

ST IVES OWN NEWSPAPER • READ AND PASS ON!

The Riverporter

FIRST FOR LOCAL NEWS

Issue I: 19 January 2018

Welcome to the first issue of *The Riverporter*, a fortnightly newspaper giving you St Ives news. At a time when local newspapers are struggling financially and the quality and quantity of local news coverage is declining we think that you might like to know what is really going on in your town.

Of course anyone can get information from the internet and social media sites but we believe that there is nothing better than to read about it in a plain old newspaper.

Also, the news we will bring you is "not fake," as can be the case on-line and in mainstream media, apparently. St Ives is a fantastic town with a lot going on, so there should always be plenty to inform you about.

Our aim is to keep you better informed of what is going on and about the issues that affect all of us who live in the St Ives area. We may be controversial at times but we will endeavour to give you accurate facts and information with the occasional touch of humour so that you can enjoy hearing the news from St Ives and The Old Riverport.

Not only will we be highlighting planned events we will bring you reports of what has happened and, most importantly, we hope *The Riverporter* will allow you to get facts on all sorts of issues and express your opinions as well.

One other difference between *The Riverporter* and other local publications is that we will only carry enough advertising to cover the costs of the

newspaper, so that we can leave space to give you as much news as possible. We invite contributions from any local group or society that wishes to let us know about their events.

St Ives is blessed with a wealth of organisations that do a wide variety of things that make living here so rewarding.



Concern is mounting for the welfare of Chill Bill

St Ives Giant Snowman, Chill Bill, has certainly had a chilling time this Christmas. He has suffered snow, frost, gales and floods as he has gone about his business of amusing the good folk of The Old Riverport.

While most animals hibernate in the winter months, Chill Bill and all his snowmen friends come out in winter and hibernate through summer, mainly because it gets too hot for them which can cause a fatal melting disease. Concern is now mounting as flood waters are preventing Chill Bill from reaching his summer resting place.

Residents will have noticed that nearly all of the snowmen that have been welcoming shoppers to St Ives since early November have now left for their homes where they will be recuperating and working on new attire ready for the 2018 Snowman Festival due to start on Monday 12 November.

NOTE: As we went to press Chill Bill was able to go to his 'summer' retreat as flood waters resided.

DEJA VU AT THE TOWN HALL

It's been an interesting year at the Town Hall as Town Clerks have come and gone on a regular basis.

It all started in late 2016 when the then Town Clerk, Alison Benfield, suddenly resigned.

A replacement was found, Allan Siao Ming Witherick, but his appointment was not ratified after an extended

probationary period.

This clearly caused considerable consternation not to mention administrative difficulties during the holiday period and a temporary Acting Town Clerk was appointed in the person of Steve Couper, a retired Huntingdonshire District Council Officer.

To help Steve through this busy period, while adverts were placed for another Town Clerk,

Alison was appointed as Steve's assistant.

A short list of qualified people was invited to attend for interview which included Alison, who had decided to re-apply for her old position.

In the end only one other candidate turned up for interview and Alison was appointed.

Alison's appointment was ratified by councillors with a recorded vote with 9 for her and 6 against.

FOR were Councillors D Rowe, R Kuch, N Dibben, R D'Souza, R Fuller, J Pallant, T Drye, J Davies and P Pope. AGAINST were Councillors I Dobson, I Jackson, J Hunt, B Luter, D Townsend, and J Tiddy.

Two councillors were absent on the night, who it is thought may have voted against, which may make 2018 an interesting year in the Town Hall, particularly as all Town Council seats are up for election in May.



To contact The Riverporter email: editor@theriverporter.uk

The Riverporter giving you the local news ...

Riverport proves ever more popular

Customers of the Swan & Angel, have been enjoying even more of The Old Riverport than usual, since the arrival of Riverport Bitter from local brewers Rocket Ales of Gt Staughton.

Pictured enjoying a pint of Riverport Bitter are left to right: Ron Westrip, Chris Morgan, Mike Loveridge (Manager-Swan & Angel), Ian Jackson, Chris Lewis, Ian Dobson and John Souter.

'We were absolutely delighted when we heard the Riverport Bitter was on the menu' said Town Team member Chris Lewis 'and we are even happier to discover that it is a really good pint.'

Manager Mike Loveridge indicated that the idea for the beer, which is proving popular with customers, had come from the Hunts Branch of CAMRA and was commissioned from local microbrewers Rocket Ales.

A new idea for the popular pub chain is to provide a local brew, which is now possible with the rise of microbreweries. Customers were asked to suggest a name for the beer and Riverport Bitter was the most popular.

It is four years since St Ives Town Council accepted the suggestion to name the historic town centre as The Old Riverport from Chris Lewis and Ian Dobson of the Town Team.

It was considered quite controversial at the time as some people thought that St Ives' history as an important market town was being ignored. This concern has proved unfounded as the town's history, its buildings, the beautiful countryside, Holt



Island nature reserve and especially the shops and the markets are promoted more than ever.

'Since we launched The Old Riverport branding with the giant sign on The Quay in March 2014 more and more people have come to enjoy all that St Ives has to offer' said John Souter.

'Not only do we have The Old Riverport Jazz & Blues Festival we have a retail group, actors, businesses and homes all using the Riverport name. To now have our very own Riverport beer shows that St Ives has come to accept The Old Riverport branding and that it really sets us apart from all the other market towns in Cambridgeshire.'



Dan Lester pulls another pint of Riverport Bitter

THE TOWN TEAM PRESENTS

An evening to celebrate the life of

MILES JEFFREY DAY

Huntingdonshire's remarkable First World War
POET AND FLYING ACE



St Ives Corn Exchange

Saturday 10 March 2018 7.30 pm

Tickets £15 from the Corn Exchange or at
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A Memorable Evening Ahead

The Town Team is working with the Norris Museum to celebrate the life of **MILES JEFFREY DAY** a remarkable pilot and poet from St Ives who died during the First World War.

Presented by local author and poet Andrea Porter the evening will feature his childhood in Rheola, education, training and combat and of course his evocative poems.

Professional actor Robert Lloyd Parry, well known for his ghost stories in Hemingford Grey Manor House, will be narrating the story of Jeffrey Day's life.

With readings, correspondence, and fascinating archive films and photographs it should be an entertaining and informative evening.



Sponsored by Leeds Day Solicitors tickets can be acquired from The Corn Exchange or on-line at www.ticketsource.co.uk/eventsstives

having your say ...

The Riverporter



PAWS FOR THOUGHT

This column by our reporter 'Eric The Dog', will bring you some of the latest

news circulating the town.

He may be 'barking mad' but he will be delighted to hear from you about any issue that concerns you.

This is your chance to get it off your chest or let Eric know of something good happening. Simply email: editor@theriverporter.uk

Who pinched our Bollard?

One minute it was there and the next just a hole. Now you may think this a trivial matter (and it is!) but just think of the important jobs these little bollards undertake. . . . If they refused to do their job properly our visiting boaters would just float away and lose trade for local shops and restaurants. Small children would have nothing to sit on while feeding the ducks. (The benches are full of people with beer cans.)

The local dogs would have nothing to sniff and let's face it we can't call ourselves a Riverport with no bollards! So as a passing thought. . . . If you were the owner of a largish cruiser visiting the town quay recently and have noticed that your boats performance seems a little sluggish. . . . it could be that you are dragging several hundredweight of iron bollard from your stern line - just saying.



More Gossip?

There is something stirring at last about the future use of The Octagon, the eight-sided wooden building in the Cattle Market Car Park by the Bus Station.

Two years ago Huntingdonshire District Council were persuaded by local St Ives District Councillors to spend over £50,000 of tax-payers money on renovations.

It has been up for rent since although an 'under offer' notice appeared recently.

District Councillor John Davies, when questioned about the future users, said that he understood two businesses were interested in using it.



The Octagon.

Website for people who care about St Ives and the surrounding countryside?



St Ives Matters website and Facebook page, is for people who care about our beautiful town, according to it's home page.

As it continues. . . 'Got steamed up about a local issue? Read the articles below. You might find your topic already covered, or a new one to send the blood pressure monitor popping.'

Issues highlighted include: a letter to Police & Crime Commissioner, Jason Ablewhite about Police numbers, the management of the Dolphin hotel and St Ives missing out on infrastructure investment. The latter seemed to raise the hackles of Councillor Ryan Fuller.

If you want to see more of this exchange or other issues raised go to:

<https://m.facebook.com/stivesmatters>

As yet the identity of the blogger/webmaster remains a mystery, although Councillor Fuller refers to him as John.

Left in the dark!

So, what was the thinking of the Christmas Lights Committee this year in their decision not to put any lights on the town quay? I don't think it is too much of an exaggeration to say that visitors old and new to our town make the effort to view our magnificent bridge and stroll along The Quay on their way to and from our wonderful pubs and restaurants. And yet there we were left with no hint of the seasonal festivities and Christmas goodwill except from the efforts made by The Quay residents and businesses.

Considering The Quay sets the backdrop for events such as 'Santa's arrival' into town, the excellent 'Snowman Trail' that brings customers into our local traders and of course this year's Boxing day 'Hobby Horse Hunt' which saw a happy crowd of Christmas revellers galloping along The Quay throughout the afternoon, I think it a disgrace that the lights committee totally overlooked this area. So come on Town Council, are you going to let us know what happened? And what about next year - can we look forward to a better job?

One he thought was a café and the other was a micro-brewery.

It's not quite what we were expecting to hear. After all Cllr Davies said he was looking forward to seeing the community use it, after declaring he had 'saved' the Octagon in his election leaflets.

Maybe it's not a done deal yet?

The renovations, according to a qualified engineer, did not include doing all the work to current building standards. For instance the cladding did not have sufficient insulation and he doubted if the electrical supply was to the correct standard.

Furthermore there is no water supply, so that will need putting in, for either a café or micro-brewery.

Of course the new tenants could be putting a water supply in and bringing the building up-to-scratch but we assume that this will mean either a very low rent to compensate for the very high cost of doing this or it will be subsidised by HDC, which means by us the taxpayers.

Notice was given at a recent Town Council meeting that there will be some infrastructure work going on in the bus station area and it seems likely to be connected to the future use of The Octagon.

If the user is yet another café it will be disappointing. A micro-brewery on the other hand would be different, although the building seems too small to be suitable and it remains to be seen if residents will be happy with the smell of brewing beer.



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St Ives Threatened by Immigrant plants

From our environmental correspondent . . . **Heidi N. D'Tries**

You may have seen recent reports about a weed that is clogging up our backwaters at an incredible rate and even threatens the navigation of our river?

It is set to sweep the country no less, if we aren't careful, and has put the Environment Agency on red alert. Sounds a bit like The Day of the Triffids doesn't it? Get a grip Environmental Agency you may have thought? I did! How can a rather nice-looking water plant with a pretty name like Floating Pennywort be a major national crisis?

W-e-l-l it can! True to say, the last time I ventured up the lovely stream behind Hemingford Lock for some peace and quiet – things sometimes get a bit tense in D'Tries Towers – I was at first bemused by the sweeping mass of weed almost blocking the channel. That wasn't there last week I thought. Then, after mooring up and some refreshment, I was amazed at the speed it appeared to be growing. I vowed never to drink alone upriver again and beat a hasty retreat to do some research. A girl needs to be informed.

Look out here it comes! Photo by Heidi N. D'Tries.

Here's what I discovered:

- *Floating Pennywort Hydrocotyle ranunculoides Native to North America (might have known)*
- *Free-floating or rooted Spreads rapidly - up to 20 cm a day (see what I mean?)*
- *Forms thick mats and can impede water flow and amenity use*
- *Blocks light, causes deoxygenation, competes with native plant species, prevents insects reaching surface, threatens survival of small fish*
- *Re-generates from fragments*
- *Overwhelms small boats with sleeping owners*

OK, so I made the last one up, but all the others are confirmed by the EA.



So what's to be done?

The EA man looked harassed but was charm personified. 'Heidi', he said, 'if you can get together some volunteers, take nets, rakes and a boom and drag the stuff out of the stream, we shall love you forever!' 'Hmmm', I thought, 'What's a boom?' He explained that that Pennywort breaks up as soon it is disturbed. Not too tough then is it? No, but this means any small fragments floating downstream will regenerate somewhere else, so we could end up spreading it. Hence the boom is laid to capture the bits.

So that's the plan. The EA is clearing the weed but can only do so much over a five-year plan and concentrates on the main river between Hemingford and Earith to protect the Ouse washes.

How can you help?

I thought you'd never ask. If you are fit, able, like waders and messing about in boats, contact *The Riverporter* and leave your details. If you spot a raft of Pennywort on the river please email Nina at nina.birkby@environment-agency.gov.uk Byeeee! More stunning revelations in the next Riverporter. Love Heidi x

URGENT REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

CONCERN IS GROWING for the safe return of the Quayside Crooner who went missing from home over the Christmas holiday period.



He was last seen following an altercation with youths which they foolishly posted on Snapchat (yes we know who you are!) that showed the crooner receiving minor injuries and going seriously out of tune.

No ransom demand has been received.

Anybody with information as to his whereabouts please contact the editor as we suspect he may require medical attention.