



# THE BEACON

Beck Row, Holywell Row and Kenny Hill



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## August – September 2024

Hello Readers

Well, as I sit here writing this, the sun is shining and the temperature is good – what a change from the past week.

Dare we hope that summer is finally here – I doubt it!

Since the last issue, we have sadly seen the closure of the Bird in Hand public house, another slice of history gone from the village. At one time the village of Beck Row boasted 4 public houses, The Smoke House Inn, The Rose and Crown, The Bird in Hand and The Kings Head.

Now just the Kings Head is left – the smallest of the four!

When you think that pubs used to be the hub of the village life, where does everyone go these days, or don't they? Life isn't what it used to be.

As you will see in this issue, the Pop-Up Library was very well attended. Lets hope we can make this a regular good attendance so it continues to visit the Parish Hub.

You will also read in this issue that we have 'Spotlight on One of Our Readers'. If you or someone you know would like to feature in a future issue, please do not hesitate to contact myself or any of the team for details.

There is still a vacancy for a Parish Councillor should anyone wish to apply.

For those readers who like to catch up online, the Beacon is now available approximately a week after the hard copies have been delivered. To find it just type in the search bar – beckrowparish.com and the Beacon should appear.

As usual it goes without saying a huge thank you to the volunteers who contribute to the Beacon and the delivering each time.

*Sue French*

# What's Going On Locally...

## St John's Church

### Sunday Services 9.30am

2nd Sunday of the Month: Service of the Word

4th Sunday of the Month: Holy Communion

Refreshments served after every service.

### 3rd Sunday of the Month:

#### Lightwave Breakfast Church

- 9.30am. St John's Church Hall,

Community Events



### 1st Tuesday of the Month, Lunch

- 12 noon for 12.30pm. Booking required.

Contact Kathy 07963 958017

### 2nd Tuesday of the Month, Soup & Bingo

- Recommences October.

### 3rd Tuesday of the Month, Coffee Morning

- 10am. No booking required.

### 4th Tuesday of the Month, Soup & Chickenfoot

- Recommences October.

Revs David & Caroline Butcher 07747 816038

## The Methodist Church

### Sunday Services

Beck Row Methodist Church 11am

Holywell Row Methodist Church 6.30pm

Rev. David McAloon - 01842 753819

## The Mildenhall Scale Model Club

now meets in St. John's Church Hall

7pm - 10pm

every 1st and 3rd

Wednesday

Gary Wenko • T: 01638 714543

## THURSDAY CLUB

2pm - 4pm

3rd Thursday of the month

(over 50s)

at Beck Row Methodist Church

For further details please

contact Maggie Walker

on 01638 715447



## St J's

### Stay and Play

FREE

Every Wednesday

9.15am to 11.30am

at St. John's Church Hall

All children aged 0-5 and their  
parents/carers welcome



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*We would like to thank all our customers who have supported us in Beck Row since we opened in 1994 at The Smoke House and then from 2005 till present at The Bird In Hand.*

*We look forward to seeing you all at our new premises in West Row.*

*LONG LIVE CUTS R US*



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**For any other information or if you would like me to call and see you for an informal chat please contact:-**

**Laura Prentice**

Sutton Services Limited, Undley Road, Lakenheath, Suffolk, IP27 9BX

Phone: **01842 861231** or **07900 251007**

Email: [laura@suttonservicesltd.co.uk](mailto:laura@suttonservicesltd.co.uk) or [office@suttonservicesltd.co.uk](mailto:office@suttonservicesltd.co.uk)

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Summer at St John's tends to be rather quiet, with weekly Sunday Services at 9.30am, and the monthly lunch and coffee morning being our only happenings. School has broken up, and everyone is enjoying some down time before the Autumn term starts.

Once upon a time, Sunday was a day of rest with only essential chores being undertaken. Attending the village church service was an

integral part of the day, along with a roast lunch and family time. As things have changed, we forget how important it is to take time out to rest and recharge our batteries in this high-pressured world.

Summer is the perfect time to relax and watch the fields surrounding our villages ripen and be harvested, and to appreciate the world we live in. We are blessed to be surrounded by nature, to see birds and animals around us daily, and to have access to the nature reserve, many public footpaths plus forest trails in Mildenhall Woods.

Sometimes we take our surroundings for granted, a bit like our churches. They are always there for us, for baptism, marriage and funerals. Running a church like St John's takes up a lot of time for a very small committee, as well as money which has to be generated. We do not have rich beneficiaries, instead a lot of grants are applied for to keep our head above water, so that the church is there for you.

Help is needed. Both financially and physically. Even the smallest donation can be gift aided so that an extra 25% can be claimed. Regular payments can be set up through Parish Giving, or you can scan the QR code in the church to donate.

Please consider what you can do to help St John's continue to flourish within the community, and enable us to continue not only with our Sunday Services, but with our regular lunches, Warm Rooms, coffee mornings and St J's Stay and Play. For a lot of people, these events are the only social interaction they have on a weekly basis. Thank you.



## SATURDAY AFTERNOON BINGO

at  
**ST JOHN'S CHURCH HALL, BECK ROW**  
 2pm

£5 per book to play, refreshments and raffle

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2024:	12th October	9th November	14th December
2025:	11th January	8th February	8th March
			12th April

**Beck Row Methodist Church**

**Thursday**  
**5.30pm & 7pm**

**Friday**  
**7am & 9am**

**With Terri 07725 761922**

## Spotlight on one of our Readers – Dennis Lockwood

Now and again we hear of members of our community who stand out in a particular way. This man is no exception and quite possibly has broken a record for Beck Row.



Dennis Lockwood has lived in the village all his life, was born in Newmarket hospital to Hector and Annie and came home to the family home in Holmsey Green. The family moved a few hundred yards away to The Street in the Sixties. His sisters Linda and Anne had already left home.

At the age of 5 he went to the Beck Row Primary School whose head was Philip Arthur Oldman. He recalls how as a youngster he remembers Mr Oldman

having a car registration starting in PAO – a habit unusual in those times. Now it is a common occurrence to record your initials or part of names on a car registration. Thinking back to his youth he thinks it was a Morris Oxford or Austin Cambridge – both makes consigned to the label of classic cars now. Mr Oldman was a strict disciplinarian and one of the few Welshmen who never sang a note during anything connected with music!

At the age of 11 he went to Mildenhall Modern Secondary School which now houses the Sixth Form part of the Mildenhall Academy at Mildenhall Hub. The headmaster then was Mr Chandler, and he remembers how he learned to garden during his education there. He has used that learning to create a beautiful garden and is probably the one in the village where most people passing will stop and look over the wall. The day Dennis spoke about his life to me an American couple were doing just that and complimented him.

He left school at 15 as you could then and went to work for A G Coe and Son, a furniture and carpet firm in St John's Street. That sadly was knocked down recently and now has 3 blocks of houses in its place. Dennis had been working there on a Saturday morning while still at school mostly sweeping up he recalls. He spent his whole working life there delivering furniture and for a lot of the time laying carpets.

He never learned to drive but says how grateful he is now for good friends who take him where he needs to go.

He has two daughters now married and



three grandchildren, the eldest of which is 27, but his son Philip remains at home working on R A F Mildenhall.

You might say “What is remarkable about that? That is the kind of life most of us live?” However, how many of you have given, so far in your life, 134 pints of blood? Not many I am guessing, which is why we are highlighting Dennis.

At the age of 18 his father who, like lots of people during WW2 and before, had regularly donated, just told Dennis to do the same and so he went along with him. Dennis's son and daughters at 18 were told by him to go along with him too, so the family tradition continues. Dennis has 5 medals awarded to him from the Blood Donor Service and at the 100th pint he was given a Diamond certificate. We applaud him and his family.



His main hobby is gardening which he does, he says, about 50 hours a week. He is out there at dawn – now about 4am – weather permitting. Someone remarked that they thought he had a “Pop up Coffee Shop,” – no, but he does have long term friends who go almost daily to sit with him on his garden seat which has a notice above it, “Old Codgers' Corner.” The lady who often joins them did insist that she wasn't an old codger as you can see by the notice. If anyone thinks they can beat Dennis's record please let us know.



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## Strawberries and Cream

Oven 190°C/ fan 170°C  
20x30cm tin lined with baking paper

### INGREDIENTS

- 7oz butter
- 7oz light brown sugar
- 3oz caster sugar
- 7oz white chocolate chopped
- 1tsp vanilla
- 3 eggs
- 10oz plain flour
- 2oz whipped cream

### METHOD:

- 1 7oz strawberries, 3 oz sugar, 1 tsp lemon juice heated in a small saucepan on a gentle heat. Stir constantly for 10-15 minutes until it resembles jam. Cool.
- 2 Melt the butter until frothy and take off heat to stir in the caster sugar and brown sugar, ¾ of the chocolate and a pinch of salt.
- 3 Stir until the mixture is of a smooth texture.
- 4 Whisk the eggs and vanilla in the chocolate mixture and add flour in stages until the batter is smooth.
- 5 Fold in the rest of the chocolate and then pour the batter into the tin.
- 6 Add spoonfuls of cream and strawberry "jam" as you go and swirl together with a skewer.
- 7 Bake for 45-50 minutes until batter comes away from the edges.
- 8 All will firm up as it cools.
- 9 Cut into squares.

This may be served slightly warm or from the fridge. If you keep it in the fridge the batter tends to harden so best to just to microwave for a few seconds.

Lovely with ice cream.



# FUSION GRAPHICS

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We are delighted to include the article on the Red Arrows which the Base has kindly sent to us. We hope you enjoy this special contribution.

## Red Arrows pay flying visit to RAF Mildenhall

By Karen Abeyasekere – 100th Air Refuelling Wing Public Affairs

Hawk T1 jets from the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team – the Red Arrows – flew over Beck Row as they made an impromptu visit to RAF Mildenhall 5th July, 2024, due to forecasted poor weather at their original destination.

This was to increase the chances of performing at a scheduled public display in Kent, which unfortunately had to be cancelled due to cloud cover and low visibility.

“It was truly thrilling to witness the 10 RAF Red Arrows and their crew at RAF Mildenhall,” said Natalie Murphy, 100th Air Refuelling wing community relations advisor.

“After many years, their presence on the ground sparked an incredible buzz and excitement within our community. “Celebrating their visit during our 90th anniversary year made the occasion even more special and was a visible demonstration of our shared quest for excellence.”



Photos by Karen Abeyasekere

As always, Team Mildenhall was ready to support our guests on their flying visit. This is the Red Arrows 60th diamond display season.

# News from the Parish Council

Beck Row, Holywell Row & Kenny Hill

June & July 2024

Telephone: 01638 501623 – Email: [beckrowparishcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:beckrowparishcouncil@gmail.com)

[www.beckrowparish.com](http://www.beckrowparish.com)

**Thursday 6th June 2024** marked the 80th Anniversary of D-Day – the day of the Normandy landings. To commemorate this day, wreaths were laid at Kenny Hill War Memorial, Beck Row War Memorial and the Commonwealth War Graves located at St John's Church followed by a Service of Remembrance.



## Family Fun Day – Saturday 8th June 2024

What a success! Even the weather behaved itself. Thank you to EVERYONE who attended on the day and for showing your support as a community. Thanks to the Parish Council Clerk, Jane, for coordinating the event. Thanks to the Parish Council Chair, Gary Peachey, for arranging the classic vehicle run, a welcome feature to the day. Thanks for their input and time volunteering, Councillors Harrison, Stannard, Bailey and Vickerage. Our Parish Keeper, Tim and our team of volunteers, Anna, Angela, Katie, Genine and Josh along with thanks to Graham of Beck Row Football Club and Suffolk Constabulary Police Cadets for their participation and our volunteer from RAFL. Thanks also to Mo and Rita for the supply of electricity! Thanks to Will and Gemma at The Kings Head for co-hosting the event from 4pm with live music from the band Gravel Road. The perfect end to a successful day.

Suppliers on the day The Outdoor Education Co., R&K Castles, The Hungry Filly, Face It Face Artists, Mikey & Jordy's Ice Cream, James from Rivett Steam and all those bringing along their classic vehicles and tractors. Let's see what 2025 has in store.



Villages, towns and cities then participated in a mass Beacon lighting event at 9.15pm in celebration of the 'light of peace' that emerged out of the darkness of war. There was a good deal of support from the local community with residents of all ages attending the wreath laying and Beacon lighting. There was also representation from the USAF, County, District and Parish Councils as well as the Royal British Legion.



**FAMILY FUN DAY 2024!**



## The Youth Shelter...

The shelter is now in place on the Toc-H land (Pirate Ship Park). This will provide a dry, safe space for meeting with friends and socialising. It is hoped that those using it will look after it. There have however been several reports of people climbing on the roof. That isn't a sensible decision, mainly as climbing on any roof could result in injury through falling and secondly it will cause damage to the structure.

Signage warning of this doesn't appear to have been successful as it ended up being removed and... stuck to the roof! Please urge all to respect and look after the equipment and facilities that are put in place for the community to use.



Continued over...

## PARISH NEWS CONTINUED...

The Parish Council would like to look at ways to reduce the speeding on the A1101 through Beck Row. Budgeting in 2025/26 for an additional speed indicator sign and potentially obtaining quotations for Village Gateways to encourage the reduction of speed. The Parish Council are also engaging with the County Council as the authority responsible for highways on this matter.

At July's meeting, it was resolved to have the war memorials in Kenny Hill and Beck Row cleaned and restored where necessary before Remembrance Day in November and ahead of the VE Day Anniversary in May 2025.

The Parish Council are attempting to source suitable land that could be used for allotments. This is ongoing and an update will be given when progress is made. The need has arisen due to there being requests from more than four residents for allotments in the Parish.

Potential funding is available for community buildings or projects in the area to enable them to look at achieving a carbon neutral footprint. The Parish Council are looking at the installation of solar panels and storage batteries at the Parish Hub. The Parish Hub already has air source heating in place so solar panels would make the Parish Hub carbon neutral.

Whilst on the topic of power saving, the Parish owned streetlights are in line to be upgraded to LED this year or early next year. It will potentially mean that any faults reported will not be fixed prior to the completion of the upgrades. Some lights will require new poles as well as light units. This will result in a significant running cost saving for future years. As the lights are on all night (rather than being switched off at midnight) the annual running costs for energy for year ending 2023-24 were just under £9,000.00. Once all Parish owned lights are LED there should be a significant reduction in energy running costs.



### Planning Matters

**DC/24/0672/HH** – a. detached garage; b. conversion of existing garage to habitable space. Pine Farm, Wilde Street, Beck Row, IP28 8BT. **SUPPORT**

**DC/24/0708/HH** – single storey side and rear extensions. 13 Falcon Way, Beck Row, IP28 8EL. **SUPPORT**

## Pop-Up Library at Beck Row Parish Hub

Suffolk Local Libraries launched the Pop-Up Library service at Beck Row Parish Hub on Tuesday 18th June. A huge thank you once again to Made By Mower for the fantastic balloon display and welcome sign. Sarah has supported so many of our community events and it is always such a great addition. It was also lovely to welcome the children from Beck Row Pre School who have attended the Tot Rock session run by Susanna who also runs the Pop-Up Library each week.

This is a weekly service, every Tuesday from 1pm-3pm. Beck Row Parish Hub will be providing **FREE** refreshments during this time. It's all set up for you to help yourself. Come and join us! The Parish Hub has air conditioning – if it's ever needed again! The sessions will run through the winter too so a warm space, hot drinks and snacks will continue to be available.



You can browse, borrow and reserve any book from the entire Suffolk Libraries catalogue!

**Tot-Rock Sessions 1.30pm-2pm**

**Free play & Craft 2pm-2.30pm**



The Pop-Up Library has a dedicated Facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/SLLBeckRow](https://www.facebook.com/SLLBeckRow)



If you'd like to consider starting a book club, Suffolk Libraries will source the number of books required.

The Parish Hub is a community space, please feel free to come along even for a cup of tea or coffee!

## THE THURSDAY CLUB Beck Row

**Thursday 14th Nov** – Trip to Rushton Lakes – £15  
**To book seats please phone Maggie – 01638 715447**

We meet every 3rd Thursday  
at Beck Row Methodist Hall 2-4pm.

We have speakers, bingo, trips  
and we have nice biscuits and a lovely cuppa.  
Come along, this is a club for ladies and men over 50.  
We'd be pleased to see you.

## Elephants, Tigers and Ghosts!

In my garden last night, I had an elephant, a tiger and a ghost! Do I live near a haunted zoo?! No, I had a moth trap out in the garden and those were among the moths I caught!



*Elephant moth*  
– photo by Katherine Puttick

Moths are a fascinating group of insects and one that is generally over-looked by most people. I used to fall into that category too. In fact, I didn't used to like moths at all, especially when they fluttered in my face. I also used to think that moths were dull, only flew at night and ate your clothes. Then I was encouraged to attend to a moth night at my local reserve, where I met an expert who completely changed my mind!

I quickly found out that there are some very beautiful and intricately marked moths, such as the pink and olive-green elephant hawkmoth, or the burnished brass, which is as shiny as a well polished coin. I also discovered that several species fly only in the day-time, such as the black and red cinnabar

moth, which is a familiar sight around common ragwort, on which its black and yellow stripy caterpillars feed. And while there are two species of UK moth that do eat clothes, the majority do not!

Moths also have fascinating lifecycles and are often used in schools to teach children about the natural world. The process of transformation from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis, and finally to a beautiful moth (or butterfly for that matter) is truly a wonder of nature. Some have lifecycles that involve them living as a caterpillar for several years, before finally pupating and emerging as an adult. Some moths even have an aquatic larval stage, protecting themselves with pieces of leaves cut from a lily leaf!

Both adult moths and their caterpillars are food for a wide variety of wildlife, including other insects, reptiles, amphibians and insect eating mammals such as shrews. Night-flying adult moths form a major part of the diet of bats. Many birds eat both adult moths and their caterpillars, but the caterpillars are especially important for feeding the young. It is estimated that a family of blue tits can eat around 1,000 moth caterpillars a day!!

Several species of moths are excellent long-distance travellers too! Most moths found in the UK are resident, but some are actually immigrants from southern Europe or even Africa. One common immigrant is the day-flying hummingbird hawkmoth, which amazingly does look like a hummingbird as it flits from flower to flower, hovering as it feeds. If you have honey-suckle, jasmine or buddleia in your garden, keep an eye out for it.

The best, and most common, way to discover what moths are using your garden is to run a light trap, although it doesn't necessarily require specialist equipment. A light bulb suspended above a white sheet is enough, or you could try hanging a sheet behind an outside light.

I've occasionally been known to spot moths that are attracted to the outside lights and hanging baskets of my local pub! So go on, have a go, you may be surprised at what you find!

Katherine Puttick, Warden  
RSPB Lakenheath Fen,

Station Road, Lakenheath, Suffolk IP27 9AD

rspb.org.uk   



## Gardening Tips

With the exceptional amount of rain we have been having, we have experienced exceptional growth. Also, everything has been blooming well this year so we must have had sunshine at some point and the plants have made the most of it.

This has on the whole meant large blooms.



Roses particularly have done well. But with excessive heavy rain, the plant stems have drooped with the weight of the flowers. Cut off the blooms that are hanging to the ground. This will lift the plant up in appearance and still retain its shape. Also where flowers are overhanging borders and are flattening onto the lawn, don't cut off completely but trim underneath, as releasing some of

the weight makes the other stems stand up more. This way the blooms can be enjoyed for a little longer before going to seed.



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The Club was host to the Parish Council Fun Day in June when the pitch was used for a Bouncy Castle and other games. It was great to see so many people from the Parish and other villages enjoying themselves in such wonderful weather. The facilities at the site are so good and sadly underused. On Lakenheath Facebook group a call went out for more U10s to join the football so Beck Row boys and girls this is your opportunity to step forward if you are interested, because Lakenheath play games

here and use the pitch for training. You could possibly just walk to join in. The details as always are at the end of this report.

Another section of our archives is displayed this time. The Bill Utting Cup Final in April 1999 played at Ram Meadow in Bury St Edmunds against Ixworth Raiders in which Beck Row won 1-0.

If you or someone you know are in the photo/ programme please let us know any of your memories.

Graham and Josie Rose would like anyone interested to join them in helping to run the club - please contact Graham on 01638 714968

Meanwhile any Beck Row, Holywell Row or Kenny Hill youngsters who want to take the opportunity to join in with Lakenheath Youth teams you are more than welcome.

Contact details are –  
Philip Haylock: philiphaylock@btinternet.com, mobile 07860 316748  
or Youth teams Richard Horrex: richardhorrex@gmail.com, mobile 07540 201223

BECK ROW		IXWORTH RAIDERS	
Shorts: Blue		Shorts: Black	
Shirts: Blue/White		Shirts: Orange	
1.	S Holloway	1	A Davies
2.	M Tucker	2	J Cousins
3.	S Dobson	3	D Jones
4.	G Maynard	4	I Clarke
5.	A Rawlings	5	J Allison
6.	S Lewis	6	L Turner
7.	N Ball	7	G Thrower
8.	K Sullman	8	A Theobald
9.	S Pearce	9	C Finbow
10.	S Ball	10	B Lombardo
11.	O Carr	11	A Ford
12.	D Ball	12	S Foreman
13.	N Cate	13	G Hartley
14.	C Farley	14	R Smith
15.	P Hatchett	15	A Marsden
16.	J Dent - Manager		
		Manager: G Deaneby J Finbow	
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## Our Story from David Taylor

*I have written a story about a man, James Stagg, who worked for the Met Office. He was the main weather adviser for General Eisenhower for the D-Day landings. In many ways, James Stagg was my hero because I can fully understand the pressures and stress he must have been under because he could have wiped out an invasion force with an incorrect forecast. He found a weather window with foul weather before and after 6th June 1944. I hope you enjoy it. The story is historically correct but his character, his interview and his life during that time came out of my head.*

### A VITAL DECISION

'My god, it's become more like a funeral parlour than a mess,' whispered Alex.

Thick wreaths of tobacco smoke added to the fug and subdued atmosphere, camouflaging the varied uniforms of allied forces and services.

'By the way, I wouldn't want to be in his shoes.'

'What are you talking about?' muttered William, offering Alex his last Woodbine and gazing across the room.

'That serious officer with the sharp features; the one alone in the corner with the pipe and yellowed moustache.'

'Ah yes, you mean James, the weather guy. Strange man. Always appears to be deep in thought as though he's got his head in the clouds.' William sniggered from behind his Daily Herald. 'What's so special about him?'

'Can't talk about it, old chap, except that he's under a hell of a lot of pressure.'

'It's strange that somebody like a weather man can be under much pressure, except, of course, under depressions and anticyclones.' They both tittered which raised a few eyebrows amongst the higher-ranking officers and a glance through the haze from James.

'Anyway, he shouldn't have any worries, just look at the fine weather, it's been like this for days.'

Soft sunlight filtered through the criss-crossed tapes on the long windows, creating the outline of a chequered board on the highly polished floor.

James Stagg had greater concerns than his indigestion from the bully beef hash he'd had for dinner and that uncomfortable layer of fat which clung to his palate. He had recently been appointed to a new position and detached to this heavily-guarded mansion near Portsmouth. He had only recently become acquainted to wearing uniform as a group captain in the RAF after twenty years of civilian service in the Meteorological Office. He loved the challenges of meteorology but his latest task would stretch him to his limits.

He had been invited to a special interview with a panel of brass hats which appeared to be sounding out James's suitability for a specific task. He had been asked a number of questions which he thought impertinent and probably compiled to test his reactions under pressure.

'Why do weathermen get their forecasts wrong so often, Stagg, or are you the exception?'

He gazed around the large interview room as he carefully considered the question and his eyes alighted on a damp patch on the ceiling. In his composed, rather quiet voice, he answered, 'Gentlemen, I would like to direct your eyes to the ceiling, to the

portion that will require some repair. This building has been constructed by workmen who were able to grasp their tools and materials.

'What the hell has this got to do with weather, Stagg?' spluttered one of the ribbon-bedecked officers.

James ignored the outburst, 'I am never able to grasp the materials of my trade, which is the atmosphere. I have to decide the future complex movements and state of millions of cubic miles of air and how it will affect us at the surface or in flight.' James cleared his throat. 'Once I have made those forecasts, I cannot direct the air, hold it or nurse it; I am powerless; it does what it wants despite any forecasts to the contrary. Gentlemen, I do my utmost to give accurate forecasts but I am not God.'

A curt letter two days later informed him that he had been appointed as chief meteorological adviser to the supreme commander, General Eisenhower, and that he would be briefed.

'Well Stagg, your advice is critical to an assault on the Normandy beaches and inland into France. Advice that will ultimately send seven thousand vessels, three thousand aircraft and a quarter of a million allied airmen, soldiers and sailors across the English Channel in this next crucial phase of this war.'

James became aware of his own sudden nervous tic. 'I can't remember a more important forecast in history, sir.'

'You've got the picture, Stagg. Naturally, it is top-secret but you will have the support and forecasting expertise of the Meteorological Office, a U.S. weather unit and an Admiralty forecast section. You will carefully assess their output and give us the necessary information to make a final decision. We don't want any waffle about possibilities; it's too

important for that.

'I don't prevaricate, sir.' James ran nervous fingers through his hair.

'The day of the assault, D-Day, has to coincide with a short period around a full moon and we've pencilled-in 5th June for this. You will understand that quiet wind and sea conditions will be necessary for beach landings, thin upper cloud only to be able to recognise beach mines and other obstacles at low tide, and preferably be cloud-free for airborne forces' pre-dawn landings. Anything you wish to say?'

'I'm not going to be swayed by pre-conceived dates, sir, and the odds for those conditions are stacked against us but I'll give you my honest opinions.'

He nervously found the briefing room where he would be briefing General Eisenhower and his chiefs of staff at 0415 and 2130 each day. He bumped into one of the British generals who wished him well but with a warning, 'Remember, we'll string you up from the nearest lamp post if you don't read the omens right.'

He wandered back to his sleeping quarter, which was a tent in the grounds, and looked longingly at his truckle bed. He didn't need threats; he required support and the necessary up-to-date weather information. He knew there would be extreme challenges ahead, particularly as the forecasters from the three centres used different forecasting systems. He was particularly concerned with the way the U.S. forecasters placed so much reliance on statistics as their operating tool.

At the evening briefing on Friday 2nd June, James was expected to present an 'agreed' forecast for the following five days when the centres could not even agree on the likely weather for the next twenty-four hours.

*Continued over...*

...continued

Despite the sun rising in all its glory, despite no unity between the senior forecasters and despite great inner conflict, James had calmly formulated the forecast for that critical period ahead, 'A series of depressions will make the weather in the Channel potentially full of menace for the next three to four days, sir; overcast conditions with very low cloud and strong to gale force winds.'

It was not what they wanted to hear. Eisenhower, however, ruled there would be no change of plan and that he would continue with the planned arrangements for Monday 5th June as D-Day. The seriousness of the occasion could be read in his face and in the almost death-like silence in the briefing room. James did not change his story on 3rd June and Eisenhower had no choice but to postpone the invasion for 24 hours and then review on a day-to-day basis. One admiral quipped, 'There goes six feet two of Stagg and six feet one of gloom.'

At the early hours briefing on the following morning, James reported no change. Later that day, the full-blown gale and rain along the south coast gave the commanders a mood of pessimism. At the evening briefing, he was told to raise his voice as heavy rain lashed against the windows. But he amazed them.

'There is a glimmer of hope for 6th June – the possibility of a short but worthwhile window between weather systems.'

James was taken aback by the extraordinary reactions of loud cheering accompanied by a host of questions about the likely fine-details conditions in the Channel and in France. He remained forthright. 'To answer those questions

two days in advance in a fast-moving situation would make me a guesser, not a meteorologist.'

'Well, Stagg, we're putting it on again; for heaven's sake hold the weather to what you told us and don't bring any more bad news,' sighed Eisenhower.

In the tense and sombre throng next morning, James couldn't help a ghost of a smile as he related his continued confidence in the forecast and, after some deliberation, Eisenhower decided, 'Ok, we'll go.'

As the hours went by on the morning of the invasion, news of the weather conditions was slow to reach James; he understood that communications were being kept to a minimum. His hands shook as he drew his charts; he calculated, he paced, he prayed and he smoked – heavily. Then he heard the great news that the landings had been successfully accomplished and the first observations from France confirmed those weather conditions which matched his forecasts. To top it, the German meteorologists had failed to recognise the weather window and the enemy had been ill-prepared.

That night, Alex met a weary Stagg in an almost empty mess, 'Have a sherbet on me sir. We haven't spoken before but I know a great deal about your fine decisions.'

Later, James knelt by his bed and wept. He hadn't slept for days but, on the last day of his assignment, his stature had grown into six feet three of dignified pride. Perhaps it was the half bottle of whisky or perhaps it was the handwritten memo from Eisenhower, 'Thanks and thank the Gods of War we went when we did.'

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During July I came across a female silver-washed fritillary butterfly. The female has a really rich orange colour. This is a large butterfly, the size of a peacock butterfly. It has a fast, gliding flight and once you see the flight it can be easily identified. The underwings are

a greenish yellow but they are marked with metallic silver bands, hence the name.

The silver-washed fritillary flies up and down a regular route along clearings and rides in woods, using brambles as its source of nectar. This butterfly lays its eggs on tree trunks and branches up to 6m up trees where it will stay until May when the caterpillar has to make its way down the tree and find the violet plant. This is possibly the only butterfly that does this in the UK, thought to give it a better chance of survival in the crevices of a tree from torrential rain.

Sounds like an intelligent butterfly during our wet spring.



Silver-washed Fritillary butterfly

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## News from Beck Row Methodist Church

We had a very successful Chicken Foot evening raising much needed funds for the Church of £223 and also a coffee morning raising £356.37. Many thanks to the ladies who provided refreshments and the people who manned the stalls, raffle, tombola, and the white elephant with jigsaws, books bric a brac and plants etc.

Of course, it is important to provide for the maintenance of the buildings but the most important fact about fundraising events is arranging a venue for people to meet, chat and generally socialize. The latest coffee morning saw the hall decked in red white and blue, with union jack napkins, balloons and Brian Roy playing his music. The event finished with the singing of war time songs by everyone - no need for help with the words, the whole morning commemorating the 80th anniversary of D Day on 6th June. A fun time was had by all.

### Forthcoming Events

**Saturday 7th September** – Harvest Supper at 7pm  
Music will be provided by Brian Roy. Tickets are £10 and available from Wendy 01842 860184 or Hazel 01638 712975

**Sunday 8th September** – Harvest Thanksgiving Service at 11am led by Duncan Palmer

**Saturday 5th October** – Coffee morning 10am-11.30am

**Friday 25th October** – Chicken Foot. Tickets are £4 including light refreshments and can be ordered from Wendy 01842 860184 or Hazel 01638 712975



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# FARMING DIARY

When I wrote my last piece, I was in quite a low place. I wasn't at all convinced that Lily (my youngest granddaughter) was going to survive. She was in Addenbrookes and struggling for breath and frankly I was scared stiff every time the phone rang. As a result of my article, I am extremely grateful and humbled by the messages of support and the personal inquiries as to the girls' health that I have received. A sincere Thank You to you all. I can happily report that yesterday (July 14th) Lily was Christened in a lovely service in St John's Church Beck Row. It was a beautiful day weather wise and both girls are now fighting fit, into everything and their tireless energy whacks poor grandad out.

Also, in the last edition of the Beacon I spoke that we were having beautiful growing conditions for asparagus. Well, that was a stupid thing to write because the weather soon turned and the last 2 weeks of May and then June were cloudy, cold and often wet. Asparagus likes hot and sunny with warm nights to thrive, so we experienced some of the lowest yields I have known since I started growing it in 1982. However, all was not totally ruined as the taste and quality was exceptionally good this year.

I also have a beehive and cool cloudy weather at this time of year does not suit bees or the making of honey either. My hive is strong at the moment with loads of bees, but I have not yet had any honey to take off. I recently met a professional beekeeper friend (I am an extreme amateur) who told me that this time last year she had harvested 900 jars, but this year she has only harvested 120. A measure of how impressive my beekeeping is – if I harvested 40 jars in a whole year I would be very happy.

The damp weather has, however, benefited the early potatoes that I planted in early April and we are currently harvesting a crop of good size and full of flavour. The Department of Agriculture is now encouraging farmers who have poor soil (In Holywell Row there is plenty of that) to plant crops that benefit nature by paying us good levels of support for doing so. Therefore, in early June I spun some seeds on to untilled sandy soil that will provide winter feed for birds. The mix contains wheat, barley, white millet, kale, linseed and fodder radish and the damp weather since sowing means that the seeds chitted well and a high percentage have emerged. I am not permitted to do anything else to the field now except let nature take its course. Well, I really hope the mix will provide a rich beautiful harvest for wild birds later in the year, but I fear all I will provide is a jungle of injurious weeds that we all know thrive on this sort of land.

As a market trader selling my eggs on Bury Market direct to the customer on Wednesdays and Saturdays, I am asked lots of questions about eggs and chicken farming and I would like to share some of them and the answers with you now. By far the most popular question is, "Have you got any duck eggs?" The answer is that no I haven't. Most of the British duck flock disappeared with the bird flu epidemic of a couple of years ago and many farmers have not restocked. Therefore, there is a huge shortage of duck eggs in this country, but duck eggs are very, very popular, so I am planning to convert some old chicken cabins into homes for 250 ducks. The first 100 of these is due to arrive in mid-August so by October I should have an unbroken supply of duck eggs.

Why are some eggs brown and some eggs white? Brown and white eggs are laid by



different breeds of chicken. In my case both are hybrids and they live side by side. White eggs are predominantly laid by white chickens and in my case the breed is called Demalb. White and brown eggs are laid by brown chickens and the breed is Lohman Brown.

Which is better? Obviously both breeds are present on my farm so I think both are the very best, but I won't sit on the fence, it might collapse! I think brown eggs look better as they don't show the marks on the shell as predominately as white eggs. I also think the yolk is slightly darker and the shell is slightly tougher on the brown rather than the white.

However, as a farmer I would much rather keep white birds than brown. From a financial angle, white birds produce the same 300 eggs per year as brown birds but eat much less food. This constitutes a considerable saving of around £1.50 a bird so 1,000 white birds will generate the same number of good-sized eggs as brown but eat £1,500 worth of feed less. Brown hens become financially unviable when they reach 80-85 weeks of age because egg numbers plummet and egg quality deteriorate, but white hens continue to be financially viable up to 100 weeks. This too, means a significant financial benefit. Perhaps most importantly of all, white hens are much easier to keep. They are kinder to each other with very little bullying and feather picking, they are calmer, easier to handle and have much less mortality. These facts in my view override the aesthetic qualities of the brown egg so I prefer white birds.

I'd like to finish with a big Thank You to someone who I assume is a customer of mine called Beata Tamas. On the 2nd Sunday of June every year many farmers come together and open their farms to members of the public. Beata attended one of these open days at Kenton Hall Estate near Stowmarket. Their event was sponsored by Kramp UK Ltd who make tools. This company hid chocolate bars labelled Thank a Farmer Chocolate Bars around the event and those that found a chocolate bar had the chance to thank a local farmer by sending them a treat for free. Beata found a chocolate bar and very kindly nominated me and chose a 96-piece Kramp Socket Set for me to receive and which duly arrived this morning. These are very professional tools enclosed in a very smart tough toolbox and a very big upgrade on my existing ragbag collection of tools strewn about in every corner of my farmyard. Once again thank you Beata and if you would like to make yourself known to me, I would love to thank you personally.





## 90th Anniversary of the Great Air Race Mildenhall to Melbourne 1934 – 2024



**July/August** – Young Aviators Mildenhall to Melbourne Air Race activity – Mildenhall Museum

**August 24th** – Lark in the Park

**August 24th-26th** – Geocache activity using What3words – Museum/Library

**September-December** – Mildenhall Museum exhibition of Air Race 1934

**September 5th** – Museum Society Talk – 1934, That was the year that was, why was 1934 such an important year for the town – Stephanie Palmer

**October** – Air Race Talk at Library (date tbc)

**October 16th** – RAF Mildenhall commemorating 90th Birthday Event

**October 18th** – 20th Mildenhall Flower Club Flower Festival

**October 19th** – Band Concert – Mildenhall Town Council

**October Half Term** – Art Trail in Mildenhall Town with audio tour guide. Mildenhall Town Window Plane Spotting competition. Children's craft and Paper Plane competition at the Library.

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