

## Village Recorder's Report – Campsea Ashe 2019

This is the third annual Village Recorder's Report for the village of Campsea Ashe, compiled by a representative from the village's Heritage Group. Reference material for this report can be found at:-

[https://www.campseashechurch.org.uk/Village\\_Today.php](https://www.campseashechurch.org.uk/Village_Today.php)

**Campsea Ashe Parish Council.** As ever the Parish Council (PC) has been active during 2019 with a full agenda of matters affecting the village. Several issues in particular have been prominent this year, notably the response to EDF's proposals in connection with the construction of the Sizewell C power station. EDF held a planning consultation meeting at the Station House in February where proposals for a Southern 'Park & Ride' facility beside the A12 slip-road were discussed, along with potential disruptions to road and rail travellers through the village. Residents were reminded of the deadline for replying to the consultation process by the end of March. Specifically the Parish Council has been addressing ongoing concerns about the possible impact of increased HGV traffic through the village's 'pinch point' narrow roads and bends, and along Ivy Lodge Road. Speeding vehicles have also been noted by residents as a problem along Ivy Lodge Road and through Lower Hacheston. Potentially these concerns will be exacerbated by developments at the Bentwaters Park industrial estate if they go ahead. Measures such as improved road signage and '30 mph' speed limit awareness stickers on street rubbish collection bins have been proposed and/or implemented following discussions with the County and East Suffolk District Councils.

Throughout the year the Parish Council has also been looking into the feasibility - in terms of cost, time and benefit - of a 'Neighbourhood Plan' for the safeguarding of the village's open spaces and amenities, though support for this has been slow and patchy so far. Another important proposal has been for the installation of a defibrillator in the village. Pre-empting the PC's decision to purchase one separately, the Allonsfield House Nursing Home generously offered to purchase an additional defibrillator to its own, to be located at the Village Hall and available to the public. Once installed the PC will arrange training for members of the community. Day-to-day matters handled by the PC have included Planning Applications and land settlement enquiries along Mill Lane and Chantry Close, the threat of rubbish-dumping and fly-tipping (dialogue with the *Norse* Facilities Management group), and a study into the feasibility of lighting between the Church car park and the Station House. Some funding applications for village groups and amenities were also approved such as for the Heritage Group's 'Village Buildings' Project, grass-cutting, the Play Area, and the Village Hall, the running of which is still undertaken by trustees within a separate sub-committee of the Parish Council.

Still with the PC, there have been some administrative points to note during 2019. In November Campsea Ashe joined the newly created *East Suffolk Community Partnership* involving neighbouring Civil Parishes, and since September it has used the *Nextdoor* social network as a local notice-board. Sadly the Clerk of the Parish Council, Barry Cable, passed away in April, to be replaced after elections for officers in the summer by Klaus Fortmann. During this election process, incidentally, the PC stated that it was keen to recruit younger-generation members. The Parish Council's website, accessed through the *OneSuffolk* organisation, provides details of the activities and the minutes of its meetings:-

<http://campseashe.onesuffolk.net>



**Figures 1 & 2.** Road closures and disruption in the village: barricades behind the church because of broadband provision in January, and roadside damage approaching the Five Ways roundabout in February.

**Road Closures.** 2019 has seen an unusual number of restrictions on roads and footways around the village. Some of these arose directly from the Highways Department's improvement schemes, such as resurfacing and pothole repair at locations near and along the Marlesford Road, and also on the U3607 Loudham Road. Others were from infrastructure upgrades, these being the broadband provision at the church in January, and the railway gate replacement at Blackstock Crossing in June. Still more disruption stemmed from motoring accidents and other mishaps. Notable amongst these latter cases were a collapsed manhole cover and a fallen tree - coincidentally both just outside the village on the B1078 in Lower Hacheston - in February and October respectively. And finally there were incidents where cars had left the road, the first where a vehicle was stranded in a field for an extended period early in the year having overshot the A12 slip-road (yet again at Lower Hacheston, towards the Five Ways roundabout), and the second in a ditch along Ivy Lodge Road in August.

**Car Parking.** Still on the roads - or more precisely off the roads - there has been growing controversy this year about rail-users' vehicles over-spilling into the Village Hall car park, the church car park, and indeed along the main B1078 roadway through the centre of the village. It is good that the commuter link from the station into Ipswich and beyond has become a well-used service, but the station car park fills quickly and remains full for much of the day, and sometimes overnight, so legitimate users of the Village Hall and church are often disadvantaged. To mitigate this, notices are being put in place at the Village Hall to discourage rail users' cars from being left there, and in September an 'honesty pay-box' was constructed (kindly by a nearby resident) at the entrance to the church car park. The thinking here is that the church car park has plenty of capacity (up to a dozen or more cars if parked carefully) and, as there is no fundamental objection to it being used occasionally for station over-spill, some financial benefit to the church may as well accrue. So far takings from the honesty box have been light, but steady.



**Figure 3.** The church car park - recently cleared of its surrounding tress and overgrowth - with its 'honesty box' for collecting contributions from over-spill parking at the station. Photographed winter 2019.

As an aside, it is worth noting that December saw the announcement of new rolling stock on the East Suffolk railway line between Lowestoft and Ipswich, so a number of quieter and more streamlined trains now travel through the village roughly hourly in each direction during the day. A separate and chronically vexing issue is the station's name of 'Wickham Market', a 'misnomer of convenience' given to it when the line first opened in 1859. Notwithstanding the celebrations at the Station House mentioned below, the possibility of officially re-naming it 'Campsea Ashe' has been the subject of controversy within the village quite literally for decades. This year the debate was raised at the PC meeting in January and was the basis of a lengthy and illustrated newspaper report published by the East Anglian Daily Times in June.



**Figures 4 & 5.** The Village Fete held in fine weather, and well attended, on 1st September. The local 'Rabble Chorus' choir was one of the many attractions.

**Community Events at the Village Hall and Station House.** Meanwhile the Village ‘Victory’ Hall - together with its adjacent Play Area - has continued to thrive as a centre for social events and leisure activities. It has been used for ‘official’ functions this year, as the venue for Parish Council meetings every two months, and for the General Election in December. Socially it has continued to host regular dances and dance lessons, keep-fit classes, bingo, quizzes and jumble sales etc. It and the Recreation Ground were also the venue for the successful Village Fete held at the beginning of September.

Across the road the Station House Community Connections and café has enjoyed an equally busy and successful year, and it celebrated its second ‘birthday’ with a ‘Walk to Launch’ social event (with participants walking some distance into the village from Melton), presentations and a party on the weekend of 1st & 2nd June. This was combined with a celebration for the 160th anniversary of the opening of the East Suffolk railway line. As in previous years, with the Bishop’s continuing permission, the Station House has been the venue for religious services once a month, alternating with those held in the church itself. In a new initiative this year, Duke of Edinburgh Award participants have been invited to volunteer at the Station House as part of their community contributions within the scheme. These activities have been in addition to the regular fixtures at the Station House which have included Pilates sessions, guitar and ukulele classes, knitting and crochet meetings, the on-going Homework Club and computing tutorials and, for younger children, the ‘*Chuggernauts*’ play, music & dance sessions. The Station House has also hosted church-based fund-raising events in April and December, and a Drawing Group exhibition from the neighbouring village of Blaxhall in August. The Station House website is:-

<http://www.stationhousecampseaashe.co.uk>

Other community affairs within the village this year have included work towards the Heritage Group’s Village Buildings Project, in which residents were invited to share the histories of their houses and other local buildings as contributions to a booklet to be produced shortly. In September the Heritage Group held a ‘show and tell’ event in the church to publicise this project. The monthly visits from the Mobile Library have taken place as usual in the station car park, and the village branch of the Mothers’ Union has had its regular meetings. Happily we know of two Campsea Ashe residents who celebrated their 100th birthdays this year, and best wishes were sent to Kath Cook in January, and Molly Hayward in October.



**Figure 6.** The Village Shop which re-opened in October.

Probably the most significant event for the community in Campsea Ashe this year has been the re-opening of the village shop on 31st October, it having been closed for over a year. This re-opening is very much against the trend of rising internet-based and supermarket / mall type shopping so the proprietors Bernard & Ann Burley are to be congratulated. By December they were reporting that it was doing well and customers’ cars parked outside are now becoming a familiar sight again. Similarly, ‘The Duck’ pub has continued to attract a strong customer-base through 2019 and is invariably busy during its opening hours. In contrast to these good-news stories, a spate of shed burglaries at the eastern end of the village was reported during the early part of December, specifically in the Church/Rectory & Jolly’s Farm areas, meaning that vigilance is always necessary.

**Social Media.** Social media is, of course, pervasive nationally and its adoption in the village is correspondingly widespread. A typical, but by no means isolated, example of this is that *Facebook* provides an excellent on-line platform for the Heritage Group’s dialogue with current and former village residents, especially during its research into the village buildings. More locally many of the news & information items circulated around the village and beyond have been publicised through the *Nextdoor* social network, an amenity which has continued to increase its reach during 2019, to an extent that one third of the estimated 178 households in Campsea Ashe were registered as of the close of the year. *Nextdoor*’s website is:-

<https://nextdoor.co.uk>

**Campsea Ashe Church and related Social Affairs.** The Parish Church is one of the other vital pastoral and community organisations in the village, of course. There has been at least one service per month in the church, with ‘specials’ to mark Easter, Harvest and Christmas. Songs of Praise and Carols were sung as well, and invariably all services were followed by a small social gathering with refreshments round the font. On Palm Sunday in April the Benefice Pilgrimage was started at Campsea Ashe, and later in the month the Church PCC met at the Station House. Unfortunately there are currently no

permanent Church Wardens at Campsea Ashe, and administration of the church's affairs falls to the continuing good efforts of its Bell Tower Captain Glenys Fear and Orebeck Benefice's Lay Elder Jane Slade. The church ran its Flower Festival on 28th July, the floral theme for 2019 being song titles from the 'Fab Four', with resultant funds put towards the Tower Repair Appeal. As in previous years this appeal had some additional funding from customers' donations of Co-operative 'dividend' to the tune of £63.81, plus there was some unexpected sponsorship from the wider local area when for 3 months the Co-operative store in Wickham Market included Campsea Ashe's tower repair fund as one of its Community Scheme plastic-coin donation options. The external fabric of the tower is still in poor shape, and the base area has been roped off for safety reasons this last year or two, but regular bell-ringing has continued uninterrupted. Practices still take place on Saturday mornings and Tuesday evenings, and a special ring was made on 18th April as a mark of solidarity following the catastrophic fire at the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Outside the church, the vegetation surrounding the car park was cleared during the early part of the year - generously at the expense of a local resident - making the area more open and attractive; and reports in the July and August issues of the benefice Parish Magazine noted that substantial parts of Campsea Ashe's churchyard were being left to nature to encourage wildlife and insects. As part of this exercise, no fewer than 13 different species of butterfly were recorded on site, including the endangered White Letter Hairstreak. (It is appropriate here to note that, consistently, the Parish Magazine remains a vibrant and informative publication circulated throughout the village, and copies are good value even after their recent price rise from 50 to 60 pence). Finally, the most unusual event concerning the church this year has been the exhumation of some interred ashes from the churchyard in January "in accordance with papers lodged at the diocesan registry." The dual Church and Heritage Group website can be accessed at:-

[https://www.campseaashechurch.org.uk/Campsea\\_Ashe\\_Church.php](https://www.campseaashechurch.org.uk/Campsea_Ashe_Church.php)

**Business and Commerce.** Several key businesses other than the shop deserve mention. Brick Kiln Farm Caravan Park enjoyed excellent reviews on *TripAdvisor*, as did the 'Nesting Box' B&B adjacent to 'The Duck' pub and the 'Old Rectory' B&B beside the church. Both Botanica Nurseries and the Allonsfield Residential Home offered employment vacancies during 2019, and the latter held a public 'Music in the Park' event in June. Clarke & Simpson's Sale Room carried out its regular - and popular - calendar of auctions, which throughout the year periodically featured special events for Agricultural Machinery, Bygones & Collectables, Antiques & Fine Art, Art Deco and so on. The village's roads are noticeably busier on Saturday viewing days, and on the Monday & Wednesday sales days. Residential properties in the village have regularly come up for purchase or rent, with local estate agents offering houses for sale this year in Mill Lane, Talbot Walk, Hambling Terrace and Railway Terrace. Average prices here have been about £240,000. Rental properties in the village have included accommodation in Talbot Walk again, in Ivy Lodge Road and along the Marlesford Road. Typically these have been offered from about £800, rising to over £1500, per calendar month. Land has also come up for sale along Mill Lane this year.

**Extremes of weather.** Last year's Village Recorder report contained some notes about extremes of heat and cold experienced nationally and therefore by the village as well. In contrast, heavy rainfall and flooding have been the most challenging aspects of the weather this year, with large puddles and localised surface water on several roads causing quite serious, but thankfully transient, disruption. Towards the end of the year the River Deben and its overspill sluice near Whitebridge Weir were inundated with flood water and the flood plain turned into a lake of several acres.



**Figures 7 & 8. Flooding of the River Deben and across its flood plain at Whitebridge Weir - December 2019**