



## ANGEL OF THE EAST



Covid-19 has changed many things in our daily lives, but it doesn't stop us remembering and, on Sunday 8 November, in beautiful autumnal sunshine, I was a distant observer as a wreath was laid at the base of our Village Sign.

To my eye, our Village Sign is splendid and special. It has just celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and seems to be standing up reasonably well to the elements. The idea of a village sign was birthed by Blythburgh Parish Council who, under the leadership of Henrietta Maslen, wanted to mark the Millennium with a fitting and lasting tribute. The whole village was canvassed for ideas. Inspired by the angels in Holy Trinity, Ray and Joan St Clair Brown's idea was for a "Village Angel" and, following a special meeting, theirs was the design selected.

The parish council wanted to use a Suffolk craftsman to forge their Angel and



selected Graham Chaplin of Ironoak Forge, Buxhall near Stowmarket. Graham accepted the commission and worked with Ray to finalise the design.

Initial plans for a stainless steel angel had to be changed due to the escalating and prohibitive cost of the electric polishing process required to rid the stainless steel of heat staining – all very technical! The final agreement was that the angel would be forged of steel throughout (apart from

the bronze hair) and then hot dip galvanised before being painted.

It took Graham a full six weeks to breathe life into the metal. Each part of the figure was made separately, before the whole was welded together. When asked how many pieces there were, newspaper reports quote Graham as saying “You’ve heard that there are 30,000 feathers on a thrush, well this is the same”. The hardest part was the face which had to be worked and beaten out from the back.

As he stretched and beat out the hot steel, Graham could only estimate what the finished expression would look like, and the slightest slip would have ruined her features.

The Angel of the East, as it was known at the time, was unveiled on 29 July 2000. The ceremony was performed by Ray St Clair Brown, Miss Ena Collis,



our  
eldest

Blythburgh resident at the time, and Matthew Doran (at 18 months old) the youngest. Graham Chaplin cut the cake. And Richard Maslen, Henrietta’s husband and a published poet, wrote a poem in tribute

Next time you pass Knoll Green maybe pause a moment to check out our “Angel of the East”.

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## WILD WATCH

The shortening hours of daylight and the drop in temperatures can affect a lot of people in negative ways. Some of us become tired and withdrawn – it's very tempting to stay indoors and just hunker down in front of the fire with a good

*Snow Crow*



book or a box set of DVDs. It's tempting, too, to think that it would be a good idea to copy some animals and hibernate. After all, lots of creatures do it, don't they? Hedgehogs, some rodents and tortoises close down and sleep for months at a time. Yet others don't, including some that you would think should be tucked up in a hole somewhere, surrounded by

their winter stores. Not all animals are driven by this urge to sit out winter somewhere warm and dry. The fact is there's much we don't know about why some animals hibernate and others don't.

We do know the main driving force for many is food availability. Insectivorous bats spend winter in a cave or similar artificial winter roost and their body temperature drops to the point where they are barely ticking over. They may spend months like this but with spring, and insects once more plentiful, they wake and become active again with no ill-effects.

If you're going to shut down like this without waking up for an occasional snack, you need to build up your fat reserves. Bears are some of the largest animals that hibernate and have to spend much of the warmer times of the year eating whatever they can find. Being omnivores, this can include anything from grass to berries, from fish to red meat. Whatever it is, they have to stash away the calories in order to spend up to five months in a winter den.

During their hibernation they do not defecate, eat or drink; that's why we couldn't copy them, however desirable the thought. A bear's metabolism copes with this prolonged period of stasis by preventing the onset of osteoporosis, and muscle-wasting, conditions that would seriously harm a human being. They even recycle their urine.

Seasonal disorders are one thing – physiological adaptation is another. While many creatures have evolved to survive long periods of torpor, we are a naturally active species. With or without lockdown this winter, we're simply going to have to stay awake!

**Paul Lacey**

## CHRISTMAS MARKET GOES VIRTUAL

Blythburgh's hugely popular Christmas Market held in the church has become a regular fixture in many people's diaries, but for understandable reasons it's not possible to host the event this year. However, its organisers are still keen to provide loyal customers with the opportunity to buy those special, often homemade gifts, that have become a feature of the market. So, this year the Blythburgh Christmas Market has gone online!

At [www.blythburghchristmasmarket.org.uk](http://www.blythburghchristmasmarket.org.uk) you can get access to stallholders who would otherwise have been at the church. Sadly, even today's technology won't allow you to enjoy the refreshments and the festive atmosphere normally available at the market, but you can still browse the goods on offer and contact the virtual stallholders to make purchases.

A visit to the site will open the door to a Christmas hamper of goodies, including cakes, decorations, hand-crafted gifts and more. The Blythburgh Christmas site will be open until Christmas Eve. It's a great opportunity to find that special present that you can't find in the larger stores.

If you have goods to sell and want to make the most of this opportunity, there's still time. If you'd like to be added to the Blythburgh Christmas market site, contact Ro Williams: [ro@blythburgh.plus.com](mailto:ro@blythburgh.plus.com).



The logo for Suffolk Car Centre features the text 'Suffolk Car Centre' in a white, sans-serif font. The word 'Car' is significantly larger and bolder than 'Suffolk' and 'Centre'. The text is centered within a dark blue background that has a subtle, wavy, light-colored graphic element behind it.

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## SLOW DOWN PLEASE

I do like a good walk. Over recent years I have walked nearly 700 miles criss-crossing Suffolk and Norfolk, and covering the entire coastline from Sutton Bridge to Landguard Point. So I was interested to see a new initiative being launched called “Slow Ways”.

The aim of Slow Ways is to create a network of walking routes using existing footpaths that connect all of Great Britain’s

towns and cities as well as thousands of villages. The end result will be routes that can be used to walk between neighbouring settlements or combined for long distance walks.

The project has the support of Ordnance Survey, among others, and has already been featured on BBC, ITV and in the national press. They have identified 7,500 routes that collectively stretch for over 110,000km, and are currently working on building a website that will host all of the Slow Ways routes information. They hope to launch the website soon.



The next challenge is to walk, test, review, record and verify all of the Slow Ways routes and for this they are hoping to recruit thousands of volunteers – which is where I think we might come in.

I’m not exactly sure where this will lead but, if you think you might be interested, then take a look at [www.slowways.co.uk](http://www.slowways.co.uk), and subscribe to their newsletter.

Maybe some of us could test the paths together – pandemic permitting.

**Colin Huggins**

## YOUR NATIVITY SCENE ON DISPLAY?

Can you help Blythburgh church make itself all Christmassy? Of course, the church will have a Christmas tree, lights and the usual decorations, including its traditional crib scene. But this year you're invited to add to the display by bringing your own nativity scene or characters. They'll be arranged on the windowsills throughout the church and their stories told on cards beside them. The scenes can be large or small, and from anywhere in the world. If current Covid regulations apply, the church will be open from 9am to dusk, seven days a week, for private prayer and reflection.

If you'd like to include your nativity scene or figures, please email Meryl Doney to register, at [meryldoney@me.com](mailto:meryldoney@me.com), and she'll give you details of how to participate.



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## GOODS SHED ON TRACK

Halesworth to Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway Society volunteers are now close to completing Phase I of the Goods Shed Project. The structural work, except for the remaining doorpost repair, is done.

Outside, the railway-style fencing and traditional Suffolk “double-X” gate, specified by the owner, is erected, and the short demonstration tracks are laid down (higher than the original, so that the tree roots are not damaged). A pathway made from recycled brick dust leads to the doors. The rest of the fenced area has been seeded with wild grasses and wild woodland flowers.

Part of the Society remit is industrial archaeology. The exact sites of the platform, A12 overbridge and the two station buildings have been narrowed down



to a few metres. A volunteer found what may be the station well, just on the river side of the original boundary gateway and – acting on information – two members went up to the church to search for the six “feet” which used to be under the small goods shed – and think they found them (*pictured*)

on the verge there. (NB the Society has no designs on them!)

We plan to restore the station sign that used to be on the platform (saying BLYTHBURGH FOR WANGFORD), and the casting of the letters is in hand. We are hoping that next spring the Covid vaccine might allow for a ceremonial re-opening of the building, where there will be historic displays. We’d very much like to be able to invite local people to this, as everyone who has come to talk to us has been very kind and supportive. A spring date, after Easter, is a possibility.

**James Hewett & Ken Penrose, Co-Chairmen**

**Halesworth To Southwold Narrow Gauge Railway Society**



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## CHRISTMAS AT HOLY TRINITY, BLYTHBURGH

At the time of writing, we're planning a fairly normal Advent, Christmas and new year calendar, with some adjustments for Covid. We're hoping to offer:

**Choral Evensong, Sunday 6 December 6pm**

**Service of Lessons & Carols Saturday 19 December 4pm**

**Midnight Communion, Christmas Eve Thursday 24 December 11.30pm**

**Family Service, Christmas Day Friday 25 December 10am**

**Choral Evensong, Sunday 3 January 6pm**

I'm afraid we are unable to hold a Crib Service this year, or to carol sing around the village.

Please note, for all the services above, **we need to ask you to pre-book.** *If you'd like to attend, please contact Jenny Allen by email at [jennyanddick@aol.com](mailto:jennyanddick@aol.com), or by text on 07710 254 665.* She will need to know, in advance, the name and contact details of all who plan to attend. It would help to know those people who are in the same household, so we can group them together to save space.

Here are the booking deadlines:

**Choral Evensong I: 5pm Sat 5 Dec**

**Carol Service: 5pm Fri 18 Dec**

**Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services: 5pm 23 Dec**

**Choral Evensong II: 5pm Sat 2 Jan**

## FOOD BANK COLLECTION POINT

Blythburgh now has its own collecting point for food donations, which will be passed to Lowestoft Food Bank. It's located in Blythburgh Church. There's a large plastic crate inside the church to the left of the main door, beside the Traidcraft stall. You can find up-to-date details of what is needed urgently, as well as what is currently in good supply. This will be updated weekly so your donations are making a real difference to people in need.



In the first few days after the Foodbank collection point was set up, we discovered that the crate was already full! This is mainly down to two local lads. Bruno, who lives in Blythburgh, grew pumpkins, and decided, with his pal Edgar, to sell them at (St Felix) school. Thanks to their entrepreneurial efforts, they made £50! They used the profits to buy food for the food bank with the proceeds: hence the full box.

The Lowestoft Food Bank covers people in need from Lowestoft down to Saxmundham, and that obviously includes Blythburgh too. The Lowestoft Food Bank is located at Lowestoft Community Church, 8 Hadenham Road, Lowestoft NR33 7NF. More details at: [www.lowestoft.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.lowestoft.foodbank.org.uk).

## VILLAGE HALL – UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

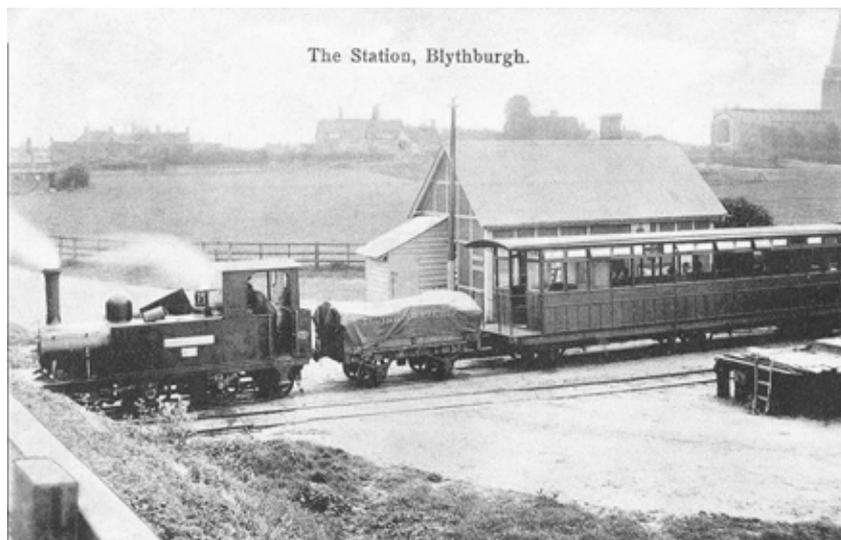
Blythburgh Village Hall was managed by a charitable trust. But as trustees have stood down over the last year or so, it has been difficult to recruit new ones. This meant that it wasn't possible legally to run the Village Hall and hire out its premises. As a result, it was decided at the Village Hall's Annual General meeting held on 24 November this year, that the Parish Council of Blythburgh with Bulcamp and Hinton (the legal owners of the village hall) should take over as sole trustee. This transfer has now taken place.

The Parish Council plan to appoint a group of councillors to supervise the running of the village hall, who will recruit representatives from the parish to join them on a management committee. The hall has been closed during the pandemic but, following a risk assessment, and once the premises have been made covid-secure, it's hoped that it will be available for community events in the new year.

The Parish Council want to express their heartfelt gratitude to the village hall's former chair, Olive Forsythe, for her tireless and selfless efforts in helping make the venue such a welcoming gathering place.

If you're interested in putting your name forward for the Village Hall management committee, please let Roderick Orr-Ewing (Parish Council Chair) know at [roderick@millend6.plus.com](mailto:roderick@millend6.plus.com).

## SPOT THE DELIBERATE MISTAKE



In the last issue of *Blythburgh Focus*, we published this picture of Blythburgh Station. What we forgot to point out is the element of 'fake news' it includes. We believe that this photograph was intended for use as a postcard, and the producers engaged in the period equivalent of 'photoshop'. Maybe they

thought that Holy Trinity, Blythburgh (in the distance on the right) didn't look sufficiently churchlike to be convincing, so they added an entirely fictional spire!

## The Blythburgh Latitude Trust is making grants

The Blythburgh Latitude Trust makes grants to individual parishioners, families and organisations to meet specific needs.

For your grant, contact the honorary administrator,  
Jim Boggis, Marsh End,  
Church Road, (478 687)

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The trustees are

- Jenny Allen, Chair
- Jeff Sutton
- Michael Nicholls
- Malcolm Doney
- Sarah Wickham
- Harry Waller

### Your Parish Councillors

**Chair:** Roderick Orr-Ewing

**Planning Advisory Committee:**

Sonia Boggis, Jeff Sutton, Val Carse

**Finance Advisory Committee:** Roderick Orr-Ewing,  
Chiara Saunders, Jim Boggis

**Councillors:** Malcolm Doney, Martha Burrows

**Clerk:** Al Besley

### Blythburgh Associations

**Blythburgh Latitude Trust**  
Jim Boggis 01502 478687

**Village Hall and Film Club**  
Olive Forsythe 01502 478521

**Horticultural Society**  
Val Carse 07973 389898

**Blythburgh Matters**  
Ro Williams 01502 478484

**Blyth Belles**  
Sarah Wickham blythbelles@gmail.com

[www.blythburgh.onesuffolk.net](http://www.blythburgh.onesuffolk.net)

## **'IT'S A RAT RUN' FINDS LOCAL TRAFFIC SURVEY**

The vast majority of the traffic passing up and down Angel Lane and Dunwich Road (the B1125) is through traffic, despite road signs saying it is for "Blythburgh village only", found a recent survey.

Following concerns expressed by residents about the volume, weight and speed of traffic on the road, the Parish Council asked Suffolk Highways to undertake a survey. Between 2 and 22 September, monitors were placed in two locations: on Angel Lane, mid-way between the Birdhouse and number 1; and on Dunwich Road close to Homestead School Cottage on Dunwich Road.

The survey found that the daily number of vehicles travelling along this stretch of the B1125 over the survey period varied between 1,175 and 1,792 each way. Southbound traffic is generally slightly higher than northbound traffic. That means the daily overall volume varies between 2,696 and a massive 3,480 vehicles.

There is no discernible difference between weekday and weekend numbers. And significantly, an estimated 95% of these vehicles were 'through traffic'. The survey found that the peak hourly number of vehicles was 250, the majority of which were passenger cars though there was a significant number of vans, but not a great deal of heavy traffic.

The local traffic advisory signs are blatantly being ignored.

On weekdays, southbound traffic (heading towards Westleton) peaks in the early morning between 7 and 8am, and there is a second (slightly higher) peak between 11am and noon. The pattern is slightly different at the weekend, with no early morning peak and the highest traffic numbers between mid-morning and lunchtime.

Northbound traffic (towards the A12) peaks between 4pm and 5pm each day. Peak flows are slightly higher northbound than southbound – the maximum number of vehicles in an hour travelling southbound was 205, whereas the maximum travelling northbound was 250.

Despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary, the data showed that the speed of traffic passing through was not excessive. Averages are more or less exactly at the 30mph speed limit at the Dunwich Road location, but well under the speed limit at the Angel Lane location. However, in both cases, approximately 15% of the traffic was over the speed limit.

The Parish Council has since formed a consultancy group to look at these figures more closely, and to make practical recommendations as to how the volume of traffic – which remains a serious problem – can be significantly reduced.

## **HOME GROWN TRAFFIC DATA**

### **Dunwich Road**

To coincide with the traffic survey, we had both our VAS (Vehicle Activated Sign) instruments on the Dunwich Road, for comparison. They largely mirrored the Suffolk Highway survey results.

### **Northbound**

Maybe because of holidaymakers staying later in the season the volumes were up by 16% compared to last year. What was most noticeable was the reduction of speeding. In October 2019 88% were driving at acceptable speeds and 12% were illegal, but in 2020 just under 95% were acceptable and only 5% were illegal.

### **Southbound**

Volumes of traffic heading south were broadly similar, but speeding was worse, particularly late at night when only 60% were acceptable and 40% were illegal. However, there's an average of only 16 vehicles between 10pm and 5pm.

### **A12 Southbound**

This was monitored during October. Overall, the volumes were down by 81% compared with October 2018 (the most recent figures we have). Interestingly and surprisingly the main reduction was speeders! In 2018, we had 2100 out of 4100 per day at illegal speeds (35 - 55mph); in 2020 this was only 945. And while in 2018 we had 24 vehicles a day at highly illegal speeds (55mph and over) in 2020 it was 7.

### **A12 Northbound**

Overall, the volume was down by 7%. Most of this drop was during the night, while the daytime levels were only 3% down. The incidence of speeding was slightly up overall, with the bulk of it at night.

## **LITTER-LOUTS ON CAMERA**

Some people who use the bottle bank in the car park opposite the White Hart have been dumping their rubbish on the ground around the bins. It is unsightly, hazardous and illegal. In order to combat this, the Parish Council has installed a CCTV camera trained on the bottle banks. This is now up and running, and we should be able to spot the delinquents, capture vehicle registration numbers and report them.

## DAISY BANK XCVI

It's still very strange, this coronavirus. One of the things I find keeps me going is routine, which for me encourages a feeling of safety and well-being.

For the last 33 years, I have got up around seven or eight in the morning and walked into the garden to feed the birds. Nearly every time, I have heard dogs barking across the other side of the Blyth Valley. They are coming from a house that we can see from our back gate – Union Farm – and it's obvious that the dogs are barking in anticipation of breakfast. Sadly, they are not the same dogs I heard years ago, but either offspring of the originals or replacements that have carried on the tradition. Anyway, like the distant train that we hear now and again from far off Bramfield, it's all very reassuring.

I've always appreciated continuity and tradition. We've had milk delivered in bottles ever since I was a child, and tea has always come loose out of a tea caddy. I opened up a tea bag, and the disgusting powder that came out of it confirmed that tradition, for me, was surely the better way. We don't drink instant coffee. I have a basic Italian percolator that goes on the stove and produces excellent coffee. Espresso, black and strong, without sugar, from that pot is what I have every mid-morning. B is not that keen on coffee but likes the variety that we drink on the top floor restaurant in Jarrolds of Norwich. When will we be able to do that again?

Technology and innovation I have always welcomed. I believe I was one of the first people to have solar heating in this part of the world; it was rubbish in those early days, and the people who bought the house off me got rid of it and I don't blame them. I was the first I knew that had an answer-machine, and one of the first to have an Amstrad Word Processor, courtesy of Mr Sugar.

Recently, I bought a second-hand iPad and iPhone from the ubiquitous e-bay. The iPad I got so that I would be able to consult with the doctor as they don't seem to do real-time consultations anymore. And the iPhone was to replace a basic mobile that I keep in the car for breakdown purposes.

I have rejected social media in any form, mainly because I can see no point to it. But I love Netflix, Amazon Prime, Spotify and NOWTV, the latter so that I can watch FI. I have always rejected Sky because of the odious Mr Murdoch, but I just can't do without motor racing, so I have had to bite the bullet. In other words, I have adopted a sort of 'pick and mix' approach.

I hesitate to say that all of the above sounds a bit pompous and smug, but if it does then I admit to some slight feelings of guilt and promise to buck up and do better! B reminds me that I named two of our previous Siamese *Murdoch* and *Maxwell*. I must have been living in the twilight zone when I made that decision!

**Paul Bennett**