

The
Hildersham
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Express



The Midwife is On Her Way

CHILDBIRTH, MIDWIVES, MONTHLY NURSES & GODSIBS

Last month we learnt all about Archangel Gabriel coming to Mary with the news of the Virgin birth & the fact that this feast of Annunciation was commemorated on March 25th. Well, the day before is St. Gabriel's own feast day & not surprisingly Gabriel is the Patron Saint or the guardian of all women during childbirth. This has given me the inspiration to tell you a little more about early rural Childbirth- & its customs & practices.

When Agriculture was at its peak, at the farm labourer level of society, there was absolutely no stigma attached to a young girl going to the altar pregnant, in fact it was expected. There was no point in marrying a lady if she could not produce you offspring. Often it would be the practice that after a couple have formed a relationship and the prospective sets of parents have accepted the planned union, a family feast would be held. After the festivities had subsided, the parents would stoke up the fire and discretely excuse themselves, so that the newly betrothed couple could set about preparing and proving that they were capable of producing for the next generation of farm labourers. It was regarded very much with the same diligence as breeding any other form of livestock. ❖

However, if you were to fall on either side this expected arrangement, life could far less rosy. If a young Martha found herself pregnant without a young man willing to look after her and the baby, she would be in desperate trouble & would inevitably become a burden on the parish. Now if around the same time in the same parish, lets say young Johnny had been caught scrumpling in the farmer's best orchard; when he came before the magistrate with the more than likely prospect of being transported to one of the colonies. For the Parish there was an obvious solution, why spend £50 transporting this fit young farmer labourer, when he could marry young Martha and take the burden of them all off the Parish's hands; therefore often an arrangement like this was come to.

If unfortunately there was no deal to be had or if young Martha did not want to have a baby yet, there was like at all times in history the very risky prospect of an abortion. The village 'Handy Woman' would often be able to provide a concoction of some sort or other containing things like Parsley, pennyroyal, rue and slippery elm, these were all just as likely to poison the young girl as they were to get rid of the baby. There was of course later some patent medicines, that when taken in excess were bound to have the desired effect, there were *Mother Seigel's Operating Pills* or advertised locally in the Cambridge Chronicle *Widow Welches Brown Pills*, openly described as being excellent for 'Windy disorders' or 'Removing Obstructions in Females'. Drinking Hot Gin in a piping Hot Bath was a cure Domestic servants and the upper classes foolishly attempted. There was of course many other more physical methods and again as there will always be people to carry them out, but we will not go down that road.

This year **Lady Day** and the **Feast of the Annunciation** quite appropriately falls on the same weekend as **Mothering Sunday – March 26th**, there will be a special family service at the church at 10am followed the Hildersham Church Annual Meeting.

Well, this all explains the link between **MARCH & CHRISTMAS**, but when was **NEW YEAR'S DAY**? At the beginning of the 12th Century right up until **1752, LADY DAY** was also the first day of the New Year. Now let me tell you the story of the various old calendars and the **MISSING 11 DAYS OF HISTORY**.

In medieval times, the Exchequer that collected the King's Taxes divided the year into two periods, one ending at **Easter** and one at **Michaelmas** or **September 29th**. This allowed sheriffs of far-flung counties to travel to wherever the King was holding court. They carried the coins collected as the Monarch's dues or taxes from his subjects, without having to carry too much at one daylight hours of winter. Later, as the amount of taxes collected grew greater and roads safer, it was decided to have Four financial periods and in order that they should be the same day each year they were fixed to the main Feast days closest to the **Quarter Days**, the **Vernal** and **Autumnal Equinoxes**, and the **Summer** and **Winter Solstices**.

, it remained the custom to balance the Exchequer books at **MICHAELMAS**, the Easter date for accounting having disappeared. ❄

BUT WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE 1752?

The Roman calendar before Julius Caesar was based on a year of 365 days. During **JULIUS CAESAR'S** reign, it was realised that the calendar had gotten out of step with the seasons by over two months, due to the actual length of time taken for the earth to orbit the sun (**the Solar Year**) was nearer to 365¼ days. So, an extra day or leap year was introduced every four years (**they had two March 6^{ths}, hence the ANUS BISSEXTILIS**). Thus, the **JULIAN CALENDAR** was established in **45 B.C.** However, they had made a fundamental error and some how managed to add an extra day every 3rd year and inevitably a huge error rapidly built up. **EMPEROR AUGUSTINE** soon realised this and put a 12-year hold on Leap Years to try to put things right – therefore the next official Leap Year was **A.D.4**. However, again by the sixteenth century the calendar was out of step, because 365¼ days per year was a slight over-estimate of the true length of a Solar year. The cumulative error then amounted to **10 DAYS**. Therefore, **POPE GREGORY XIII** decreed that the day following **4th October 1582** would be **15th October 1582**. So that the same problem would not recur, the rule for leap years was changed slightly. End of century years would no longer be leap years unless divisible by 400. Therefore, while 1600 and 2000 would still be leap years as in the Julian calendar, the years 1700, 1800, and 1900 would not. Thus, the **GREGORIAN CALENDAR** was established.

Unfortunately, the sixteenth century was a time of severe religious division right across Europe. States still obedient to the Papacy adopted the Gregorian calendar at once, that is in October 1582. These were Spain, Portugal, and Italy, with France following in December of that year, and Prussia, the Catholic States of Germany, Holland and Flanders on 1st January 1583. Catholic parts of Switzerland followed in the next two years, Poland went Gregorian in 1586 and Hungary in 1587. In the year 1700, the German and the Netherlands Protestant States and Denmark adopted the Gregorian calendar. Sweden wavered, keeping the Gregorian non-leap year of 1700 but reverting back in 1712 by having two leap days that year. The Swedes finally settled for the Gregorian calendar in 1753 omitting the eleven days from 18th to the end of February of that year. You will of course have noticed that I have not mentioned the good old British, always one to go its own way and often at this time lagged behind the rest of Europe:

In Britain, the Gregorian calendar was not adopted until 1752, also part of the same Act of Parliament, changed the date of **NEW YEAR'S DAY** to **1ST JANUARY**. This meant that **31st December 1751** was decreed as New Year's Eve, to be followed by New Year's day on the **1st January 1752**, this is still the current Act of Parliament we abide by today. As England had taken the year 1700 to be a leap year, the difference that had now built up between the **Julian** and **Gregorian calendars** now amounted to **11 DAYS**. The Act of Parliament clearly specified that **Wednesday 2nd September 1752** was to be followed the next day by **Thursday 14th September 1752** – and hence:

“THESE ARE THE MISSING 11 DAYS OF BRITISH HISTORY”

This correction of 11 days caused great concern and dismay amongst the peasants, who thought that the authorities had literally **STOLEN 11 DAYS OF THEIR LIFE!**

(This was the reason behind the trick maths question at the end of the last edition! - see the answer to this and the other February questions next month)

At the same time the balancing of books was also transferred from **Michaelmas** to **Christmas**. The changes were to apply to all the Dominions of the British Crown, including of course the North American colonies; you can see the effect of these changes quite clearly in the way the records are written in the Hildersham Parish Registers. ✖

Another obvious question is why does the **Tax year** end on **April 5th**. Well quite simply all we have learn so far applies – Lets look at the evidence: -

In the 17th century, **HEARTH TAX** and other taxes were collected on **LADY DAY - 25TH MARCH**. When Britain forsook the Julian calendar for the Gregorian calendar, we also know that at the same time **1ST JANUARY** was adopted as the formal date for the start of each year.

As a concession, the Government decided that the tax year 1752-53 should keep the length that it would have been without the change. This avoided accusations of collecting a whole year's tax for a year of only 354 days. It was thought that it was far to complicated a tax issue to change the end of the financial year. However, to ensure that the following tax year was the correct length it was extended by **12 DAYS** from **24 March 1753** to **5 April 1753**. In 1854, the Government decided that the end of the financial year should be changed to **31ST MARCH**, but most confusingly it was bizarrely decided that the end of each tax year would remain at 5th April. Hence, the tax year still continues to run from **6th April** to **5th April** each year. 🐣

HILDERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS MAY 4TH 2006

Back in November last year, I told you that in 2006, it will be time for the residents of Hildersham to Elect who it would like to serve them for the next three years as Parish Councillors. Hildersham is entitled to have five Parish Councillors, one of whom is selected by the other four as Parish Council Chairman. This Election will take place on the same day as the other Local Elections on Thursday, May the 4th.

If there are more than five nominations for Parish Councillor, an election will take place; if **NOT** all the nominated people will be appointed as Parish Councillors and the vacant positions will have to be filled by requesting certain individuals to stand, clearly this is not a desirable situation.

Perspective Hildersham Parish Councillors, can be nominated or put their own name forward.

The **QUALIFICATIONS FOR CANDIDATURE** for Hildersham Parish Councillor are as follows:

To qualify as a candidate a person must be 21 years of age and a Commonwealth citizen, citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a citizen of another Member State of the European Union and either:

- a) Be registered as a Local Government Elector within the Parish; or
- b) Have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises within the Parish during the whole of the previous twelve months; or
- c) His/Her principal or only place of work during the previous twelve months has been in the area of the Parish; or
- d) Have resided within the Parish or within 4.8 kilometres (three miles) thereof during the whole of the previous twelve months.

Last year, I also asked you to have a long think over the winter months, as to whether you would like to put your name forward as a Parish Councillor. As there have not been enough Nominees - there has not been an **ACTUAL ELECTION** for places on the Hildersham Parish Council for many years. As you know from previous magazines and the inevitable free flow of information around any small community, there are many very important issues facing the future of Hildersham. Here are just a few of those issues that will need to be addressed over the coming months; they are:

- e) *The Future of our Village Hall*
- f) *The Charitable status of the Village Hall and Parish Land*
- g) *The Best use of Parish Land for the Benefit of all the Village*
- h) *How do we Best prepare the Village against the Risk of Flooding*
- i) *How do we square the urgent need to effectively get excess rainwater into the drains, without changing the rural feel and appearance of the village*
- j) *How do we Best Communicate these Needs and Discuss the Possible Solutions*
- k) *How do we deal with the Thorny Issue of Parking and Verges*
- l) *How do we adjust to the new Financial Reality of Local Government*

All the above are just some of the many difficult questions that any future Hildersham Parish Councillors will have to deal with; they are issues that simply will not go away. Yet, despite this, I think that they hold a great challenge and if we work together as a united community, we can find the solutions that will be right for Hildersham.

In April, after I have received the official minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on March 8th from the Parish Clerk, I will give you a more detailed report. However, to give you a broad feel for the typical range of issues that are discussed, I will give a brief outline of the March meeting here:

THE HILDERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8TH MARCH 2006

❖ *Public Participation session: that always starts off the meetings:*

- There was an in-depth discussion on the new kerbing north of the river – the poor workmanship, its impact on the look of the village, were just some of the issues discussed.
- There was discussion of the general problem of the green area in front of the village hall.
- There was discussion about the state of the Bus Shelter at the A1307 – it is full of broken glass, even old trainers.
- The increasing problem of youths parking by the Village Hall or in the Ford Access-way, leaving empty beer bottles and in the trees some signs of the apparatus used in drug taking.

❖ *District and County Councillor Report by John Batchelor:*

- The proposed new turning arrangements at the A1307: Councillor Batchelor explained that the section 106 agreement for Granta Park phase 2 has been agreed that the £350,000 be used to fund a right turn into Hildersham from the A1307. However, the County Council Highways department have objected and asked for the money to be put by for the long term project of a cycleway from the Four-Went-Ways to Cambridge – Councillor Batchelor stated that he would continue to press our case strongly.

- Councillor Batchelor explained that the School Bus department was looking at the best way to resolve the Hildersham children's safe route to Abington Primary School problem.
- Correspondence had been received from Councillor Smith regarding Asbestos and the continuing problem with parking on the grass at Meadowlands – it was hoped that the site visit and new suggestions would improve the situation, but as the land belongs to SCDC, we are awaiting permission and a decision from them.

❖ **Village Hall Refurbishment:**

- *Later on there is a paragraph on the Hildersham Village Hall Sub-Committee.*
- The Hire charges for the Village Hall were discussed and it was decided to raise the prices. [See next month for details]
- There was also discussion of the need for a deposit of £100 to be left for unknown hirers of the Village Hall from outside the village. The basic principle behind this and its need was generally agreed.

❖ **Village Maintenance:**

- The quotes from the various Grass Cutting Contractors was discussed and a selection was made for the 2006 Season
- Street lighting was again discussed and we were informed that the SCDC has decided to retain ownership and still be responsible for replacement and renewal of the lamp posts – with the Parish Council being responsible for the repair and maintenance of the actual electrical parts of the lights and the electricity used.

❖ **Correspondence:** [NOTE: While the actual letters were not read out, their contents were widely and openly discussed]

(a) A letter had been received expressing concern at the large number of animals frequenting the allotments – especially Rabbits and Rats

Follow Up Discussion: Parish Councillors agreed to look into ways to try and restrict this animal activity.

(b) A letter had been received from Margaret Bate explaining that Mr Gerald Franklin, the Parish Council Chairman was completely mistaken in his belief that she was victimising Mr Martin Taylor with the aim of getting him removed from his council bungalow at Meadowlands. She stated that nothing was further from the truth. She went on to explain that she continued to enjoy a long held friendship with Mr Taylor, although they had disagreed over the issue of parking on the grass. She stated that she had told Mr Taylor personally that she had communicated with SCDC over the state of the grass at Meadowlands. She also stated that she wanted the letter to be read out at the Parish Council meeting, so that it is publicly known that she would never do anything behind Mr Taylor's back.

Follow Up Action: Parish Councillors acknowledged the contents of this letter.

(c) A letter had been received from Mr Gerald Franklin, the Parish Council Chairman, explaining that it was his intention to hold further Motocross Events at Rectory Farm. He explained that he had always had a great passion for this sort of activity and that under the law as it stands he was entitled to hold up to 14 such events a year, although he did not envisage that there would be this number. He went on to explain that he would try to hold them in a more distant field and use straw bales to try and dampen down the noise. He went on to say that they would be timed so that they would not interfere with church services and that he would donate some of the proceeds towards the village hall refurbishment.

Follow Up Action: Parish Councillors expressed most strongly their surprise and disappointment that Mr Franklin had decided to hold further Motocross events at Rectory Farm. Especially in light of the many letters of complaint, deeply held views expressed at the November Parish Council Meeting and all the other strong feelings of opposition in the village after the last event held in October 2005. It was generally felt that Motocross events at Rectory Farm would have a detrimental effect on the vast majority of Hildersham residents. Mr Franklin countered this argument by stating that he in turn had

received a great deal of support in the village and had requests of the dates of the next Motocross meeting from residents wishing to attend.

❖ **Planning:**

➤ 7 Beeches and Elm Cottages was discussed – [see Parish Council notice board for details]

❖ **Any Other Business**

(i) The P.C. Elections were discussed and the genuine need for an Actual Election was fully supported, as well as the need for this to be clearly explained in a Late March Edition of the Hildersham Express.

(ii) Andrew Westwood-Bate pointed out that it would soon be the 120th Anniversary of the Act of Parliament that led to the Enclosure of Hildersham on the 25th April 1886 and the building of the Road Bridge. Hildersham was the last Parish in Cambridgeshire and one of the last in the country to be enclosed – Opposition to this was led by the Goodwin Rectors and the Webb Farmers – who believed it was not in the best interest of the villagers. However, after Mr Thomas Webb Jnr. aged just 40, was buried on the 28th February 1881, having died in the Smallpox outbreak in the village, the momentum of the opposition to enclosure was lost. The Hildersham Enclosure Act specified that the former Parish Common Land of St Margaret's Green and Night Common be transferred to the Huddlestone of Sawston Hall; whereas about sixteen acres of the Huddlestone's former arable land was transferred to form the two areas of Parish Field Gardens (*Allotments*) and some eight acres of pasture for the Recreation Ground. The act also specified the 'Stop-Up' of several old roads as well as giving the permission to build the Hildersham Road Bridge and to straighten the river. ✽

I think this brief outline gives you a good idea of the range of topics discussed at a typical Hildersham Parish Council meeting. Now as promised, a brief report from the Village Hall Sub-Committee: - The Village Hall Sub-Committee membership is made up of Parish Councillors and several non-Parish council members. Over the last few months, it has been working very hard on your behalf. We have had many of the required surveys carried out; this includes a detailed Structural Survey. This was a crucial first step before any other money was spent on repairing and refurbishing the Village Hall. We shall have to wait until we receive the final report, but it is clear that historically building regulations were not as rigorous in the 1920's. The Hall itself is supported above the flood plain on brick piers or columns. It would initially appear that the central white brick columns might have no foundations at all and just sit on the bare earth. While the outer harder engineering brick columns only have very shallow footings. You only have to look at the floor of the Hall to see how it has moved. There is a 7½” drop from the centre line to the outside wall and the kitchen end has clearly sunk. I mention all this at this stage to emphasise the fact that we are carrying out exhaustive investigations and before any decisions are made, we will be holding an Open-Day to explain all the possible options available to the village, so that some very difficult decisions can be made.. Definitely, **“Doing Nothing”** is no longer an option, as it is clear from many of the surveys, that before long if nothing is done, we will no longer be able to use the village hall. This would have disastrous consequences for the well being of village life.

Therefore, if you feel like I do that Hildersham is a very special place, why not put your name forward for nomination to the Parish Council. The outgoing Hildersham Parish Council and the Hildersham Village Hall Sub-Committee all firmly believe that it is very important and in the best interests of the village that in this years Parish Council Elections that there is an **Actual Election**; not just a hand over to the few that have put their names forward. With all these important future issues and decisions looming, it would give the incoming Parish Councillors the confidence and the backing of a firm mandate from the Hildersham residents that had elected them.

NOMINATION PAPERS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE PARISH CLERK, BUT SWIFT ACTION IS NECESSARY.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR NOMINATIONS TO BE ACTUALLY WITH THE RETURNING OFFICER AT SCDC IS APRIL 3RD 2006

After writing all this, I think it is clear how important I personally believe all these matters are for the future of Hildersham and this is why I have decided to put my name forward for Election to the

Hildersham Parish Council. We are very lucky, Hildersham has a vast pool of talent in its midst representing a wide range of disciplines. These people have exactly the right qualities that are needed, so on behalf of the Hildersham Parish Council I ask you to step forward and join them. We also owe a great debt of gratitude to all those who in the past have served on the Hildersham Parish Council; all these people have a vast amount of knowledge and expertise. I think that this should be tapped into and we should ask them to act as Mentors to the incoming Parish Council. ✨

Hildersham has always been a very close community & together there isn't a single problem that with careful deliberation & a bit of hard work & co-operation cannot ultimately be resolved. 🙏

HILDERSHAM PARISH CLERK

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FOR HILDERSHAM EXPRESS EDITORIAL ISSUES

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SPECIAL REQUEST - PLEASE READ:

LOST IN THE VICINITY OF THE BACK GATE AT HILDERSHAM HALL - A SIGNET RING OF GREAT SENTIMENTAL VALUE. THIS WAS A WEDDING GIFT AND HAS BEEN WORN BY A LADY FOR 65 YEARS AND IT SLIPPED FROM HER FINGER ON FEBRUARY 11TH. SHE IS NATURALLY BEREFT AND IF YOU HAVE FOUND THE RING PLEASE RING RUTH MOORE 892900.

It should be noted that the Editorial Opinions and Views expressed in the HILDERSHAM EXPRESS Do not always reflect the opinions and views held by the Hildersham Parish Council

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