

# Open Field

£1

February 2026



*Laxton Mill Stand, Mill Field, January 2026*

The monthly publication of the  
parish of Laxton & Moorhouse

[www.openfield.org.uk](http://www.openfield.org.uk)



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**Photography by / Photos from** Janet Cooke, Helen Sheard, Dave Sheard, Dik & Joy Allison

# Open Field

[www.openfield.org.uk](http://www.openfield.org.uk)

**We always welcome contributions and can help if you are not sure how to write what you want to say.**

**We believe all illustrations to be free to use. If anyone feels their image has been wrongly used, please get in touch.**

Contributions for the next edition to be with the Editor by **NOON ON 16th MARCH PLEASE. Earlier preferred.** You can send in your contributions at any time.

# Church News



On behalf of the parochial Church Council, I would like to wish everyone a happy New Year and thank everyone for their support over the last year. We are finding it harder to find vicars or readers and this makes it harder for me, as church warden, to keep things going. It is a big responsibility, what with the services and the maintenance of the building.

This year is a quinquennial inspection which we have to have every five years. This year I know we will have to have all the electric tested and some spotlights repaired, as well as some more work on the roof. The west wall is falling down and we shall have to repair that.

We keep working hard to keep things going but things get harder as we have no support from a vicar or the diocese, but the last thing we want is for our lovely old church to close like a lot of churches have and then be sold off,

*Brenda*

## Apologies

Sincere apologies for the errors in the last issue. Unfortunately the link had to be resent and in haste the wrong one went to the school for printing resulting in you receiving the copy sent to the proof readers. The correct version appears on the web site.

We are particularly sorry as we had made special mention of our three sets of twins who had birthdays last month. Margaret Palmer and Steff did appear, but Gabriella and Daniel Sheard were missed out along with older sister Angelina who also has a January birthday. You will recall our Treasurer Sarah had twins Jack and Joseph last year and they celebrated their first birthday in January.

Brenda Noble sends in the birthday list and generally keeps us on track with the 'Big' birthdays. Unfortunately she didn't mention that she had one in December and we must therefore also apologise for not giving her a special mention for her 80th. We send a belated message of congratulations to all concerned.

## Sympathy - Olive Brenda Beard

We were sad to hear that Olive Brenda Beard (née Noble) had died on December 7th in Lincoln Hospital at the age of 85.

Olive was the wife of Bob and mother of Ian and Jane. She was a grandmother of seven and a great grandmother. She was a sister to George and Annie.

Olive was born at Moorhouse before coming to live at Twitchell Farm, Laxton and attending Egmonton School. Bob and Olive were married in Laxton Church and had just celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

## Sympathy - Jean Ball

Sympathy also goes to the family of Jean Ball who died on 12th December 2025 at the age of 99. She lived in Laxton with her husband and after he died she moved away to Farndon and then to Spion Kop to be near her family.

Her funeral service was held in Laxton Church on Thursday, 8th January 2026.

## Get Well Soon

Best wishes to Margaret Noble, who has been in hospital. We hope she will soon be on the mend after an operation.

We wish a speedy recovery to Claire Sanford, who is now wearing a boot on a broken foot. Similar wishes go to her mother, Daphne, who is recovering from a fall and a bad back.

Dik Allison is also recovering from a bad back and we hope he feels better soon.

Just as we had sent off the combined December and January edition, we heard that neighbours Stuart Clarke and Jeff Tate in Egmonton were both quite unwell. We very much hope that both are now fully recovered.

We send best wishes to anybody who is feeling unwell or waiting for treatment at this time. We hope the New Year gets better for everyone affected by ill health.

# Subscriptions for your Magazine

We will be confirming our number of subscribers and magazines to be printed this month. **If you have not already done so, will you please renew your subscription to Open Field now if you wish to do so asap.** The 2026 price is **£6** for eleven issues for the year. We must say thank you to our generous advertisers without whose support this would be impossible.

**Please pay your delivery person or put your payment in an envelope with your own name on it and drop it in to the person who delivers to you as soon as you can.** Alternatively you can put your £6 in an envelope, clearly marked with your name, **in Jean's letterbox at Blacksmith's Cottage, High Street, Laxton or Joy's at The Dovecote, Church View, Egmonton.**

Your prompt payment will be really appreciated. Thank you for your support.

## CHRISTMAS CARD DELIVERIES,



Thank you to everyone who put their Christmas cards in the church box along with donations for the church. A total of £80 was raised which was very much appreciated. Thank you to Janet for sorting them and to Jean Hennell, Janet Cooke, Keith Morton and George Noble in for delivering them for us. Thank you

*Brenda*

## Thank you

Just to say thank you to everyone who sent me plants flowers and cards for my big birthday. It was very much appreciated.

Thank you once again

*Brenda*

## Thank you - Open Field

When we moved into Dijon house 14 years ago, the previous owner left us a welcome pack. In it she advised us to subscribe to the Open Field magazine. She told us it was full of useful information regarding upcoming events, which would help us to integrate into the village.

Over the years I have read many articles of thanks, birthday and anniversary wishes, sporting success, successes and issues that arise in Laxton, all accompanied with amazing photographs.



It is with regret and somewhat shame that I have never thought to put pen to paper to thank the very people who each month put together our wonderful village magazine. So I would like to start the New Year by putting this right thank you Joy and Dik Allison and Jean Hennell for all your hard work.

I would also like to thank Rachel Hennell and my sister Allison Hanson for all their help decorating the village hall for Christmas and my brother-in-law Jack Hanson for decorating the magnificent Christmas tree in the Hall

*Joy Robinson*

## Thank you - Open Field

As we start a New Year, I would like to thank the 'Open Field' team for all the work they put in every month to make our Magazine appear.

Thanks must go to Joy for the great job she makes of putting it all together when she gets the information articles and photos. Thank you for the adverts too. Without people putting them in there would not be any Magazine.

Thank you to Roy and Jean, who go to Claypole every month to fetch the printed copies from the printers and take them to the people who deliver them door-to-door and around the village and further afield. Thank you all for playing your part.

Thank you once again

*Brenda*



## Open Field Changes

I am sorry to say that I have received a letter from Joy informing me and the PCC that after over 21 years compiling 'Open Field', she wishes to retire.

we are so grateful to her for all the time and effort that she puts in it every month. Everyone says what a good, professional job she makes of it and it's the best village magazine around.

We will now be looking for a new person to take over her job. Joy said she is willing to work with someone else to help them learn the job if they need it.

So if there is anyone out there who thinks they can do the job and have the time please get in touch with either me and we can begin the handover.

We are so grateful to Joy for all the hard work and time she has put into 'Open Field' over the years. It doesn't seem 21 years.

Once again a huge thank you, Joy from the PCC and all the readers of the magazine.

Thank you, Joy

*Brenda*

***The following letter arrived from Jean as 'Open Field' was being prepared and after Brenda had written her contribution:***

Joy, very many thanks for your almost 22 years putting the magazine together. I know how hard it has been for you. I have loved working with you on 'the mag', but I think it is time I gave it up as well and let someone else have a go.

Many thanks to all my helpers who have delivered the magazine round the village.

*Jean*

Thank you Jean. Recently I have lost my enthusiasm for tackling the layout, but you have reminded me what fun it has been working together, somehow managing never to miss an issue in all that time.

I remember Dik and I had lived here a whole three weeks when I somehow got the job. You have been a great support and it has been good working with the whole team over the years.

Thanks to everyone who is involved. I hope they will continue to support us for our remaining issues and the new team after that, whoever they may be.

*Joy*

## Chop & Chat

The Christmas themed December meeting of Chop & Chat was very well attended. The timing seems to have fallen just right to avoid people being felled by the horrible bout of 'flu that so many seem to have had soon after.



The table was decorated and Dave was busy in the kitchen juggling the pots, pans and oven items. The others on

his watch in the Fire Service must have been delighted to have such a great cook among their number and their loss is most definitely our gain. Thank you Dave and thank you Helen for all your hard work in the kitchen as well.



This time the food was set out on tables across one end of the room with all the elements of the lovely roast dinner. The mash was well mashed this time as Geoff was back to give a hand. There was a choice for dessert, and it turned out the stollen was actually panettone A change because we had been happily eating Christmas pudding until April!



In January the choppers were ready in record time, and the numbers were a bit down due to illness. Many thanks to the trusty team who deliver to those who can't make it. Thanks also to The Dovecote who donated a tasty selection of desserts which needed to be eaten. We were happy to oblige!

Meals now costs £5 a head. The next lunch will be on 2nd February. Everyone is welcome, so if you would like to come, please contact Helen S on **07905 166392**.

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*Congratulations to everyone celebrating a special event this month. We wish you all a wonderful day and a happy and healthy year to come.*

## **FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

*Congratulations to everyone celebrating in February. The birthday roll of honour for this month is: Eunice Saxilby, Mavis Beckitt, and Margaret O who all share a birthday, Di Jackson, Diane Beckitt, John Gent, Sebastian S and Alfie A, who will be 1 year old*

*We don't have any anniversaries for February, but our best wishes go to any couples we don't know about.*

*If you would like your special event recognised here, please let me know the details.*



*Brenda*

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# Village Hall News



“Chop & Chat” continues during the cold months on each first Monday of the month. The next one will be on **Monday 2nd February**, starting around 10.30am.

This is our monthly luncheon club will and be taking place in Laxton Village Hall. There is now a £5 per person charge to ensure the club can continue without the support of grants if necessary. Where else would you get a tasty two course meal and coffee for that?

## Quiz

The Village Quiz is being held on **Friday 6th March** (the first Friday in March) in the Village Hall. Start time is **7 for 7.30pm** and cost is £10 per person, covering the normal Maloney's pie, jacket potato and pea supper plus dessert (there are vegetarian options available as well). It is BYO (Bring Your Own) in terms of drinks etc.

Please advise Ian Robinson (**07771 696248**) of your teams including numbers in the team to reserve your table. Numbers are limited in the Village Hall so please don't delay in contacting Ian to ensure you will get a place.

There will as usual be a raffle, for which donations of prizes are welcome & requested. As at previous events, we will bundle up prizes to minimise time the drawing of the raffle will take.

We look forward to hearing from you as you register your interest & team. All proceeds raised from the running of the quiz & raffle go towards the running costs of the Laxton Village Hall.

## Pilates

The “Pilates” class continues to be run by our experienced fitness teacher, Rachel. She asks for 4-week block bookings up front, priced at £28 for the block or £8.50 for an individual session. Please contact Helen Sheard if you are interested.

It is held at the Laxton Village Hall on Thursday evenings running from 18:30 to 19:30. It is aimed at all levels, so beginners are very welcome. Get in touch to see if there will be space for you if you are interested.

## It's YOUR Hall for YOUR events

A reminder to everyone of the facilities that Laxton Village Hall has to offer, and which can be hired to host any form of event. All details can be found on the Laxton Village Hall website (**[www.laxtonvh.org.uk](http://www.laxtonvh.org.uk)**).

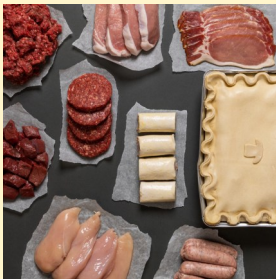
In particular, on the site, there is a Facilities tab which sets out what is available, including the fully fitted modern kitchen.

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# Laxton Community Coffee Morning

Laxton Community Coffee Mornings resumed on 17th January. They take place on the 3rd Saturday of each month between 10 am and 12 noon in the Village Hall. The funds raised are used to support events for this community as well as for specified charities, usually chosen and requested by those who support them.



Our coffee morning on **Saturday 21st February** will be in aid of Diabetes charities. This is in response to a villager request, as we gather a number of local families have members who are effected by this condition.



The December Coffee Morning was reluctantly cancelled as many of the regular helpers and organisers were unwell. This was particularly disappointing as it had been well publicised as being in memory of Karen (on the left in the picture) one of our founding team whose sudden death recently had shocked everyone. This has now been rearranged for **Saturday 21st of March** and it will be in aid of Barnardo's - one of the charities close to Karen's heart. It will also be our third anniversary event.

There will be a raffle to boost the funds raised and any donations of prizes would be very gratefully received.



These events welcome everyone from the village and beyond. We have a number of regulars from nearby communities. Please do come along and enjoy some good company, a chat and some of the trademark home made cakes. We look forward to seeing you.

# Laxton's Weekend of Christmas Festivities

This year the festive season got off to a great start with various community events which brought together friends, families and neighbours, with a good few relatives and visitors.

## Christmas Tree Light Up



The first event was the lighting of the village Christmas tree outside the

Village Hall. In recent years this has become something of a new tradition. It is master-minded by the Parish Council, whose members erect and decorate the tree and organise the accompanying entertainment and refreshments.



There was a great free spread

of Christmas goodies for people to enjoy before settling down to listen to the Dukeries Brass Band playing some seasonal music. There were carols and other Christmas favourites to get the 60 strong audience in the mood.

People went out carefully - and watched as the tree came to life. A big thank you to those members of the Parish Council who made it all happen.



## Carols and Concert in Church

Seldom can the good folk of Laxton have been treated to two different bands performing on two successive nights in different venues.

Several days of hard work from the organisers and helpers had got the church looking its best before a small army of people moved in to



decorate and install trees and window decorations. The pillars were decorated as well and the sight that greeted the sell-out audience for the Carol Concert was a delight to the eye.

The Sherwood Forest Brass Band were fantastic. One musician said the acoustics were the best in any church he's played in. The programme was a mix of

traditional carols and festive songs like 'Jingle Bells'. There was a perfect mix of audience participation and tunes to listen to.

Emotions were stirred when two young ladies came to perform solos on their cornets, one of which was the 'Last Post'. The mood lightened



with the conductor getting the audience waving their arms and there followed a rousing standing ovation.

One anonymous person who attended the concert was so impressed that they offered to cover the cost of the band.



## Christmas Tree Festival



This was the first event of its kind in the village, as far as anyone could remember. It had been talked about last year, but for one reason or another it had not happened. A small group were determined to get it going this year and recruited some others to help.

The organising group had most of the year to think about how it would work and they put out an early appeal for people, groups and businesses to come forward if they would like to decorate a tree. It proved to be quite a logistical challenge to work out how to fit in all the many trees offered without using the pews and making it impossible to seat people for the Carol Concert and further services after the event officially closed.

The event was advertised widely,



although the weather did not really work on our side. It was a very cold period and testimony to the determination of those who stood in in the church greeting visitors.

Visitors were impressed with the spectacle of the trees and those who had come from outside the village were interested to know more about the church and the war memorials.



Joy's sister and brother in law, Allison and Jack Hanson. They had decorated the room with some delightful touches and Jack had made a great job of decorating the large tree, which filled the bay area. Close to this was a small area with pens, paper etc. where children could amuse themselves while their parents enjoyed their tea and cakes.



The volunteers who had a rather warmer time of it were in the Village Hall, serving refreshments to the visitors.

Special thanks go to Joy Richardson, Rachel Hennell and



A huge thank you to everyone who baked, gave tombola prizes or provided other items to be sold, with all the proceeds going to the church. The tables were heavily laden with tempting items and the temptation was on another level at the kitchen bar, where the supply of cakes and tray bakes was enormously varied and seemingly limitless. What a lot of effort everyone had put in to make it all a success!

There was even an impromptu crafting lesson in the hall, when Joan Ware was

persuaded to show how she made her decorated Christmas stockings.

A huge thank you to everyone below and anyone inadvertently missed our who helped over the weekend. It wouldn't have happened without you!



- Joy & Dik Allison  
Elaine Bedford  
Lesley Booth  
Paul Crothers  
Janet Cooke  
Joan Cottee  
Roger Cottee  
Julie Dawson  
Alison & Jack Hanson  
Amanda Hennell  
Jean Hennell  
Mark Hennell  
Rachel Hennell  
Roy Hennell  
Sarah Hill  
Jennifer James  
Heidi Keay  
Steff Lowe  
Graham Marsden  
Alan & Anna Moorhouse  
Jean Morton  
Brenda Noble  
Dashing Dogs  
Laxton Parish Council  
Laxton WI  
Milton Mutts  
Mutts go Nutts
- Margaret Palmer  
Helen Pick  
Ivan & Christine Rayner  
Joy & Richard Richardson  
Anne-Marie & Geoff Rose  
Jess & Stuart Rose  
Sue Saddington  
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Daphne Sanford  
Dan Sheard  
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What can I say? Just thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make the weekend such a huge success. We started with the brass band on Friday night which was great and from all the comments everyone thoroughly enjoyed and was a lovely start to Christmas .



Saturday and Sunday we had our first ever Christmas tree festival.

How lovely the church looked with over 20 trees resplendent all over the church and in every corner, the porch, the altar and all the windows and shelves, even the pillars and screen. It was a lovely selection and most had themes to them. Once

again, thank you to everyone who helped in any way, including those in the village Hall providing food, tombola, gifts for sale, and the whole looked nice with its tree and all decorated.

After everything has been paid for, I think we will probably have raised around £1700 which is a magnificent sum. Once again a huge thank you to everyone who helped and supported the weekend in anyway. I'm not going to mention anybody by name as I don't want to miss anybody out but once again on behalf of myself and the church Council, thank you, this will be put towards maintaining our lovely old church.



Thank you,  
*Brenda*



## THIS MONTH'S SERVICES IN OUR VILLAGE CHURCHES

### FEBRUARY

**HC** = Holy Communion, **EP** = Evening Prayer, **WS** = Word  
**MP** = Morning Prayer, **Es** = Evensong **WfA** = Worship for All

#### 1<sup>st</sup> February

10:30 am Laxton H/C ?

4:00 pm Wellow E/P ?

#### 8<sup>th</sup> February

Kirton H/C Rev. Alistair

#### 15<sup>th</sup> February

10.30am Walesby H/C Rev Allison

18<sup>th</sup> February Ash Wednesday ?

#### 22<sup>nd</sup> February

10.30am Wellow H/C ?

#### 1<sup>st</sup> March

10.30am Laxton H/C ?

4.00pm Wellow E/P ?

#### 8<sup>th</sup> March

10.30am Kirton H/C Rev Alistair

#### 15<sup>th</sup> March Mothering Sunday

10.30am Walesby Rev Alistair

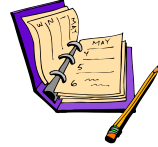
Please note those services marked ? are those for which I have still to find vicars. We think this will be a problem in the future, so please keep in touch with me Brenda (01777) 870541



# *FEBRUARY DATES FOR YOUR DIARY*

## **FEBRUARY**

Mon 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Chop & Chat
Weds 11 <sup>th</sup>	WI
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	Coffee Morning
Weds 18 <sup>th</sup>	History Group



## **Forward Planning:**

## **MARCH**

<i>Mon 2<sup>nd</sup></i>	<i>Chop &amp; Chat</i>
<i>Fri 6<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Village Hall Quiz Night</i>
<i>Weds 11<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>WI</i>
<i>Weds 18<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>History Group</i>
<i>Sat 21<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>Coffee Morning</i>
<i>Fri 25<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>WI Fashion Show</i>
<i>Tues 28<sup>th</sup></i>	<i>Parish Council</i>

## **Regular Events:**

*Parish Council 4th Tuesday of January, March, May, July, September and November*

**Copy Date for March 2026 edition:  
12 noon, 16th February 2026**

*Please let us have your contributions in good time. We do what we can to include last minute items, but it is not always possible. Late arrivals are unlikely to make it into print.*

### An Abundance of Christmas Goodies

Christmas was coming, so what do all sensible WI members start to think of? That's right – chocolate! Laxton WI, not ones to miss the nub of the matter, brought in the experts, and what a treat it was.



The sight that greeted members that night was a chocoholic's dream. A large table loaded down with the largest assortment of beautifully made chocolate goodies you can imagine. The perpetrator of this glimpse of chocolate heaven was Cathy Wright of Cathy's Chocolates and Cakes, and she was about to show us how it was done.

With remarkably little equipment – microwave oven, some plastic bowls, spatulas and trays, Cathy set about making truffles and explaining as she went along. The amount of information was astounding, displaying Cathy's depth and breadth of knowledge. We learned about flavourings and sampled exquisitely prepared samples. The amount of preparation that had obviously gone on prior to her and Matt's visit was an object lesson to all public speakers.



She and Matt worked as a well practised team with Matt supplying odd snippets of information as he took part, made truffles to be chilled and brought other things Cathy needed.

The amount of information learned was legion, covering aspects of chocolate and its uses. No wonder that Cathy has made such a resounding success of her business and her career. She runs courses and gives talks as well as supplying some very well known chefs with chocolate goods.



Cathy's story is not unlike that of our previous speaker, Tracey of Wild Floral. Working in quite a different career, like Tracey she suffered grievous family events. Cathy went on almost a sabbatical time while recovering and began to make chocolate as a hobby, as Tracey grew flowers. Her skill and talent soon became not only a life saver but a burgeoning



career. She has never looked back. Later Matt suffered a neurological illness and on his recovery they began to work together.

A mince pie and mulled wine brought the evening to a close, but what an evening! All the ingredients for a chocolate start to festivities thanks to Cathy and Matt. What lovely people.

P.S. The truffles were delicious!

## **Who done it? Or Murder Mystery Night**

It was a cold, dark night on the 12th December when three intrepid Laxton WI sleuths set off to Southwell Library to try to solve the dastardly murder to be perpetrated that evening. Other WI teams would be competing, but .... who would crack the mystery?

Admittedly it didn't look too good when two of the would-be detectives got lost on the way from the car to the library, but surely things could only get better?

The library soon filled with chattering, laughing teams of putative ace investigators and settled ready to enjoy the play, which would provide the 'meat' of the evening. The teams would have to guess the identity of the culprit, the weapon, the modus operandi and the reason the deed was done.

The keen amateur drama group acted out in fine costumes a drama loosely (very loosely) based on a pantomime theme. What performances there were! The Wicked Witch of the West North West was evil personified, but whose mask didn't allow her to see out of it and she kept

banging into the stage props and had to be guided around the stage by the rest of the cast. Our Laxton hearts swelled with pride as our own Linda Coppin gave a heartfelt, sensitive and moving portrayal of the back end of the horse. Wigs slipped, lines were lost, songs were sung – it was magnificent, and Dick Twittington was dead.

The cast were to come amongst us in character and of course be allowed to lie their heads off while we interrogated them to catch out the miscreant. Then came the master stroke – striding out from the wings came Claudia Winkleman. The glossy hair, the orange make-up and the big sweater, the deep voice and the clipboard brought a gasp from the whole room.

Closer inspection proved that 'Claudia' was a gentleman from the am dram group who had even shaved off his beard to complete the illusion – it was very, very good.

Supper was the standard one would expect from the WI, and over goodies brains were pummelled and cast were grilled. 'Claudia' obligingly guided the Wicked Witch of the West North West round the tables and everyone had a thumping good time.

Our team, self named the Hopefuls, filled out our musings on the form provided and the judges compared our results with all the other teams. We had decided that Cinderella had shot Dick Twittington with Tom Morris's gun in his own bedroom because she had found out he was a faithless blackguard and was going to leave her in the lurch.

After a nail-biting wait (and in third place...) we were declared the winners and bore away prizes of a chocolate orange each with pride.

Many thanks to all those who organised the night. It had obviously taken a great deal of hard work from a lot of people. Very enjoyable it was too.



### **Christmas Meal at the Dovecote**

Every year Laxton WI celebrate Christmas by having a meal out in the evening, and this year was no different. Arranged yet again by the resourceful Sandra, we went to our local hostelry, the Dovecote.



It may appear to the casual reader that Laxton WI have spent a good deal of the last month eating lovely things and meeting smashing people. Guilty on all counts!

The food was excellent, the waitresses cheery and obliging, and the company on fine form. It was noticeable how well the food was presented, and we felt well cared for which always helps the evening along.



Desserts were outstanding, so beautifully made and the size of the portions of cheesecake called for some serious work with a spoon and fork. Coffee came with a selection of mini goodies.

It was no wonder the atmosphere was so congenial, with the laughter sounding out from all parts of the room. It was a shame that the 'lurgi' which has taken such a toll of the village stopped some people from attending. We will just have to do it all again!

Thanks once again to Sandra.

In January we had one of our 'games' nights, something not to be missed. The same evening everyone brought a photograph of themselves as a baby or toddler to see who could correctly identify the most.

February brings something different. Edwinstowe Chiropractors are coming for the evening to speak about 'Backs'. They have some very interesting methods of diagnosing and treating conditions. Come along – we are always pleased to see new faces.

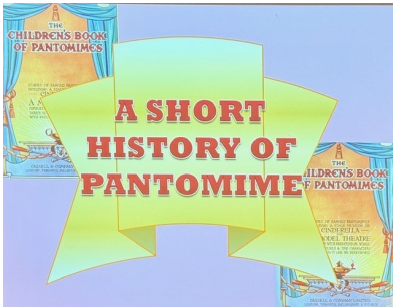
We also have plans in hand for another of our popular Fashion Shows by SOS on 25th March. For those who have not been. This is a company who bring garments from all sorts of brands. We provide models to display a selection of them and afterwards everyone can purchase what they like from the extensive collection of racks. See the advert near the front of this issue.

# Laxton History Group



The Group does not meet in December, so our November meeting is the last of the year. We began by hearing the outcome of our recent Craft Fayre. This had gone very well and been well attended with a steady flow of visitors, despite it not being a very pleasant day.

Jean thanked everyone who had helped set up, sell, serve refreshments and clear away afterwards. The £431 raised will go to History Group funds this year.



With Christmas just around the corner, we had a talk about the history of pantomime from retired university lecturer Dr Ann Featherstone. She was a lady of small stature but huge personality and a voice clearly honed during years in a lecture theatre.

She retired from the post in 2014 and missed her students. This was the impetus for beginning her talks.

Pantomime was a natural choice of subject as she had acted with her local am dram company as a girl, playing principal girl.

We learned that at one time the panto ran for all of December and January and was hugely popular, bringing in revenue to support the venue for the year - not so different from today.

In all, pantomime has had some 300 years of evolution. Originally they were only 15 - 20 minute extravaganzas at the end of the main play. They provided a more cheery finale than, for example, the conclusion of Hamlet or Macbeth. The stories were derived from European tales, but most strikingly, the early performances were all in mime, with music and no dialogue at all.

The characters from the Italian Comedia dell'Arte (Colombine, Harlequin, Clown and Pantaloon) can still be seen in the popular characters portrayed today.

There were no scripts nor writers. The people who became famous in connection with pantomime were certain of the actors. We heard about John Rich (1692-1761), who was a dancer famed for playing Harlequin. It was said that he had a poor speaking voice and so mime became the order of the day. It was Rich who built Covent Garden Theatre.

There was strong competition between Rich and David Garrick (1717-1779) who knew he could not better Rich as Harlequin, so he introduced dialogue. This opened up pantomime and it became very competitive.

A theatre's point of difference could be their scenery, and well known professional painters were employed to design and paint sets.

Ann spoke about the different outstanding people of the day. One was Grimaldi - not at all a pleasant person - and he performed as Clown, the part on which today's dames are based.

It was not until the 19th century that pantomime became a stand alone show. New stories were introduced, there might be live magic, but still the show was only a maximum 30 minutes long.

From the 1830s children began to appear. They would be auditioned and only the smallest and prettiest would succeed. They often had to learn their parts and rehearse, potentially from November, without payment, only earning for the dress rehearsal and on the days when there was a paying audience. Families put up with this exploitation because the child actors were often the only members of the family earning a wage at all.

In addition to being exploited, backstage was a dangerous place with gas lights and trap doors. The children also had to return through the streets at night after the performance and this was not a safe thing, with attacks on them not being uncommon.

As music hall gathered pace during the year, the leading people began to be recruited for the pantos, and so began the practice of 'celebrities' performing.

Theatres tried to stage their pantomimes during the wars, with female performers and the introduction of afternoon shows to avoid the black out. Shift workers were able to attend then. Men on active service loved the shows, which were great morale raisers. Post war performers from popular radio, and later, shows got involved and we know that this trend continues.

Pantomime is peculiarly English. Ann stated that it is utterly incomprehensible to many, especially Americans.

Roger Cottee revealed a hitherto unknown part of his history when he said during his vote of thanks, that he worked as a stage hand at Wimbledon in his holidays, seeing the stars of the day such as Cyril Fletcher.

There is no formal January meeting, but members voted to repeat the successful social gathering of the last few years. A lunch was preferred and this has been booked at the chosen venue - the Birds' Nest Coffee Lounge at Hall Farm, Weston on 21st January.

# Laxton Jury and Court Leet 2025

These two important events in the farming year took place too late for inclusion in the last edition, so rather than let them pass without a mention, a brief summary follows.

The Jury is responsible for inspecting the wheat field - the field which was fallow in the previous year and which will have been cleared, the soil prepared and the new seed sown.

The members, all sworn in at the Court Leet the previous December and with Ivan Rayner as field Foreman, walked over the field inspecting the strips. Robert Haigh, as Bailiff, had prepared stakes which were hammered in at the points agreed to be the place the strip should meet the syke or roadway. The two should meet at the stake, but where any problems were identified a note was made for discussion later.

When the whole field had been inspected, the Jury members returned to the Dovecote for a traditional roast dinner, after which they

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discussed the discrepancies noted and agreed the level of fines to be suggested at the Court.

The following week the Court Leet met in the Village Hall in the presence of the Lord of the Manor, Gregor Pierrepont, and his team and the Steward of the Court.

After many years of service, Alistair Millar retired from this role and he attended to support Emmett, who he has been training to succeed him. It was Oliver's first time taking the proceedings himself.

It is the Bailiff's duty to open proceedings and after that Oliver called out the names on the Manor Suit Roll. This is rather like calling the register, except that any absentees are liable to an essoign of 2p. This is not so much a fine as a fee for non attendance. At one time the Bailiff would have gone round to collect the payment. Now he simply brings a bag of 2p coins and covers the usual sum of 12 - 14p himself!

The Foreman for the next year's wheat field comes to the top table first to take the oath of service on behalf of the Jury. On this occasion it was Roy Hennell, the longest serving Foreman and a Laxton man from birth. He was followed by his fellow jurors, who take a simpler, formal oath of service.

Next the transgressions noted by the Jury the previous week were discussed along with the suggested fines. The Court's decision confirmed the fines to be levied. The Court was closed by Robert after which there was time for discussion of other matters of concern.



At the end of the meeting Alistair Millar was presented with gifts to mark his 18 years of service to the Court Leet of Laxton, which has gone well beyond simply attending on one day a year. The gifts were personalised and accompanied by a card signed by Robert, Stuart Rose as Clerk, all members of the Jury and the Lord of the Manor.



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06/12/15	40	Spare / ROLLOVER
13/12/25	59	Richard
20/12/25	47	J & D Geldard
27/12/25	21	Alan & Anna
03/01/26	4	Cath
10/01/26	9	Roy

There are currently nine numbers available, if you would like to join or indeed, if anyone would like an additional number.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all supporters. As the New Year approaches can I please ask BB Holders if they are owing money to bring them up to date please.

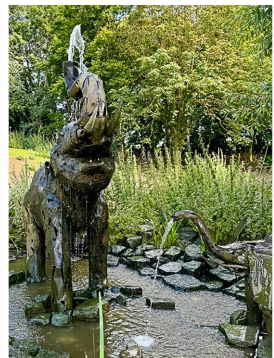
Thank you for your support,

*Helen Pick*



This photo was sent in by Amanda Hennell. We could have run a competition to decide what it actually shows, but who could tell?

It is the elephant water feature at Cobbs Country Store when temperatures had fallen below zero over night. On the right you can see it at a warmer time of year. Which do you prefer?



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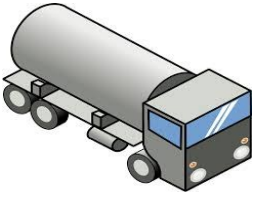
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info on web pages / links.



# Group Oil Order

The winter order was placed on 20th November and achieved a surprisingly favourable price of 58p/litre + VAT at a time when the price was going up. Since then it went up a little and has been coming steadily down in the early part of the year. Unfortunately it has recently leapt up again to roughly the price prevailing at the time we ordered. There seems to be no rationale to it at all.

Despite the very cold few days we experienced at the start of the month, only one person has indicated a need for a top up by the time of writing. The next order will be, as usual, towards the end of January / early February.

You are welcome to join the ordering group at any time provided that you can be contacted by email. The group is not limited to Laxton and Moorhouse. We have group members in Egmonton, Kneesall, Kirton and Tuxford and the companies we use are happy to take orders from them all. At one time they liked the economy of customers living close together, but recently they seem to be delivering to an agenda of their own. If you have friends or relatives in the area who would like to join, please give them the contact details.

Everyone orders as much as they want, only when they need oil at the time of an order. There is no obligation to order and nothing stopping members ordering with any supplier between group orders.

Please use my personal email if you have it. [oil@openfield.org.uk](mailto:oil@openfield.org.uk) is a general address you can use if you don't have mine, which I don't publish because of the amount of spam it generates. *Joy*





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## Citizens Advice Are Here for you in 2026

January can be a challenging period for many individuals. Financial pressures resulting from the festive season may place strain on household budgets, while issues deferred until the New Year can add further concern. We are here to help. Advice Service Manager Robert George shares his insights into how financial difficulties often come to the surface in January:

“The New Year often inspires a desire for a fresh start, but for many people this can feel out of reach. During January and February, we see a significant rise in clients seeking help with debt or money worries. If you’re struggling, please don’t hesitate to contact us. The sooner you seek advice, the more options you’re likely to have.

Citizens Advice have specially trained debt advisers to listen without judgment, help you work through any challenges, and support you in finding a positive way forward. We understand how overwhelming debt can feel, and you’ll always find a compassionate, understanding ear with us.”

Your local Citizens Advice service is here to help you find a way forward. Our free, confidential, impartial advice is available at many different locations throughout the area. Our team can give advice on a wide range of issues including debt, benefits, budgeting, housing & energy, work & employment, relationship and family advice.

We have made some changes to our regular drop in services as listed below:

Alexander Lodge:

Newark (Castle House):

Great North Road, Newark, NG24 1BY - Tuesday & Thursday 9:30am-12:30pm

*Bookable appointments available in the afternoon*

Bilsthorpe Library:

1 The Crescent, Bilsthorpe, NG22 8QX - 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month 9:30am-12:30pm

Boughton Community Hub:

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Southwell Library:

The Bramley Centre, King Street, Southwell, NG25 0EH - 4th  
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Sutton On Trent Library:

Methodist Church Hall, High Street, Sutton On Trent, NG23 6QA - 2nd  
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**February 21st**

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## Dukeries Singers

A December to Remember and an Exciting Year Ahead

December was a wonderfully busy and rewarding month for The Dukeries Singers! We brought festive cheer to our local communities with a series of Christmas performances that truly captured the spirit of the season.

Our concerts in Ollerton and Edwinstowe were met with warm appreciation, and we were delighted to share carols at both The Sherwood Forest Craft Centre and the Sherwood Forest Visitors Centre. These events reminded us why we love singing together and sharing music with others.

We are also thrilled to announce that Edwinstowe Parish Council has awarded the choir a grant to support our work in the local community. This funding will help us continue to bring music to people of all ages and backgrounds. It will also support our exciting collaboration with King Edwin's School in Edwinstowe in 2026, a project that promises to be hugely beneficial for both the choir and the school.

We would also like to express our heartfelt thanks to The Edwinstowe Handbell Ringers for their continued support and wonderful performances at our events throughout the year. Their contribution adds a special touch to every occasion.

In 2026, we are excited to turn our focus to "Songs from the Musicals", a vibrant and uplifting repertoire that promises something for everyone. Our talented Musical Director has been working hard to prepare some truly exciting pieces that will showcase the choir at its best.

If you love singing or simply enjoy great music, why not join us? Everyone is welcome, no auditions, just enthusiasm and a love of song! For more information or to book us for an event, please contact:

John Banbury

**07759 086132**

[john@asherwood.co.uk](mailto:john@asherwood.co.uk) or [thedukeriessingers@outlook.com](mailto:thedukeriessingers@outlook.com)

Come and be part of something special in 2026!



# Egmanton Village Hall

[www.egmantonvillagehall.org.uk](http://www.egmantonvillagehall.org.uk) / 01777 871171

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- ♦ **Pilates** - Thursdays from 5:30pm - 6.30pm with Holly Rye.  
Contact **07415436001** Email [holly-rye@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:holly-rye@hotmail.co.uk)
- ♦ **Egmanton WI** - Third Thursdays in the Hall
- ♦ **Coffee Morning**: The second Saturday of the month from 10 - 12 .  
Next one will be on **February 14<sup>th</sup>** All welcome.

*All events appear on the web site - see above*

## Reporting Potholes



A reminder about the pothole reporting contact details are:

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## Laxton Defibrillator

The defibrillator in the Visitor Centre, is always accessible as neither the Visitor Centre door nor the cabinet housing is locked. Please do remember that the defibrillator must only be used once authorised by a call to 999.

## Booking Laxton Village Hall

The Hall is available for anyone to book and bookings are taken through the web site. Please visit:

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# Useful Contact Details

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Neil Randall 01777 871229 & 07710 398745, evenings and weekends  
Mark Hennell 07812 908316, evenings  
Stuart Rose 07939 228353, as required  
Jeanette Geldard 07956 959135, daytime in Kneesall,  
evenings / weekends  
Anne-Marie & Geoff Rose 07961 933290 / 07957 991002, as required

## Police

Sgt 2949 Christian Hurley, Sherwood Neighbourhood Policing Team,  
Ollerton Police Station

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Sutton-on-Trent Surgery 01636 821023  
Ollerton Surgery - Middleton Lodge Practice 01623 703266  
Newark Hospital 01636 681681  
Bassetlaw Hospital 01909 500990  
King's Mill Hospital 01623 622515

## Cardiac Arrest? Say "Alexa Activate Emergency CPR" to an Alexa device

Fire Safety Advice (Tuxford Fire Station) 01777 870381  
MP Mr Robert Jenrick: [robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:robert.jenrick.mp@parliament.uk) 01636 612 837  
County Councillor: [cllr.mike.pringle@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.mike.pringle@nottsc.gov.uk) 0115 977 5661  
Parish Council website: [www.laxtonandmoorhouseparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.laxtonandmoorhouseparishcouncil.co.uk)

