

The Raynhams' Newsletter - January 2025

Dates for the Diary

- **Saturday 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th** - Creative Crafters in Village Hall from 10am to midday.
- **Saturday 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th** - Bar night in the Village Hall from 7 to 11pm.
- **Saturday 25th** - Coffee morning in the Village Hall from 10am to midday in support of Thornage Hall for Independent Living.
- **Tuesday 28th** - Coffee morning in Helhoughton Village Hall from 10 to midday in aid of the Motor Neurone Disease Association.
- **Tuesday 28th** - Meeting of Raynham Parish Council in the Village Hall from 7pm.
- **Friday 31st** - Mobile library at West Raynham bus shelter from 9:30 to 9:45am.
- **Friday 31st** - Meeting of the Gardening Club in the Village Hall from 6 to 7pm.

Local Church Services

- **Sunday 26th** - St Martin's, South Raynham, from 10:30am.

West Raynham Coffee Morning - Saturday 25th January

Proceeds from the first coffee morning of 2025 will go to Thornage Hall, near Holt, which provides supported living for adults with learning disabilities with residential and day care services.

A selection of crafts made by residents of Thornage Hall will be on sale.

More information about Thornage Hall can be found at:

<https://www.thornagehall.co.uk/>.

We will also have an exhibition of winning and runner-up photos from last year's Newsletter photo competition, and we are really pleased that Paula Smith will be at the coffee morning. Paula has been the judging the competition since it started in 2020.

Everyone welcome!



Christmas Bingo Night

Huge thanks to everybody who came to the Christmas bingo on December 2nd and everyone who donated gifts for the raffle. Special thanks to Jessie and Toby and all the other helpers! A grand profit of £688 will be given to village hall funds.



Tracy Jolliffe.

Christmas Party Raffle



Proceeds from the raffle at the Christmas party on December 16th came to £126.50 and was donated to Cranmer House in Fakenham, which provides residential care and support for older people in West Norfolk.

Thank you to everyone who took part!

Repairs to the Tower Roof of St Mary's Church

As many readers will have noticed, there is currently scaffolding on the south side of the church tower of St Mary's in East Raynham. This is because, after 156 years, the original lead on the tower roof dating back to the building of the church in 1868, needs replacing.

Following generous donations from Viscount Raynham, the diocese of Norwich and the Raynham Solar Fund, we were able to begin the work recently. Richard Pillinger was



appointed as supervising contractor with Richard Castleton of Castle Lead (pictured) doing the lead work.

Replacement of the lead has now been completed but the scaffolding will be in place for a while longer as we look to take advantage of its being up to repoint some of the south wall of the tower.

A big thank you to all the benefactors who have made this work possible and to all

those whose signatures supported the application to the Solar Fund. The tower roof should now be watertight for at least the next hundred years!

James Hickman.

Andrée's 90th Birthday

Thank you, dear friends of West Raynham for your kindness and generosity

I was surprised and delighted with the amazing personal card which so many friends had signed. And then on the morning of my birthday I opened the door to a bouquet of beautiful flowers and a bag of splendid goodies from Fortnum and Mason.



I was absolutely astonished by the thought and effort taken to get all this together. Thank you all. I am so sorry that I am unable to thank you in person, a hip and knee problem keeping me in London over Christmas.

I shall think of you while enjoying the goodies while looking forward to getting to know you better. And I shall always keep the card.

In Love and Friendship,
Andrée Molyneux.

Parish Council Meetings

Parish Council meetings are held in West Raynham Village Hall starting at 7pm, and the dates for 2025 are:

- 28th January
- 25th March
- 27th May
- 29th July
- 30th September
- 25th November

Agendas, meeting notes and other documents, including information from Norfolk County Council, can be found at: <https://www.raynhampc.info/minutes-agendas>.

Village Hall Committee Meetings

Dates of Village Hall Committee meetings for the first part of this year are scheduled as follows:

- 3rd February
- 31st March
- 12th May
- 21st July

All meetings start at 6.30 pm.

Norwich Science Festival - 15th to 22nd February



The Science Festival started in 2016 and the programme for this year includes talks by the BAFTA award-winning wildlife expert Steve Backshall, Dr Jess Banks, zoologist and presenter on CBBC, and the dancer Darcy Bussell.

There will be events in St Peter Mancroft church, and a walk around Norwich exploring microbes, as well as the return of the Poo Trail at Pensthorpe. Interactive talks and lectures will cover a range of topics including artificial intelligence; the animal body; botox; polar bears; climate change; forensics; maths, and evolution.

The Forum will be transformed into the Explorium with hands-on activities for children. Do drop in between Saturday 16th and Monday 18th to find out about the work being done by Butterfly Conservation (Norfolk Branch) and the Hawk and Owl Trust.

Newsletter Contact Details and Past Issues

- Deadline for submissions - 25th of each month.
- westray.newsletter@gmail.com - To send in articles or manage subscriptions.
- <https://www.raynhampc.info/documents> - Download previous Newsletters.
- Recent issues available to view in West Raynham Reading Room.

Mobile Post Office

East Rudham (car park for The Crown)

Monday	09:20 - 10:20
Tuesday	09:20 - 10:20
Wednesday	15:40 - 16:20
Thursday	09:20 - 10:20
Friday	11:00 - 12:00

Helhoughton (opp. village hall)

Friday	10:05 - 10:50
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Harpley

Monday	08:00 - 08:30
Tuesday	08:00 - 08:30
Wednesday	16:20 - 16:45
Thursday	08:00 - 08:30

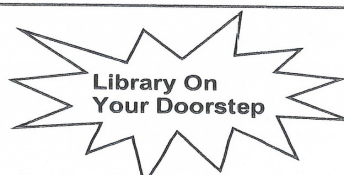
Weasenham

Friday	08:00 - 08:50
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Whissonsett

Friday	09:00 - 09:50
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Mobile Library



Route DER 501 West Raynham, Pockthorpe, East Rudham, Coxford, Tattersett, Wick-en Green, Syderstone, Stanhoe, Bircham Newton & Bircham

Bus shelter

Pond End
School road
The square
Eye lane south
Fakenham road lay by

West Raynham

Pockthorpe
East Rudham

09:30—09:45

10:10—10:25

10:30—10:45

10:50 - 11:10

11:15 - 11:30

11:35 - 11:50

Coxford

11:55—12:10

Tattersett

13:25—13:35

Wicken Green

13:45—14:05

Syderstone

14:10—14:20

8 Ashside
Village hall

14:25—14:40

Stanhoe

Docking road

14:55—15:10

Bircham Newton

Monks Close

15:15—15:35

Bircham

Village shop
Social club
Windmill Hill

15:45 - 16:00

16:05—16:15

16:20—16:35

Four weekly visits on Friday, on the following dates 2025

Jan 03, 31
Feb 28
Mar 28

April 25
May 23
June 20

July 18
Aug 15
Sept 12

Oct 10
Nov 07
Dec 05

Join the library and you can borrow up to 20 books, Audio Books, large print books, children's books). Or Hire a DVD. For more information contact Dersingham Library (01485) 540181

IT'S FREE TO JOIN! EVERYONE WELCOME!

7-Oct-24

WWW library.norfolk.gov.uk

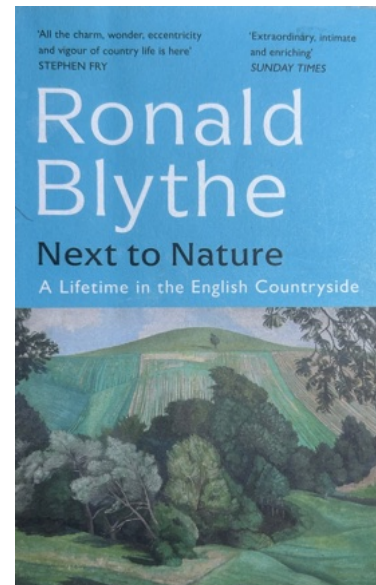
Norfolk County Council
@ your service

Ronald Blythe - An Appreciation

The author Ronald Blythe (1922-2023) is best known for his book 'Akenfield' published in 1969. This was an oral history account of changes in rural life in a fictional Suffolk village from the 1890s to the 1960s.

Ronald's entry into the literary field came after a chance encounter with Christine Kühlenthal in Colchester library where he was working as a librarian after the Second World War. Christine introduced him to the artist John Nash, her husband, and Ronald gradually met other important cultural figures in Suffolk and beyond including the writers Adrian Bell, E. M. Forster and Patricia Highsmith, the composer Benjamin Britten, and leading members of the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing. Subsequently, John Nash bequeathed his Tudor farmhouse, named Bottengoms, in Wormingford village to Ronald in the late 1970s.

Over the recent holidays I finished a collection of Ronald's articles in 'Next to Nature: A Lifetime in the English Countryside' (John Murray publishers; 2022), which were originally written as weekly 'Word from Wormingford' columns for the *Church Times* between 1993 and 2017. The articles in 'Next to Nature' are grouped by months of the year, and Ronald's descriptions of the countryside around him, often involving the overgrown orchard at Bottengoms, the lane leading to his house and the farmland nearby, surreptitiously draw you into his world of contemplation and reflection. There are simple observations, such as leaves falling in November or a river walk, which then focus down into some greater detail before revealing a wider, sometimes religious, context to the scene. Ronald was a lay reader and regularly deputised for vicars across several parishes in and around Wormingford.



However, Ronald was equally likely to combine his reflections on seasonal changes in the landscape with thoughts about various artists, writers and poets, weaving the past into the present and vice-versa. Frequently mentioned are John Nash (1893-1977), a soldier and official war artist in both World Wars; the artist John Constable (1776-1837), whose father owned Flatford Mill; John Clare (1793-1864), the 'Northamptonshire peasant poet'; Roger Deakin (1943-2006), environmentalist and founder of the 'wild swimming' movement, and the nature writer Richard Mabey (b. 1941).

I will be re-reading 'Next to Nature' month by month over the coming year, and although each article is short, sometimes taking just two to three minutes, it usually pays to go through a particular sentence or paragraph several times to absorb Ronald's humanitarian meditations rooted in the Suffolk and Norfolk countryside.

For anyone wanting to know more about the author, then a good place to start is the recent biography by Ian Collins titled 'Blythe Spirit: The Remarkable Life of Ronald Blythe' (John Murray publishers; November 2024).

Paresh Shah.

The Fight for Fakenham Commons

Part 1 - Background to the Enclosure Scheme

Most of us know Fakenham as a quiet market town, situated on the River Wensum and at the heart of a largely agricultural landscape that surrounds it. The town's peaceful character belies a brief period over 150 years ago when resistance to the enclosure of its commons boiled over into riot, arson and class war. Little is popularly known of the disturbances that shook the town in 1870, of the arrests and draconian prison sentences conferred on those found guilty of disturbing the peace, or of the armed police stationed in the town to preserve order. The dispute centred on the rights of local residents to use the commons to pasture animals, gather fuel and collect material for construction, traditions local commoners had enjoyed for centuries. For the commissioners who managed the process of enclosure, however, customary rights had little basis in law other than for those who owned land or property, a position which allowed them to ignore the wishes of the majority of townspeople and forge ahead with the scheme.

Over a period of 600 years or so until the late 19th century, enclosure transformed the English countryside, replacing the communally worked strip fields, commons and heaths with larger fields for arable crops or pasture for livestock, forming the basis of the rural landscape we know today. Through the erection of fences and hedges, it also transformed the way people interacted with the land as it ceased to be a common resource, the customary rights enjoyed since 'time immemorial', disappearing forever. The commons, heaths and meadows, alive with a rich diversity of flora and fauna, were ploughed and closed off and quickly denuded of their rich biodiversity. The landscape villagers knew so well and had such affinity with was now largely in private hands, as the poet John Clare observed in his poem 'The Mores':

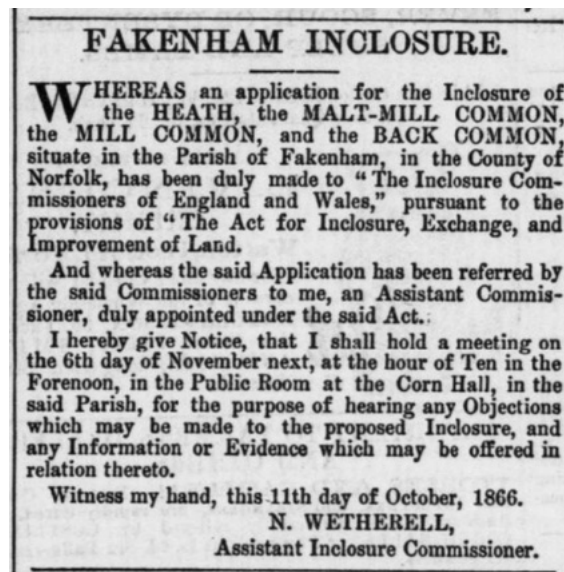
Fence now meets fence in owners little bounds
Of field and meadow large as garden grounds
In little parcels little minds to please
With men and flocks imprisoned ill at ease

Early enclosures took place through private agreement between landowners, a process replaced by enclosure by parliamentary act in the 18th century. In over 5,000 enclosure bills up to the end of the 19th century, around seven million acres of land were enclosed, an acreage equivalent to one-fifth of the total area of England. In Norfolk, the bulk of enclosure took place from 1760 to 1820, but commons were still being enclosed as late as the 1870s, including Fakenham's.

The first reference to an enclosure scheme for the commons of Fakenham is in October 1866, when a press notice appeared announcing that an application had been made for the enclosure of the four commons: the Heath, situated to the east of the town, Malt Mill Common and Mill Common, both of which ran adjacent to the river Wensum to the south, and Back Common, to the town's west, an estimated total of 163 acres.

A meeting in the Assembly Room of the town's Corn Hall (now the cinema) in November, officiated by Assistant Enclosure Commissioner Nathan Wetherell, was held to hear any objections to the proposals. According to the report in the Norwich Mercury there were few dissenting voices and little evidence of the hostility which was to come several years later, although some amusement was created with the appearance of W. Mitchell, a razor-grinder and bill-sticker, who had volunteered to be the spokesman for the opponents of

the proposal. His 'luminous oratory' was quickly extinguished by a single explanatory sentence from the Assistant Commissioner, causing Mitchell to retire to the rear of the assembly 'amidst a roar of laughter, to meditate on his folly, and the business of the meeting passed on smoothly to its close'. Interpretations of the meeting on the part of the local inhabitants were quite different to the Mercury's report, as we shall see.



Notice of Enclosure (Norfolk Chronicle, 13th October 1866)

Wetherell had summarily dismissed the claims of Mitchell regarding the rights of the poor to the commons, a humiliation prompting mirth among the audience, despite many supporting Mitchell's claims. The exchange was perhaps typical of similar hearings across the country in which the labourers' interests were peremptorily quashed by a representative of the landed and propertied classes. The casual dismissal of a dissenting voice was symptomatic of the powerlessness of the labouring class when faced with someone with the pedigree of Wetherell, a Cambridge-educated lawyer, draftsman and conveyancer. Wetherell took the view that those who had no rights had no right to be heard, a position which was later to prompt an explosion of anger and violence in Fakenham.

In fact, not only was Wetherell dismissive of the claim of parishioners' rights to the commons, he threatened to have them jailed if they continued to object. They should be quiet, he ordered, or leave the meeting, prompting an exodus by the majority opposing the scheme. Many of the objectors felt they had been unfairly treated and on December 12th they held a meeting, at which several of the town's small tradesmen formed an Association for the Defence of the Rights of the Poor, subscribing a small sum for the purpose of having the case properly investigated.

Resolutions from the meeting, emphasising the uninterrupted use of the commons by the town's inhabitants over hundreds of years, were summarised in a letter penned the following day to the enclosure commissioners by spokesman James Lucas Flaxman, a local schoolmaster and Methodist lay preacher. A similar letter was sent to Lord of the Manor Sir Willoughby Jones of Cranmer Hall, one of the instigators of the enclosure scheme.

Next month: A Summer of Discontent

Phil Henshaw.