

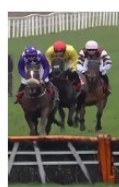
Grafham Gossip

Deadline for the May issue: by 9am on Monday 15th April



FUNDRAISING RACE NIGHT

For the shop and a charity raffle for HCCN



Saturday 20th April
Grafham Village Hall
Doors 6.30pm First
Race 7:30pm



Entrance FREE Race cards on night £3 cash

Raffle tickets, race cards and race bets will be cash only.

All drinks, snacks however, will remain card only and will be available in the Village Hall and Pub.

Buy and own a horse for £5 – Please visit, asap, either the village shop or pub to pay £5, record a horse name of your choice and give your name (as owner). Only 40 horses are available pre-race night, so please make sure you do not miss out.

Each winning horse owner wins a bottle of fizz.

Five races, plus an auction race no 6, plus an additional pig race.

Tickets per horse or pig are £1, buy as many tickets on either one horse/pig or multiple horses/pigs, as you like.

All winning bets paid in cash after each race.

PIZZA VAN AVAILABLE 8 PM

Editor's note...

As I write this it's raining, again, even the ducks must be fed up! However, the hedgerows are beginning to sprout their bright green spring leaves and the blackthorn is covered with white flowers. Blackthorn is the tree that later in the year produces sloes. So it should be a good year for sloe gin lovers!

There's lots packed into this issue; hope you have an interesting read.

Please send in your contributions in good time for the next deadline - by first thing - 9am on Monday 15th April for the May issue.

Keep gossiping!

Editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk



ALL SAINTS GRAFHAM

Easter Day - 31st March - Open Church

2.30 - 4 pm

Lovely flowers, live music,
tea and cake



Find more details in
View from the Pew, page 2



Don't forget Messy Easter,
Fri 29th March 10.30 - 12.30

It's fun for everyone and includes crafts
songs, Bible story and buffet meal
in the village hall

Also remember to 'Save these Dates'

8th & 9th June, Flower Festival & Bioblitz - see p. 8

5th & 6th July, Beer Festival - see p. 6

Messy Church logo © Bible Reading Fellowship 2021

Thank you

Thank you to the many people who came to my aid on Tuesday afternoon 12th March, when I fell into Breach Road, and cared for me until the ambulance arrived. It turns out I've broken my humerus and I was in a lot of pain. It was a frightening experience to be lying in the road unable to move. I am so thankful for the kindness shown. I didn't get the names of everyone who helped me but if you're reading this I want you to know how grateful I am. I have had so many lovely messages and offers of help. What a caring community we live in.

Lynn Sharpe



Easter Holiday Scheme

Would your child like to attend a fully funded holiday scheme this Easter where fun experiences, a meal and snacks are included?

Children in receipt of benefit-related free school meals are eligible to attend a participating holiday scheme for 16 hours.

Please visit the County Council webpage for details and the wider eligibility criteria:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/haf

Questions:

haf@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

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All Saints Church, Grafham

Paperback book sales continue in the porch. Thank you for your donations, they provide a valuable source of income for our church. A payment box is attached to the bookshelf.



Grafham, Ellington and Brampton Services

Palm Sunday	24th March	09.30 Holy Communion Grafham 11.00 Morning Worship Brampton
Monday	25th March	19.30 Compline Ellington
Tuesday	26th March	19.30 Compline Grafham
Wed	27th March	19.30 Tenebrae Brampton
Maundy Thursday	28th March	19.30 Holy Communion Brampton
Good Friday	29th March	10.30 -12.30 Messy Easter Grafham Village Hall 14.00 Good Friday Reflection Brampton
Easter Sunday	31st March	10.30 Holy Communion Brampton 14.30 -16.00 Open Church, Grafham
1st Sunday	7th April	09.30 Morning Worship Grafham 11.00 Holy Communion Brampton
2nd Sunday	14th April	09.30 Holy Communion Ellington 11.00 Morning Worship Brampton 18.30 Taizé Grafham
Wednesday	17th April	09.00 Morning Prayer with Duncan, Grafham
3rd Sunday	21st April	09.30 Morning Worship Ellington 11.00 Holy Communion Brampton
Wednesday	24th April	09.00 Morning Prayer with Duncan, Grafham
4th Sunday	28th April	09.30 Holy Communion Grafham 11.00 Morning Worship Brampton

For a full list of services for all three churches visit:

<https://eastleightonstone.com> and click on **Calendar**

Also see: <https://www.facebook.com/EastLeightonstone>

Listed on the left, you will find:

- All Grafham Services (except on Wednesdays not listed, a short informal Morning Prayer at Grafham 09.00 - 09.30 is open to all)
- Sunday services for Brampton and Ellington
- some extra services at times e.g. Christmas, Easter

The Brampton 11.00 Sunday service is live-streamed every week and can be accessed via the **You Tube site**

To join the mailing list for the Parish Newsletter, visit: <http://www.eastleightonstone.com> and click **News**

Contacting the clergy:

Duncan Goldthorpe 01480 459246 or 07907 694177

rev.duncan.goldthorpe@eastleightonstone.com

Keith Wood Churchwarden, Brampton

07802 368 659

wardens@eastleightonstone.com

Sue Roberts Churchwarden, Brampton

07980 889904

wardens@eastleightonstone.com



1st Sun	5th May	09.30 Morning Worship Grafham 11.00 Holy Communion Brampton
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View from the Pew

At the time of writing as Spring is emerging from Winter we are still in the period of Lent when our church is bereft of flowers. This is a reminder to us of the bleak period that Jesus spent in the wilderness. Palm Sunday on 24th March celebrates Jesus's entry into Jerusalem and we shall have Holy Communion at 9.30am. This is a joyful service.

On Good Friday in memory of the crucifixion our altars will be stripped of their raiments and the small altar will be arranged with our cross and crown of thorns. Please feel free to come in and say your silent prayers at any time during the day.

An Easter Day service with Holy Communion will be celebrated at Brampton at 10.30am. Other Holy Week events are in the list above.

Our flower arrangers will have decorated our church with lovely displays to celebrate the resurrection. There will be an Easter Garden outside for passers-by to see. On Easter Day afternoon between 2.30 and 4pm, everyone is invited to our Open Church when there will be tea and cake to enjoy and traditional music to hear. In that joyful environment our previous Open Church afternoons have been a great success and popular with many from the village. Do feel free to come in, even if you are not a churchgoer as all are welcome on this special day. We look forward to seeing you.



Christians Together
in Brampton, Grafham and Ellington

christian aid 2024
May 12th - 18th

Have you counted your blessings through Lent ?
Will you make a difference to someone less fortunate than yourself ?

Coins collected by anyone who has been 'COUNTING BLESSINGS' will be accepted gratefully by Nicola (01480 453922) so that counting may commence.

Thank you for your support
Lives will be improved or saved.

Well done !



COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

BRAMPTON BEFRIENDERS



PARISH NEWS

March meeting

**Gigabit Broadband**

The free community hub service was installed in the village hall on the 21st February, and has been routed through to the shop and pub. All seems to be working well.

MVAS

For February, the MVASs were located by Home Close (outgoing towards Buckden/Perry) and in Breach Road, by the Cinnamon (outgoing towards Ellington).

New MVAS volunteer needed – The current volunteer is standing down and a new volunteer is needed. The Parish Council would like to express their thanks to the previous volunteer for all of their work over the last couple of years in regularly taking down and putting up of the MVAS units.

Our two MVAS units have proven to be an effective way to encourage motorists to comply with the speed limits, and we would like to ensure Grafham continues to enjoy safer roads. To ensure optimum effectiveness, the two MVAS units need to be relocated once a month, and have their batteries replaced. A new volunteer is being sought to help assist with this. So, if you are interested in taking on this role, please contact the Parish Clerk for further information.

Children's Play Area

The Parish Council has now replaced all of the swing seats in the children's play area which had deteriorated over time due to general wear and tear. The moss under the swings and other equipment has also been treated and will be removed in due course.

School Holiday Parish Sessions

Grafham Parish Council have been approached by the Sports Development Officer at Huntingdonshire District Council about the upcoming School Holiday Parish Sessions.

Sessions are delivered by qualified Sports Activity Officers and Leaders and involve multi-sport activity adapted to suit the needs of the community. The focus is on providing fun games and opportunities, to try a variety of sports and allow the children to socialise and keep active in the holidays. Some of the sessions potentially offered are: Tag rugby, dodgeball, football, cricket, hockey, tri-golf, bocia, rounders, archery, capture the flag, athletics and more. The age range for these activities is 5 - 11 years old.

If the Parish Council were to fund one session a week for a two hour period over the school summer holidays making the session free for participants, is this something residents would be interested in attending? If you feel you would be interested, please can you email your details to the Clerk at: clerk@grafhampc.org

Village Hall Drains

The drains/gullies have now been cleaned out around Grafham Village Hall and The Grafham Trout Village Pub, removing years of silt build up and debris.

Save the Date

Don't forget the

'Spring Clean Litter Pick' will take place on Saturday 27th April 2024, 10.30 am.

Anyone interested in joining this event please meet at the Village Hall, Brampton Road

All equipment needed will be provided.

Refreshments available in the village hall afterwards.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 2nd April at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

Cllr Ian Gardener

Chairman, Grafham Parish Council

For more information about your Parish Council see the village website:

<https://grafham.org.uk/index.php/parish-council/> or contact a member of the parish council or the parish clerk, details below.

Contact details for Grafham's Parish, District and County Councillors

Grafham Parish Council Parish Clerk, **Lisa Hazel** clerk@grafhampc.org

Ian Gardener Chair 01480 812821 i.gardener@grafhampc.org **David Russell** d.russell@grafhampc.org

Patrick Curran p.curran@grafhampc.org **Carole Baber** c.baber@grafhampc.org **Jo Dunn** j.dunn@grafhampc.org

Sunil Gogna s.gogna@grafhampc.org **Diana Thomas** d.thomas@grafhampc.org

**Grafham's County Councillor**

Ken Billington 07725 764889

ken.billington@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

3 Church Way
Alconbury Weston
PE28 2JB

**Grafham's District Councillor**

Stephen Cawley 07925 741167

stephen.cawley@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

34 North Road
Alconbury Weston
PE28 4JU

Brampton Church Land Charity

This not-for-profit charity meets twice each year to receive grant applications, and typically, although not exclusively, supports applications for grants from £250 to £750, so larger amounts may be considered.

The next Trustees Meeting will be held on 15th April, and so if you have a project which relates to the Church of England or another charitable cause in the parish of East Leightonstone (Brampton, Grafham and Ellington) or the adjacent parishes, please contact the clerk to the Trustees at 31 Cranfield Way Brampton Huntingdon PE28 4QZ, or email churchlandcharity@protonmail.com for an application form to be completed and submitted preferably not less than two weeks prior to the above meeting.

"Has the bin man bin Mam?" Changes to Food / Garden Waste Collections - see below.

Alternate Wednesdays

Blue Bin - Recycling and Black Bin - Refuse

Every other Thursday Green Bin - Garden Waste



For waste and recycling services, visit

www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/bins or

call 01480 388640 between 8.45am and 5.00pm

April

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	Blu	G	5	6	7
8	9	Blk	11	12	13	14
15	16	Blu	G	19	20	21
22	23	Blk	25	26	27	28
29	30					



May

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
		Blu	G	3	4	5
6	7	Blk	9	10	11	12
13	14	Blu	G	17	18	19
20	21	Blk	23	24	25	26
27	28	Blu	G	31		

Changes to Disposal of Food Waste

From 1st April 2024 food waste will no longer be accepted as part of the garden waste collections. By law we cannot charge for the collection of food waste and now that the garden waste service is moving over to a chargeable service, food waste has to be excluded. Any food waste will have to be placed in the grey bin. Find out more on the [Food Waste page](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/Food%20Waste) of www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/

Garden Waste Subscription Service

On 31st March 2024, the existing free garden bin service will come to an end and be replaced with a new fortnightly garden waste subscription service. The cost per year is £57.50 for one garden waste bin and £30 per additional bin (up to a maximum of 3 additional bins). You can pay by credit/debit card or by Direct Debit. You can also share bins with neighbours to reduce the cost.

For full details of the new service, please see the [Garden Waste section](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/bins-waste/) of www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/bins-waste/

Wildlife Trust

Spring Walks at 10.30am

Sat 20th and Sun 28th April



Wildlife Trust for
Beds, Cambs
& Northants

www.wildlifebcn.org

Huntingdonshire
Local Group

The first walk will be at Portholme Meadow on Saturday 20th April. Dr. Pat Doody will lead this walk and will focus on one of Portholme's specialities, the snakes-head fritillary. We also hope to see and hear corn bunting and skylark.

Please meet at the entrance to the meadow at Godmanchester Lock, TL241704. What3words: amused.finishing.bulky. Nearest postcode PE29 2NB.

Our annual bluebell walk is at Brampton Wood on Sunday 28th April. It will be led by George Cottam and other wardens, depending upon demand. We will look at the rich variety of spring flora, focusing on the bluebells. We hope to see and hear the wonderful birdsong at this time of year. Please meet at the Visitors' Barn, near Brampton Wood Car Park, Grafham Road, Brampton, nearest postcode PE28 0DP. GR TL 184699. What3words: skinning.rhino.headboard.

Both walks take approximately two hours. Please note that paths at both sites are very uneven and likely to be wet. Everyone is most welcome to attend. There is no charge, but donations are welcome.

For more information please contact George: 01480 450809 or

georgecottam@virginmedia.com

Part of the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and
Northamptonshire Registered Charity No: 1000412

The TING bus - no bus stop required



The TING bus will collect you from any address within the service area. Journeys must be pre-booked, but this can be done on the day of travel, by ringing 01157 773 187 or by downloading the Vectare DRT app. Buses operate Mon-Sat except bank holidays. First pick-ups are available from 06:00 with last drop-offs by 20:00. The fare is £2 each way (£1 for under 19yrs.) Concessionary passes are accepted 09:30 to 23:00 Monday-Friday and at all times on Saturdays.

If you plan to travel with a wheelchair, pushchair, suitcases or shopping trolley, then book via telephone so that a larger TING vehicle is assigned to you. There are a limited number of buses operating, so book one week in advance to avoid disappointment.

If more riders use the buses, we can make a better case to expand the service. View the TING service map and read more details on the Vectare website:

<https://localbus.vectare.co.uk/ting>

Covid Keep up to date by visiting:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> and

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Useful Phone Numbers

All emergencies **999**

Police non-emergencies **101**

NHS - help for your symptoms **111**

Hard of hearing textphone service **18001 101** or
for emergencies **Text 999**

Huntingdon Police Station **01480 456111**

Anti-terrorism Hotline **0800 789 321**

Action Fraud **0300 123 2040**

Crimestoppers **0800 555111** (anonymous)

To report anti-social behaviour in Grafham **01480 388388** or
email: crm_cpe@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

To stop unwanted phone calls

Telephone Preference Service TPS **0345 070 0707**

To stop unwanted mail (Royal Mail) **03457 740 740**

Power cut Call 105 or 0800 31 63 105 or

text POWER and your postcode to 80876

<http://www.powercut105.com/>



Website: www.grafham.org.uk

E-mail: editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk



Talking Shop

It has been a quietish first two weeks of March but we are hoping things will pick up as tourists return to the area in the Spring and the campsite re-opens.

The Hides of March

So far only a few vouchers have been reclaimed at the shop. The Chief Squirrel may have to be a little less subtle where he is hiding the vouchers. If you have found a voucher, it must be reclaimed by the 31st March. Terms and conditions will apply.

More about Race Night - Our Cheltenham - 20th April:

Grafham Village Hall: Doors 6.30pm First Race 7.30pm
Pizza Van Available from 8pm. Entrance FREE.

Racecards on night @ £3.

Raffle tickets, * race cards and race bets are cash only. Drinks and snacks at the village hall and the Trout are card only.

Buy and own a horse for £5 – Please visit, asap, either the village shop or pub to pay £5, record a horse name of your choice and give your name (as owner). Only 40 horses are available pre-race night, so please make sure you do not miss out. Each winning horse owner wins a bottle of fizz.

www.grafhamvillageshop.co.uk 01480 810119

There are five races, plus an auction race no 6, plus an additional pig race!

Tickets per horse or pig are £1, buy as many tickets on either one horse/pig or multiple horses/pigs, as you like. All winning bets paid in cash after each race.

*Raffle for Huntingdonshire Community Cancer Network (HCCN)

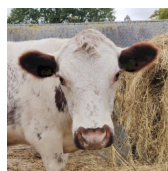
Roofless in Grafham?

The roof is still sporadically dripping, but it has been a very wet winter. Anyway, the roof contractor has been appointed and expects to be undertaking the repairs in late April. The Shop Committee is really grateful for a £500 donation towards the repair from the Firework Committee and hope that with a successful Race Night most of the costs will be covered. It may be necessary to close the shop while the internal repairs are underway – expected to be half a day - but in any event we hope to be able to service villagers collecting their newspaper.

Coming Soon – Reservoir Dogs

Specially commissioned from local chocolatier Hay Chocolates - 'Grafham Reservoir Dogs' - milk, plain and white chocolate dog shapes in 100g bags a great and unique novelty present and very tasty too

See back page for Summer Opening Hours



Chewing the Cud with Rev. Duncan Goldthorpe Rector of The Parish of East Leightonstone and Rural Dean for Huntingdon

OH YES, HE DID!

It is a common belief, even among some Christians, that Jesus died on a cross and that three days later, he came back to life;

OH NO, HE DIDN'T!

Jesus did not 'come' back from death. As some people have apparently done. He went through death and destroyed it. Unlike those who returned to the same sort of life they had known before, He broke death's power and destroyed what is mankind's last enemy.

The Bible tells us that death is the result of humankind's sin. In reaching out for what was not rightfully theirs, they forfeited God's gift of life. When Jesus took upon himself what was not rightfully His, namely the sin of the world, God reversed this judgement and raised Him to life which could never be destroyed. This life is available and offered to all who will ask forgiveness for the way they have lived their lives and put their trust in Jesus. What greater gift could there be? This is why we call it 'Good News'. This is why we preach it.

We should celebrate Jesus' resurrection more frequently than we do, not merely on Easter Sunday. We should sing Easter hymns more often. Every Sunday is Easter Day every day of a believer's life is Resurrection life. It empowers us and gives

us hope which the world cannot give or take and enables us and prompts us to join with Christians everywhere in the great words of hymns such as:

'Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia! Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia! Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia! Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!'

or

'Great is Thy faithfulness, Great is Thy faithfulness, Morning by morning new mercies I see, All I have needed Thy hand hath provided, Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me'

or

'In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song,

This cornerstone, this solid ground, Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace. When fears are stilled, when strivings cease, My comforter, my all in all, Here in the love of Christ I stand.'

*Happy Easter!
Duncan*



Sunflowers in the churchyard

Please plant some extra sunflowers soon so we can have a great display in the churchyard. When they are sturdy please either plant them in the churchyard or contact me and I'll happily collect them. Debs.russell@gmail.com More churchyard sessions are planned - when it is drier!





Please get in touch if you can spare an hour to help clean the church, even if only now and again.

We are desperately short of helpers.

Contact: editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk



Could you help make tea?



Little Fishes Stay + Play sessions meet on Wednesday mornings in the Village Hall in term time.

If you can spare an hour, we'd be most grateful if you would join our tea rota!

Please email: editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk or telephone Hazel: 07870 307388



Bible Study Group in Grafham

A new home bible study group is starting on 11th April at 7.30 pm at 8 Cedar Close, led by Frankie Stead

We aim to explore some of the texts that are less familiar to us.

If you are interested in joining this small group please contact Hazel: 07870 307388.

Ellington Village WI

meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 19.30 in Ellington Village Hall

We welcome visitors with a charge of £5 which includes a raffle ticket and refreshments

Also, monthly coffee mornings open to all 10.00 - 12.00 on the first Wednesday of the month

New Volunteer Cambs website calls on the local community to make their mark with volunteering

A new website has been launched by Support Cambridgeshire, promoting exciting opportunities for residents of Cambridgeshire to explore volunteering near them.

**volunteer
cambs!**

Whether you have 10 minutes to spare or 10 hours, in a few clicks you can be matched with an organisation or group in the community which inspires you to make your mark, expand on the skills you already have, discover new ones, unlock your potential or create lasting friendships with like-minded people. All you need to do is visit the Volunteer Cambs website at: volunteercambs.org.uk create an account and hey presto! At the click of a button, you can find the ideal cause to support right on your doorstep.

Volunteer Cambs works by asking organisations and groups to load up their opportunities and profiles directly so there's always something new for a volunteer to look at every time they visit the site. And the good causes who are promoting their work benefit by having a continuous stream of potential volunteers.

An enquiry form featured on the website will help groups and volunteers match up, contact each other, and there is even a chat function for those who want to dip their toe in first. Would be volunteers can search for opportunities by location if transport is an issue, for instance, or by topics that match their skill set and interests.

To find out how you can match your precious time to local good causes visit volunteercambs.org.uk It all starts with one act of kindness.

What's on at St Neots Museum

stneotsmuseum.org.uk

8 New Street, St Neots Tel 01480 214163

We organise a variety of specialist and family events from walks, talks, one day festivals, temporary and touring exhibitions.

All activities and their booking details can be found on the Events page of our website: www.stneotsmuseum.org.uk/whats-on/

MacMillan fund raising weekend

Grafham Village Hall 12 - 5pm
16th and 17th November 2024

Tina Theodorou is organising another fund raising weekend event for Macmillan Cancer Support. Please 'Save the date!' Donated items will be welcomed at this event.

I would like to ask please, that all items are in very good resaleable condition to help raise as much as possible for such a great cause.

Thank you all, Tina

More information to follow closer to the event date.

Community Notices

Notices: no charge if no profit is made

Community Info, Free to good home, Help wanted.

Items For Sale: a donation towards printing costs please, to reflect the size of advert/money made, if/when items are sold.

Profit making events: a donation towards printing costs please, to reflect the size of the advert.

For more details, email: editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk

Adverts

Business adverts are priced according to size and the space they take up on the page.

They start at £6.00 for a small box, payable in advance.

The money goes towards the cost of printing this newsletter.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Mysterious Author,

Out and About

San Antonio, Texas USA

Thank you for your kind words that you published in the latest edition of the Grafham newsletter. Again it was a delight to read. I can't wait to hear the continuation of your "out and about" article.

As to how a Texan found your website? Some of my ancestors lived in Perry and farmed there. In fact much of their farmland is now at the bottom of the Grafham Water! Some were married in the beautiful Grafham Church. As I learned more and more about the area, I decided to subscribe to your newsletter. I am sincere in saying I do wish to come there. I am still researching my family from there and many of the records, especially parish records, I have been unable to find online. My great great great grandfather, John Browning lived in Perry and according to the 1807 Inclosure map owned property near (and under) Grafham Water. Some lived in St. Neots, some in Keysoe, some in Hail Weston, some n Caldecott (more specifically Poplar Farm), others in Harlestone, and other places nearby. One of the Caldecott sons, my great grandfather) came to Texas!

I am in the process of writing their family history, which is pretty difficult, since I have never been to England. Added to that is the fact that I am not a writer! Oh, well... You obviously are, so keep writing your wonderful articles about the area and I will keep trying to picture it!

Most sincerely,
Jessica

Hello Jessica,

I trust all is well with you out there in San Antonio?

Thank you for your kind and interesting email regarding your family's origins here in little old Grafham. All is now very clear. I suspect if you seek further information on your family's origins in this area you might want to make contact with the Huntingdonshire Archives - they have a website:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ They may be able to help with further info. Also, the local parish church may be of help too. www.eastleightonstone.com

As to me, whilst I quite enjoy the 'man of mystery' moniker, I only do this to give the local readers something to do (it's very quiet here.) Surprisingly, it seems my identity has yet to be discovered! I intend to keep it that way for the time being, but for you I can reveal that my name is ... , though I would be very grateful if you would keep this to yourself.

I am very pleased that you enjoy the 'Out and About' articles and I intend to carry on writing as long as my walking legs, eyesight and typing fingers allow me to do so.

In the meantime, my very best wishes to you, and if you do ever find yourself in this part of the world, then don't hesitate to get in touch.

All the best, ☺

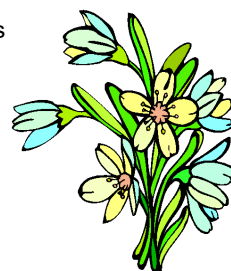
Let us know your news, views, and comments. Email: editor@grafhamgossip.co.uk Thanks, Ed

The Grafham Gossip aims to remain impartial and the editor publishes letters and views received, provided that the name and address or email address of the writer is provided.

RHS Top Gardening Jobs for April - Sunshine and Showers

Spring is finally in evidence as daffodils and flowering trees start to bloom. Expect the inevitable April showers this month but with sunny days too, when you can turn your attention to the lawn. It's an exciting month, with indoor-sown seeds well into growth, and it's also time to start sowing outdoors. Just watch out for frosts...

- Sow hardy annuals, herbs and wild flower seed outdoors
- Protect fruit blossom from late frosts
- Tie in climbing and rambling roses
- Keep weeds under control
- Start to feed citrus plants
- Increase the water given to houseplants
- Feed hungry shrubs and roses
- Sow new lawns or repair bare patches
- Prune fig trees
- Divide bamboos and waterlilies



There's more advice from the [Royal Horticultural Society website](http://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/april) [https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/april](http://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/april)

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OUT AND ABOUT February 2024 Part 2...

Part 1 can be read in the March issue. Visit www.grafham.org.uk click on *Grafham Gossip*
(An occasional rumination on life in and around Grafham)



The lane twists and turns as we continue to head east towards Portholme Meadow. On the right, we can see across a field to the river whose course we are following.

Myself and the Management chat about all manner of issues as the dog continues to find new and interesting things to either examine or chase. It is one aspect of walking in that there is a tendency to lose track of time or, indeed, distance due to either being engrossed in chat or simply thinking about something. As has been noted before, it is interesting how the simple business of putting one foot in front of the other for an extended period can often lead to solving an apparently insolvable problem.

We gradually approach a lengthy railway embankment which rises above the water meadows carrying the main London to Edinburgh railway line. An occasional train clatters its way north or southward, but being electrified, they aren't particularly noisy these days. A meadow full of cows hoves into view on our left and the dog must, of course, investigate these large black and white 'dogs.' She stands at the wire fence looking in and one or two of the cows approach the fence, clearly curious as to what this small, four-legged creature is. At one point, dog and cow are almost nose to nose. She wags her tail – she probably thinks it's a massive collie – and then simply continues on her way leaving the cows to chew the cud.

We have now arrived at a huge railway viaduct which we walk under and can see the meadow ahead of us. After 15 metres or so, we pass through an access gate (there is a public footpath across the meadow) and bear right heading towards the river. As we exit the trees the grand panorama which is Portholme Meadow stretches before us; all 106 hectares of it. On a sunny day, it's a great spot from which to just stand and observe the 'big sky' of eastern England. However, it is also extremely flat and there is nothing between us and the stiff northerly wind sweeping it. With heads bowed, we make our way to the river and to a shallow spot that has a small beach of gravel and sand.

This is what the dog has been waiting for and without a second thought, she's off and wading chest-deep through the water. She displays some peculiar behaviour; notably sticking her muzzle under the water which results, inevitably, in the water going up her nostrils and causing her to sneeze incessantly. And she singularly fails to learn from this lesson by repeating the behaviour several times again!

Her other trick is trying to bite the waves she creates when moving through the water. What this is about I have no idea, but she seems to get some strange pleasure from it. Eventually, she decides that she is never going to defeat the waves and climbs back up onto the grass. A quick shake and she's ready for the off once more.

We turn round and head back to where we entered – the wind is now firmly behind us which helps. We leave Portholme Meadow behind and retrace our steps back to Bromholme Lane.

After some 15 minutes, we are soon back at the lane at which point we cross the tarmac road and take the public footpath through the caravan park. It looks quiet and empty this time of year, though a few caravans appear to be parked here permanently.

We pass a row of caravans many of which are keen to proclaim who their owners are. One caravan bears the names of 'Karen

and Andy' in the window while another declares that 'Steve and Steph welcome you to their home.' Thanks, Steve and Steph! I will pop in for a cuppa next time you're in residence.

We leave the caravan park and follow the public path through a copse of assorted trees before emerging onto Brampton Golf Course. There are no golfers to be seen. The path takes us between a couple of holes and to a pedestrian gate on its western edge. We leave the golf course, cross a small meadow containing the remains of a WW2 brick hut, and then emerge by the Huntingdon road.

The dog is briefly on the lead as we walk a few feet to find another pedestrian gate through which we emerge into another meadow which, thankfully, is free of any livestock. We cross the meadow and eventually find ourselves at the back of Mary Magdelene Church, Brampton. We let the dog off the lead briefly and she goes haring off to a familiar hedgerow where, as usual, she utterly fails to catch any of the bunnies which are sitting there pulling faces at her. I think the rabbits now taunt her deliberately, but she is persistent (or stupid) if nothing else!

We walk through yet another pedestrian gate and enter the graveyard. With dog firmly back on lead, we follow the footpath which takes us to the front of the church and out onto the road opposite The Manor, a Leonard Cheshire home for the physically disabled. We turn left and make our way past the 'The Old Bull' public house on our left – a popular haunt of one Samuel Pepys back in the day.

We are now back amongst the noise of commuter traffic and school children cycling back from school. We keep firmly to one side of the footpath and plod slowly back towards the dog's home on River Lane. She is tired – noticeable by the fact that she is now walking behind rather than in front of us. In fairness, she has done well for a nine-year-old, and she will undoubtedly sleep well tonight; as, indeed, will I.

We pass the old RAF Brampton (where I was briefly stationed back in 1978) and which was sold off to developers some years ago. Little of the old camp remains other than the old Officers Mess, though a lot of the original park trees have been retained. Much of what was at Brampton has, I think, been moved up to RAF Wyton. I have many happy memories of RAF Brampton and understandably prefer to remember it as it was rather than as it currently is.

As we approach home, the Management announces somewhat triumphantly, that we have walked some 12,000 paces (she has a pedometer on her mobile phone) which is about five miles. I feign enthusiasm at this virtuous news and instead undertake a mathematical problem in my head which attempts to calculate the number of paces to bottles of beer. Eventually, I conclude that 12,000 paces equate to approximately two bottles of 'Fen Skater' IPA - allowing for calories burned, weather, wind direction and whether there is an 'R' in the month.

Please, dear reader, do not concern yourselves with how I came to that highly complex conclusion; it would take far too long to explain! Cheers!



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Grasses

Grasses are probably one of the most important but under-considered group of plants on our world. Found in all terrestrial habitats they dominate around 40% of the land surface of the planet. Poaceae or Gramineae, as the family is known, has some 12,000 naturally occurring species worldwide with around 160 species in the UK. This does not include the Sedges or the Rushes which, despite some species having grass in their name, are not of the same family. Diversity is one of the keys to the family's success. Consider the variation between Early Sand Grass, considered one of the smallest species, approx. 50mm tall with a stem diameter of less than 1mm compared to the Giant Bamboo reaching 46m high with a stem diameter of 36cm and with each stalk weighing close to ½ a tonne. They are so adaptable that a grass species is one of the few plants native to Antarctica.

Initially thought to have evolved around 55 million years ago, recent improvements in fossil analysis have found residue on dinosaur teeth suggesting grasses were in existence up to 110 million years before the present. They have evolved to grow from the stem base rather than from the stem or leaf tip. This allows regeneration to easily take place if the upper part of the plant is removed. Hence, they can stand regular cutting or grazing and regenerate rapidly from fire and other natural disasters.

Because of the way they grow, grasses form the main diet of a huge number of wild species. On the African savannah Zebra and many Antelope species graze whilst an English meadow grassland provides food and shelter to many small mammals like the Harvest Mouse and Field Vole. Even carnivores will eat grass, Brown Bears are known to graze extensively when other food sources run short and one species of bear lives on

nothing else, the Giant Panda. These are just the species that you notice, many thousands of invertebrate species, from Grasshoppers and Crickets to Leafhoppers and Aphids and many different larvae and caterpillars all rely on grasses as a food source. To combat this some species have evolved a mechanism that deposits silicates in their leaves leaving a sharp edge. Mostly found in tropical species these can be capable of cutting through cloth and even some UK species are capable of drawing blood from an unwary finger.

But it's not just wildlife that is sustained by grasses. Of all crops grown by man about 70% are grasses. Through direct consumption, mainly of their seeds, grasses provide just over half of man's dietary energy. This does not include the growing of grass to feed grazing animals destined for the human food chain. Further products originating from grass include beer and



spirits through the processing of wheat and barley and half the world's sugar is derived from sugarcane, another grass species. Add to this its use in construction, Bamboo makes excellent scaffolding, its value as an amenity, where would outdoor sports be without grass pitches, and its aesthetic use in many gardens it can be seen just how useful this plant family is.

Gregory Belcher

Senior Reserves Officer,
Wildlife Trust BCN



Wildlife Trust for
**Beds, Cambs
& Northants**

Photographs: Ed

Honey & mustard chicken thighs with spring veg

Serves 2 but easily adjustable for more
If you are like me chicken thighs are a frequent meal. This recipe adds a twist with honey and mustard marinade/sauce.

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 lemon zest and juice
- 4 chicken thighs,
- 300g new potatoes, unpeeled, smaller left whole, bigger halved
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 100g spinach or sliced spring greens
- 100g frozen peas

Method

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. In a small bowl, mix together the honey, mustard, garlic and the lemon zest and juice. Pour the marinade over the chicken thighs and season. Put the chicken, skin-side up, on a large baking tray, then dot the new potatoes in between them. Drizzle the oil over the potatoes and sprinkle with sea salt. Roast in the oven for 35 mins until the chicken skin caramelises and is charred in places. Add the spinach or spring greens and peas to the roasting tray. Return to the oven for 2-3 mins until the greens have begun to wilt and the peas are hot and covered in the mustardy sauce.





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