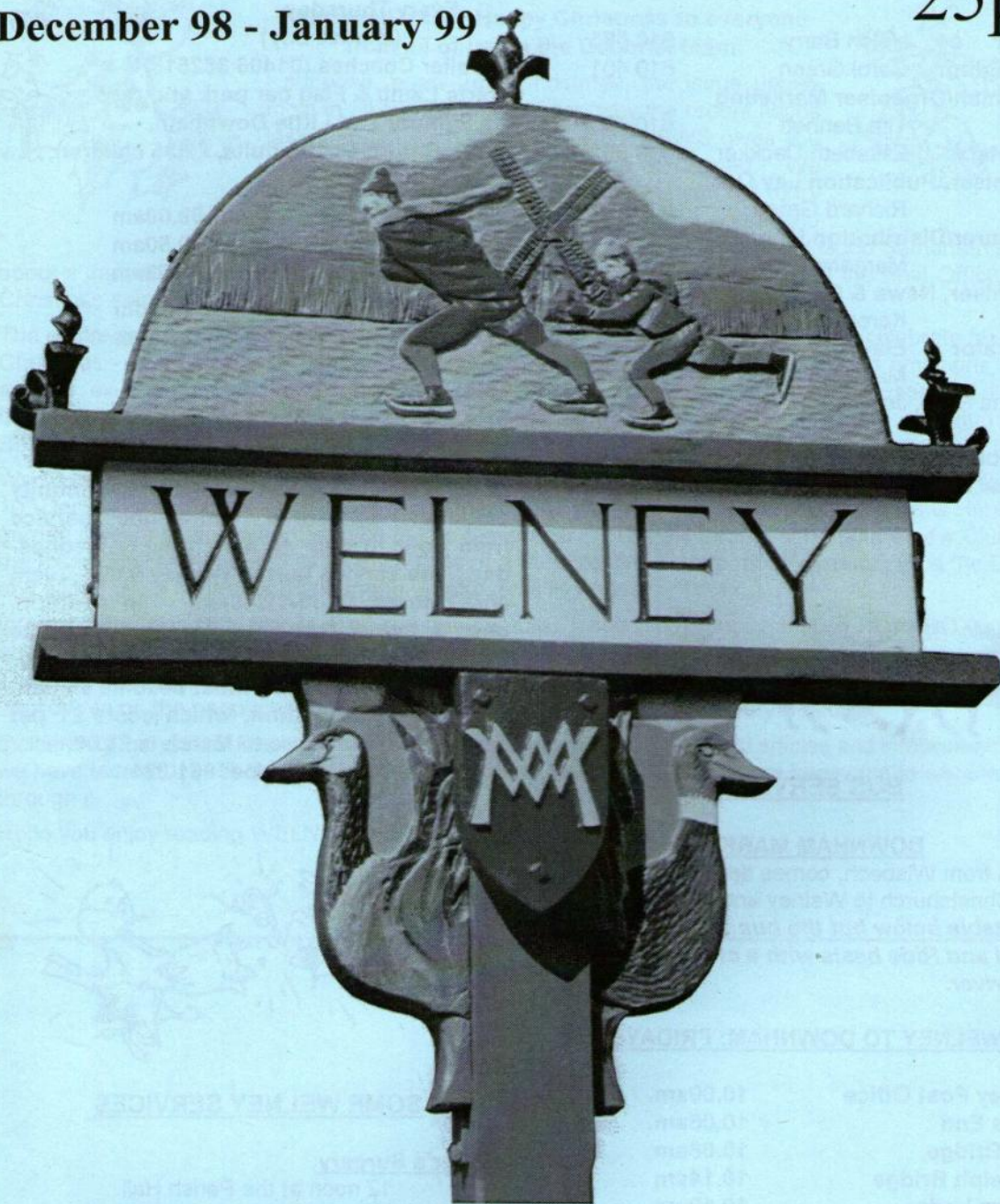


Issue N° 8

December 98 - January 99

25p



NEWS



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Chairman/Organiser Marketing	Tim Bennett	610 433
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Sheona Snell, Jo Pegg.		

Distribution: Peter & Charlotte Cox, Pat Rix, Michael Dickinson, Tom Fisher and the Editorial Team.



BUS SERVICES

DOWNHAM MARKET

Starts from Wisbech, comes through Upwell and Christchurch to Welney and Downham. *Timetable below but the bus will operate on a Hail and Ride basis with a clear signal to the driver.*

WELNEY TO DOWNHAM: FRIDAYS

Welney Post Office	10.00am.
Lakes End	10.06am.
Lots Bridge	10.08am
Nordelph Bridge	10.14am
Salter's Lode	10.19am.
Downham Market	10.26am.
Downham Market	12.15pm
Salter's Lode	12.22pm.
Nordelph Bridge	12.27pm.
Lots Bridge	12.33pm.
Lakes End	12.35pm.
Welney Post Office	12.40pm.

(Fare: £1.70 single, £2.20 return)

ELY

Every Thursday
(Market Day)

Cavalier Coaches (01406 362518)

Starts Lamb & Flag car park and runs via Pymoor and Little Downham.

Fare: Return £4.10 adults, £2.35 children, £3.20 pensioners.

Welney	09.00am
Ely Market Street	09.50am
Tesco's car park	09.53am
Tesco's car park	12.35pm
Ely Market Street	12.40pm
Welney	1.28pm

MARCH

Apologies for not having publicised this service before.

FACT (Fenland Association for Community Transport) operate a "dial a ride" service from door to door to March every Wednesday. The service leaves Welney 9.00-9.30am and returns 12.30-12.45pm. In addition, once a month 'specials' run to places like Peterborough and King's Lynn.

To use the service you must become a member of the Association, which costs £1 per year. The return fare to March is £3.00

For further details phone: 661 234



SOME WELNEY SERVICES

Doctor's Surgery

12 noon at the Parish Hall
Monday, Wednesday & Friday

Prescriptions

Can be collected from the Post Office (inform the doctor at the time) Repeat prescriptions can be left and collected at the Post Office.

Wet Fishmonger calls at:

3.00pm Chestnut Avenue and
3.15pm at the Post Office every Friday



EDITORIAL

First of all a very Happy Christmas to everyone from all of us on the Editorial team.



I suppose, apart from Christmas, the issue uppermost in all our minds has been why the recent floods lasted so long. I hope WELNEY NEWS gives you some of the facts from the people concerned. We are not here to give or support any opinion but to try and ensure we get answers from the people who control the situation. In addition there is a delightful Good Samaritan story

about a Japanese lady caught in the floods and taken in by our own Wendy at the Post Office. A Christmas-spirit sort of story, if I'm allowed to mix Biblical events in this way.

The centre pages go to Ernie James, recovered from food poisoning and waiting to celebrate his 92nd Christmas - he'll be 93 on 8th January 1999. Jo Pegg tells us of her studies and ambitions, and another ex-William Marshall School pupil, Mark Smith, is congratulated on graduation at Nene University College, Northampton. Thanks to Cissie Bedford for bringing this to our attention. Bernie Markham explains what happens to all those heaps and lorry loads of sugar beet.

We have a photographic account of the William Marshall School's Carol Service and Nativity Play on 10th December and some photographic evidence of the damage caused to Amy and Andrew Hankin's garden by cars skidding on black ice in late November. There's information about a new Club on the Parish Hall page as well as all the details of a St. Valentine Dance next February. Plus the Diary and all the usual information and round-up of events in Welney

In our next edition we'd like to start two new features - one provisionally entitled **SOAPBOX** giving anyone the chance to let off steam on their own topic - something about which they feel strongly. The other would be entitled **MY LIFE IN A DAY** and would give us a chance to read about the very varied lives of the people who live in Welney. Contributions will be very welcome.

Incidentally this edition has been noticeable for the number of unsolicited articles and information that we have received. That is really great - it is our newsletter and people are beginning to want to talk through it.

Hope you enjoy reading WELNEY NEWS.

Helen Barry



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WELNEY PARISH HALL

The Parish Hall Committee recently asked the Trustees of Marshall's Charity if they could help towards the cost of two changes in the Hall which could not have been foreseen. The first was a change to the signs for emergency and all other exits. This was a new illuminated design imposed by EC Regulations. The second was the replacement of electric payment meters brought about by the change in the size of the 50p coin. The total cost was over £900 and the Committee had no choice but to comply with the EC ruling and to adapt to the coinage change.

The Trustees of Marshall's Charity responded very generously with a cheque for £904 to cover all the work.

The Committee is very grateful indeed for this response. Without it - bearing in mind having to raise £1,800 a year to keep the Hall up and running - there is no doubt we would have faced serious financial difficulties.

An appropriate place then to give our thanks to **Amy Markham** who will donate over £100 to Parish Hall funds in the new year. **Amy** is an agent for a greetings card catalogue and gives all her profits every year to the Hall. It is a very generous gesture and although the rest of the Committee thank her each year, I think it is time that everyone in the village knew of her generosity.

Thanks, Amy.

ST. VALENTINE DANCE

SATURDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 1999

MUSIC BY

TJ COUNTRY

TICKETS: £2.50

available at The Three Tunns, the Post Office and from Alison Ingram: 610 525

DOORS OPEN 7.00PM

All profits to the Parish Hall

Friends of Welney Parish Hall

There is a move afoot to set up a club or association of people interested in promoting, and taking part in, fund-raising for the Parish Hall. This would be a registered Club with Officers and a constitution dedicated to raising money for badly needed work on the Parish Hall

- for example a new floor to replace the present bow-shaped one, and a sound-proofed partition so that the Hall could be used for two functions at a time, or indeed make one small function warmer and more cosy.

The Club would be registered at the Parish Hall and would include the possibility of regular prize money on a lottery type basis - among other ideas.

If you are interested in joining or indeed becoming part of the organising team, please ring John Waring Jnr on 610 332.

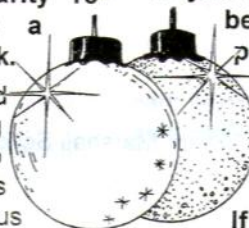
John and his helpers will be coming round to individual households to explain the new Club.

If we can raise money through this Club we might be able to raid the National Lottery Small Grants by matching their money with our own.

Rosi Beckford
(Chairman)



Help fill our
stocking



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DIARY DATES

DECEMBER DECEMBER DECEMBER DECEMBER DECEMBER DECEMBER

Fri	18th	9.30 am onward	Mobile Library	Usual Location
		7.30 pm	Bingo	Village Hall
Fri	23th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hal
	29th	2.00 pm	Friendship Club	Village Hall
	31st		Private Booking	Village Hall

JANUARY JANUARY JANUARY JANUARY JANUARY JANUARY JANUARY

Wed	4th	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
	6th	7.00 pm	WI	Village Hall
	7th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Mon	11th	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
Tues	12th	2.00 pm	Friendship Club	Village Hall
		7.30 pm	Parish Council	Village Hall
Wed	13th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Mon	18th	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
Wed	20th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Fri	22th	9.30 am onward	Mobile Library	Usual Location
Mon	25rd	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
Tues	26th	2.00 pm	Friendship Club	Village Hall
Wed	27th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Fri	29th	7.30 pm	Bingo	Village Hall

FEBRUARY FEBRUARY FEBRUARY FEBRUARY FEBRUARY FEBRUARY

Mon	1st	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
Wed	3rd	7.00 pm	WI	Village Hall
Thur	4th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Sat	6th	10.00 - 12 noon	Mini Mart	Village Hall
Mon	8th	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
Tues	9th	2.00 pm	Friendship Club	Village Hall
Wed	10th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Sat	13th	7.30 pm	St Valentine Dance	Village Hall
Mon	15th	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
Wed	17th	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Fri	19th	9.30 am onward	Mobile Library	Usual Location
Mon	22nd	10.00 - 12 noon	Playbus	Village Car Park
Wed	2nd	7.00 pm	WI	Village Hall
Thur	3rd	7.30 pm	Whist	Village Hall
Tues	23th	2.00 pm	Friendship Club	Village Hall

CHURCH NEWS

How many shopping days left before Christmas? Have we made the mince-pies and will there be enough?

Will the lights work throughout the Christmas season or do we need to buy some spare bulbs? Is the turkey/chicken/joint large enough or, indeed, is it too large?/

Have I booked my transport to the church service?

These and so many more questions are rushing through our minds - usually at the most unlikely hours - 3am - 4am - 5 am - when we would much rather be peacefully sleeping.

Fun and frustration, peace and panic, excitement and exhaustion, feasting and fattening, spending and spending and spending.

But then Christmas Day arrives. Frustrations begin to fall away. The panic is over - or at least we can do no more about it. We are left with the wonder and joy. Faces alight and excitement in the air. Yet because of the rush we may find it hard to just stop and think.

What are we doing and why. Well, we grew up celebrating Christmas this way and so we carry on the tradition or make new ones for ourselves and our families.

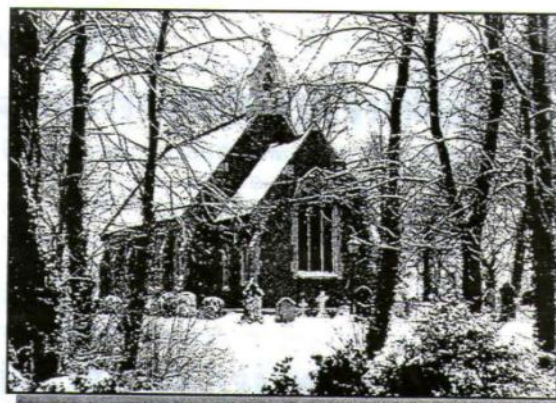
St. Nicholas - the first Santa Claus. Christmas cards: the tree and its trimmings: a Christmas carol or two: the twelve days of turkey - well it sometimes seems like that as it keeps arriving for days after the event and dressed in various guises. All have their explanation and each has its reason to be part of our festivities.

So, too, has The Christmas Story, so richly told to us throughout the years and perhaps none better than by our children in their Nativity scenes played out in schools and churches throughout the land.

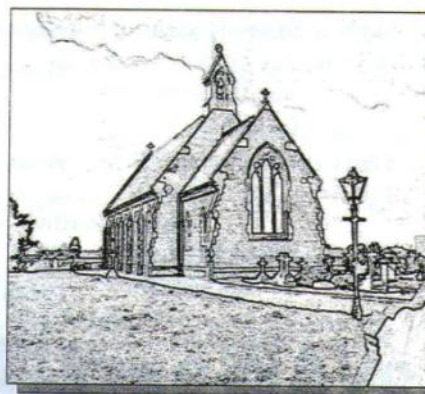
Surely we need to just pause at least, and think of the true reason we celebrate. The reason why God chose to be born into the human race in the form of Jesus the baby in the manger. Why he grew to manhood and died at the age of thirty-three. And we need, each one, to think

seriously as to whether or not there might just be something wonderful to discover for ourselves rather than to pack Jesus away with the decorations again in January and forget about him until next Christmas.

Sheila Tooke (Rector)



Then and now - the church looks the same but the trees have long gone



CHURCH SERVICES

December

20th 9.30am Holy Communion

Christmas Eve

24th 2.30pm Christingle MANEA
11.30pm Holy Communion
CHRISTCHURCH

Christmas Day

25th 10.00am All Age
Holy Communion MANEA
27th 9.30am Morning Prayer

January

3rd 9.30am Morning Prayer
10th 11.00am All Age Worship
17th 9.30am Holy Communion
24th 9.30am Morning Prayer
31st 11.30am United Service MANEA

February

7th 2.30pm Christingle
14th 11.00am All Age Worship
21st 9.30am Holy Communion

ARE YOU GOOD AT MAKING DECISIONS?

When you are sixteen you have to start making really tough decisions about your future. Decisions like what you need to study further for the career you want, and what that career should be. At sixteen all I really knew was that I liked working with people and had really enjoyed helping the disabled with learning to ride. So I started with the horses and was accepted for further education at The College of West Norfolk. But this meant studying at Cambridge and living away from home.

When I faced these facts, I realised I had made another decision. I was still extremely dependent upon my parents and didn't want to leave home and I really didn't want to leave the company of my friends at school at Downham Market.

So, cross out working with horses and look to working with people. I had thought of teaching as a career, but then discovered a series of A Level Courses called GNVQ - a National Vocational Qualification - which would train and equip me for a variety of careers with people - exactly which one I could decide later. - and I could study at Downham Market Sixth Form College.

GVNQ sounded very daunting but actually meant "A" level work in Health and Social Care. Topics included Biochemical techniques, Child-care and NHS Units. The Courses ranged from the academic to the practical - or a mixture of both, and I could take each Unit again and again until I had passed them.

On the practical side, I had to run a playgroup - well not just me - the whole Health and Social group - all of us! The playgroup is really fun to run and anybody new is welcomed warmly.

Inevitably all students have their favourite child in the playgroup - if that child wants a story read, then they read it. Last year we took parents and toddlers to Banham Zoo. I and Lisa Markham - who lives at Tayview, Main Street - took our favourite round with his Mum. Frasier was really sweet and we carried him while he named the animals.

Part of my work experience during the Course was at William Marshall Primary School, which I thoroughly enjoyed, although I was terrified when Mrs. Golson was called away and I was left in charge of the class. But my confidence came, and I managed by myself, but I realised



JO PEGG, MELANIE CROWN
AND LISA MARKHAM

then what a huge responsibility teachers have in controlling and instructing young kids.

I finish the A Level Course this year and now I have more decisions to make. One, I have taken. I do not want to be a teacher and I am not going to university. The part of the Course that has interested and involved me most is psychology so now I am going to try for that. At eighteen I have set my sights on a job which involves job training. I have seen one locally but the age limit is 21 - still I am going to see if there are any other vacancies - any job where I would be working with young or middle aged people would suit me down to the ground - any offers anyone?

As one of my friends put it in my 'leavers book' when I was 16:

'Decisive, that's you, Jo'

Jo Pegg



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LETTER PAGE

Many people will have known **Dorothy Clayton** when she lived with her family at Welney House Farm. She now lives in Wisbech, and writes:

Dear Helen and all the 'Team',

Thank you once again for such a good magazine. Enclosed a donation of £10. I am most grateful to you for sending it along to me.

A few weeks ago on my return to Wisbech after staying with my daughter, Ann, and her husband, Michael, we stopped and went into the churchyard where we found everything beautifully kept. Then we entered the Church; it was so nice to find it lovingly looked after.

Congratulations to all concerned.

Later we met my son Michael and Erica and went across to the Lamb and Flag for a delicious meal and I must say, never have I ever seen better toilet facilities so

Congratulations again.

Christmas will soon be here, so may I wish you all joy and happiness as once again we remember the Birth of our dear Saviour.

Sincerely yours

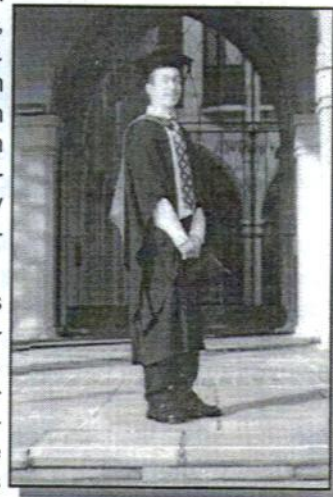
Dorothy Clayton
(Great Gran)



GOOD NEWS

Recently **Mark Smith** gained his Diploma in Graphic Design from Nene University College, Northampton. During the course he won an award which enabled him to study in Prague, Cologne and Paris. **Mark** is currently in his last year for an Honours BA in Graphic Communication at University College, Northampton.

Mark's success brings joy and delight to his mother, Jane Smith, at Upwell, to his grandparents Tommie and Phyllis Edwards of Hurn Drove, to his great-aunt Queenie Johnson of Chestnut Avenue and to Brian Turner, who taught him in William Marshall School.



Congratulations Mark
from everyone in Welney.



Can you offer a lift to Wisbech?

On Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. If so, please contact **Edna Bodger, Bowthorpe Centre, Wisbech, tel: 01945 582 480.**

Need accommodation for visiting friends or relations?

Stockyard Farm



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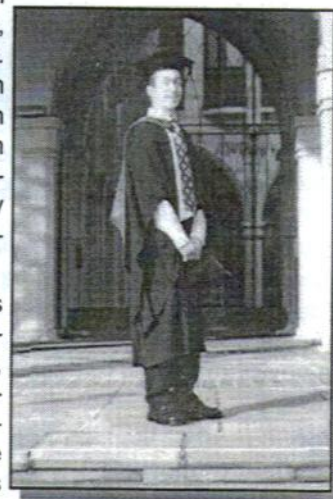
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Mrs C Bennett

TV Lounge, Conservatory, Breakfast room, Pets Welcome. Free Range Produce No Smoking

ERNIE JAMES CATCHING EELS

I hope that we will be able to come back in future editions of WELNEY NEWS to the memories of **Ernie James**, one of the oldest inhabitants of Welney, but his life has been so rich that I thought we would take it a bit at a time and concentrate this month on what he remembers of catching eels in The Delph.

Ernie was born in 1906 in a cottage, the Ferry House, perched on the bank between The Delph and the Old Bedford River. His father had a thriving smallholding as well as a basket making shop in the village. Here two workers made clothes-baskets, bread-baskets, children's cots and table-mats from white willows, and skeps for feed and baskets used for potato picking, and sack-holders, all used by farmers and made from brown willow. They were sold over a very wide area. His father was also the chief ferryman across the washes in flood.

Ernie, as he grew up, learnt how to make a living from the Fens. He learned the sowing and harvesting of crops, the care of animals, shooting the ducks, mole catching, plover catching and he learnt how to make eel traps and nets, and how to catch eels and sell them to those who took them to the profitable Billingsgate market in London.

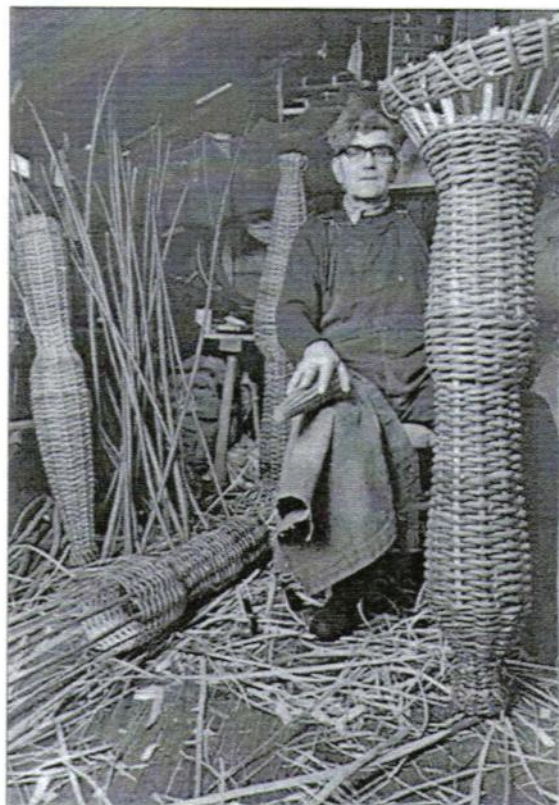
First of all where did he catch the eels?

'Well', he says, 'my old man hired all this river Delph right down to Welches Dam. I used to be up three o'clock of a morning, before I went to work, setting my hives there - and the old lady what lived here (in the cottage on Bedford Bank West where he now lives) Mrs. Smart, she used to take our eels to Manea Station in the cart for the seven in the morning train.'

This was in the days of **Ernie's** youth when by day he was still working with the pigs and the crops on his father's smallholding, doing every job as the seasons dictated, helping his father in ferrying passengers across the washes when they flooded, and then, when there was time, watching others as they bent the willow wands into eel hives, eel grigs and baskets of all designs.

Ernie told me of those early days. 'Well, I learnt from my father for the start, and the Kents used to make them, then there was old Harry up at the Welney Hotel and Joe Butcher. I used to go round and sit and watch them. Then I used to make my own hives, what I thought was the best out of the lot. Everybody wants them now

for decoration, you got them in all the pubs, old John Waring's got one, and I think there's one in the Flag and all the doctors, they all got one.'



'That's me when I could do the hive making. But these last few years, I can't bend the willow because my hands is so crippled.'

'That's the hive, that's about three or four feet long - they don't hold a lot of eels - but then there's the grig about three or four times longer than the hive and as around as you or me. They'd hold seven or eight pound of eels - maybe more. And we'd put them in front of the nets.'

'You see we'd lay the net along the river with the grigs in front of them, those eels that turned round in the nets, they'd come straight into the grigs.'

'In the twenties, maybe, when we sent on the train - well, first Mrs. Smart took them for the seven in the morning, then later we used to send them on the seven at night train so they was travelling then in the cool of the evening. And we put ice in them, of course, maybe we'd have four trays in a box with ice packed between the trays so they was kept alive all the time.'

'They all went then to Billingsgate, but then

perhaps we was catching a lot and perhaps they wouldn't let you know nothing for a day or two, and we kept sending these eels and perhaps when you got your cheque, they'd put on it - some dead or too small and you had to have what they'd give you. They didn't want the small eels - that was the worse, because in towns they just have these cooked eels don't they, the big ones.

'But then later we got this bloke who'd come and collect the eels here in his van. And this was the best way because as soon as he put his eels in the van he paid you, and if they died later that was up to him. But they didn't, because he used to pack them up with ice. He'd put 70lb in a box and ice all on the top of them and then he'd pay you.

'For nine or ten year he came and collected everyone's eels. - he told me he used to collect £2,000 worth of eels on his route. He used to come every Wednesday, but I had so many some times when he's had to come every day.

'Usually we'd have perhaps a quarter of a ton in the morning but sometimes he would take one load and his wife come and take another.

'One time Josh Scott was helping me - it was just before he died - and one night we caught 700 lbs of eels and they made £700 in money - and Josh says that's just done me right and that was a week afore Christmas.

A big catch like that, most would be caught in

the nets, but a fair amount in the grigs as the eels turned. And the nets had to be kept in good repair, and you had to turn your hand to that.



'Of course it weren't all profit - you had to have your licence from the river boards and pay for that and everyone knew where you had the rights - but sometimes you'd have the motor boats tear up your nets and you'd have to get the police to stop them. But you always had your licence with a date on it, and they would come and inspect and if it was out of date you'd be summonsed.

'I always enjoyed the eel catching - it goes from April to October and matched in with the other times when I was mole-catching or plover-catching or wildfowling - but I had a great fascination with the eel. You know, they're born in the Sargasso Sea, way out in the Atlantic and millions of them young ones swim right back to these rivers and then, when they're ready to produce their young, back they go on that great journey to the Sargasso Sea, have their young and then die. It's a wonderful story.'

Ernie James has many more tales of his life in Welney and we'll come back to hear more in future editions. Meanwhile, Happy Birthday to Ernie on 8th January when he will be 93.

Helen Barry

GRAHAME SEATON

AMIAS

DESIGN AND PLANNING CONSULTANT

Well Creek Lodge, St Peter's Road, Upwell.

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Drawings prepared for houses, bungalows, alterations and extensions.

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HOMEWATCH

Kings Lynn Police report another quiet couple of months for Welney. Reported crimes consisted of two attempted burglaries; on 13th October there was an attempted burglary of a garage in March Road, which failed when an alarm was activated. On the 7th November a garage on Wisbech Road was broken into, but a youth was disturbed and ran off; nothing was stolen. These incidents underline again the vulnerability of garages and outbuildings and the importance of good security for valuable tools etc. A new, stronger padlock or an automatic security light on a garage or garden shed may seem an unwanted extra expense at this time of year! However, any improvement in security is an overall benefit in the end, not only for the household concerned but for its neighbours too; the fewer easy targets there are, the less likely it is that an area will be visited by crime.

A seasonal warning! Remember to keep up your standards of home and car security. A car or house stocked with Christmas shopping is an especially interesting target to an opportunist. Also, if you are planning to be away from home over the Christmas period, remember the usual precautions for going on holiday - don't make it obvious that your house is unoccupied, and leave it as secure as possible.

Welney Homewatch Group

Since I stepped down as village co-ordinator, Welney Homewatch has remained somewhat dormant, though some of the patch co-ordinators at least are still continuing in their role and I am maintaining communications links with the police. We still have a treasurer and some money in our bank account, and I am still holding a stock of information leaflets, UV marker pens, and cycle marking kits. We are planning to hold a co-ordinators meeting early in the New Year in order to discuss any future developments in Homewatch. This meeting will be primarily for existing Homewatch postholders but if anyone among the newer arrivals to the village is interested in coming along to add their views or ideas, they would be very welcome. There is no date or venue set at present; these will be announced by the usual means!

Karen Fleming 610 523

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FRIENDSHIP CLUB

The Friendship Club held its AGM on the 17th November. Ken Sorensen chaired the meeting. During the AGM there was an election of Officers and committee members; Cissie Bedford was re-elected as chair, Madge Singleterry as vice chair, and Rita Sweet as treasurer. Secretarial duties will continue to be shared between Cissie, Queenie Johnson, and Ken Sorensen. Other committee members were re-elected as before.

The Friendship club is always looking for new members. Coach outings are open to non-members, subject to space being available. Anyone interested in finding out more please contact **Cissie Bedford on 610206**.

The Club Christmas meeting is on 15th December at the village hall; there will be seasonal readings, carol singing, and mince pies. This is followed by the trip to Baytree Nursery on the 16th.

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THE CHILDREN'S CRIB

St. Mary's Church was full to capacity on 10th December for the Service in which the children and the congregation sang favourite carols and all the children acted their Nativity play. Children from the infants' class played Mary and Joseph and the Shepherds and two of the Wise Men, with a third Wise Man from the senior



**THE WISE MAN TELLS THE CHILDREN THEY
TOO CAN GIVE GIFTS FROM WELNEY**



**THE CHILDREN THINK DEEPLY ABOUT WHAT GIFTS
WELNEY CAN GIVE**

class. They processed from the back of the Church and formed a beautiful Crib. As the story of the Nativity unfolded with the Shepherds and the Wise Men laying down their gifts, the children from the School discovered that they could talk to the Wise Man and he told them they, too, could give gifts to the Baby Jesus. And so they all talked among themselves and then decided on all the gifts which would represent the people

and the activities of Welney. And as they thought of the presents the children then went down into the Church and received the gifts from the people in the pews. From Harold Carter's bulbs to Wendy Redman's sweets and Post Office parcel, from Ron Padget's vintage car model to a brick from Dennis Booth - with Madge Singeltery representing all the activities in the village hall - and a whole host of other presents - with adults and children walking together to the crib with their gifts on behalf of the village.

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THE NOVEMBER FLOODING

**A report from DAVE GILLET
Catchment Engineer (North)
Environment Agency**

Heavy rainfall during October caused extensive flooding to many parts of the country and also dramatically increased river flows on the Bedford Ouse upstream of Earith.

As a result of these flows the automatic gates fully opened on the 2nd November and remained in that position until 19th November, apart from one day. The maximum river flow during that period was approximately 100 cubic metres per second.

The Welmore sluice gates were fully operational on the 4th November although the difference in water level between the Ouse Washes and low tide was 150mm or 6 inches.

Unfortunately this coincided with high tides during the week 2nd-8th November which obviously affected discharge through Welmore. In fact the highest tide of the year was recorded at King's Lynn on the 16th November resulting in an Amber Tidal Alert being issued and all flood gates being closed.

As the water level rose on the Washes, Sutton Gault road flooded on 2nd November with Welney road flooding on 4th November.

Due to the saturated ground conditions, flows were slow to recede with small amounts of rainfall creating increased flows. It was not until 18th November that flows fell to 45 cubic metres per second and Earith closed significantly so that it was only open 20%. These automatic gates work when the upstream river level reaches a set level. They continue to open and close various amounts to maintain the set level i.e. if the level is reached a gate will open; after a short period of time the level is checked by computer. If the level has gone up the gate will open further or open another gate, if the level has gone down, the gate will close. The gates continuously adjust to maintain a static river level. The maximum opening of the gates is 8 feet, at the time of writing (early December) they are open about 6 inches.

I understand there is some concern about silta-

tion of the gates at Welmore. Yes, the gates were silted up, will always silt up if regular flow through the gates cannot be maintained, which is impossible to achieve. As an example of siltation of tidal gates - because Welmore has been discharging it has been impossible to discharge through Denver Sluice, the Old Bedford Sluice and Well Creek (all near Denver). As a

result all three of these are silted up. Silting of gates will occur in a matter of days if there is no flow, so until I know I will get some discharge through the gates, it is pointless desilting with machines or pumps. And in November it was the exceptionally high tides which caused the delay in clearing the water from the Washes.

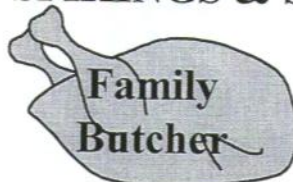
Since the Easter floods, frequent Ouse Washes Updates are sent to Mrs. Redman at the Welney Post Office in order to provide information to the local community.

Flooding of the Welney road has occurred early this winter but I would like members of the public to be assured that every effort is being made to prevent the

flooding of the road and evacuate water from the Washes as quickly as possible.

The new sluice at Welmore is still on programme to complete by July 1999. It will have purpose built jetting pumps to clear silt from gates as part of the design.

J D SPIKINGS & SON

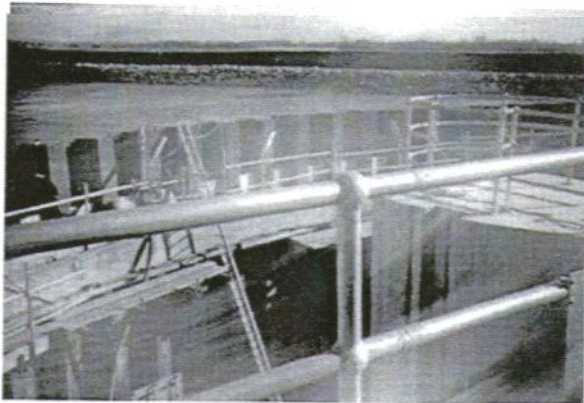


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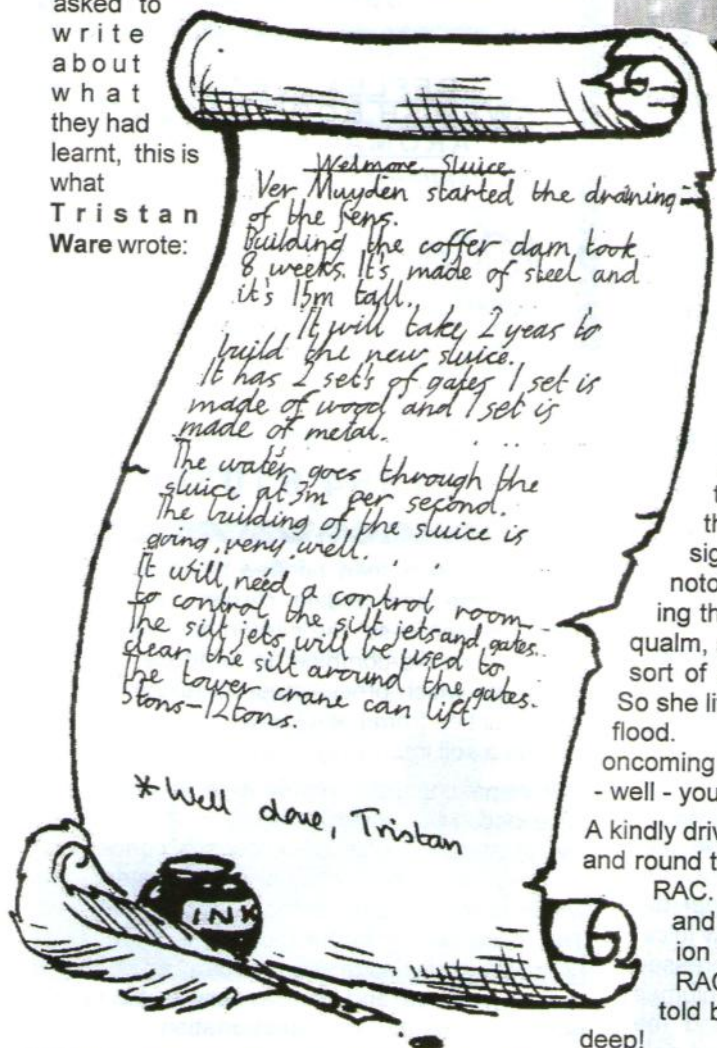
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THE NEW COFFER DAM AT WELMORE

On 16th November children from the village school visited the site of the new dam and sluice and were told how it was being built and what it would do when finished. Back at school when asked to write about what they had learnt, this is what

Tristan Ware wrote:



A JAPANESE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

Akiko Motoyoshi is a television journalist. She had just finished an assignment in England and was taking a few days off, just driving around England in early November. She avoids main roads and prefers ambling along on minor routes so, journeying from Derbyshire to Mildenhall, she chose to wander along the A1101. She saw the 'Road Closed' signs at Welney but not knowing of our notorious Welney washes flooding plus seeing the cars in front of her continuing without a qualm, she assumed there were probably some sort of road works ahead with a way through. So she literally plunged ahead and there found our flood. Having to veer slightly left to avoid an oncoming car, she hit the deepest of the water and - well - you can all guess the result.

A kindly driver in a four-wheel drive took her on board and round to Wendy at the Post Office to 'phone the RAC. Wendy took her in and dried her out and found Akiko was an enchanting companion in the four hours while she waited for the RAC. To do the RAC justice they had been told by the Police that the flood was eight feet

deep!



However a really happy ending. The RAC took Akiko to a hotel in King's Lynn, and drove her to London the next day. Akiko, Wendy and Peter became great friends and Akiko sent a lovely bunch of flowers in thanks. Now back in Japan, Akiko has faxed:

'Akiko sends her love and wishes 'Merry Christmas' to the Redmans and the villagers who are lucky enough to know everything about the Welney floods!'

She plans to visit Welney next summer - in the meantime perhaps we can persuade her to become our first correspondent in Japan!

Helen Barry

HEAPS OF BEET TO BAGS OF SUGAR

Have you ever wondered how the heaps of sugar beet lying in the fields turn into the bags of sugar you buy in your local shop?

Britain's first sugar beet crop was grown and processed in Norfolk more than 80 years ago. That first harvest and factory "campaign" began a remarkable partnership between agriculture and industry which still endures. Early factories were amalgamated in 1936 to form the British Sugar Corporation. Our local factory - Wissington - built in 1926, plays a major role in the prosperity of the area, as an employer, a ratepayer and a user of local services. British Sugar pays the 2,000 growers supplying beet to the factory around £75 million in an average year. A further £610,000 is paid to the local authorities in rates.

Wissington factory has a permanent workforce of 150 rising to 320 during the processing campaign which lasts around 18 weeks from late September. The factory operates 24 hours a day throughout the processing and juice refining period. It provides its own electricity and exports into the national grid.

More than 1.8 million tonnes of beet are processed every year. Some 900 lorry loads are accepted each day and the factory is able to process in excess of 15,000 tonnes of beet a day.

When the beet arrives at the factory, it is tested for quality, then washed and sliced. The way sugar is extracted is similar to brewing tea - the slices are infused in hot water and sugar diffuses out into the water - this is called raw juice. The vegetable matter left behind is then pressed and dried (this gives rise to the familiar plumes of steam seen at the beet factory) and the resulting matter mixed with molasses and sold for animal feed.



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The raw juice is then purified by mixing it with milk of lime and adding carbon dioxide gas. During this process, the carbon dioxide and the milk of lime re-combine to produce calcium carbonate which precipitates out taking most of the impurities from the juice with it. This lime is sold as a soil improving agent.

The remaining pale yellow juice is called thin juice and, while much purer, it is still relatively low in sugar. This undergoes a condensing process which produces a concentrated juice which is then filtered before being crystallised. The juice is crystallised under a vacuum to produce crystal sugar in various grades, which is then washed and dried, ready to be stored prior to packaging and transportation.

Wissington is the largest sugar processing factory in Europe, with a daily output of granulated sugar reaching up to 1,500 tonnes..

Now you know what happens to the lorry loads of beet always in front of you when you are in a hurry - they carry the beginnings of a product important both to local agriculture and industry.

Bernie Markham



CAN WE HAVE MORE BUSES?

By the time you read this, I will have attended a second meeting organised by Norfolk County Council about the eternal problem of public transport in remote rural areas.

Basically, Norfolk has been given the largest helping from a new pot of money designed to encourage the establishment and improvement of local services, which also includes innovative means of meeting the demand.

I shall be working along with other interested local parties to put in a bid for funds in order to save our area. It would be very helpful to our case to have some idea of the likely demand for a particular service or route. **If you have any suggestions on possible routes and venues which you would like to see established, please contact me as soon as possible on 610 433**

Tim Bennett



BLACK ICE DAY

On 27th November, Norfolk suffered a Black Ice day and the Hankins family of Welney received more than its fair share of that suffering. On the Wisbech Road, at the corner where Amy and her son, Andrew, live, there were three separate accidents. The first car at about 6.30am hit the front hedge with disastrous results.



Andrew and the ravaged front hedge

Andrew said his mother was particularly upset because her late husband had planted the hedge for her.

At 7.00am a second car crashed into the pole carrying the Hankins' electricity supply, which was promptly cut off. Eastern Electricity came at 10.00am; the supply was restored but the pole will have to be replaced.

A third car hit the ice but thankfully for the Hankins veered left and came to rest against a tree on the other side of the road.

Incredibly, no one was injured - so that meant that the police - who were apparently having quite a morning with black ice - did not attend.

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HUSKIES LEAD THE WAY

Well, they may not quite get to drive Santa Claus, but Welney's pack of Siberian Huskies, bred and trained by John Carter and Ann Lunn, have made a great start in the national championships which got underway at Bedgebury Forest in Kent.

After the first two races, John is already leading the field in the 6-dog team series with a win and a second place.

Uncertainty on the fitness of a couple of dogs meant that John only took part in one of the 4-dog races and likewise Ann with the new 3-dog team series.

They will have plenty of opportunity to catch up this winter because a new formula for the championships discounts the poorest results from the thirteen race series.

If you would like to see Ann and John in action, they'll be racing in the King's Forest, Suffolk over the weekend 2nd/3rd January. **Phone them: 610 420 for details.**

(Tim Bennett)



FESTIVAL OF SWANS

Over 1200 visitors took part in our first Festival in November, many from as far away as Sweden, Iceland, Scotland and Ireland. Sunday was the most popular day with half the visitors attending then.

The first event was the school children's evening with Welney, Ten Mile Bank and Littleport children showing their own beautiful pictures of swans and then watching the swans have their evening feed by floodlight. Each day during the Festival the WWT Centre was buzzing with many more visitors than usual, watching slide lectures, looking at the Gallery - including photographs by Chris Knights and, of course, the biggest stars - the swans themselves.

There was a village evening on 23rd November when 29 Welney villagers came to a floodlit swan feed, and enjoyed good views of the winter visitors to the Ouse Washes, just a few feet in front of them.

The Ceilidh at Welney Parish Hall was enjoyed by about fifty people, both local and visitors, experts and the uninitiated alike, but a lot of fun was had by those that joined in - especially those who hadn't got a clue what they were supposed to be doing!

So we can look back at the first year's Festival as a great success on a small scale, and look



The group RSVP who played at the Parish Hall Ceilidh



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forward to planning next year's events. We want especially to encourage activities in the village, so if you have any interest, do make your ideas known to us, and if you would like to help in the organising, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

Phillipa & Carl Mitchell 01353 862 481

RSVP provided a superb performance of English Folk Music which it was a privilege to listen to - a definite concert performance! The players showed amazing versatility with a host of different musical instruments.

The dancing was enjoyed by all of us who participated, and included a couple of fans from Norwich who saw the advert in the press. The caller, playing melodeon, was extremely effective in introducing dances. Many thanks to WWT who laid on the Ceilidh.

Tom Fisher

Thanks are also due to the WWT for a generous donation to Parish Hall funds from their profit on the Village evening at the Trust Centre.

THE DOG (FOULING OF LAND) ACT 1996

Our Borough Council have now adopted this law, but have chosen at this stage to limit the extent of land designated. The new law replaced the bye-laws that previously dealt with the problems and provides the local authority with the ammunition to considerably tighten up on the way in which this nuisance is dealt with.

In anticipation that such acts of irresponsible dog ownership will become even less acceptable, Welney PC intends to provide a bin designed specifically for the disposal of dog waste to be erected at a yet to be agreed site within the main village.



In the meantime, can I urge dog owners in the parish to be particularly vigilant about ensuring that their animals do not foul the pavements and other footways around the village? If accidents do happen, then please remove the mess, preferably taking it home with you.

Tim Bennett



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LINE DANCING

The line dancers intend to continue in the New Year: dates of sessions will be posted in the village shop when available.

Pat Rix 610 292

PLAYING FIELD

As you will see in the Parish Council report, the Public Meeting was a disappointment, but some useful suggestions were made.

Mr. Blackwell suggested a Scout Group, but needs 2 more committed people to help him, any offers?

The Welney Football Team have home games on 16th January, and 13th and 20th February. They are being sponsored by The Lamb & Flag, so why not go round and cheer them on.

I have a set of carpet bowls on loan from the Borough Council. If you are interested, I shall be having a trial day on 21st December 2-4pm, so come along to the pavilion and try it.

Pat Rix

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Regular Monday Club nights at Downham Market Youth Club continue until the week of 18th December. On Friday 18th December is the Club's Christmas disco; the normal rules apply but in addition this will be a tickets only event; tickets will be on sale at the High School, the Sixth Form Centre, and at the Youth Club itself.

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discussion to look at a wide range of health-related topics.

There should be a more detailed program of events available in the New Year; hopefully I'll be able to display any useful or interesting events in Wendy's when the information is available.

Reminder; the Youth Club phone N^o. (Monday evenings only) is 01366387504.

Karen Fleming (610523)

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OUR

thanks go to Elaine Sweetman for the wonderful cartoons and sketches which she so consistently produces for the village magazine.

**Without her contribution
we would be much
poorer in style and
quality.**

**Keep 'em coming
Elaine!**