ST IVES AWARD WINNING NEWSPAPER

The Riverporter

COVERING THE NEWS FOR ST IVES AND AROUND

Issue 149: 15 December 2023

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION



A Christmas & New Year message

Ron, Erik, Milly and I would like to thank you for your support, and hope that you can enjoy time with your friends and relatives over the Christmas break.

This is the sixth Christmas The Riverporter *has reported on matters St Ives and our readership continues to grow. At least 3,000 people read each issue, which is a considerable number considering that we do not deliver to homes.*

We are often asked where you can pick up a copy and the list includes, Kings Hedges newsagents, W H Smith, Mace, the Co-op, Morrisons garage, the Library, the Corn Exchange and several other shops and hairdressers. You need to be quick though, as they are snapped up fast. We do hope that people share a copy as we try to keep waste to a minimum.

The good news is that every single issue (150 now including the 1st April 1668 issue) is available on-line at www.theriverporter.uk. These copies are mostly in colour as well!

2023 has been a strange year, neither good nor bad but a bit of everything. Sadly the general feeling nationally now is of a downward slide. However locally there were some good things as life continued to return to normal. This included some of the annual events of which St Ives excels - Picnic in the Park, the Carnival and Music Festival, The Old Riverport Jazz & Blues Festival and the Christmas Lights switch-on. Of course we had a great time at the Coronation event and we erected the bandstand to celebrate the life of Queen Elizabeth II.

On the not quite so good front is the loss of several shops, more flooding, the continued problems of parking, the problems of the Corn Exchange roof repairs (see article page 2) and of course the dreaded Car Trap, now a national subject of debate. No doubt we at The Riverporter *will continue to keep you informed and hope that 2024 will bring more good news than bad. Next issue 12 January 2024.*

A Happy New Year to all our readers, Ed.

DIARY OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

Friday 15th - A Candlelit Christmas Musical Feast with Karen England and Mark Burton. The Free Church 4pm. Tickets £15 call 07971623243.

Saturday 16th - St Ives Choral Society Family Christmas Concert 6.30pm, Free Church, St Ives. Tickets: ticketsource.co.uk/St Ives Choral Society

Friday 22nd - Carol Concert with RAF Wyton Brass Band. The Corn Exchange from 6.45pm. Tickets £10 www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents.

Chapel Arts @ the Corn Exchange

St Ives & Music - Acts for 2024

FRIDAY 26TH JANUARY

Brooks Williams



Brooks returns for an intimate concert in the Riverport Café Bar. He has been a leading light on the roots acoustic music scene for over three decades and it is no surprise he is listed in the Top 100 Acoustic Guitarists.

FRIDAY 23RD FEBRUARY

STELLA HENSLEY'S MUSICAL AMIGOS



7.30pm in the Riverport Café Bar. Tickets: £10 from the Bar or from www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents

This Weekend!



Saturday 11am - 4pm

Watch Santa Claus and the Giant Snowman arrive at The Quay.

Usually a magical moment as the picture left, taken in 2019 by Alan Bennett, shows. Santa is brought to the landing stage surrounded by elves, raindeers and a variety of creatures in canoes, weather permitting.

Join the procession around the town and arrive at The Corn Exchange to enjoy Santa's Snow Fest, which includes craft tables and a huge Snowglobe, plus the popular Santa's Grotto, with a present for every child who meets Santa.

There is also a café serving refreshments.

Sunday 10am - 3pm

Another chance for children to enjoy crafts, play in the Snow Globe and see Santa in his Grotto.

It is hoped to hold the draw for the Snowman Trail, which will announce the winners of the £50 Townrow vouchers.

Please note: Entrance to the Corn Exchange is £1 per child but all activities are then free.

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yes you can with Slimming World

ST IVES

The Burleigh Hill Centre
Constable Road, PE27 3ER

Tuesdays 9.30 am *
Thursdays 5.30 pm *
Fridays 9.30 am
Saturdays 8.00 am & 9.30 am

* Calmer sessions

For information about our special offers, call/message Kathie on 07772 868472

PCC wants more?



Cambridgeshire's Police & Crime Commissioner, Darryl Preston, is asking the public how much they would be prepared to pay towards policing in 2024/25.

The commissioner said:

'With record numbers of new officers to support (1,732) funding must work harder. The money Cambridgeshire gets from government is one of the lowest in the country and I will continue to lobby government to review this issue.'

The good news is that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are safe places to live, with significant reductions in rural crime (24%) and neighbourhood crime (23%) across the county compared to pre-covid times.

This includes a:

- 37% drop in residential burglary offences
- 15% drop in personal robbery offences
- 12% drop in theft from the person offences
- 48% drop in hare coursing and poaching
- 36% reduction in rural criminal damage
- 57% reduction for cycle theft in Cambridge city.

Darryl said *'I understand that many of you want to see more of those new extra officers in your neighbourhoods.'*

Police and Crime Commissioners have been told by Government that they are able to raise the police element of council tax by up to £13 a year for band D household, a 4.8% increase.

The survey is available online and will be open until 5pm on January 2.

Corn Exchange new roof nears completion

The Corn Exchange's new roof is nearly complete, and the management team now face the serious challenge to fully re-open the facility.

Initially it had been expected that the upstairs rooms and Riverport Café would reopen in October, but now, following the delays it is likely to be in January.

The Corn Exchange's landlords are the Town Council and they have organised and paid for the extensive works, which included the removal of hazardous waste.

Undeterred the team are now busy getting the entertainment programme ready for 2024 and are hoping for a fun packed year starting with the tribute band ***'Don't Stop Queen Now!*** on the 27th January which sees the return of a money off deal with *Di Rita's* as part of the ticket price.

All the favourite Corn Exchange sessions will start again including: **Quiz Nights** - 2nd Thursday of each month.

Open Mic Nights - 3rd Friday of each month. It's still free, come and sing/play among friends.

Comedy Nights - 3rd Saturday of each month.

And of course, the **Chapel Arts** music events on the 4th Friday every month (see page1) and the regular film nights with **Screen St Ives** will restart.

And this year is not quite finished yet as Santa Clause is visiting St Ives this Saturday, followed by **St Ives Band & Christmas Carol Concert** on 22nd December 2023 - with mulled wine & mince pies!

Other 2024 planned events include:

Burn's Night Supper - Thursday 25th January 2024 with a 4-course meal, Scottish Piper and Ceilidh Band.

Soul & Motown Night Saturday 2nd March 2024 with music from Madison Avenue.

The Corn Exchange is a true community facility and is run by the CIC, a team of volunteers. It was saved from closure over 12 years ago by the efforts and support of the Town's people when it was refurbished. It has become one of the best venues around for entertainment and caters for local groups.

Following the Pandemic, which caused similar places to close, The Corn Exchange survived and succeeded in transforming itself into the comfortable facility it is today.

However the financial crisis and Ukraine war, followed by the forced closure of some activities, due to the roof repairs, have resulted in substantial cost increases and loss of revenue, and once again the Corn Exchange needs your support to survive.

If you enjoy our Corn Exchange, please give them your support by attending functions. You can check them out and buy tickets online at … www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents.
Or go to the website at: www.thecornexchange.org.uk.

Can you spare some time to help out?

As the Corn Exchange team get back into action, they are looking for volunteer helpers across a multitude of tasks and for those who fancy a challenge. They are looking for Members and possibly new Directors too.



If you are interested, please drop in and leave your details or email: bookings@thecornexchange.org.uk



Saturday 9th December saw the annual ArtsFest Exhibition in the Corn Exchange. Below is one of the stands where visitors could buy art, crafts and gifts for Christmas.



The Riverporter

Voted Best local newspaper of the year 2019/20 in the Cambridge Building Society's Community Magazine Awards



A Merry Christmas from Erik.

having your say ...

Get it off your chest, email Erik at:
editor@ theriverporter.uk

Dear Erik,
Subject: Pleasant surprise

What a pleasant surprise this week when Bob Burn Murdoch popped up on a TV programme filmed at The Norris Museum in 2013. In his usual enthusiastic and erudite style, Bob explored the history of ice skating in the Fens. Happy Christmas Bob!

Stewart Denham

Dear Erik,
Subject: New Garden Waste

Like me you may have picked up the Christmas and New Year leaflet re. *Refuse collection arrangements over the festive period.*

You may also have seen the information on the back about the new subscription only garden waste service.

I confess to being a little confused by the information, especially the early bird discount. So I called the Council this pm and spoke to a very depressed and sad-sounding lady.

She explained that the leaflet isn't accurate. The yearly cost is NOT £50 per year. It is £57.50 per year. The Early Bird Discount isn't £50 as the leaflet suggests but rather £7.50. None of which is made clear.

It hasn't been confirmed but I've heard that HDC is thinking of getting Matt Hancock in to organise it all! I hope you are all well and keeping warm. Regards **John Mc.**

Dear Erik,
Subject: BHF Candle Lighting success

The traditional Christmas Candle Lighting in the Bridge Chapel raised £1,100 for the British Heart Foundation. All of this money goes to supporting research into heart disease.

The St Ives fundraising group would like to thank all of the many people who again came along, T*he Riverporter* and also of course the helpers who make this event over four weekends in November and December possible.

With very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year!

Jean Chandler

Businesses upset by plans for The Broadway

Following the article in our last issue about plans to redesign The Broadway, local traders have started a petition against the proposals. Some 39 have already signed it as they object to the loss of 10 parking spaces, which they say will further reduce the numbers of shoppers in the Town centre.

When is consultation not consultation?

Vanessa Kelly from the County Council said her and her colleagues had a number of site visits including visiting every business on The Broadway to get feedback, which she claimed was 'overwhelmingly positive'.

Corrine Harwood of *La Muse* disagrees. She told *The Riverporter* that she had objected at the time and had even written a letter saying that no parking spaces should be lost.

It seems most of the consultation was about creating more cycle racks and improving the area for pedestrians and cyclists. Of course if you ask a question on those matters you may get a different answer than giving the full picture.

We know questions can be put in a way to elicit the answer you seek. So it isn't surprising that businesses are objecting as they see the full plan. Will it go ahead anyway? Time will tell.

COPE in St Ives

Meetings are held at 2pm to 4pm in St Ives Corn Exchange on the third Thursday of each month. Contact Angie 01480 300726
Entry is £2.00 and includes refreshments and the celebrated £1 Raffle.

COPE membership is free and members are encouraged to bring friends, carers and partners. Everyone is welcome.

21st December 23 - Christmas Lunch (Corn Ex)
18th January 24 - Hunts Society for the Blind
15th February 24 - Sue Lacey: Writing Books
21st March 24 - Josea Malawi
18th April 24 - Age UK.

Taproom hosts shopping party with Carols

Below: *The St Ives Musical Theatre Choir singing outside the Taproom last Wednesday during their Shopping Party, where you could buy a variety of gifts, cakes and mulled wine. The Taproom is donating £1 towards a scholarship for future performers, from every mulled wine and mince pie sold until Christmas Day.*



OTHER NEWS

Difficult times for Town Council?

There are a number of problems stacking up for the Town Council and 'mutterings' that its work is not going to plan. At this time of year the Council usually discusses the Precept (the amount of money it requires to do its work) and yet the agenda for December makes no mention of it.



There is no mention of the failure of the Council to produce a copy of their Bridge magazine this year. This may seem an insignificant issue but the council is duty bound by the *Local Government Transparency Code* to provide information to all residents regularly throughout the year. Some information must be given quarterly, some once a year, the overriding aim is for the public to be kept informed, and not to do so could jeopardise the Council's Quality Status, which it painstakingly earned some years ago.

Public warn Council not to ratify motion.

At Wednesdays Council meeting councillors were being asked to ratify standing orders for 2023. During Public Participation, *Peter Townsend* pointed out that the paper councillors were being asked to ratify was in fact a template which did not contain the procedures pertinent to St Ives Town Council. He pointed out that St Ives had a long tradition of procedures that had developed over the years and these would be lost if that document was ratified.

He said the existing Standing Orders were missing from the papers and was no longer on the Council's website. He was fearful that customs, such as councillors wearing robes at meetings would be lost along with other traditions associated with St Ives. Mr Townsend also pointed out that all the Council's *Terms of Reference* are currently illegal. The Mayor thanked Mr Townsend for his contribution and agreed to increase the number of councillors looking at the standing orders to ensure the correct paperwork was submitted. We understand there are staff shortages are at the heart of the problems with some on sick leave, including the Town Clerk.

Other TC news: The Town's planning committee did refuse the plans for the Parish Church Hall becoming housing and added extra comments against the Envar Incinerator appeal. The Toucan crossing for the A1123 between the Silvaco and BP roundabouts should be installed soon making access to and from Aldi easier.

Are councillors worth their money?

Next year is likely to see a general election, assuming Rishi Sunak survives the rest of this year, and in May 2025 Cambridgeshire will elect all its County Councillors. St Ives has two County Councillors representing the Town. Over the past year *The Riverporter* has reported on matters that the County are responsible for and has been seeking help and advice from our County representatives. We noticed that one of our County Councillors is rarely if ever available. The other, Kevin Reynolds, on the other hand is available and usually responds quickly to queries from the public. Now it is deemed that St Ives should have two Councillors, so that its residents can be well represented, so it doesn't seem fair that Kevin is doing all the work.



We decided to look into this matter a little more closely and were surprised that not only was our other representative, Councillor Fuller (left), unavailable in St Ives, but his attendance at County Council meetings leaves a lot to be desired. This time last year Cllr Fuller caused controversy by removing his address and employment details from his ***'Register of Interests Declaration',*** that all councillors must make when taking up their posts. He also replaced his signature with his name typed on the form and failed to attend some meetings (see RP126).

District and County Councillors are remunerated for their work (Town Councillors are not) and so Cllr Fuller is paid to represent us and it isn't a paltry sum. We have looked into the details of how much he has received and how much he has done while a County Councillor.

Mr Fuller was elected on 8 May 2017 and reelected in 2021. So far he has received £61,289 in allowances and £667 for travel expenses. He is expected to deal with Council issues for his electorate and attend 6 meetings a year. Since 2017 he should have attended 38 meetings up to the end of November. In fact he had only attended 30 meetings, being absent on 5 occasions since May 2022. Which means his costs average at over £2,000 per meeting but that is not all.

The minutes suggest that Cllr Fuller doesn't always attend the whole meeting. Admittedly meetings usually last from 10am to around 4pm (with a lunch break) so can take around 5 hours. But Cllr Fuller regularly skips the afternoon session. What this means is that Cllr Fuller is probably costing us nearly £500 per hour. Now I know a lawyer can easily cost that, as can a consultant, a dentist and probably my plumber! It does depend on just how much value we are getting for his efforts.

Cllr Fuller doesn't sit on any other committees and we have been told rarely contributes to debates so is he value for money? We are lucky that Kevin Reynolds takes his job more seriously and no doubt does more to earn the yearly allowance, which is now £11,133.48 per annum.

We are told that our democracy allows us to get rid of bad councillors and that is true but we can't do anything about replacing Cllr Fuller for another 17 months, by which time he will have received another £17,000, bringing his total earnings to nearly £80,000.

The County Council is in a dire position financially so can we suggest that the number of County Councillors is halved, as it appears one is enough for any town. Cutting the number down to 31 from 61 would save in excess of £330K just in allowances alone!

The COURTYARD St Ives

Open-air boutique market, run by independents



Open 7 days a week, all year round

CALL Cambridgeshire Alliance of Lifelong Learners

Continuing Learning for Adults in St Ives ("CLASI")

We are a group of between 30 and 40 people who meet in the **Methodist Church Hall** on The Waits, St Ives on a Thursday.

Our courses start at **10.30am** and finish at **12.15pm**

The next course starts on:

Thursday 4th January 2024



and is a four-week course on **ASTRONOMY** by local astronomer **Jonathan Clough, a Fellow of the Royal Astronomy Society.**



Jonathan is an experienced speaker who can talk about the full breadth of astronomy topics. He describes himself as an "astro-nut" with an infectious enthusiasm for all astronomical topics!

WEEK ONE: 'The Star of Bethlehem' from an astronomical viewpoint

Contact Peter for more information at:
peter.german@ntlworld.com
07980 864 543

Join us this Christmas

AT ST IVES FREE CHURCH

Christingle Service
17th December - 11am
Join us for an all-age, cafe-style service as we build Christingles and reflect on themes of light and hope.

Candlelight Carols Service
17th December - 6pm
An atmospheric evening of readings and traditional carols.

Nativity Service
24th December - 11am
Bring family and friends along to help us tell the Christmas Story.

Christmas Eve Service for all ages
24th December - 6pm

Christmas Day Service at Fenstanton United Reformed Church
25th December - 9.30am



Tots and Carers 10-11.30am Wednesdays, Church Hall.
Our group for babies and toddlers is a great way to connect with other families in the town. Each session includes free play, story time, crafts, singing, and a healthy snack.

ST IVES ANTIQUES FAIR

(Signposted)
Burgess Hall (One Leisure)
Westwood Road, St Ives,
Cambs. PE27 6WU

2023
Saturday & Sunday
30th and 31st December

45 stands, prestigious venue,
ample free car parking,
wheelchair access from street level,
refreshments & licensed bar.

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