

The Raynhams' Newsletter - February 2025

Dates for the Diary

- **Saturday 8th, 15th, 22nd** - Creative Crafters in Village Hall from 10am to midday.
- **Saturday 8th, 15th, 22nd** - Bar night in the Village Hall from 7 to 11pm.
- **Monday 3rd** - Meeting of the Village Hall Committee in the Village Hall from 6:30pm.
- **Friday 28th** - Mobile library at West Raynham bus shelter from 9:30 to 9:45am.
- **Friday 28th** - Meeting of the Gardening Club in the Village Hall from 6 to 7pm.

Local Church Services

- **Sunday 16th** - All Saints, Helhoughton, from 10:30am.
- **Sunday 23rd** - St Martin, South Raynham, from 10:30am.

St. Margaret's Ruins - Fundraising Weekend - 12-14 April

 Save the Date! 

St. Margaret's in Ruins – Fundraising Weekend
 **12-14 April 2025**

 Preserving the Past, Engaging the Present, Inspiring the Future.



 **Key Events:**

Saturday, 12 April 2025

- **Spring Clean of the Churchyard** (10:00–12:00) @ St. Margaret's Churchyard
Join us to tidy up and enjoy light refreshments.
- **Funk & Soul Bar Night** (19:00 onwards) @ Village Hall
Dance to DJ Funky Chicken and enjoy delicious Mexican food and a silent auction!

Sunday, 13 April 2025

- **Michael Chestney's Tractor Run** (Time TBD)
A scenic parade with refreshments and fundraising stops along the route including breakfast before departure in the village hall.

Monday, 14 April 2025

- **Tracy's Easter Bingo Night** (Evening) @ Village Hall
Win fun prizes and enjoy a community raffle—all for a great cause!

 **Call for Volunteers & Donations!**

MORE TO COME!

Let's make this weekend a success—get involved today!

Please contact Anne-Marie Martin, 07813 030426, enquiries@stmargaretsruins.org

Stay tuned for more details.

Dog Walkers - Please Help

We are very fortunate to have a lovely area in which to enjoy walking, either on our own or with our dogs. However, it has been noted that there has been an increase recently of dog waste left on paths and in the fields and meadows around the village. There are several bins in the village and on the outskirts, so could all owners please pick up after their pets as this is not only unpleasant for other walkers but dangerous to animals.

Norwich Science Festival 15th to 22nd February



Drop in to the Forum between Sunday 16th and Tuesday 18th to find out about Butterfly Conservation (Norfolk), and on Monday 17th and Wednesday 19th the Hawk and Owl Trust (Sculthorpe Moor) will also be present.



Wednesday 2 April
10am to 12 noon
Village Hall
in aid of West Raynham School



Newsletter Contact Details and Past Issues

- Deadline for submissions - 25th of each month.
- westray.newsletter@gmail.com - To send in articles or manage subscriptions.
- <https://www.raynhampc.info/documents> - Download previous Newsletters.
- Recent issues available to view in West Raynham Reading Room.

West Raynham Coffee Morning - 25th January

Thank you to everyone who attended the first coffee morning of 2025. A total of £425 was raised for Thornage Hall, which provides supported living for adults with learning disabilities. Several parents and families whose children use services provided by Thornage Hall were also at the coffee morning. Craft sales, including spice mixes, cards, bird and bat boxes and candle holders, contributed £200 and the rest came from donations for cakes and hot drinks.



We would like to thank our wonderful village bakers, including Sandra, Chris, Jenny, Caroline and Roy, for the lovely cakes, scones and sausage rolls, and to Melanie, Mahnvir and Andrew for helping during the coffee morning.

If you are interested in knowing more about Thornage Hall, then please visit their website at: <https://www.thornagehall.co.uk/>. Two regular events are an annual summer fair in September at the Hall, and a craft sale in November held at Godwick Great Barn.



We also had an exhibition of winning and runner-up photos from last year's photo competition in the Newsletter, and we were really pleased Paula Smith was able to be at the coffee morning. Paula has been the competition judge in 2020, which was our first one, and then in 2022 and 2024.



Paresh and Paula with Debbie and Jane who took part in the 2024 photo competition



Display of winning and runner-up photos from 2024 selected by Paula

Andy's Last Night

On Friday December 13th last year, Andy Mead undertook his last official bar night in the Village Hall. Andy has been the mainstay behind the bar for over three years but now wishes to spend more time on his boat and with his family.

We presented Andy with a much-appreciated HMV voucher (as you can see by his face in the photo!) as a token of our grateful thanks for all that he has done.

Andy will continue to appear in the village dog sitting, DIYing and no doubt will pop up behind the bar from time to time. We wish him many happy hours listening to whatever music he was able to purchase with his voucher.

Debbie Lamont.



West Raynham Christmas Party

The West Raynham Village Hall Christmas Party, held on 14th December 2024, was a joyful celebration of community and festive cheer. The afternoon unfolded with laughter, music, and the delightful scents of the season. The beautifully decorated hall resonated with classic Christmas tunes that created a heartwarming atmosphere. Carol singing provided a magical interlude, and the warmth of friendly conversation made the event a perfect blend of festive traditions and community spirit.

Adding to the excitement was a fantastic raffle, offering a table full of wonderful prizes. Our thanks to all those who donated wonderful gifts for the raffle. We raised just over £125 from the raffle and were pleased to donate the proceeds to Cranmer House Residential Home for the Elderly in Fakenham, so they too could enjoy a wonderful party of their own.

Special thanks go to Debbie, Tracey, Andrew, Bridget H., Sandra, Sid and Monica for all their help and support, and a huge thank you to Theresa for once again baking the most stunning cake for our raffle. Heartfelt thanks to the Solar Fund Committee for providing us with the grant to make the event possible again this year.



Anne-Marie Martin.

Snowdrop Season

It's that time of the year again when gardeners look for the first signs of Spring but, of course, February is still winter! One of the first plants to show that Spring is in the air is the humble snowdrop, found in the wider countryside and in our gardens. We are very lucky to have some excellent places to see snowdrops close to us and the place that most people know is Walsingham Abbey and its extensive grounds in Little Walsingham, just the other side of Fakenham. The Abbey and Shirehall Museum are open daily until Sunday 2nd March from 10am to 4pm.



There are other places to visit which are open under the National Garden Scheme, and probably the closest to us is Lexham Hall, which has a very large garden with extensive areas of snowdrops set around a 17th Century Hall with a large lake as well. There is often a snowdrop walk to Lexham church but be aware it can be muddy on the walk to the church, though there are good paths in the garden. As well as snowdrops there are other plants and shrubs in flower such as hellebores and scented winter shrubs. This garden is open from Sunday 9th to 15th February from 11am to 4pm.



Another local garden is Bagthorpe Hall to the north of East Rudham. This also has extensive areas of snowdrops along a woodland walk and again may be muddy! This garden is open on Sunday 23rd February from 11am to 4pm.

A bit further away in the countryside near

Sheringham is Chestnut Farm at West Beckham, which is a plantsman's garden and has over 100 different species of snowdrops! A couple of varieties flower as early as December. Like Bagthorpe Hall, Chestnut Farm is open on Sunday 23rd February from 11am to 4pm, but there is a booking system which needs to be completed before your visit.

Please visit www.ngs.org.uk to see further details about these three gardens, including how to find them. Let's hope we have some sunny Sundays in February to view these gardens at their best!



Members of The Raynham's Gardening Club will be visiting Lexham Hall and please get in touch if you want to join us so we can organise sharing cars. If you are interested, then please email the Newsletter in the first instance at westray.newsletter@gmail.com.

Bryan Welton.

The Fight for Fakenham Commons

Part 2: A Summer of Discontent 1

By August 1869, surveyor Robert Wright had produced a plan for the Fakenham enclosure showing how the commons were to be divided up, and he presented the proposals at a public meeting in the Corn Hall. According to the press report, the well-attended meeting expressed 'general concurrence' with the proposals. Nothing further was heard until April 1870, when it was announced that the valuers report, together with estimates of expenses for the enclosure, was to be deposited at the Corn Hall for inspection, prior to a public meeting scheduled for 26th April to hear any final objections to the proposals.

The night before the meeting, in a presage of events to come over the summer months, Fakenham heath was set ablaze, a number of boys with lighted brands spreading the flames by burning furze (gorse) bushes across the shrubland. The incendiarism was almost certainly a response to a notice that had been posted on the church door on 24th April. It gave notice of the suspension of commons rights, authorised by Robert Wright, the valuer and surveyor. News spread as quickly across the town as the fire did over the heath. People flocked to witness the blaze, described by the Norfolk News as "an impressive sight" which could be seen for several miles. The paper gave its own verdict on the arson attack:

There is little doubt that the heath was fired as an expression of abhorrence of what is regarded by some as an act of legal robbery perpetrated by property upon poverty in the enclosure of the common and heath which is just being completed. We are informed that two men are in custody on a charge of having caused the fire, but the damage done amounts to nothing worth naming.

It was an extraordinary statement by the liberal-leaning Norfolk News but accurately reflected how the labourers and small tradesmen of Fakenham felt about the imminent loss of their rights to the commons.

The following day's meeting was chaired by Assistant Commissioner Wetherell, three and a half years after presiding over his first public meeting in respect of the enclosure. In the press report a "few slight objections" were considered but there was no significant impediment preventing the enclosure from proceeding. Wetherell informed the assembled that this was to be the last meeting on the subject and that those who wished to take possession of their allotted land, as now staked out, could do so as the valuer, Robert Wright, would write immediately to the Commissioners for the official legal warrant, "but that for the arrival of this they need not wait, as it was now simply a matter of form". Wetherell's words would come back to haunt him. He was clearly keen to see the process completed after such a long gestation, and given the absence of any concerted resistance thus far could not have known what was about to unfold. Within weeks Fakenham would be in turmoil.

Allottees, accepting Wetherell's invitation to take possession of their new parcels of land, started to erect fences along the boundaries of the heath and commons. They wanted to make a start by growing crops or pasturing animals, depending on the type of ground they were allotted. For men like Robert Frost, shopkeeper of Oak Street, his three strips of land on the common represented an opportunity to consolidate his status.

Mr Turner and others were ferociously pelted with stones, some of them of a large size. Mr James Turner received a severe blow in the forehead from a stone and wherever a knot of respectable persons stood conversing, a volley of stones quickly flew into their midst. Some of the fencing having been recently tarred, it burned with tremendous fury, the flames leaping high into the air, and darkening the heavens with vast clouds of smoke. In the melee some of Mr Smith's windows and the glass of his greenhouse was demolished. During the whole of Tuesday, the excitement in the town was intense; knots of persons were seen conversing at every corner, and it was reported that in the evening it was intended to finish the work of destruction on the heath, and then to repair to the Back Common, to destroy the fences erected by Mr Sillett and Mr Howorth on the property which they had purchased at a public auction. Crowds assembled at night on the heath, and until midnight kept its inhabitants in a state of disquietude. The whinze was set on fire in numerous places; and at times the sight was not without some degree of grandeur, mixed with a wholesome dread lest the sparks, borne along in that direction by a strong wind, should set fire to the farming property of Mr William Southgate. Although due notice was given by the Valuer, prohibiting the feeding of cattle etc. on the lands in question, certain persons have persisted in defying the authorities. The Valuer has, therefore, issued a handbill, announcing "that all horses, cattle, sheep and swine, which shall be found going or depasturing upon the said inclosure, or lands to be enclosed, or any part thereof, will be impounded until the person or persons permitting such horses, cattle, sheep or swine, to go or pasture upon such land or any part thereof, shall pay the sum of 10 shillings for each horse or head of cattle, and 5s for each sheep or swine". Steps are also being taken to secure efficient aid from the police authorities, and to punish the offenders guilty of outrage.

The May disturbances shook the town to its foundations. Although the scheme had been in process for several years, the premature erection of fences gave local inhabitants the opportunity to vent their anger over the loss of their commons. It was a sign that the people of Fakenham were not prepared to give them up without a struggle.

Next Month: A Summer of Discontent 2

Phil Henshaw.