



'SUMMER' AT LAST!



PARISH/TOWN CLERKS' NETWORK

The second meeting of the above network will be held at Causeway House on Monday 24th September, commencing at 7.15pm – agenda items – Code of Conduct – do you have any questions? Freedom of Information Act/Data Protection – there will be a presentation and a chance to put your questions. 'Sustainability' – what does this mean to you? – Presentation and discussion.

PARISH CLUSTER MEETINGS

The autumn round of cluster meetings will begin soon and if you would like to confirm who will be hosting the meetings please don't forget to take a look at the Parish Cluster pages on our website – www.braintree.gov.uk – click on Council and Democracy – Parish Information – Parish Clusters.* These pages include information on hosts for the next round, minutes and agendas and guidance on arranging the meeting.

(*Hard copy list of host parishes sent by post)

For further help, please contact Linda Hadley, Parish Liaison Officer.
Tel: 01376 551414 Ext 2343; or
Email: Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk

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CONGRATULATIONS TO RAYNE PARISH COUNCIL

– for winning the Calor Village of the Year East of England Information Communication Technology Category Prize. They will go on to represent the region in the national competition for this category.

IMPORTANT NEWS:

Rural Communities Development Fund

The Fund has re-opened for applications as there's still funding available from the 2007/08 allocation.

The new closing date for applications is **31st October 2007**. Each eligible parish council can apply for up to £5,000, so even if a successful application has already been submitted to the 2007/08 funding round, parishes can still submit again for the balance.

Contact: Angela Verghese, External Funding & Voluntary Sector Development Manager. Tel: 01376 551414 Ext: 2329 or email: angve@braintree.gov.uk





Braintree District Council - dates

24th September - District Clerks' Network meeting – 7pm – agenda will be sent end of August and includes 'Code of Conduct', Freedom of Information Act, Sustainability – have you any questions you would like answered on these topics?

22nd October – Forum - Presentation on Planning Enforcement

Essex Association of Local Councils and Essex Training Partnership

Date	Course
12.09.07	Budget & Precept
19.09.07	AGM
27.09.07	Health & Safety
9.10.07	Planning for the future of your village or community
18.10.07	Councillor Training Day 1
1.11.07	Council Finance
7.11.07	Chairman's Day 3 (modules 5,6)
13.11.07	Roles & Responsibilities
29.11.07	Planning Day
5.12.07	Law & Procedures
12.12.07	Christmas Lunch/Open Forum

Contact Alison East; Tel: 01371 879722
Email: alison.east@ealc.gov.uk

Rural Community Council of Essex Playing Fields Training Seminar – Monday 17th September - 9.30 – 4.30 – Writtle College.

Essex Playing Fields Association, supported by RCCE and Writtle College is holding a one-day seminar dealing with the protection and maintenance of playing fields and recreation grounds. Contact: Colin Freeman on 0845 1080124 or email: colin.epfa@btconnect.com

A Practical Introduction to Community Development – 25th September at RCCE office, Threshelfords Business Park, from 10 am to 4 pm. One day workshop organised by Inspire East and Rural Action East to explore the essentials of community development. To book, contact Michelle Gardiner on 0844 477 3938 or via the Inspire East website www.inspire-east.org.uk

Village Halls Conference – 20th October. The annual conference for Village Hall Management Committees, organised by RCCE. For more information contact Sue Sheppard on 0844 477 3938.

“Transition Essex” conference – Wednesday 24th October 2007 – 9.30 am to 4 pm - Essex Records Office, Chelmsford.

As oil reserves become depleted and the price of fuel and energy increases - find out how to improve the resilience of your community and prepare for the transition to low energy usage. Could Energy Descent Action Plans be the new Parish Plans? The conference will include a range of presentations, workshops and market stalls with information about community schemes and support for villages looking to enter the Best Green Village competition. To book, contact Jan Cole at RCCE on 0844 477 3938.

“Going Green” Training Programme

RCCE will be running a training programme in the winter covering a range of topics linked to the Best Green Village competition including caring for your environment, saving resources and travelling wisely. For further information, or to register an interest in any of the above, please contact RCCE by email: enquiries@essexrcc.org.uk or Tel: 0844 477 3938.



Policy & Performance - Ward Profiles

We have been pleased with the positive feedback and the constructive comments we have received from Ward Councillors and Parish Clerks about the Ward Profiles sent to them last month. The Ward Profiles, one for each of the thirty wards in the District, provide information including employment patterns, transport, population and crime in the wards and offer comparisons with the district and national averages. This is the first phase of the Ward Profiles Project and we are keen to involve councillors at all levels in its future development.

Over the next few weeks we will be considering ways to expand the amount and type of data available and looking at how we can best present that information. As the project will be web-based from now on, we intend to build in links to other useful websites. We are looking at how we might be able to provide "cross-boundary" information to give a more rounded picture of those wards on the edges of the District and that look outside the District for services etc.

Each profile is available on the Braintree District Council website (www.braintree.gov.uk). We will update you via the Parish Update newsletter as the site develops.

Please let us know what your council would like from the project. Are there areas or types of information that you would like to see included? Do you have any suggestions about how we can or should develop it further? We would be pleased to receive any comments or suggestions. Please contact Lynn Marston on EXT. 2008 or email lynn.marston@braintree.gov.uk

Open Space Audit - Update

An Interim Report on the audit of Open Space which took place last year was reported to the Council's Open Space Audit Steering Group in April.

380 open spaces were assessed, comprising 40 parks and gardens, 39 natural and semi-natural green spaces, 31 green corridors, 107 outdoor sports facilities, 121 amenity green spaces and 42 stand-alone children's play facilities.

Their quality was scored between 1 (poor) and 4 (good) for a range of components including landscape, accessibility, safety and condition of buildings, outdoor furniture and maintenance of paths, grass areas and flower beds. A quarter of all parks and gardens had an average score of 3.5 or more. Many open spaces are multi-functional – nearly half of parks and gardens have sports pitches, ball courts or children's areas and nearly half of sports grounds and playing fields have playgrounds.

The household, user and sports club surveys showed a large measure of agreement with the findings of the audit on the quality of open spaces. 55% of respondents rated amenity spaces as good or very good. The most common complaints about parks and gardens are the absence or poor quality of toilets, too much litter and inadequate lighting. 28% of respondents use natural or semi-natural green spaces making them the most frequently used type of open space. For tennis facilities the clubs reported declining memberships whilst the public considered there to be a lack of provision. One reason could be that in general the public would like greater opportunity to play tennis casually without the need to belong to a club.

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Most people are prepared to travel for 15-20 minutes to open spaces. The most popular mode of travel is walking, with cars being used primarily to travel longer distances or to use sports facilities.

The next stage is the preparation of a green spaces strategy and to assist the Council a Strategy Development Group has been set up to recommend policies and proposals to the Council. The Group has already set standards for the provision and quality of open spaces in Braintree district. During the remainder of the year the Group will be applying the provision standards, evaluating options for achieving the amount of open space required to meet future needs of residents, setting priorities for the improvement of open spaces and agreeing policies and proposals for the future management of Council-owned open space.

Housing Transfer - Update

Braintree District Council will transfer its homes and housing service to a brand new housing association, Greenfields Community Housing in November 2007.

Greenfields Community Housing will be one of the first Community Gateway Organisations in the country. This means that tenants and leaseholders can work with staff to actively influence decisions that are made regarding homes and communities.

A Community Gateway Group has been formed, consisting of 17 tenants and 1 leaseholder. The CGG will make recommendations to the Board of Greenfields, based on residents' views throughout the district. There are 15 Shadow Board members at present, consisting of 6 tenants, 1 leaseholder, 5 independent members and 3 council nominees.

Elections recently took place to find the CGG members and to fill the spaces available to four tenant Board members. Over 30% of council residents used their vote in the district wide ballot. Details of those elected can be found on www.GreenfieldsCH.org.uk

Phil Adams has been chosen as the Chief Executive of Greenfields and David Hall has been chosen as the Finance and Resources Director. Both have significant experience in working for housing associations, Phil at Colchester and David at St Edmundsbury. An extensive recruitment process took place in March involving staff, tenants and leaseholders to fill these roles.

For further information about Greenfields, call 0800 7811 344 or log on to www.greenfieldsch.org.uk

Planning – Local Development Framework

We are currently preparing the Core Strategy which is one of the key documents in the local development framework. This is being prepared in conjunction with a review of the Community Strategy. These two documents will together determine the strategy for the District for the period to 2025 and beyond.

- Consultation on Issues and Options closed on the 31st May and we have over 1200 representations - these can be viewed on the internet via the following link: <http://consultation.limehouse.co.uk/braintree/drafts/5/index.html>

- The responses are currently being analysed and will be reported to the Council's Local Development Framework Panel at the end of July (continued on next page)



- The Local Development Framework Panel will take the responses into account in developing preferred options for the District

- Consultation on Preferred Options will take place in the autumn and we will involve the Parish Councils in this

- Work on an Allocations Document which will identify specific sites for housing, employment etc will start later this year

Further information on the LDF, including all the documents, can be found on our website (www.braintree.gov.uk) by following the link to Planning from the home page and then to the local development framework.

Paul Munson
Head of Sustainable Development

Flooding Advice

- **Do check in Yellow Pages under Flood Damage** for suppliers of cleaning materials or equipment to dry out your property.
- **Do wash taps and run them for a few minutes before use.** Mains tap water should not be contaminated but check with your local water company if you're concerned.
- **Don't attempt to operate any damaged electrical goods** until they have been checked by a certified electrical engineer. Floodwater conducts electricity.
- **Don't attempt to operate any gas appliances** until a certified gas engineer has checked them. Be careful with naked flames. Gas pockets, oil and other contaminants can build up in and around floodwater.
- **Don't eat food that has come into contact with the water** - floodwater contains sewage and other contaminants.
- **Disinfect surfaces** - especially food preparation areas.

• **Don't walk through fast flowing water in the home or outside** - Just six inches of water can knock you off your feet. Be careful of holes and dips when moving around. Use a stick to gauge depth.

• **Do take up sections of damaged floorboards, carpet, wall tiles, wet furnishings** - clean off mud and contaminants, wash with disinfectant and leave them to dry outside if possible. Generally discard items but speak with your insurance company first.

• **Don't attempt to dry out paper or photographs.** Place them in a plastic bag and if possible place them in the fridge.

To Summarise:

Keep a list of useful numbers to hand eg: your local council, the emergency services, your insurance company and **Floodline - 0845 988 1188.**

Have a few sandbags or floorboards prepared to block doorways and airbricks.

Make up a Flood Kit, including a torch, blankets, waterproof clothing, wellingtons, a portable radio, first aid kit, rubber gloves and key personal documents. Keep it upstairs, if possible.

Talk about possible flooding with your family or those you live with. Consider writing a Flood Plan, and store these notes with your Flood Kit.

Make sure you know where to turn off your gas and electricity.

What about your pets? Where will you move them to if a flood is on the way?

Please go to page 12 for more flooding information.



Development Services

Landscape Architect



“Parks for People” Witham Park

**(formerly known as The
Recreation Ground)**

Preliminary work on an improvement project for Witham Park, which is owned and managed by Braintree District Council, is underway. The historic park is badly in need of restoration and improvement to bring existing features up to current standards and to provide new facilities. The current project value is estimated to be £517,000.

We are planning an application for a major grant, for 75% of the project value, from the “Parks for People” scheme, which is jointly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund.

We need to show that we are working with other local organisations and groups in developing proposals to restore the historic features of the park and to develop its potential.

For our application to be considered, the work and activities we propose for the park must meet 5 ‘expected’ outcomes, these being to: -

1. *Increase the range of audiences.*
2. *Conserve and improve the heritage value.*
3. *Increase the range of volunteers involved.*
4. *Improve skills and knowledge through training.*
5. *Improve management and maintenance.*

Anyone who is interested in the future of the park is welcome to attend the meeting on Tuesday, 25th September at 7 pm in the Public Hall, Collingwood Road, Witham, be they an individual or someone representing an organisation.



(Nina Pegler and Jenny Claydon at Witham Carnival)

At the Witham Carnival held on Saturday 14th July, a stall was manned to raise awareness of this major project and to collect views on the park as it is now and how it might be developed. Questionnaires were handed out to park users to find out how they use the park and what changes they would like to see.

Completed questionnaires are starting to be returned. Contact details were taken from people interested in following the progress of the project and getting involved in the process.

Whilst at the event itself, 49 people provided approximately 80 written and very useful suggestions for improvements, which included toilets and improved play equipment in addition to the need to address worries about anti-social behaviour and maintenance. (continued on next page)



The Carnival also served as an opportunity to let people know about the first public project 'Stakeholder' meeting, which will take place on: **Tuesday, 25th September at 7p.m. in the Public Hall, Collingwood Road, Witham**

This a long-term project for which a great deal of work will be required, not least because the application process is multi-staged, and if we are successful, work will not start on site until 2010 at best. For more information please contact:

Jenny Claydon, Project Manager & Landscape Architect, Development Services, Braintree District Council, Causeway House, Braintree, CM7 9HB; Tel. 01376 551414 x 2565; jencl@braintree.gov.uk



The Barn Owl

The River Colne Countryside project is working to establish a network of barn owl boxes to help the spread of the much-loved bird. The project is appealing for the public to be on the look-out for barn owls and report sightings.

For the project to be worthwhile it is important to establish where existing populations are so that boxes can be put up near to them. Barn owls will only spread from existing populations and do not suddenly appear in areas where there are no existing owls for miles around.

Work is already underway with landowners to improve the habitat for hunting and some barn owl boxes have already been put up.

Please contact Project Officer, Richard Parmee, if you have seen a barn owl within the last year, with details of where, when and how frequently.

Richard can be contacted on 07702 918980 or email: Richard.parmee@braintree.gov.uk



(Image by courtesy of the Barn Owl Conservation Network)

A bonus with an increase in numbers is that barn owls are good indicators of the general state of the countryside. If numbers are high it shows a plentiful food supply, which in turn indicates good conditions for numerous other species, including many rare or endangered ones.

The River Countryside Project is managed and funded as a partnership between Braintree District Council and Colchester Borough Council. Its purpose is to help local people to make wildlife, landscape and access improvements throughout the valley from Great Yeldham to Colchester. It does this by supporting people to carry out environmental improvements, offering advice and identifying opportunities on wildlife issues and helping to secure grant funding for projects.



NEIGHBOURHOOD DISPUTE? DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO GO FOR HELP?

Do you have a problem with a neighbour that is taking over your life, not sure how to resolve it, can't see the light at the end of the tunnel? These are typical feelings that **SEAMS** the local mediation service faces.

SEAMS is a completely independent charity with no connection to organisations such as Braintree District Council or the Police.

Mediation is often misunderstood unless you have been through the process and see just how successful it is. **SEAMS** do not act as judge and jury in cases but allow parties involved to express their concerns and feelings. Due to a lack of communication the parties have often forgotten what started the problems!

The trained volunteer mediators then work with all parties for a solution that fits everyone; they don't force solutions but allow ideas and agreements to develop. This means that via mediation there are no losers just winners unlike other processes such as court action. This in turn results in a high-resolution rate of those who use mediation.

If you are involved in a dispute affecting you, please contact the service to see what can be done to help.

SEAMS is always looking for volunteers so please contact them if you would like to be trained to become a volunteer mediator.

**01376 331511 or PO BOX 5303,
Braintree, CM7 1SA**

Community Warden – A Profile on Richard Winter (Halstead)

Richard Winter, the Community Warden for Halstead, although finding his work challenging at times, regards the community there as kind and helpful. This, he says, has made his work a lot more pleasurable and in some aspects a lot more rewarding. Getting to know Halstead Town Council has opened a lot more doors for him to meet the volunteers who give up their time to make Halstead a better place to live and work in.



(Cllr. Michael Gage, Richard Winter and Cllr. Helen Catley – Mayor of Halstead)

As a Community Warden, Richard covers a whole range of aspects for Braintree District Council, from collecting litter in the streets, parks and public gardens to being the eyes and ears for Essex Police on anti-social behaviour matters. The aim is to try to encourage the community to work together to make it a safe and better place to live and work.

Having been born and brought up in the Braintree district, his hobbies cover the country pursuits – shooting and fishing. Richard also enjoys time with his family, gardening and through planning ahead has achieved a garden which he says is very special.

More about the Community Wardens at www.braintree.gov.uk – click on Environment – Street Scene – Community Wardens.



In the last issue of the Update there was an error in the spelling of Coe's Meadow, Bulmer – I hope you will please accept my apologies. Editor

TOWN AND PARISH NEWS

Great Henny, Little Henny, Middleton & Twinstead

Retirement presentation to John Holmes

John Holmes has retired after serving Twinstead as a parish councillor for 31 years. The current Chairman of Great Henny, Little Henny, Middleton and Twinstead presented John with a leaving gift – a book on cricket (one of his favourite pastimes!) John has always been very active in the community, involved with Friends of Halstead Hospital, Twinstead Cricket Club, Sudbury Bowls Club, Sudbury Society, Village Hall Committee and a Sidesman at Twinstead Church.



(Current Chairman, Keith Hughes, presents John Holmes with a retirement gift)

The presentation was also attended by past Chairlady Elizabeth Godfrey, Twinstead and Great Henny councillors and District Councillor Tony Shelton, to wish him well.

The information contained in this newsletter is published in good faith from a variety of sources and may be subject to change.

Bradwell

Retirement of Chairman and Clerk – Kathleen and Bernard Hill



With papers and newspaper cuttings spread out on the dining room table, Kathleen and Bernard Hill review the results of 16 years of dedication to maintaining and in very many cases improving the environment and facilities in Bradwell.

First becoming interested in the Parish Council when there was a proposal to close the William Julian Courtauld hospital in 1990/91, Kathleen became a councillor and then Chairman for 11 years.

After serious flooding of the parish clerk's home, involving the loss of some of the parish records, Bernard took over the clerk's post. From that time Kathleen and Bernard became a tenacious team. Their attention to detail has enabled them to make a difference on many occasions, attending public inquiries, arranging public meetings and consistently opposing the expansion of Stansted Airport. Their hard work has resulted in notable improvements including the A120 Bradwell Village Improvement Scheme.

There are many BDC officers who will miss their help and support as Bernard and Kathleen were always at the top of the list to be called on for monitoring projects and attending meetings. We wish them a long and happy retirement.



Great Bardfield

Life in an English Village: The Great Bardfield History Project

Great Bardfield Cottage Museum has been transformed by a new redisplay following a three-year project that will be officially launched in September 2007 as part of new research and interpretation of the history of the village.



In May 2003 Braintree District Museum was approached by Peter Cott, Chairman of Great Bardfield Historical Society to help develop the display of the Great Bardfield Cottage Museum. By the time of the successful grant of £24,904 from the Local Heritage Initiative in May 2004 the project had developed into a wider brief to improve the interpretation of the village. The appointment of Jenny Rooney, the Project Co-ordinator kick-started the work and has led to the following achievements:

- New research into the history of the village including the Medieval court of Elizabeth de Burgh, detailed house histories, the Bardfield artists, religion, shops and businesses, oral histories of residents and a back index of the Bardfield Times.

- Monthly articles in the Bardfield Times with stories of local history will be edited into a booklet that will be available from the Museum.
- Substantial restoration of the 16th century thatched almshouse that houses the museum including replacing all the cement render with lime; complete rewiring; structural repairs to the timber frame and patching the thatch.
- Great Bardfield Horticultural Society transformed a small, neglected area of land at the rear of the Museum into an Elizabethan style arbour.
- Cleaning, cataloguing and labelling over 1400 objects and documents in the Museum collection using the Catalist database. Objects that require sensitive storage have been reboxed in archival quality packaging into a new store. This will allow themed displays.



- New display cases and graphic panels to interpret the museum collections and local history thematically. The cases were funded with a grant of £4,000 from the Essex Heritage Trust. A volunteer created a new model of the Museum at the time of the last resident of the Almshouse, Nellie Bright. New panels are to be provided for the Great Bardfield Cage



- A project with Great Bardfield Primary School using new local history research to interpret the Tudors, Victorians and Second World War including a village trail for children. This culminated in two days of role-play activities at the School.
- A new website will be launched promoting the history and heritage of the parish.
- A revised village trail will be issued to all households and new booklets on the various different aspects of village history will be published.



Staff at **Braintree District Museum** have assisted throughout the project with advice on the successful grant applications, collections management, oral history, education in schools, display case design, exhibition layout and project management.

Other groups and museums that Braintree District Museum works closely with are: Earls Colne Heritage Museum; Finchingfield Heritage and Finchingfield Guildhall; Halstead and District Local History Society and Witham Heritage Centre.

Sadly Peter Cott passed away in September 2005. However, the outstanding achievements including the research, partnership working and fundraising will stand as a testament to his vision and the success of the *Life in an English Village Project*.

The Museum is open every Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday from Easter to the end of September from 2.00pm – 5.30pm, or by appointment.

For further information please contact Robert Rose, Braintree District Museum on 01376 325266, robert.rose@braintree.gov.uk or Jenny Rooney, Great Bardfield Historical Society, on 01371 810572, or email jenny@hacklimited.co.uk.

Great Yeldham

Yeldham Glades

Great Yeldham Parish Council have used their imagination and initiative and turned an unused area of land to the rear of their parish burial ground into a 'green' woodland burial site.



(photograph - courtesy of the Great Yeldham Parish website)

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Although originally expecting to apply for a lottery grant, the adaptation has been funded using a donation from someone whose family has been linked with Great Yeldham for over 200 years. When accepting the donation, the parish council agreed to incorporate a tribute to a member of the benefactor's family who died in 2003 and was buried in the cemetery. An English oak, encircled with a commemorative wooden seat, has been planted in one of the glades. This oak is also felt to partly replace the 'famous' old oak in the village centre.

The project has included the planting of many traditional species of English trees and shrubs and is set out as three 'glades'. It's a wonderfully peaceful landscape, with just the sound of the tall grasses and the many and varied wild birds. The graves will remain unmarked and eventually the ground will return to its natural state.

The practicalities for this project have included surveying the land to prepare a grave location grid system, purchasing a litter bin and notice board, preparing rules for the running of the burial ground, and a Register of Public Graves in Unconsecrated Ground being purchased.

Opening this summer, Yeldham Woodland Glades will be available to Great Yeldham residents and the surrounding villages. Whether this will eventually be opened up to a wider area will be reviewed after three months.

Have you any ideas for future newsletter articles? Contact Linda Hadley –
Tel: 01376 551414, Ext: 2343:
or Email: Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk
Download a copy from:
www.braintree.gov.uk – Council and
Democracy – Parish Information – Parish
Newsletter.

Flooding (continued from page 5)

If you are concerned about flooding, it's important to contact the relevant authority i.e. for flooding of the highway – contact Essex County Council Highways. For fluvial flooding (rivers) – contact the Environment Agency.

BDC has a role during flooding under certain conditions, this comes under Emergency Planning.

Steve Tullett, BDC Flood Investigation Officer, advises that there are "Permissive Powers" under which he may investigate the cause of flooding to certain areas. If it is found that a watercourse is in need of maintenance, the "Riparian Owner" will be contacted and asked to clear out their watercourse. If the person refuses then, BDC will advise the aggrieved person that they can take "Civil Action" as this is what it is.

If there is risk to life or internal liveable property damage (not sheds or garages) then BDC may take enforcement action if the person refuses to maintain their watercourse. BDC has no jurisdiction over pipes in watercourses; this is for the Environment Agency.

Please contact Steve on 01376 551414 for further advice.

Commission for Rural Communities

From 19th July 2007, an analysis of the written evidence arising from the CRC participation inquiry – "Strengthening the role of local councillors" has been available to read at www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk or Tel: 01242 521381 for information on how to obtain a hard copy.

It's worth a read and discussion.