



WATLINGTON GOSSIP

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Please Note

The closing date for receipt of articles to be included in the next issue of the Gossip is:

Monday 15th November 2004 If you have an item for inclusion which is ready before the deadline, please let us have it (see previous column for methods of doing this).

THANK YOU

EDITORIAL

As I sit down to write this item it is mid-August and the weather is hot and sultry. The hot summer that we have all longed for is here and now we complain that we are too hot and sticky. By the time you read this it will be early September and the cooler autumn days will be upon us and maybe an Indian summer before winter is upon us once more.

It occurred to me as I mused on the decisions made at the last Parish Council meeting that, as with the weather, we cannot please all the people all of the time.

I refer in particular to the problem (yes I do mean problem) of the skateboard/BMX park. This started as such a good idea; provide the children of the village with something to do, so that there would not be so much vandalism, graffiti etc. However, as many of you are aware, it has turned out to be almost the opposite. The structure has been constantly vandalised and the graffiti is a disgrace. Some enterprising individuals even managed to achieve access to the inside of the structure and turn it into a drug and sex den! Most villagers would be appalled at the items found inside. The general area around the park is constantly a mess of litter, broken glass and other debris. The once well-used basketball area is practically a no-go area, as users have to clear the area every time they want to use it. The dustbins previously provided have been set fire to.

Previous erroneous reports that the Council had decided to remove the skateboard park made for a very interesting and noisy Parish Council meeting. The users made promises that matters would improve, which have obviously not been kept.

It costs the Parish Council (and therefore you, the Council Tax payer) a lot of money to maintain the skateboard park, which is now in need of major repairs to keep it safe. Those repairs should have been completed by the time you read this.

There was a lot of discussion at the last Parish Council meeting, as there has been often in the past, as to the future of this equipment. I cannot remember such an emotive and split decision made on any item previously. There was a view that the equipment should be removed entirely. Oh, what an outcry that would bring I am sure. Eventually it was decided, far from unanimously, that the Council would pay to have the equipment resurfaced and reinforced at a not inconsiderable sum, which has to be found with difficulty from this year's budget. Even then, one item on the park is to be removed as the money could not be found to repair it and it would become dangerous.

It is so easy to accuse the Parish Council of not doing anything to keep the youth of the village occupied. Just how much of your money should they spend trying to attain that aim when all it seems to achieve is to provide another target for vandalism?

Go along to a Parish Council meeting and hear the arguments for and against the decisions made when they spend "your money". Why not come forward and become a Parish Councillor. As I write, there is a vacancy, due to the sad loss of Ted Featherby, and the Council needs to co-opt a new Councillor. Contact the Parish Clerk (contact details on the inside back page) and he will tell you what to do next. Make a difference; be involved in decisions that affect you and your family in the village. Despite what I have said above, it can be a very rewarding use of your spare time.

Brenda Leedell A member of the
editorial team

Letters, Letters.

If you have a point of view you would like to get across, why not write a letter to YOUR magazine.

Dear Gossip

Congratulations to everyone who organised and helped with Watlington Pre-school Extravaganza. It was great to see the fancy dress parade, the dance display in the hall and the football competition. Thanks to the hot dog lads and the refreshment ladies. It was a pity about the weather. It was more like old times with everyone working together. I saw a lot of a younger generation helping. That must be good, after all Watlington is your village; be proud of it.

I am sorry I had to disappoint so many people requesting tickets for Guys & Dolls, but it was a sell-out every night! Once again, I had two bookings no-one turned up to claim. So in future we shall have to request all money in advance. A special 'thank you' to the boys and girls on the playing field, who were well behaved while the show was on.

On a sour note, no thanks to the person who passed on an old five pound note to me. Things don't change much!

Bill Cameron, (Grabble) Downturn Road.

oooOOooo

Dear Gossip

As a long standing resident of Fairfield Lane, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council and J. A. Brothers for the work done in re-surfacing the lane this summer. I'm sure the mothers taking their children to school find a difference pushing their buggies along the lane. If it remains as it is now, all pedestrians will be happy to use it, especially in the winter, now that the mud and the potholes are gone-Thanks also to the Players for a memorable evening at their latest show 'Guys & Dolls'.

Maureen Bowman, Fairfield Lane.

oooOOooo

Dear Watlington Gossip,

Thank you all once again for a wonderful summer edition of the Watlington Gossip. Great reading, lovely front cover illustration. May I, through your magazine, thank everyone involved with the resurfacing (at last) of Fairfield Lane, not least of all Mr Rockcliffe, who I indeed saw at the wheel of the digger. After many years of a dusty, potholed surface, we now have a neat and tidy lane. No more huge puddles to avoid when it rains and no more dust when its windy. Not only the residents are pleased but so must the mums be, taking their children to school. They must have found it difficult when pushing prams and pushchairs. All my visitors can't fail to notice how tidy the lane looks when they call.

Mrs Maureen Spalding, Fairjield Lane

oooOOooo

Summertime - peace and tranquillity? Not on your life!

How many people realise that bonfires that do not cause a nuisance to themselves, carry in the wind, sending obnoxious smells over and into other people's properties (let's be honest, haven't we all needed to open our windows in the recent hot weather?).

Noise, which may Just be to them a hobby, or additional small income, with hammering and banging almost continually, can be enough to drive neighbours indoors. It's amazing how far the noise can travel, especially in the evenings. Foul language: whilst you may think that it can only be heard by yourselves and those close by, can carry for a great distance and can be heard not only by neighbours, but also by their children-Radios: we ail like to listen to music, etc., but perhaps your choice is not the same as the person in the next road. Turn the volume down a bit, then we can all have our choice- Car radios can sometimes have you bouncing in your armchair indoors! Please remember, we all have to live in the neighbourhood and try to treat others as you would wish to be treated. Let us all enjoy [next] summer-

Mrs I. Hammond, Wensum Close

oooOOooo

Dear Gossip readers,

The Grand Banger Race Night, held on the 17th July 2004, raised £363.04 for the Michelle Sherwood Cancer Fund. Grateful thanks are expressed to all those people who attended, and to all those who helped on the night with the races, the food and the raffle, etc.

Geoff Beaumont. Downham Road

oooOOooo

The following anonymous slip was taken from the Post Office Gossip box:

Congratulations to Mike Davies. His interpretation of Watlington Gossip in plants and flowers [the cover to issue 22 of the magazine] is brilliant.

Vacancy for a School Community Governor

Being a school governor can be enormously rewarding....not monetarily, but in the amount of satisfaction derived from seeing children's progress and influencing school developments.

To further their aim of increasing links with the local community. Governors of Watlington Community Primary School have included an additional Community Governor under their newly approved constitution. Anyone who is interested in applying for this position can obtain further information either from the Headteacher, Mrs Dowden, on 01553 810468. or the Chair of Governors. John Ward- on 01553 811473.

Being a governor can take as much or little of your time as you let it. but an evening a month during term time is typical- plus a few short daytime visits to the school if possible. Full Governors' meetings are normally held in the evening, 4 or 5 times a year, with sub-committees meeting as necessary to discuss finance, staffing, curriculum, facilities and health and safety. School visits allow governors to monitor progress and assist in activities- and whilst new governors are normally encouraged to contribute according to their interests and expertise, it is hoped that the new Community Governor would help integrate the school and village. Norfolk County Council provide an excellent Governor Training Programme to help new and existing governors understand their role.

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Comment

In Setters received from the electricity company by several people in the village, concerning the recent experience of brief electrical power cuts: it would appear that these can be caused by anything from birds, wind-blown debns. thunderstorms, or even tree branches touching the overhead cables. Then why has it only happened in recent months and apparently now stopped (at least until the next time)

Watlington School of Dancing

On Saturday 17th July, Watlington School of Dancing held their annual prize giving. The afternoon commenced with a demonstration of examination dances some of the pupils, and a performance of "Shades of Beatles" by the senior ballet class, which was originally performed at the Corn Exchange in April during the NODA Festival of Youth. Mrs Judy Parsons, secretary of the Watlington Players- then presented the certificates, badges, prizes and cups. Members of the adult tap class kindly volunteered to serve the tea at the end of the proceedings.

The school has broken up for the summer holidays. Autumn term commences on Saturday 4th September.

Mrs Penny Cooke

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Watlington Information Centre

The title office at the eastern end of the village hall continues to serve the community, staffed by a band of 26 volunteers, at the last count- We have been extremely sad to lose two of our eldest volunteers this year. It speaks something of that generation of people, now in their eighties, who are interested in new things, a fount of knowledge of their past, and who have contributed generously with their time and talents. We pay tribute to Ken Fox and Ted Featherby. We are also grateful to each volunteer who contributes in their own special way. However, we do still need additional volunteers. There are times when it is difficult to find available people. Volunteering is rewarding and is considered a valuable experience by employers as well as helping one to get to know people in our village community. Do call in if you feel able to help. or come along to the volunteers' get-together in the small hall on 16th September at 2.30 p.m.

Finance-wise the Centre is grateful to the parish council for a grant which covers our telephone line rental, and we continue to receive a small amount of revenue from the Phone Co-op from members' calls. If anyone feels able to help us in this way, by paying for telephone calls through the Phone Co-op, do contact us.

Work on a Welcome to Watlington booklet for new residents is well under way. This will include information from community groups and services in the village.

Watlington Information Centre is open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The telephone number of the Centre is 01553 810777 and the email address is wic@watlingtoninfo.com. There is also a web page on www.watlingtoninfo.com

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WATUN6TON PLAYERS

Presents



By Mark Camolela & Beverley Cross.

Produced by Mike Cooke

Watlington Village Hall October 27 28 29 at 7.30 pm

BOXOFFICE KL810452

Don't be caught out, book early because we had a list for cancellations for Guys and Dolls, so there were some disappointed people. Kate Carpenter (01553 810381).

oooOOooo

Too many people confine their exercising to jumping to conclusions, running up bills, stretching the truth, bending over backwards, side stepping responsibility and pushing their luck.

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Watlington Players

Guys and Dolls was a great success artistically and in audience appreciation. We had a sell-out, which has not happened in the last few years. The night club setting, i.e. seated at tables, was very popular, with the audience having improved sight lines, and with the especially hot weather, cooler than close seating, plus plenty of refreshing cold drinks available.

For a number of years, the Players have supported local charities. Our bar and refreshment profits going into the fund, which is divided up each year. For this last production we offered facilities to Roger Wright of King's Lynn Heart Support Group, whose helpers held a raffle on charity night, and end of evening collections on the following nights. The audience gave so generously that they raised £533, far more than we could have donated from the bar profits etc., so, this is probably the way forward-We are now reading and casting the autumn play (see poster above). It's a very funny farce, produced by Mike Cooke.

7.

Watlington Village Hall

By the time you read this, we will have turned the corner from summer into autumn and will be approaching the end of another year. Likewise, the village hall will be coming to its year end, culminating in the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. on Thursday 4th November.

Want to know more about the village hall?

It replaced what was affectionately called "the black hut", a corrugated tin hut obtained second-hand as a former gymnasium from the east end of London, some time before World War One

by Squire Birch of Watlington Hall. It stood close to the road on the present plot and was used as a reading room and for various church and village events. It survived right into the 1980s. In 1988 the new hall was built, after years of fund-raising in the village and with grants from the county and borough. It was an immediate success, and booked solid. So in the 1990s it all began again, with plans for an extension. The then committee (which looked remarkably similar to the now committee) hit the jackpot, with a £90,000 lottery grant and finished building the Small Hall in the year 2000. Present users include adult education, archery, badminton, carpet bowls, clinic, craft group, dancing school, short mat bowls, under 5s, Watlington Players, Wednesday Club, Women's Institute, youth football. And of course, it's the top local venue for parties, celebrations, wedding receptions, puppet shows, concerts, etc.

The village hall is a registered charity, the parish council are custodian trustees. The management committee are administrative trustees, running the hall on a day-to-day basis. This committee comprises club representatives, seven elected members, and two members from the parish council. All committee members are trustees and need to act collectively in the best interests of the hall and all its users. Thanks to the hard work of these committee members, volunteers, and two part-time cleaners the hall attracts a lot of favourable comment. The committee sets hiring charges annually to meet the normal running costs, but improvements to the hall have to be financed by fund raising. Want it to carry on like this? Want it to change? It is your hall, for your enjoyment, not a secret society with closed doors! Some long-standing members are going to put their feet up at the AGM, so some dedicated people are needed to fill their shoes. Believe us, it's a fulfilling experience helping to run a village hall like ours in Watlington.

The present management committee invites all readers to come to the AGM ON THURSDAY 4TH NOVEMBER AT 7.30 P.M. IN THE SMALL HALL when, as well as the formalities there will be refreshments, an opportunity to chat, to find out more about Watlington Village Hall, and to help with its future success.

For further information contact the chairman, Brian Toates on 01553 810231, or the secretary, Barbara Church on 01553 810584.

Watlington Village Hall Diary Dates

Saturday 16th October, 7.30 p.m.

A fundraiser for the Village Hall Quiz Night. Teams of between four and eight people are invited to book up on 01553 810584. The ticket price is £3 per person, which includes light refreshments. You can expect the customary friendly rivalry.

Thursday 28th October at 2 JO p.m.

In collaboration with Creative Arts East. The Magic Circus Puppet Show Roll up! Roll up! For the greatest show on earth. The Magic Circus introduces us to Tommy Edwards, the clown with a fear of heights, who has fallen in love with the beautiful trapeze artist Fifi La Mour! Come and marvel at the amusing and awe-inspiring circus acts., all set to original music! This is a brilliant show for the whole family. Tickets in advance: adults, concessions and children £4. On the door: adults, concessions and children £5. Bookings, phone 01553 810732, or 01553 810466, or 01553 81023.

Thursday 4th November at 7 JO p.m. Annual General Meeting in the small hall

Saturday 13th November at 7.30 p.m. In collaboration with Creative Arts East. Romantic Jazz with Tina May.

"Tina May is that great rarity, a singer who actually enhances a song" The Observer. Do you think you are not keen on jazz? You will definitely change your mind once you have heard Tina May. Her beautiful voice and sparkling style make her one of the top jazz singers and a true superstar of the future. Bar and light refreshments available. Bookings: phone 01553 810584, or 01553 810732, or 01553 810231. Tickets bought in advance: Adults £6, concessions and children £5. On the door; Adults £7, concessions and children £6.

Saturday December 4th.

Christmas fund-raising day.
Coffee morning with stalls, 10 a.m. to 12 noon in the small hall.

Social Evening with Race Night 7.30p.m.

9.

The rector writes

The Benedictine Way applies to everyone

When on holiday I love to visit Benedictine Monasteries. One of my most memorable visits was to Monte Casino where Saint Benedict lived and worked. Seeing the present Benedictine Community you are struck by their warm welcome in the true Benedictine tradition of hospitality, and their simple, balanced and dignified lifestyle.

Many people regard monks as extremists, but I saw a different picture. Here was a group of men who decided to live together to pursue a life of prayer, study and work. A life of quiet sanity instead of the usual race for money and power.

Saint Benedict was the father of western monasticism and is the patron saint of Europe. His communities kept his simple rule, a page of which I read each week, which helped to preserve the ancient learning and culture of Greek and Rome after the Roman empire crumbled. They became centres of culture and learning throughout the middle ages. They became centres of health care, justice and the arts-Benedict's rule also established a primitive form of democracy in an age of tyranny.

The rule also established the foundation for modern human rights because in the community each person was treated with respect and honour. Benedict's monasteries valued learning, good manners, discipline and self respect.

The holy monks taught that these ordinary virtues were part of the call to holiness. Benedict reminds us that all of these virtues—including holiness—are vital for a civilisation of decency, order and peaceful prosperity.

Benedict lived in the sixth century when the Roman empire was falling into ruins. The values he established were vital then, and they are just as necessary now. Our own society is suffering from the same symptoms of decay as ancient Rome- Lawlessness, immorality, greed and despair are all around us.

Benedict's principles for a good and balanced life are enshrined in the three vows which Benedictine monks and nuns make. They take vows of stability, obedience and conversion of life. From these three promises come the balance which we need as individuals and as a society.

Stability means being rooted. The Benedictine monk or nun promises to stay committed to his or her community for life- We need this kind of commitment in our marriages, in our Christian worship and in our communities.

It seems a sad fact that many folk are not willing to persevere. When things get rough people bail out. Commitment seems to be a dirty word. Stability means getting stuck in and not giving up on a particular community or commitment. Stability means we find God and happiness right where we are, and that we do not have to flit about after every trend, fashion or new idea.

Obedience is a harsh word in a society where anything goes and pleasure seems to be the only guiding principle. However, the root of the word 'obey' means 'to listen'. True obedience means listening to others and responding to their needs. The obedient person is always alert to the spoken and unspoken needs of those around them. Obedience builds peace and understanding in communities. Obedience is vital for the Christian life to prosper. We need to listen to God, listen to the bible, listen to Holy Church and listen to the Holy Spirit within us.

Then, after listening, comes action.

Conversion of life is the dynamic vow. The person who seeks conversion of life is always looking for a new way to see life. This principle does not just mean being converted in the religious sense. It is a way of looking at life that is creative, optimistic and positive. It sees possibilities, not problems. It gives people the benefit of the doubt. It is always seeking to convert the difficulties of life into opportunities for growth.

The person who vows to follow conversion of life wants to convert the whole world from death and despair to new life and hope. These three principles are not just for monks and nuns. They can be applied to our families, our businesses, our schools, our faith, communities, our local communities. The Benedictine Rule was written in the sixth century, but it is timeless in its appeal. It is always relevant because Benedict understood people. He understood what makes us tick, and that will never change. May God go with you. Father James

Dates for your diary.

Saturday 18th September
Wormegay and Tottenhill Bingo evening
7.30 pm. Village Hall, Tottenhill.

Sunday 26th September
Patronal Festival 11 am. Saint Michael's, Wormegay
with Father John Burgess SSC former Rector of Glastonbury-

Saturday 16th October Traditional Harvest Supper
in the Village Hail, Tottenhill with Gwen Spriggs of Radio Norfolk Tickets £4
phone: 810305.

11.

A tribute to Ted Featherby who died on 24th June 2004

The words that follow were taken from the oration spoken at Ted's funeral, with kind permission of his widow Mrs Sylvia Featherby and the oration's author, Doctor Hugh Lacey .

Ted Featherby was a fount of all village knowledge. Born in 1915, in School Road, Watlington. During the First World War his father served in the Royal Flying Corps, and his family go back to the 1800s. His grandfather was a wheelwright, carpenter and undertaker, and Ted learned his trade from father and grandfather by going round with them as a small boy, to homes in the village. His interest in people and the village must have stemmed from that time.

At the time, Watlington was a small village of some 500 residents, without mains water or electricity, but with a busy railway, four pubs, ten shops, including a baker, shoemaker, butcher and a cycle repairer. The tin hut and the surrounding field, given by the Pope family, was the centre of village life. It was a very close and friendly community and Ted spent many happy hours in the tin hut. playing table tennis, billiards and darts. Outside, he played football and tennis. He was good at sport.

He was a choir boy and remained closely associated with the church throughout his life. At one stage he was a church warden. In his eighties, he and Michael, his son, gilded the church

clock, something he had done with his father many years before. At the outbreak of the Second World War. Ted joined the R.A.F and was posted to the Orkneys. where he met and married a local lass, Margaret. Here, Michael was born. Ted came back to Watlington to work with his father and again took an active part in village life, playing football, tennis, cricket and also acting. He loved the village, was a parish councillor, where at one time he held the position of chairman.

He was a flood warden from 1965 and also carried out a survey of local wells.

He was very involved in the Royal Air Force Association, in which he became vice-chairman of the local branch. Ted's wife Margaret died in 1980. He married Sylvia who shared his interests in the village. This interest in life and the village never wained. He was still a parish councillor and a member of R.A.F.A. He also belonged to the Watlington bowls club and the Wednesday Club at the time of his death.

We met Ted 45 years ago when we first came to the village and he took us and our house over. He always seemed to be around, especially at tea-time, when he would fill us in on the latest gossip, which was never malicious. His past memory of people and events was phenomenal; he was truly 'Mr Watlington'. Ted always looked smart and upstanding. He had an easy social manner and would chat to anybody, including Meryl Streep and Seth from Emmerdale. whom he met at the Duke's Head, his favourite hostelry in King's Lynn. We very much miss his company and enthusiasm, and not being able to ask him about people and events in the past.

Ted was a perfect example of how to keep active until the end. He even climbed a ladder to cut our wall creeper down only two years ago! We, and so many. will miss you Ted.

Doctor Hugh Lacey

Ted Featherby



Parish Council Report

From Co/in Vince, Clerk to the Parish Council At the July meeting of the Parish Council, councillors stood in silent tribute to the late Cllr Ted Feath-erby, who had served with distinction on the parish council for a number of years, including a spell as chairman. His input to council meetings and his deep knowledge of village history will be sorely missed by all.

The Parish Council has agreed that the skateboard park equipment will be resurfaced as the current surfacing has deteriorated considerably over the summer. The new surface 'Skatelite Pro' is an industry standard that should prove more durable. However, the costs involved are high and as a result the Council has also decided that it would be very unlikely to provide further funding in 2005/2006 if this surfacing proves to be unsustainable or if there is vandalism damage to any of the equipment.

The Council has agreed to have 'gateway' signs at each of the roadways entrances to the village, the first one already having been installed by the County Council along Downham Road. It is hoped that the signs on Station Road and Church Road will be installed this financial year and St Peters Road and Thieves Bridge Road in 2005 (though these may possibly occur all in this year). At the same time it was agreed not to pursue the matter of speed reactive signs at the present due to their high installation costs. Council approved County Council consultations on proposals for waiting restrictions at the junction of School Road / Church Road / Downham Road and for a 40 mph zone between Watlington and Magdalen and it appears that these schemes may now be going ahead.

The crossing from the Millennium Green towards the shop is now in the design stage and should be installed this financial year. The Council has brought to the attention of the County Council the need for upgrade work on the footways in Church Road, School Road and parts of Downham Road. The assessment of the need for a footway from the village hall car park to Mill Road has scored well and is on the list of works to be carried out by County. However with all these Jobs there is no guarantee as to when works will be carried out.

Plans are under way to improve the fence and kissing gate on the boundary of the Glebe Land at Downham Road and to make the narrow strip of the Glebe Land more open with a modest widening of the cut areas either side of the existing footpath. The football pitch area is now well defined and work is going ahead to try and produce a playable pitch by the end of the coming football season. The Council has also agreed to severely reduce the height of most of the Leylandii and other hedging on the boundary of the recreation ground to create a more open site. This will most probably have to be delayed until next year because of financial constraints. The play equipment project has now been divided into 2 phases with news of Phase 1 funding, the tots area, still expected in September. The Council has added a new mound slide to this first phase to replace the one removed at Warren Close last year. Improvements have been made to the station car park. A weekend of work by WAGN has resulted in the creation of extra spaces, a more acceptable surface and safer site access. It is doubtful that there will be further upgrading in the short term but it is council policy to continue to press for an expansion of the parking area.

Thanks are extended to JA Brothers for their assistance in laying out the new surface for Fairfield Lane, which will be appreciated by all the many regular users of the lane, especially with the winter months to come.

EDF Energy has confirmed in writing that the fault causing the series of power cuts has now been rectified. Thanks should be extended to BBC Radio Norfolk for their piece on this problem, as the number of vans attending the village after the broadcast seemed to multiply daily!

Two final points. The Council has decided on a policy that in future anonymous letters will no longer be considered at council meetings and if you wish to e-mail the Council the address has changed to watting-tonparish@onetel.com with immediate effect

PLANNING REPORT

The following decisions have been received from the Borough Council:

8 Beechwood Cloae - Extension to dwelling:
Approved.

72 Fen Road - Extension to dwelling: Approved.

94 Fen Road - Variation of residential planning condition: Approved.

Adjacent to 47 Mill Road - House/garage construction: Refused and Tree Preservation Order imposed.

Potver Farm, 159 St Peters Road - Change of land use to garden: Refused.

7 Warren Close - Extension and conservatory:
Approved.

23 Warren Close - Extension to dwelling:
Approved.

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13.

What if ..

Throughout the four seasons of the year I walk daily with my dogs along the trails, banks and ways of West Norfolk, hi the main these walks take me through the woodland at Shouldham, or along the banks of the Ouse in either direction from the bridge at Magdalen, and the banks of the relief channel.

At times I tend to link the relief channel with the lane known as Bells Drove which, as some of you will know, is a narrow road extending in a general southward direction from Station Road (just east of the bridges at Magdalen) for about two miles, almost into Runcton Holrne, where it joins Common Road and on into that village.

During one rather overcast and sombre day towards the end of June of this year I found myself trekking, the dogs ahead of me, along this narrow road, contemplating on and marvelling at the heavy growth of weeds and grasses on both sides of the lane, when I suddenly began to realise that unless someone - the Norfolk County Council, or whoever is responsible for these narrow highways - took control of the organic growth on either side, nature would soon reclaim the land on which this man-made track was laid. Indeed, I came to one long stretch of road where, down the very centre the tarmac and granite chippings weeds had been thrust up by, leaving only two rapidly narrowing tracks for the access of wheeled vehicles. A 'divide and conquer' process was well under way.

This scene of nature's wanton encroachment started me thinking what might happen if for some cataclysmic reason man no longer found himself in control, as he surely appears, and certainly considers himself to be.

From that time in late June I began to take more notice of the deprivations caused by nature's advances, particularly where areas of man's unheeding lack of response - or in some places deliberate neglect - had allowed steady encroachment and colonisation of weeds, shrubs and even trees.

For instance, while driving towards the main A 10, along the Thieves Bridge Road, lake careful note of the hedges on either side. At one time, perhaps 30 years ago, whole stretches of these hedges were torn out by the local land owner, only to be replanted several years later. I have good reason to remember the lack of those hedges, for in those days I used to be dropped off

from work at the junction with the A 10, and walked the mile or so into the village and home. In the winter, the wind rain and snow drove across this hedge-less road, to my utter discomfort. In recent times the hedges were kept back, away from the road, exposing a few feet of grass verge. Now however they are so tall and rampant that they begin to bend over at their tops and because they reach out into the road they are kept under control only by passing lorries, trucks and domestic vehicles- A kind of automotive pruning!

How long would it take, should the transit of vehicular traffic cease, for those hedges first to begin to encroach into the highway and then to meet overhead? In five years a beech hedge, if untouched by the machines of men, will put on in the region of three feet of growth in all directions. At that rate, in 5 years the hedges on Thieves Bridge Road would meet and mingle both vertically and horizontally, making an impenetrable barrier between Watlington and the main A 10.

The growth of weeds and grasses would begin as the movement of traffic along the same stretch of road ceased. Before very long, and certainly within the time it took the hedges to close down the thoroughfare, nature would reclaim the land that for so long had been governed and controlled by mechanical means.

There is a triangle of land just off the green path that connects Bells Drove with the bank of the relief channel. It measures some 40 paces along each of its three sides. Two or three years ago the land was cleared of all growth and a great heap of imported stones appeared in the centre of this triangle.

Gradually, over a period of a year, the stones were removed by the fanner, presumably for use as track ways in other areas. The triangle became churned up, uneven and bare of all growth where the stones had been.

Within weeks, mosses and low growing weeds appeared in the rutted ground. Then came taller grasses and docks. Over the period since that time (no more than eighteen months) shrubs and even small trees have taken root and the land has become rank, overgrown, and a haven for many forms of wildlife. In one corner of this triangle stands a piece of farm machinery, obviously discarded and of no further use to the tillers of the land. It is gradually being submerged and lost into the surrounding landscape-All that I have observed and related here is really of little consequence and is easily controlled by the variety of machines that man has devised-

It is a salutary fact however, that nature waits patiently in the background for man to fail. We may feel secure and in control, but what if the machines failed, or the power required for their activation was not available, or humanity itself became depleted to such an extent that we were brought to subsistence levels? It all sounds like science fiction, or a very expensive film drama, but next time you walk through the orderly fields that surround our village, or drive your car into the countryside, just take note of the odd corners and crevices where rough, untutored plants and grasses grow, and recall this article which begs the question. What if.....

Barry Shears

Summer Extravaganza thank you

Although it seems like a while ago now, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank everyone who helped make the Summer Extravaganza possible.

There were a number of individuals, clubs and societies that contributed by way of either a cash donation, donations of equipment, raffle prizes and of course help on the day, and our first port of call is the Parish Council, who was very supportive of our idea and agreed that the Church Field could be used as a venue. Also, thanks to the chairman of the Parish Council, Doctor Hugh Lacey who kindly agreed to open the Extravaganza for us with Gillian Sheppard. The next step was to get word round to the villagers that it was going to take place, and so we would like to thank the Watlington Gossip for advertising our Extravaganza. This provided the perfect media in which to advertise both our day and our cause to the whole of the community- Although new to the village, the proprietors of Watlington Post Office and Stores, and the Angel pub were very charitable by displaying our programmes and posters, financing and printing of the raffle tickets and providing a very generous raffle prize.

Thanks also to GE-Be Transport for donating the use of a lorry for the day, which provided us with a much needed stage and focal point on the field, and who also provided a generous raffle prize. Many village and local firms also contributed, for example Geoffrey Grief, Builder & Decorator of Watlington, who made a financial contribution towards the sponsoring of the infallibles and rodeo bull, along with GPL Construction of Runcton Home A. G. Wilson Plastering and Tiling, of Temngton St Clement, Dow Chemical and Wilkinson. John's Quality Butcher provided the meat for the Hot Dog Society, and Graphic Attack produced the lovely colourful signs that were seen on the A 10 and in the village.

We would like to mention the Hot Dog Society:

Cyril Plike, Adrian Revell, Kevin Edwards and John Sharp, who not only fulfilled their culinary obligations effortlessly, but whose help on the day was invaluable. Also Chris Thiart, who again was a fundamental part of the organisation on the day, and together with Railtrack, has provided us with additional funding to boost our own efforts. We would also like to mention Nick Langford and Vanessa Fisher who were among the first to arrive and the last to leave, and although all three were helping out on other attractions for the whole day, still stayed behind to clear away at the end.

Watlington W.I. volunteered their services on the day by providing much needed refreshments in the village hall. Penny Cooke and the Watlington School of Dance was also in the hall and provided lovely dance displays which the public very generously made a contribution towards. Another dance display took place, thanks to Jane Marshall, Tim Bannister and the students of Watlington Primary School, who took part in the Molly Dancing.

Another big thank you goes to Andrew Smith, who organised the fun run. Andrew spent a long time devising and preparing the route, making it safe and setting it all out on the day. Andrew also helped with the preparation of the field the night before (in the rain) and was there until the bitter end on Saturday. Not many of you got your running shoes on that day but well done to the people who took part and made it worthwhile.

One of the main attractions on the day seemed to be provided by the football tournament, and being a three woman band, it made it somewhat difficult to organise, so we would like to thank Baz and Mark Anderson of the Watlington Wanderer's under eights and under tens for marking out the pitches (in the rain-twice!) and helping to organise the tournament, and Mike Fincham of Downham Reds under tens for organising the tournament on the day and translating the completely girlie football fixture list to the confused managers.

Another main attraction was the dog show. We were surprised by the response to the show on the day, but it was lovely that so many of you turned up to show your dogs, we received donations of prizes from Mike Smith, Lynda's Dog Grooming and Paula Green who not only did an excellent job of organising the dog show, but who was also there from start to finish to help with all the preparation.

Paula would also like to extend her thanks to the judges, Jean Golding, Barbara Church, John Ward and Margaret Mould who had to make the difficult decisions and she hopes they enjoyed the day. Thank you to all the staff and committee at the Pre-School for their contribution to the

Kings and Queens, fancy dress, and to Father James who made an excellent Judge for the competition. Also to those who helped on the stalls on the day as well, it was much appreciated.

As you can see, many people offered their time and support for this fund-raiser and if we have missed anyone out then we apologise, but we sincerely thank everyone who helped make our profit of £1,400.

For us, the aim was to raise money for the mobile but we also wanted to bring the village together to enjoy something as a community. We think we achieved that on the day and we hope you think so too. Thanks for your support.

Julia Suiter - Sarah Berry - Angella Revell

16.

Fen Riversway Bridle Group

The Fen Rivers Way Bridleway Group was set up in 2001 by enthusiastic local riders utilising Public Bridleway sections of the Fen Rivers Way long distance path between King's Lynn and Downham Market.

The Group successfully bid for National Lottery "Awards for All" money to improve access to the nearby Relief Channel and effectively double the amount of safe off-road riding and walking in the vicinity. Watlington Parish Council also donated funds to the scheme.

Membership of the Group is only £5 a year. They meet bi-monthly and welcome new members, whether cyclists or walkers.

The Fen Rivers Way Bridleway Group would like to acknowledge the help of the Environment Agency and their tenants for allowing the use of the land, and Norfolk County Council's Access Team for their advice and practical support for the project

Where can I ride?

The River Great Ouse has public bridleways on both banks between Wiggshall St Germans and Stowbridge-

This newly agreed access provides over 14 kilometres additional riding and walking along the nearby Relief Channel, between the two villages. The routes are open to walkers and cyclists too. The Ordnance Survey "Explorer" map 236 provides details of other paths linking to the Relief Channel bridleways.

What do I need to do?

Nothing, just turn up and enjoy the riding!

- Parking facilities are indicated on the map.
- Please remember to respect the countryside and that these routes are by permission of the landowners.
- Motorised vehicles are strictly prohibited.

NB. For security purposes there is a locked gate at Stowbridge on the east bank entrance/exit. KEYS are only available to the Fen Rivers Way Bridleway Group, and on payment of a £5 returnable deposit from:

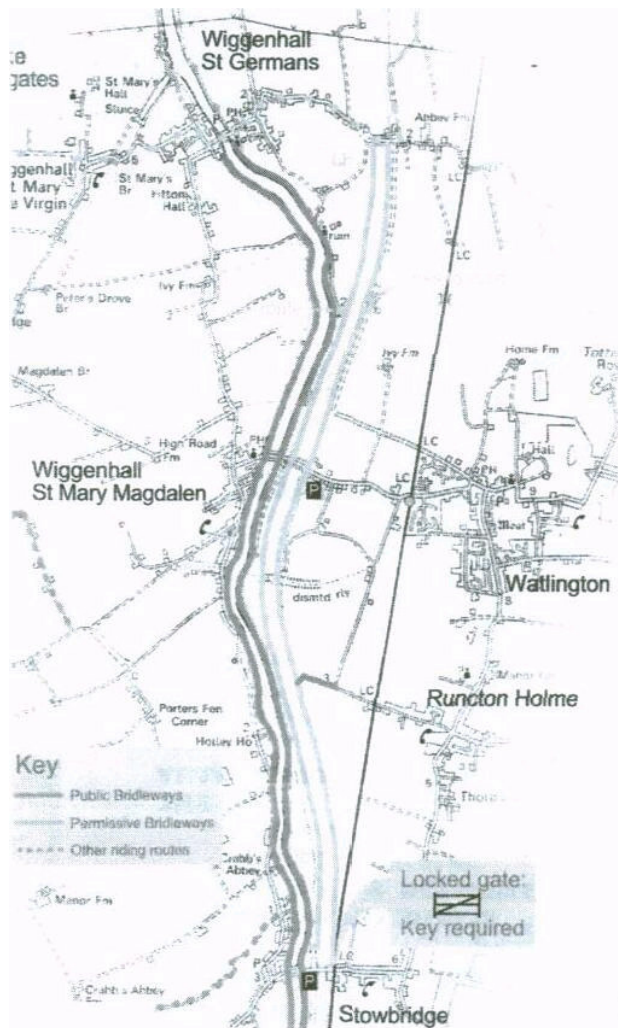
Mrs Maureen Lamb - 01553 811182, or Mis Jean Golding-01553 811362

The project was supported by:

The Environment Agency Norfolk County Council Watlington Parish Council

Fen Rivers Way
Bridleway Group Permissive Routes

The map below indicates the routes that may be accessed by riders, walkers and cyclists.



oooOOooo

Cycle Sale

Some aspects taken from

the Department of Transport leaflet

Wear the right kit - fluorescent by night, reflective by day. Wear a helmet - if an accident happens, a helmet of the right size and fit can help to prevent head injuries.

Two thirds of young cyclists who are hurt get their injuries while doing tricks or playing. Bikes aren't toys!

Be alert - look all round before starting off - don't ride straight off the pavement onto the road - ride in single file on busy or narrow roads, and always ask yourself, has that car driver seen me ?

Watlington Women's Institute

At the June meeting members celebrated their 37* birthday by holding a party and inviting 60 visitors from neighbouring institutes to join them. They were warmly welcomed by president Mary Greeves and they enjoyed a buffet supper prepared and served by Watlington members. The birthday cake was made by committee member Betty Bray. The Norwich Informality Barbershop Quartet provided music and humour to the evening.

In July, Revd. Betty Humphries spoke to the members about the Work of a Prison Chaplain. She gave us an insight into prison life and humorous anecdotes of her dealings with the prisoners at Wayland Prison near Watton.

At the August meeting, the booked speaker was unwell and not able to attend. However instead, one of the members, Brenda Leedell, gave a short talk on her research on the Watlington War Memorial and the men whose names are on it. Brenda will eventually be producing a booklet with details of her findings for purchase by anyone who may be interested.

Forthcoming Meetings in 2004 Sept 14th "Granny's Drawers" - Mrs Ann Knight Oct 12th "Ghosts and Witches of Cambridgeshire" -Mike Petty MBE Nov 9th AGM - Yvonne Sizeland - WI Advisor Watlington History Group

The second meeting of the Watlington History Group was held on 12th July 2004. George Ward reported on his research into the police presence in the past and there was some discussion on sources of information. Brenda Leedell gave a short talk on her research into the names on the Watlington War Memorial.

The History Group intend to exhibit at the Watlington Past & Present Weekend.

A further meeting will be held late September/early October, probably on a Monday evening, so watch the notice boards. If you wish to be personally contacted when the date is set please contact Rosemary or Brenda with your e-mail address or phone number and we will let you have details. An attendance fee of £1.00 will be asked to pay for the use of the room, with surplus funds going towards paying for guest speakers etc-

Anyone interested in the history of the village is invited to attend. For more information, please contact Rosemary Hams (KL 810711) or Brenda Leedell (KL 810848).

oooOOooo

The right to be heard does not include the right to be taken seriously.

Hubert Humphrey

21.

Watlington Carpet Bowls

We have again entered the leagues at Lynn Sport and Downham Market hoping to do better than we did in the 2004/2005 season.

We have also entered the Borough Cup/ Mayor's Charity Shield for the 2004/2005 season, but do not know any dates yet

Charity tournaments held at Littleport start again on the 20th September for the 2004/2004 season. We hope that we can get farther than the quarter finals this season.

On Thursday 22nd July we held a social day during which we played a pairs competition for the Ken Fox Memorial Plate. This was won by Neville Wagg and Phil Baines. It was a very enjoyable day with everyone bringing something for the buffet. Drink was supplied by the club. We still have a few vacant places, so if you are interested come along on Thursday mornings or Tuesday evenings, or telephone 01553 811439.

J. D. Stephens, Hon Secretary

oooOOooo

Watlington Short Mat Bowls Club

We are holding our summer team competition on Sunday 15th August. No other competitions have been held yet. These all start in the autumn. We sadly miss Ted Featherby, who recently died. He was a highly valued member of our club, having been our treasurer from the beginning. Our sympathy and support go to Sylvia and her family. We meet on Monday evenings and Friday afternoons. Why not come along and try the game. If you are interested, please ring 01553 811439.

J. D. Stephens. Hon Secretary

oooOOooo

Watlington Sports & Social Club

After 15 years as stewards, Mick and Sylvia retired at the end of May this year. A surprise party was held for them on the last Saturday in May (and it was a surprise). A collection was made and Sylvia was presented with a bouquet of flowers made by her daughter-in-law Lisa, and Mick was presented with a bottle! Their daughter Lorraine and her friend Hayley provided the buffet (and it was great), so the evening was a great success. The money collected is paying for a break at Potter's Leisure Centre, for a Country Music special at the end of September (tickets have been applied for). This was their choice, so we hope it will remind them of the club in years to come. They have since bought a caravan, so we all wish them well in their new hobby and hope that they enjoy it, as they deserve it.

At present, Ian McDonald is steward and, with the help of the committee, intends to keep up the standard that Sylvia and Mick have set. Our kitchen is open for business and a full menu is available. Meals can be booked on 810171. Please leave your order, but if you don't mind waiting to eat, just turn up! We can also cater for all types of occasions. We are happy the football season is back with us. We will be open for every game of football shown on Sky (on our big screen TV).

Entertainment is held every second Saturday night, a list of events is displayed in the club. Along with the football and entertainment we have a jazz club once a month (usually the middle Monday). A folk night is also held once a month. On Tuesdays a cribbage team play. New players are always welcome. Wednesday nights we are host to the ladies darts team, Thursdays, two to four pool teams, and Friday is a social evening. So come along for a drink and a chat with your friends.

If there is anything else you would like to see being held in the club, please let someone on the committee know and we will try to provide it. In conjunction with the Parish Council, we are helping to rejuvenate the football pitch on the church field as we now have a Saturday and Sunday football team as a very well run youth section, playing from the under nines to the under sixteens - girls, as well as boys. If anyone is interested with any form of sponsorship or donation please contact the steward, Ian McDonald.

We are having the car park sorted out at our own expense, so hopefully, it will be done before you read this!

A reminder: We are a private members club (new members welcome). It is only £5 to join. All people who are not members, be it wives, relations or friends must sign in and pay a fee of 50 pence. This is a requirement of the law.

Ion McDonald. Steward (810768)

oooOOooo

The Wednesday club

September already - a remarkable summer for the birds and bees, and the flowers! The members who travelled to Audley End on the 9th June, had a lovely day to enjoy a guided tour of the house and learn of its fascinating history, before exploring the great expanse of gardens and grounds. We held our strawberry tea on the 23rd June. Thanks go to the committee who laid on a luscious spread, and thanks to Mrs B Fisher, who provided an intriguing quiz all about food-

We started our meeting on the 14th July with a minutes silence, held in respect for Mr Ted Featherby who had died on the 24th June. A moving tribute was paid by the social secretary Mrs Jess Ebbens

who reminded us that Ted had been a founder member when the club was formed in 1995 and attended meetings regularly with his wife Sylvia- We shall miss him. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to a friendly games event.

On the 28th July we welcomed members from the short mat bowls club, who came along to demonstrate the game. Not only did they invite the members of the Wednesday Club to play, but they provided expert tuition to those new to the game. We want to say a big thank you to all concerned for providing such an interesting and enjoyable afternoon, under the expert eye of Mrs Johnson.

The very next day, the 29th July, members travelled to Cromer to visit the "End of the Pier Show". Another happy event. Then came August 11th - it had rained for three days before, and rained for two whole days afterwards - however, by the time our convoy of cars departed from the village hall to travel to the grounds at Sandringham the sun was shining. With our thanks to Mrs Ebbens and Mrs Carter, who found a most suitable spot in the woods for us to hold our picnic tea. The whole event was very relaxed and informal, held in perfect weather, a great success. Future events include:

8th September: Bingo 22nd September: The Hoime Henge Circle, a talk by Dr Handley of Lynn Museum. 13th October: Annual General Meeting 27th October: "The origins of surnames", speaker: Mr Derek Palgrave. 10th November: Outing to Norwich Our meetings are held at Watlington Village Hall, commencing at 2.00 p.m. Admission, £1, which includes tea or coffee and biscuits. You are most welcome to come along to any of the events listed above. Come and meet our friendly group.

Brenda J. Newman, chairman

Diary Dates

Please refer to the articles in this magazine for further details concerning the dates below,

SEPTEMBER:

4th, Penny Cooke's School of Dance, autumn term.

4th, Watlington Past & Present exhibition.

8th, Wednesday Club, Bingo.

11th, Sports & Social Club, Mark Steel.

14th, W.I. "Granny's Drawers".

18th, Church Bingo, Tottenhill.

22nd, Wednesday Club, "Hoime Henge Circle".

25th, Sports & Social Club, Steve Ross.

26th, Wormegay church, Patronal Festival.

OCTOBER:

9th, Sports & Social Club, Race Night

12th, W.I. "Ghosts and Witches of Cambridgeshire".

13th, Wednesday Club, A.G.M.

16th, Church traditional harvest supper, Tottenhill.

16th Village Hall, Quiz Night

23rd, Sports & Social Club, Travis Graham.

27th, 28th, 29th Watlington Players, Boeing, Boeing.

27th, Wednesday Club, "The origins of surnames".

28th, The Magic Puppet Show.

NOVEMBER:

4th Watlington Village Hall, AGM.

6th, Sports & Social Club, Martin Richmond.

9th, W.I. Annual General Meeting.

10th, Wednesday Club, outing to Norwich.

13th, Romantic Jazz, with Tina May.

20th Sports & Social Club, Quiz Night

DECEMBER:

4th, Village Hall fund-raising day.

4th, Sports & Social Club, Deon Damon.

24th, Sports & Social Club, possibly KL Brass Band

oooOOooo

As long as we have memories, yesterday remains. As long as we have hope, tomorrow awaits.

As long as we have friends, today is beautiful.

25.

I Watlington W.E.A.

The origins and causes of the First World War

A course of eight lectures by Dr. Peter Neville Lecturer in history at the University of East Anglia

Thursday 14th October to 9th December 2004 7 to 9 p.m. At Watlington Primary School (with a one week break on 28th October for the school half-term)

Course fee £30

Concessions available those of you who attend the WEA lectures will well remember Peter Neville's excellent course on the origins of the Second World War. Dr Neville lives in King's Lynn and apart from lecturing at the UEA also runs a summer school. He has written books on Mussolini, Chamberlain and Neville Henderson. He has another book due in the spring of next year called 'Hitler's Dupes? - Britain's Appeasers.' Dr Neville's lectures are always fascinating and are accompanied by slides, graphics and videos.

Bring your own coffee for a break during the lecture around 8 p.m.

For further information, please contact Dr Lacey, on 01553 810276.

Poetry Please

This simply beautiful poem was sent in by Beoy Bray. Its author remains anonymous-

The Loom of Time

Man's life is laid in the loom of time
To a pattern he does not see.
While the weaver works and the shuttles fly
Till the doom of eternity.
Some shuttles are filled with silver thread
And some with threads of gold;
While often but the darker hue
Is all that they may hold
But the weaver watches with skilful eye
Each shuttle fly to and fro,
And sees the pattern so deftly wrought,
As the loom moves sure and slaw.
God surely planned that pattern;
Each thread, the dark and fair
Was chosen by his master-skill,
And placed in the web with care.
He only knows its beauty,
And guides the shuttles which hold
The threads so unattractive
As well as the threads of gold.
Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the pattern
And explain the reason why -
The dark threads are as needful
In the weavers skilful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He had planned.

oooOOooo

27.

Useful telephone numbers:

Parish Councillors:

01553810276 DrH Lacey (chairman) 01553811282 Mr R Amor 01553811362 Mrs J Golding
01553810711 Mr J Harris 01553810848 Mrs B Leedell 01553810212 Mrs S. Miller
01553810169 Mr C Pike 01553810331 Mr R Rockcliffe 01553810231 Mr B Toates
01553812082 Mr C. Vince (Clerk) 01553811870 Mr D Widowson

email address of the parish council:

watlingtonparish@onetel.com

Borough Councillor:

Mr Julyan Ansell 01553 810428

County Councillor:

Mr Richard Rockcliffe 01553 810331 (Mobile number: 07958 352 975)

Member of Parliament for South West Norfolk:

REMINDER!

The closing date for receipt of copy for
the next 'Gossip' is the 15th November
2004

Mrs Gillian Shephard M.P. 01366385072

Other useful numbers:

01553 810253 Watlington Medical Centre 01553 810253 Emergency (out of hours) 01553
811440 Prescriptions (fax only) 01553811631 District Nurse

01366383241 Health Visitor
01553617429 Patients'Group
01553 613613 Queen Elizabeth Hospital
01223 245151 Addenbrooke' s (Cambridge)
01480 830541 Papworth Hospital
01603 300600 Norfolk Health Authority
01553 810468 Watlington Community School
01553669300 Social Services
01553695800 Benefits Agency
01553692722 Borough Council
01553772568 King's Lynn Library
01366 383073 Downham Library
01553 691211 King's Lynn Police Station
0800 555111 Crime Stoppers (free phone)
01553 810263 Watlington Post Office & Stores
01553 811326 The Angel Pub and Restaurant
01553 811345 Village correspondent to Lynn News
01553810305 Father James Nolan
01553 810732 Village Hall (Bookings)
01553810777 Information Centre.

email address of the Information Centre:
wic@watlingtoninfo.com

Johns Quality Butchers

4 Wales Court, Downham Market, Norfolk Tel:
01366388377

Free delivery on all orders over £10 to Watlington on Tuesdays and
Thursdays

Please phone any order through on Monday and Wednesday for next day delivery

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