humphrey. Not least I want to express our collective thanks to the Parish Clerk, Kate Copley, and our Assistant Clerk, Kate Bennett, both of whom carry a heavy workload, and a great deal of responsibility. This they do with efficiency, good will, and seeming inexhaustible good humour!

Neil Morgan  
Council Chair



## THE BUTTERPILLAR CLUB

The ButterPillar Club is a Holiday Club offering Summer Activities, Excursions and Childcare at affordable prices. We take school age children up to the age of 16 and are open from the 26th July in Upwell. The ButterPillar Club is not your average holiday scheme. We're offering that something a little bit different. Our mission is to assist parents in giving kids those all important life skills, build their confidence and self esteem and introduce them to new friends that they might not otherwise meet. Our activities include, circus workshops, scarecrow making, sports, Cooking, Arts and Crafts, Fashionista (create an outfit set for the catwalk) The ButterPillar Ramblers, Prince and Princess Academy, Speed Stacking, Football. We're also running a 2 day Football Academy, a Pony Club incorporating a mix of horse and stable management and riding and a Pop Factory where children get the opportunity to record their favourite songs at a professional music studio. Fish & Chip Friday happens every week followed by The ButterPillar Party which is set to be a fantastic day. There is loads going on all day every day!! It's important to us that we offer something for everyone, parents included,

so that's why we've introduced a number of different packages to ensure flexibility. Whilst The ButterPillar Club offers a full time childcare solution we also offer places on a daily and half day basis. We understand that some parents work part-time and shift work and some just want a bit of "me" time which, as a parent I fully understand. We don't want children to miss out on this fantastic Club and can arrange transport for children coming from other villages. All our staff are suitably qualified and are all CRB Checked and referenced. The ButterPillar Club is Ofsted Registered and accepts Childcare Vouchers. The ButterPillar Club was founded by Sam Channon, a mum of 2, after looking for suitable childcare on returning to work. Unable to find anything she set about creating her own childcare and making it available to all. There is currently little for children to do in Upwell and the surrounding villages during the holiday season but The ButterPillar Club is set to change that. If you would like further information or have any queries please call Sam on 01945 774550 or visit our website [www.thebutterpillarclub.co.uk](http://www.thebutterpillarclub.co.uk)



### Summer activities and excursions

Action Packed, fun, all day, every day.

The ButterPillar Club is a holiday club offering tailor made childcare, excursions and special interest courses at affordable prices, for children aged 5-16 years. Our on-site premises are based at the Upwell Community Primary School near Wisbech.

Activities include:  
Arts & Crafts, Sports, Cooking, Dance Academy and much much more.  
The ButterPillar Club is Ofsted Registered and accepts childcare vouchers.

**The ButterPillar Club**  
Tel: 01945 774550 e-mail: [info@thebutterpillarclub.co.uk](mailto:info@thebutterpillarclub.co.uk)

#### Follow our four easy steps to booking!

1 Choose when you want it... Look through our daily timetable and pick the sessions that your child would like to attend.

2 How often! (how much can you handle)... Our flexible packages by booking will ensure the ButterPillar Club works for you.

3 Add additional activities and excursions... We also offer a variety of day excursions leaving from King Lynn, Upwell, March and Wisbech.

4 Check out... Visit our website for all the information you'll need on how to book and pay. [www.thebutterpillarclub.co.uk](http://www.thebutterpillarclub.co.uk)

BOOK NOW! - SUMMER 2010 PROGRAMME STARTS 26 JULY



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## UPWELL'S OVER 60'S KEEP FIT CLASS



Tuesday mornings, between 10.am and 11am is a 'must not miss' time slot for many of our more senior residents who wish to enjoy a good workout in a convivial atmosphere at the village

hall. Anyone who believes that this is a casual stretch and token exercise activity would do well to pop along and see how wrong you can be. This is not for the faint hearted but the membership of around 40 ladies (and one brave man) go about their business in an energetic and enthusiastic way, which leaves no doubt as to their commitment to the cause of fitness. Moreover, they look extremely professional in the precision and timing of their co-ordinated movements. In part, this is explained by the fact that the class has been running for nearly 6 years now and is held weekly, throughout the year, pausing only temporarily when instructor Sue Birt is on holiday. The weekly programme follows a particular pattern, with an initial warm up followed by a variety of exercises, often using appropriate aids such as light weights, bouncy balls and ropes. This is followed by stretching exercises and finally a cool down interlude before the class ends. An important point is that class members are told never to go beyond their comfort zone and to stop if they feel in any way strained. If it all sounds too serious, this is not the case and the frely exchanged banter between Sue and her members often ends in peals of laughter, especially when Sue attempts to sing! Membership remains open to all of the age group concerned and, provided the compulsory medical declaration shows nothing alarming joining is simply a matter of going along to the hall a few minutes before the start time. The weekly fee is £3 and this includes a cup of tea or coffee after the class finishes. This latter social time is equally thoroughly enjoyed as members gather round to exchange news and views. From personal experience I would suggest that 11 am is not a great time to go and enquire, particularly if you are a man! The verbal exchanges do not allow for casual



enquiry, unless you have a flip chart and a pen! I venture to suggest that this social follow up is just as popular as the exercises – and quite right too! Sue is a fully qualified instructor and is fully insured. She now runs 5 classes each week, including a class on Thursday evening in Outwell for enthusiasts of any age. Anyone wanting to make further enquiries can contact Sue on 01945 772900. Both the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council are extremely pleased to have this most appropriate and welcome activity centred in our hall. We would be more than happy to see all our day and evening time slots filled by our residents doing what they love – in what is now one of the best village halls anywhere in the country! Neil Morgan

## DO YOU PUT OUT BLACK BIN BAGS FOR COLLECTION?

Following a recent case where a Downham Market woman was prosecuted and fined for putting out black bin bags with her bin, I contacted the Borough Council at Kings Lynn to find out what residents who have extra rubbish should do to get it collected. In most cases if you recycle all that you can, you should be able to get the rest of your waste in your black bin. However, if there are six or more people living in your house or if there is a particular medical reason why more bins are required, additional black bins can be requested. For residents who are keen recyclers, the Borough Council will provide additional green recycling bins, free of charge to any household on request, regardless of the number of people living in the property.

If you continue to have problems with the volume of waste that you produce but there is not deemed to be sufficient need for an additional bin at your property, the Borough Council's Waste and Recycling Officers are on hand to help you see if there is any way in which you can reduce the amount of waste you produce. For more information please contact the recycling and waste management department on 01553 782060. Waste put out in sacks next to, or on top of, the bin will not be collected unless it is sealed with a special red tag which can be purchased from any Council Information Centre. Red tags cost £1.10 each. All sacks sealed with one of these red tags will be collected alongside the rubbish in your black bin on your usual collection day. The nearest Council

Information Centre to Upwell is in Downham Market – at The Priory Centre on Priory Road. The Borough Council offers this advice to residents wanting to maximise the space in their black bin:  
\* Do not put your waste into black sacks before you put these in the bin as the excess air inside the bags means that they can get jammed and use up valuable space. Small kitchen bin liners or old supermarket carrier bags tend to be much more suitable.  
\* Additional domestic waste and a number of household items can be taken to your local household waste and recycling centre to be disposed of or recycled.

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## FENLAND ROVERS - A NEW YOUTH FOOTBALL CLUB FOR UPWELL

A new youth football club has been launched, playing tournaments in Upwell and Christchurch at the villages' playing fields. The Fenland Rovers has three teams: under 9's, under 12's and under 14's and the club is looking into the formation of further age groups as time progresses. All team managers are F.A. level 1 qualified coaches and are CRB (child protection) checked and first aid trained. Many of the managers have been associated with youth football teams for many years and have the knowledge and experience needed to support youngsters taking their first steps in football training. The first tournament to be held will take place in Christchurch on the weekend of the 3rd and 4th July. Teams will need to register by 8.30am in readiness to begin playing at 9.30am. There will

be the usual facilities available, including tea, coffee, sweets and a BBQ (using the finest local butchers' sausages and burgers). There will also be a selection of stalls and first aid cover is on hand. If you have children who are interested in playing football, no matter what their ability, then why not join the Rovers during the weekend. They offer a safe, friendly environment to nurture your child's individual skills, development and needs.

- 3rd and 4th July: Tournament at Christchurch
- Training Sessions every Wednesday at Upwell Playing Field
- Annual fees-easier to manage than weekly/monthly payments
- Fully Trained managers/coaches

- Matches during the season to be played at both Upwell and Christchurch
- Never mind the ability-we just want the children to have fun
- Looking for Sponsorship! Can you help?
- Team colours are pink and black

Contact Pam Salmon for more information on 07930 344685 or call in to Upwell Post Office



## SUMMER-BEE IN UPWELL



Stand in our new village cake shop, gaze on the sumptuous array before you and I guarantee your spirits will lift. A cake, as all fellow addicts will know, is so much more than just food. It's a comforting treat for a rainy day, the reward for a job well done, that little bit of indulgence you share with a friend, along with secrets, your bond cemented by butter-cream – naughty but nice! It's a sin that carries no discernable punishment and, in the absence of over-indulgence, no visible damage either. Jayne Sommersby and partner, Peter, decided, almost on a whim, to open their cake and furniture shop in the old bank building on Town Street. As is often the case, though, what seems like an impulse is an idea that's been buzzing around in the background for some time. A nurse by profession, Jayne has always baked in her spare time, even branching out into speciality cakes and baking for a shop near where she lived twenty five years ago. Looking to make some changes in their lives, they thought that Jane could bake cup-cakes – very fashionable at the moment – which they would advertise on line. Peter, a retired care-worker, started to renovate and paint old furniture which they picked up over a period of time, also to be advertised for sale; but when they drove past the bank building with

its 'To Let' sign above the door it was the light-bulb moment and they saw the opportunity they had been looking for to turn their hobbies into a business. The business is going well, deservedly so, as Jane is selling extremely good quality cakes at very competitive prices and the shop, open seven days a week, is enhanced by examples of Peter's furniture. There are tables, chairs and chests of drawers, which serve to show off some beautiful cable sweaters – also made by Jane. The good news is spreading through the village and beyond, as they now have customers who travel here from March, Downham Market and Wisbech especially to buy cakes; people have even called as they were going on holiday and bought cakes to take with them. Amazingly, Jane is fitting in the cake-making around her job as a health-care worker which sometimes means staying up until three in the morning. Clearly this is not sustainable, and her main aim is for the business to be so successful that it becomes her full time occupation. Jane and Peter both enjoy the contact they have with people and feel that they have been made welcome here in Upwell; they find everyone very friendly and are pleased to be part of a village already more than adequately served by a number of thriving shops. Theirs is very much a family business, encouraged by Jane's three children, one of whom, Gemma, sometimes joins them to help in the shop. When cooking, Jane uses only the best produce which she sources locally; she enjoys every aspect of the baking process, though both she and Peter agree that dealing with mounds of butter-cream at the end of a busy session in the kitchen can sometimes seem a bit tedious – not exactly the icing on the cake, then! At the moment she is managing without any special equipment, having given away an industrial food mixer to her daughter just a year ago after leaving it stored in a

cupboard, unused, for many years. Although she is hoping to acquire some labour saving devices when the success of the business justifies it, for the time being, the butter cream will continue to be dealt with using a wooden spoon! Jane's enthusiasm for the business is most evident when she talks about future development; professionally printed signs have been ordered to help identify their whereabouts and she is constantly trying out different recipes to tempt us and see what sells well, the latest of these being rhubarb and yogurt cake, and trifles. The latter are made that little bit special by being sold in returnable glass bowls. When Peter made a detour one morning which meant he would be ten minutes late opening the shop, he was surprised to get a frantic call from Jane telling him to get down there quickly. Two women had phoned from their car where they were waiting outside to buy some cakes; apparently they were on their way to Sandringham and there were some people they wanted to impress. The mind boggles! Could it be that her Maj...? No, wrong time of year, but maybe in the future.... who knows? Orders are taken for both cakes and furniture: Tel: 07780 880611 or 07724 004663 Email: j.sommersby@tiscali.co.uk

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## UPWELL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL



The Summer Term at School

### Assemblies

Rev. Jesson and Rev. Ely have led some of the Monday morning Assemblies. Jane from Barnardos came into school Monday 14th June and talked to the children about the disadvantaged children across the UK. An envelope / sponsor form for creating a badge was given to each child.

### Cycling for Yr 4

Rev Ely has had a busy time visiting Upwell School. He took 12 Yr 4 children into the playground and gave them some basic training on their cycles for 2 hours. They all received a certificate for this.

### Artsmark

We also have staff to be proud of. The school has been awarded Artsmark for our work across all the Arts including Dance and Drama as well as Art. I would like to thank all the staff for their hard work, but in particular Mrs Norman, who spent a very long time collecting and collating all the necessary evidence and got the application in on time. We know we do well; it is good to have it recognised.

### Financial Management in Schools

Thanks to Mrs Mahoney's hard work and organisational skills we have also been awarded FMSIS. This is a national standard for financial management in schools and is a testimony to the positive working relationship between staff and Governors who have the increasingly difficult task of steering the school through sometimes stormy financial waters.

### School Photographer

Sara Falco the Tempest Photographer came into school on 20th May and took Class and Team Photographs. These were taken in our garden.

### School Council

The children have had regular meetings with Mrs Handley. The school council has two children from each of the seven classes in school.

### F.O.S.A.

The 19th March saw the children come to school in non-uniform in preparation for the Easter Bingo that was held on Friday 26th March. The children were asked to bring in items that would be suitable for the bingo evening. A good time

was had by all.

### Multi-skills

We continue to have Miss Fuller come into school on Wednesday afternoons to coach classes 3 and 4.

**NEAD Project** – Yr 3 and Yr 3/4 from William Marshall, Welney

Twelve schools from our cluster have been taking part in the NEAD Project. They have been working on Dancing, Food, Culture and Art in Russia. The finale to these sessions is taking place in Downham Market, on Wednesday 23rd June, with a samba procession starting at 12.30 p.m.

### Story Teller

Robin Gregory came into school from our Library service to read Stories to the children in their classrooms. The children had a great time listening to Robin tell them stories.

### Year 6

Year 6 have had a busy couple of months, starting off with a Music Mix festival by the BBC orchestra at the Corn Exchange, King's Lynn. In April they visited the Crucial Crew at the fire station in King's Lynn. During May they had to do their SAT's tests and towards the end of May some of the children went camping at a PGL site in Boreatton Park in Shropshire.

### Cricket

Professional Cricketer, Jarrad Cunningham from New Zealand has been coaching Yr 6 this term.

### Bewilderwood

What a great day we had at 'Bewilderwood' yesterday. The sun shone, Mildred the crocodile squirted water, everyone behaved beautifully (even the parents) and we got everyone there and back safely! Mr Turner did manage to get friction burns on the slide, but no-one can understand how!!!! ..... Any photographs of me on the slide will be confiscated!

We had praise for some of our Y6 pupils who helped a little boy, visiting with his family, who bumped his head, what a caring lot.

The children who were unable to go with us also had a great day and have produced a wonderful display based on the 'Bewilderwood' book. Miss Lewis kept them busy and was full of praise for how well they worked together and helped each other. We have children to be proud of, as I am sure you already know. – Mrs Chatwin, Headteacher



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## THE SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTING

Imagine this conversation around the family tea table today:

Child to parent,

"So where are we going on holiday this year – Tenerife....The Canary Islands...Crete? .....Or America!...Hey dad can we go to Florida? All my mates have been to Florida."

"No, not this year, love. I thought we'd go to Hunstanton for the day, you know, travel on the bus; that would be fun wouldn't it?"

Blank amazement as children stare at parent in disbelief; he cannot be serious! It's not that they think there's actually anything wrong with Hunstanton; they go there all the time, the odd sunny Sunday at 'Sunny Hunny' with Gran and Granddad in tow, it's fine; it's just not a holiday and certainly not a special treat.

But years ago it was. In the early 1900s the annual Sunday School Outing was the highlight of the year, eagerly anticipated during the long winter months. It was occasionally referred to as The Treat, though in some areas these were separate, The Treat being held on the Vicarage lawn while The Outing was a visit to the sea-side or local fun park. One of the earliest accounts I can find is of a trip to Cromer at the time when the odd motor car was just starting to appear on the roads. Children and their parents all piled into horse-drawn wagons to make the ten mile journey,

'...and branches were pushed into the sides to form a leafy canopy overhead. Huge baskets of food were taken, as we left at 6.00 a.m. and had breakfast on arrival. Lunch at 12.00 noon and tea at 4.00 p.m. meant a busy time for some. A large hall was booked for the purpose.'

The writer of the article can remember feeling very privileged when he was about ten years old as he was allowed to sit up in front with his father, who drove the leading wagon. His special job was to keep a lookout for cars, and on the rare occasion when he spotted one, they'd stop and he would jump down to hold the horse's head.

Just over sixty years ago these outings were still regarded as the major event of the year; but by then bus, or sometimes train, were the accepted modes of transport. I spoke to Madge Cox and David and Pauline Gray who could clearly recall the excitement they felt as the day of the outing drew near. For Madge and other members of the New Road Sunday School, Hunstanton was always the destination and there would be as many as five or six buses all setting off together. The journey took about two hours, but this didn't matter as it was part of the treat, and they would stop for a break at Sandringham where the children were given sixpence and a bun. There was no luxury like toilets, but they could spend a penny behind the bushes before continuing on their way. David can't recall being given any money but, although in a different Sunday School, he also remembers the stop at Sandringham where he and his mates would peer through the iron gates in the hope of seeing the King. (No-one had told them about Balmoral.) He can also remember having to get out and push the bus up Heacham Hill, which was a good deal steeper in those days and quite a novelty for fen

children.

Pauline was a member of the Three Holes Sunday School and can clearly remember the outings organised by Mrs Swann and Mr. Hugh Beckett – usually to Hunstanton, but sometimes to Wicksteed Park for a change.

For everyone, the main excitement of the day was that first sight of the sea. Necks would be craned and noses pressed against windows from as far away as Onion Corner near Castle Rising as competition to be the first to shout, "I can see it," was fierce and even carried with it the prize of an extra sixpence on some buses. On arrival there would be a mad scramble to see who could be first onto the beach with shoes and socks off for a paddle. The

swimming pool was an option, as was skating at the end of the pier and, of course, venturing further into the sea for a swim, apparently without swimming costumes as, according to David, 'there weren't none then!' For a rainy day there was the arcade with its array of fruit machines and some harder souls still ventured in for a swim. Everyone usually took with them all the food they needed for the day and picnicked on the beach, though the occasional fish and chip lunch, in the event of rain, was an added treat.

Inevitably there was the odd mishap. David recalls the time when he smashed his hand while playing on a wrecked ship under the cliffs at Old Hunstanton. A heavy metal door swung on it and, although it was strapped up by St. John's Ambulance first aiders who assured him there was nothing to worry about, it turned out to be broken, a fact not discovered until two months later. He still has a crooked finger today.

Whole families enjoyed the day together but the adults had to pay their way, unlike the children, whose treat was funded partly by holding a garden fete at Large's Bakehouse and, in part, by their own efforts. Pauline remembers the annual Sunday School Anniversary held on a Sunday afternoon in a very large carpenter's workshop opposite the

pub in Three Holes. A stage was erected where children would sing and do 'recitations,' then, on Monday afternoon, there would be a procession of horses and carts, tractors and trailers around the village bearing children, again singing, while someone on a bicycle went about collecting money.

The interview with David and Pauline was carried out in their garden on a sunny afternoon accompanied by bird-song. As I got up to leave, David suddenly remembered the only recitation he ever did and, without warning, decided to share it with me:

I wish I was a little fish  
And buried in the ice,  
Then when the ladies skated past  
Oh, wouldn't that be nice!  
Now that's got to be worth a shilling of  
someone's money!



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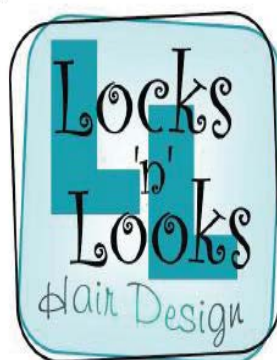
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## OLD FRIENDS NEED YOUR HELP!

A couple of weeks ago I received an email from an old Upwellian, now living in the United States, asking for a photograph of Burbeck House on Town Street. The lady in question was called Jenny Gottsch (nee Sawyer) and her story was so interesting I thought I'd publish it and ask whether any of our readers remember this lady or her family?

This is what Jenny wrote:

My grandparents were Abe and Rose Venni from Outwell and my parents were Ruby and Samuel

(Sam) Sawyer - there is no 'Y' in our name. Our last address was Hallbridge Road in Upwell. I have two younger sisters: Josephine (Jo) and Margaret (Marge). Jo now lives in Outwell and Marge lives in Long Sutton.

My parents both worked for Dick Morton (by the way, I cannot find a 'Bramley' apple anywhere over here). When we were growing up we used to go on long walks or bike rides all over Upwell, picking cowslips, buttercups and dogdaisies. We attended the Methodist Chapel. Patty Robinson was my first school friend. I used to go to her house for tea in Burbeck House and visit her when she moved to Hallbridge Road. Later she went to New Zealand I think. Jill Carver and Kathleen Blunt were also friends from the primary school and Jill remained my friend at the secondary school. I also knew Sylvia Bloom, Joan Winters, Shelia Cole and Margaret Dack. We used to bike to Downham Market to get the train to Hunstanton on a Sunday then bike back home. Sylvia and I went into service together after we left school. We went to Perse school for Boys in Cambridge. Sylvia, Jill and I have remained friends. We write and send cards and when I used to come back home for visits we would get together over a cuppa- tea and catch up.

I left England in 1978 bound for California. My husband was based there. Our first stop was Westside, Iowa to see my husband's family. At the time they were farmers in the town - made up of German emigrants who came over years ago and bought land and built their own houses. Some have long gone but the house that my husband's grandfather's family built is still standing and my son and his family still live there. The family owned 250 thousand acres of farm land and pastures. The land has been passed down through the generations and is now owned by my husband and rented out. Iowa is known for its sweet corn, soybean and the best pork chops in the

States.

We stayed in Westside for two weeks and then headed out to California. I was home sick already as we drove all the way across the States to get to the George Air Force base in Victorville, California. It was stuck right in the middle of the desert. I thought "Oh my God where am I?" If someone had offered me a ticket back home I would have taken it and been on the next flight home! Of course, that did not happen. It took a while to get used to but we bought our first home and lived there for 27 years. The heat was hard to get used to. It was always over the hundred's in July and August and I have known it to be 123 degrees. We did have a pool, which we enjoyed on many a hot day. My husband made the military his career for 23 and a half years and then went on to work for the Department of Defence before retiring in 2004. We went back to Iowa in 2002 for a visit and decided that we would retire there. We bought a piece of land in in Carroll and built our retirement home there, which I designed. The builder's wife wanted me to work for them designing houses for her but I declined as I was ready for quiet life after being a military wife for so long. If you have been a military wife you will know what I mean! So here we are in Iowa and I have my four seasons back. The winters are cold but I don't mind, at least I don't have to put up with all that heat most of the year and it is easier to grow my flowers. I love to be in my Garden whenever possible with my little dog at my heels.

I do miss England and coming home to Upwell; visiting my Mum; chatting with my Mum's neighbours (I still send them cards at Christmas). I would usually take a walk through the village when I visited. It's good to keep in touch and I do miss my family in Upwell. I have my husband, two sons and four grandchildren. My best friend from Upwell, Pauline Gamble, now lives in Missouri and we talk most weeks. My sister, Marge, will be out this way at the end of June for a visit. I am looking forward to that and I sometimes wonder where I would be today if I had not left England. Upwell will always be home.

Does anyone out there have a photograph of Burbeck House or know any of the people Jenny remembers? If so, she would love to hear from you. You can send an email to her at jgiowa@aol.com or you can drop a letter to me, the Clerk, at the address on the back of the newsletter. If you have photographs you would like to share with Jenny I can copy them and get them back to you so you won't lose any treasured items.

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## A PLEA TO DOG WALKERS

Please could dog walkers refrain from putting their dog waste in the litter bin that is at the front of the St Peters Road Cemetery. There are dog waste bins for this purpose situated on the corner of New Bridge and opposite the Church, just past the phone box.

## UPWELL HEALTH CENTRE REPORT

The winds of change are blowing through Townley Close this summer; we have some significant happenings at the health centre. Most momentous is the retirement after 28 years of Paul Millard. Paul started at Upwell in 1982 and has witnessed a transformation of the practice. When he joined there were just two other partners, Maurice Handoll and Tony Rushmer, and only just over 4000 patients. Now we have five partners, a salaried doctor, two nurse practitioners and 9200 patients! Sadly Maurice and Tony are no longer with us although I have been around long enough to remember both of them very well. Paul became the senior partner in 1990 when Tony retired and has been an invaluable brake on the sometimes over enthusiastic ideas of his younger colleagues. Paul is retiring in the middle of August and is moving to Yorkshire fulfilling an intention he and Jennifer have had since they settled here all those years ago. Paul is not going to be idle in retirement; although he will not be practising medicine any more. Paul is going to pursue further study and indulge his passion for nature. I think he also intends to get better at fly fishing by following the old adage practice makes perfect. I am sure you will join with me in wishing him a long and healthy retirement.

When one door closes another opens and Paul's retirement has left open a place in the partnership. I am delighted to tell you that Paul is being replaced by Dr Jenny Haine who has been working as a salaried doctor in the practice for several years. We are thrilled Jenny is joining us as she brings a measure of youthful exuberance back to the practice; she has already cultivated a strong following among the patients. Jenny is the second partner we have appointed who did part of her GP training at the surgery. Clare Blundell and Jenny both spent six months here as trainees during which time we spotted their potential and did our best to lure them back when they had qualified. Jenny's current post of salaried doctor in the practice is being taken by another ex-trainee of ours. Vineet Bhardwaj spent two six month periods with us and we are all very pleased he has agreed to come back and join us again in the new role. Vineet is an excellent doctor and was very popular with both patients and staff during his time with us; he will join the staff again at the beginning of September.

That is not the end of the changes. The turnover of pharmacists is, I am afraid, continuing. Asif Patel has decided to move back to Leicester where his family live as his mother has been ill and he feels he needs to be nearer to give her the support she is due. He is leaving us at the end of July and will be replaced by the gentle giant you may have already met in the pharmacy in recent weeks. Chidi Nneji. Chidi is Nigerian by birth but he trained in Nottingham and has lived in the UK for many years. He is a delightful guy and I am sure he will be very popular with you all.

I don't seem to have said much about health related matters. Well things are fairly typical for summer at present. The flu pandemic did not have as big an impact locally as we feared but it significantly disrupted our surgeries and we had to find time to immunise lots of you. However, we must not forget that not everywhere was as lucky as we were here. Many people died of swine flu, especially a disproportionate number of pregnant young women, so I want to stress the importance of having your flu jab again in October when we start the season all over again.

I am sure many of you will remember in a previous newsletter I mentioned the withdrawal of branch surgeries in Christchurch and Welney. In January as part of the changes we made we altered the way we booked appointments to see us at the surgery in

Upwell. Since then it has been much easier to be seen on the same day with acute problems. The price that was paid for this was to reduce the number of appointments available for pre booking one or more weeks ahead. We have taken note of the feedback you have given us on this and we will be reviewing our appointment policy again soon, especially in light of the altered priorities set for us by the new coalition government.

Finally we have just received the results of the latest government run access survey. This will be last one following the announcement this week that the new government is scrapping the survey. I must admit I think this is a good thing. We were never convinced that the survey gave a fair reflection on how easy or difficult it was for patients to see us, although the average for both the main measures at Upwell for the last two years was well over 80% satisfaction.

We were struck every year by the number of patients indicating in the survey that they would like us to open on Saturdays and in the evenings. Well apart from a three month period in 2008 the surgery has run a Saturday morning surgery for the whole time I have been a partner, and that is 22 years. Also we have one surgery a week which runs until 8pm or starts at 7am. Can I encourage you all to check our practice leaflet or website to see exactly what we are offering as you may be pleasantly surprised!





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## NARROWBOATS AND NARROWBOAT PEOPLE



In the short time, just five years, that I have lived in Upwell, a village to which I was drawn principally because of the river, I have noticed and recorded a considerable increase in the seasonal traffic on the river and specifically, that of narrowboats, one of my main interests, and was therefore pleased to be asked to contribute this article to the Parish Newsletter.

Born and brought up on the north coast of Cornwall it is not true to say I could swim before I could walk, but it was a pretty close thing, and only a short jump from there to fishing and boats. Well actually, anything to do with the water, but my focus here is boats. I started with model sailing boats' graduated to an unseaworthy rowing dinghy owned together with a couple of school mates; moved on to a kit built wood and canvas canoe then a sailing canoe. I rowed pilot gigs and sailed redwing dinghies for the school; conned an Australian surf boat, and owned one of the first Malibu surfboards in the country; joined the RAF and sailed whalers before briefly commanding an RAF Marine Craft Unit – MTB's powered by twin Rolls Royce Merlins and converted for air / sea rescue and target-towing were fun! So, boats are in the blood! Then I got married. Heeling at 30 degrees with freezing water coming aboard by the bucketful held no Sylvie appeal. Neither did racing powerboats offshore in the North Sea. Two cabin cruisers, one on the Thames and another on the River Blackwater were only marginally better – too



cramped, and with only very basic "essential facilities." (The OK phrase is "Bucket and Chuck it" which paints the picture more than somewhat vividly!).

Then, oh happy day, some narrowboat owning friends invited us for a few days cruising. It was a life-changing experience. A stable floating platform with full standing headroom; a proper flushing toilet and a shower; a kitchen with real domestic facilities, – gas cooker, refrigerator, hot water on demand, stainless steel sink with a draining board, ample storage, - beds at least as big as ours at home; a dining table; a solid fuel stove; comfort all round and, above all, tranquillity! Wind in the Willows stuff. Weekends away from the stresses of work, usually mooring overnight close to a friendly hostelry. ("Do I have to? Not another roaring log fire, a succulent steak, and pints of real ale. Oh well, If I must."). Now, I just want to be in a boat and on the water: Don't care whether its ferry or a frigate, but here was something with which Sylvie could be happy. Thus it came to pass that after suffering the penury of our son and heir's seven year sojourn at university, we were able to save the pennies for a while and invest in our own narrowboat, "Mr. Toad" a real cheapo commissioned from new in 1998.

"Mr. Toad" has given us a lot of pleasure. We have learned our way around the world of narrowboats, their history, development and operation: The nation's system of waterways, -

canals and canalised rivers. We've cruised the Thames frequently and the beautiful River Wey where Mr. Toad lived before coming to this neck of the woods. We now keep Mr. Toad at Fox Narrowboats in March. They are the principal hire fleet operator on the Middle Levels and indeed, throughout East Anglia: More about them at the end of this article. We have done the Rivers Nene, Great Ouse, and Cam as well as its tributaries. All of these rivers are canalised, that is, their flow is tamed and controlled by systems of locks and sluices just like the man-made canals. We have used much of the nation's canal system including the north and south Oxford Canals and most of the Grand Union Canals as well as, of course, the Nene Ouse link incorporating Well Creek. And that is still only about 750 miles of the remaining 2000 miles of navigable waterways in Britain.

We picked-up a lot of information about the development of narrowboats out of industrial need, and then as an industry in its own right before decline, near demise, and regeneration as an altogether new industry. We learned something of the colourful people who, in the narrowboats' heyday were its life, and of the, most usually, friendly people we meet who own, operate or use them today. Curiously too, something of the people who stand and watch the narrow boaters who inevitably, get it most wrong when the crowd of observers is at its biggest – boating, the saying goes, is a spectator sport! And I have spent countless enjoyable hours working on the boat, whether it has needed it or not. It's a 'man' thing. Perhaps above all, we have made some new and enduring friendships. So, a bit of history and please, knowledgeable reader, do not be nit-picky – this is a potted synopsis full of generalisation and not a doctoral thesis. We, Britain, yes, its true, led the world into industrial revolution. Factories sprang up close to areas of resource, for example, iron ore for foundries and clay for potteries. They needed fuel so tended also to be near to coal mining areas. But the fuel had to reach the factories, and the factory output had to get to the customers which often meant export via the main maritime centres of London, Liverpool and Bristol. Yes, easily forgotten today, we were the world's greatest maritime power. Unfortunately, Isambard Kingdom B' was hardly even a gleam in his proud mothers eye so the railways were not an available option. Eddie Stobbart had not bought his first pantechicon nor even set up a network of freight carrying stage coaches. (Either the M1 had not been built or, more likely, was closed for widening). Canals, which relied on cheap labour to build them, not on expensive technology, were the answer. Navigators, hence 'navvies,' dug the canals mainly following contours but when essential, using locks to change water levels, creating some 3000 miles of navigable waterway to strict specifications which hold good today. The radius of canal bends combined with a controlled width of navigation and of locks was such that the boats using them were restricted to a length of 72 feet and width of six feet ten inches. The channel depth was three feet which determined the maximum laden draught of narrowboats and the need to pass through sometimes very long

tunnels determined the maximum air draught – the height of the boat above the water. Early craft were constructed of heavy home grown oak planking, were horse drawn, and carried some sixty tons of high density cargo like coal or iron ore. They, and the canals, were owned and operated by companies, some of which, like Fellowes, Morton and Clayton, (FMC), came to predominate, holding virtual monopolies over major routes. Individual boats were crewed by families of mum, dad and often several children all of whom lived in the incredibly small boatman's cabin, about ten feet by six feet, and reminiscent of gypsy caravans, at the back of the boat. Canal people developed cultures of their own reflected in their life styles and even had their own art forms which can often be seen in the unique 'castles and roses' themes of decoration used on many contemporary canal boats. Commercially, speed was of the essence and so, just as with the coaching industry, staging posts were used so that fresh horses could be employed without need for rest breaks, and sometimes, on the most commercial routes, even crews were changed at intervals: These were the 'fly' routes where boats operated non-stop day and night to get urgent high value cargoes to their destinations on time. They were highly competitive and there was much vying to set new records. Owners used carrier pigeons to convey fresh orders to their crews so every boat had its pigeon box on the roof. These can often be seen today though they are generally used for storage – mine holds logs and kindling for the boat's solid fuel stove. Eventually, wooden construction gave way to steel which actually made for lighter boats and gave far greater bulk cargo carrying capacity and in due time, the horse was replaced by first, the steam and later the diesel engine. The greater power afforded by mechanisation allowed narrowboats to tow one, and sometimes more dumb barges or 'butties' as they were known. There are a some preserved examples of these early narrowboats and happily, some of them are still working as examples of our heritage: You may remember that in 2008 the oldest working steam narrowboat, President, and its butty stopped at Upwell creating a great deal of interest whilst transiting to and from the River Great Ouse.

### "Mr. Toad on the River Wey and Steam Narrowboat President at Upwell, 2008

Returning to the history, both the railway and road systems were developed and quickly offered speed and cost with which the canals could not compete. The canals went into decline and many were lost. In the first half of the last century the canals were saved only by two world wars during which teams of mainly women used narrowboats to convey strategic cargoes of munitions and other vital war supplies safely. In the nineteen-fifties a recovering war weary generation emerged aware that life had more to offer than they had experienced before world war two, whilst some capitalised on the opportunities thrown up by the end of hostilities. Cheaply available redundant wartime infrastructure and equipment was called into use by entrepreneurs who set about satisfying all manner of needs and these included better use of leisure time. Amongst many other things, the hire boat industry was born and this included narrowboats – a welcome reprieve which is entirely responsible for halting the further



decline of our canal system and for emergence of new generations of boat much like my own for those sufficiently fired to buy their own craft. It costs quite a lot to hire a narrowboat for a week's holiday but split the cost amongst the eight, ten or even twelve people a modern hire fleet boat can accommodate and it becomes a very affordable holiday: I challenge you not to find yourself fulfilled and refreshed by the experience. Buy your own? Well, anything from a few thousand pounds and a bit of basic DIY will get you afloat in a narrowboat: At the other end of the scale, just a few months ago the first million pound narrowboat was announced – dream on!

And the narrowboat people of today? Well, they are a pretty diverse lot coming from all walks of life and include quite a number of celebrities some of whom, like Timothy West and David Suchet, launch themselves wholeheartedly into areas such as preservation of the waterways. There were even a few narrow boating MP's of all political persuasions who also championed the narrow boating and waterways causes but I am unsure whether they survived the recent electoral extravaganza. More typically though, are the ordinary folk who simply take a narrowboat holiday, maybe just once, but usually more often. There are the owners who live aboard perhaps as a cheaper alternative to housing or often because they are retired and simply enjoy continuously cruising the system: Some who need to escape the rigours of life and even a few who are fugitives from family, from justice, from council tax, or are simply reclusive. However, most are just like me, boaty people who simply want to own and use a narrowboat for nothing more than their own and family pleasure.

### Fox Narrowboats

Fox Narrowboats is a family run company based at March. Our hire fleet has been meandering along Well Creek since the creek re-opened to navigation in the 1970's. I have fond memories of the working parties held to clear debris from the Creek at that time, of skating on the creek as a child and more recently volunteering as a kayak coach with the Welle Duke of Edinburgh's award group in 2000 and 2001.

Our boats have changed in many ways since the early days and now offer luxurious accommodation complete with central heating 240v electricity microwaves, flat screen TV's and other mod con's. They are greener now with modern low emission diesel engines and grey water tanks to prevent pollution.

Our fleet is easily recognisable by its distinct green and red livery. We are again justifiably proud of having an Enjoy England Five star fleet. This position has been held for the past 6 years and has required a considerable investment of time and finance. Last summer saw the introduction of a day hire narrow boat which has allowed people with just a day to go boating and experience all that the Fenland Villages of Upwell and Outwell have to offer.

### Swift Fox in Well Creek and the Hunter Rowe Basin being developed

I like to think of the day boat as taking our company back to its roots. Charlie Fox started the business we now have today with a small fleet of rowing boats and canoes hired by the hour from a small workshop in the riverside street of West End back in 1964. A far cry from the 200 berth marina now situated on the western side of town welcoming boaters from across the main canal network as well as hire customers from around the world.

The question I'm so often asked is "Do you go boating yourself?" Yes I do. My day off next weekend will be spent travelling along Well Creek by boat with friends for lunch at The Five Bells. On the way I hope to see an abundance of wildlife and will spend much of the outward journey Kingfisher spotting.

Paula Syred

Managing Director Fox Narrowboats. May 2010 So, just as Well Creek was in the past a vital part of the life blood of the Fens, it is now a principal part of the area's leisure industry not least for narrow boaters, and it is a valuable public amenity.

Dave Short and Ted Skelton.

