

# The Riverporter

PLEASE READ AND PASS ON

COVERING THE NEWS FOR ST IVES AND AROUND

Issue I78: 21 February 2025

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

## Where is the proof?

The following letter from a reader points out that our MP, Ben Obese-Jecty, is due to present a petition to The Speaker of the House of Commons over the proposed solar farm at Great Staughton without being aware of the facts.



The letter stated that although a solar farm at Great Staughton might seem outside of the close confines of St Ives, it is worrying that our MP makes claims without facts. The writer asked, if he does it there, will he do it closer to St Ives on other issues?

### Here is what the letter said . . .

In principle, solar farms are a positive: they generate power. There may be a negative: they use land, and limit some crops. Mr Obese-Jecty says in the Hunts Post that the solar farm 'will directly impact on wildlife' - nothing is offered in support of that claim. It is presumed to be a negative effect.

It is a happy coincidence that Cambridge University and the RSPB have just published a study\* looking at the impacts of 6 solar farms on birds in the Fenlands, and compare these with arable farms in the area.

When solar farms are established, they often switch from arable to grazing below the solar panels. What did they find? To cut a long story short, in biodiversity terms arable was far worse. Solar farms with grassland, and especially those with a mix of grassland and hedges (mixed), supported more species, at higher densities, than arable; for mixed sites it was basically twice the number.

This was the same for threatened bird species. The introduction of grassland in an otherwise arable landscape had benefits for groups such as insects too. Other studies showed bumble bees were at double the number inside than outside solar farms: managed grassland provided more nectar sources than denuded arable.

So, biodiversity prospers when solar farms replace arable, and can provide a crop: normally sheep, too. They don't blight the land as our MP infers.

Overall, it seems that our MP needs to read more widely before making unsupported biodiversity claims. Hopefully, he will be better informed on other issues?

\* Ref: Copping et al (2025). *Bird Study: 48 Solar farm management influences breeding bird responses in an arable-dominated landscape* <https://doi.org/10.1080/00063657.2025.2450392>

**The Riverporter asked Ben for the evidence that solar farms directly impact on wildlife. We await a reply.**

Meanwhile Mr Obese-Jecty has received praise for his efforts since being elected, as he has certainly been seen a lot on Facebook asking questions of the Government and getting involved locally. Most of the comments referred to how good it was to see an MP doing something, which the previous incumbent had failed to do in twenty years. The latest of these involvements was for working with the Department for Work and Pensions on a Jobs Fair at the Burgess Hall (see below), which saw over 600 people attend.



## DIARY OF EVENTS

If you wish to inform us of your events please email: [editor@theriverporter.uk](mailto:editor@theriverporter.uk)

### FEBRUARY 2025

#### TONIGHT Friday 21st - Mud Blood & Bandages

The development of Battlefield Medical Services - A presentation by Ian Langworthy 7.30pm the Free Church, Members free, visitors welcome - £3.

**Friday 28th - Chapel Arts Concert with Kimberley Rew (of Katrina & The Waves) and Lee Cave-Berry** - at the Corn Exchange 7.30pm. Tickets £10 [www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents) or from the venue.

### MARCH 2025

**Saturday 1st - Repair Café** - at the Methodist Church. To book a repair slot please email [stivesrepaircafe@gmail.com](mailto:stivesrepaircafe@gmail.com). No email? Leave a message on 07377 014401. Pre-booking is recommended.

**Saturday 1st - Craft Fair.** Saints Crafters at the Free Church. Doors 9:30am. FREE ENTRY. Also on the 1st Saturday of each month.

**Wednesday 5th - Engage Talk - Tales from the Riverbank** 2pm, St Ives Library - Donations welcome.

**Saturday 15th - Spring Serenade Concert by St Ives Choral Society.** Free Church, 7.30pm. Tickets [www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-ives-choral-society](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-ives-choral-society).

**Thursday 20th - Annual Town Meeting** details to follow.

**28th March - Chapel Arts Concert with Soloman Smith, Chris Newman and Mal Hyde-Smith** at the Corn Exchange 7.30pm. Tickets £10 [www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents) or from the venue.

## The Bridge 600th Anniversary

In 2017, Irene Valero-Sánchez, who was born in Spain, moved to St Ives when taking up a position as a consultant physician at Papworth Hospital and stood as a Town Councillor. In her free time she took lots of photographs and as she said 'Discovered the beautiful hidden corners of this wonderful town and the fascinating nature and wildlife of its surroundings'.

She left behind a lot of wonderful pictures, many of which have since been used in publicity. The one below captures our beautiful Bridge. Its Sepia effect makes it a timeless picture, one that could have been taken centuries ago, rather than in 2018. A fitting image to celebrate the 600th anniversary of its construction in 1425/26, replacing an earlier wooden bridge.



Read on-line at [www.theriverporter.uk](http://www.theriverporter.uk) or see our Facebook page. Email: [editor@theriverporter.uk](mailto:editor@theriverporter.uk)

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**28th February**  
**Kimberley Rew & Lee Cave-Berry**



An evening of popular music with Eurovision winning musician and songwriter of Katrina & The Waves - Kimberley Rew & Lee Cave-Berry.



**28th March Soloman Smith**  
 Cambridge based singer songwriter with Chris Newman and Mal Hyde-Smith. Blurring the lines between Folk, Soul and Blues.



**25th April Greg Brice**  
 Greg's performance will leave you wanting more. 'The most exquisite finger-picked acoustic blues you could wish to hear.'

Doors open at 7pm. Concerts start at 7.30pm.  
 Tickets £10 on the door or from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents)

# Do you wish to have a pitch at the Flea on The Quay this summer?

The St Ives Old Riverport

## Flea on the Quay



**The New Market Event on the beautiful St Ives Quay**  
**Collectables • Curious items • Crafts • Objet d'art • Antiques**  
**10am to 2pm on 1st Sunday of each month - May to August**

The organisers are keen to hear from anyone interested in having a pitch at his popular Summer market.

If you are interested in having a stall or would like to help please call 07900 112635 or email Sandra at: [townteam@stivescambridgeshire.co.uk](mailto:townteam@stivescambridgeshire.co.uk)

## St Ives Civic Society Talk Schedule



Here are details of the next four talks to the Civic Society in 2025.

**21 February Mud Blood & Bandages** – The development of Battlefield Medical Services in WW1. A presentation by Ian Langworthy dispels some common myths.

**28 March Climate Change** – What it means for the flat lands of East Anglia. Follow-up to a presentation by Dr Rob Larter with presentations from experts on sea-level rise, an opportunity for members to be involved in a debate about the future of this region with its fen towns, as the seas expand

**11 April The Enclosure Act** – How Farming Practice in St Ives changed irrevocably. A presentation by Bill Franklin who will talk on enclosure - from the open field system of the Saxons to enclosure by act of Parliament with reference to the effects of enclosure in the St Ives area

**16 May Eating on the Ration** – A presentation by Chris Carr on rationing in WW2 and opportunity to try some wartime chocolate cake and savoury biscuits.

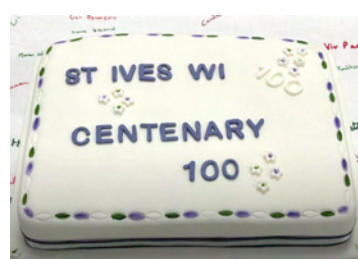
All Talks are 7.30pm-9.00pm at the Free Church, St Ives. Members free admittance, visitors welcome - suggested donation £3.

## St Ives WI celebrate 100 years

The centenary was marked with a party with the Federation Chairman and former St Ives member, Phyllis Brooks, welcomed by President Sue Barton.

Members enjoyed a delicious High Tea and the tables, decorated by the Committee included bone china,

crockery, flowers, confetti and specially designed serviettes. Prosecco was served with a celebration cake and a story poem about the WI was written and read out by St Ives member, Sue Sheppard.



The Committee worked hard to make this a very special occasion, which included a bumper raffle with great prizes.

## Smartphone Free Childhood promoted

All primary schools in the St Ives area have sent a letter to parents highlighting the **Smartphone Free Childhood campaign**.

The governing bodies of Thorndown Primary, Eastfield Infants, Westfield Juniors, Wheatfields Primary, Holywell Primary and St Helens Primary in Bluntisham all agreed to send the joint message encouraging parents to consider the impact using a smartphone can have on children. The **Smartphone Free Childhood campaign** encourages parents to join over 2,100 children in the County to delay buying a smartphone.

Stuart Wilkinson, Online Safety Lead at Westfield Junior School (pictured),



has seen a marked difference in the way pupils interact with technology over the past decade.

'It is important that parents understand that smartphones are addictive by design. Many games have a vested interest and business model based on keeping the player on the screen for longer and the content of

many apps and games often just isn't age appropriate for primary children.'

'We protect children from other forms of addiction, such as alcohol, cigarettes or gambling. Yet it seems we allow them on highly addictive platforms and then we're surprised when they struggle with limitations on their screen time.'

**The typical 12 year old spends over 29 hours a week on a smartphone.**

'In a survey of our Year 6 pupils at Westfield, 65% admitted they sometimes spend too long in front of screen, a recognition of not being able to regulate their own screen time.'

'Children desperately need grown-ups to set the example.'

The letter encourages parents to watch the award winning short film **A Stolen Childhood** which explores some of the issues that arise when young children use smartphones. Parents who wish to consciously delay getting their child a smartphone are encouraged to sign the **Smartphone Free Childhood's Parent Pact** to show other parents that they are not on their own, joining the parents of over 93,000 children who have already signed.

## NEWS SHORTS

◆ As part of the 600 Anniversary of the Bridge celebrations on Saturday 26th July there will be a Ceilidh with the Catch the Pigeon Band and Caller, Trevor Smith (below). St Ives Corn Exchange at 7pm. Tickets are just £5, from [www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/cexevents).



◆ HDC staff will be talking to people about Active Travel at Market Hill on 24th February between 10/11am. If you see them have a chat about how to get people walking and cycling.

◆ The EA's plans for St Ives & Brownhill Staunches became clearer in the 109-page briefing document for a Regional Flood and Coastal Committee meeting - and it reveals a sad future for the structures and flooding. The meeting of over 2 hours spent just 5 minutes, at the end, on St Ives sluices and flooding.

ST IVES  
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 MUSICAL DIRECTOR  
 ARNEN GIBERT

# SPRING SERENADE

From the Bavarian Highlands EDWARD ELGAR  
 Sacred Songs KARL JENKINS  
 Serenade to Music RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS  
 Love Divine HOWARD GOODALL

Saturday 15 March 7.30pm, FREE CHURCH, ST IVES

Tickets £16 (accompanied children under 12 free)

Book your tickets online at [www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-ives-choral-society](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-ives-choral-society)

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having your say ...

# The Riverporter

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

## OTHER NEWS

Milly and Tilly take on Erik's role.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Letters are reproduced as presented by the writer. Editing is confined to grammatical corrections or minor trimming to fit the space. *The Riverporter* neither condones or condemns the opinions expressed.

**Dear Editor (Milly and Tilly),**

COSI have kindly arranged another lunchtime concert at the Free Church - this month's is on Friday 28th. It features Deirdre Culloty and Kate Wishart on flute and piano.

**Deirdre Culloty and Kate Wishart**

Anna Bon: Sonata in D major  
Poulenc: Sonata for flute & piano  
Paul Lewis: Serenade Populaire

**Our next Lunchtime Concert  
at St Ives Free Church  
Friday 28th February  
at 1pm**

I was very sorry to hear about Erik. Many thanks and best wishes as always. **Pete**

**Dear Milly & Tilly,**

I and all readers of The Riverporter are very sad to hear of Erik's death, and send condolences to his family. He was not 'just a dog' but part of a family, and will be sadly missed.

RIP Erik! **Diana Baldwin**

**Dear Milly & Tilly,**

Do you recall the 'Good Ol' days when Trumps' comments were outrageous and kinda funny? We couldn't wait to hear what would come out of his mouth (or his on-line posts) as they became more bizarre. They aren't so funny now! Even more bizarre and frightening, not just for Americans but for all of humanity. **Sandra**

**The following two letters reflect quite different views of Booze in The Pews.**

**Dear Erik,**

**Subject: Booze in The Pews.**

Booze in the Pews was lovely, the church is beautiful & such a fabulous setting. It's so good to see a church being used to host community events. Take care. **Jenni**

**Dear Erik,**

Yesterday evening, I ventured the few hundred metres to join the 'Booze in the Pews' at All Saints Parish Church (mistakenly having chosen the wrong evening to meet with the USA Philosophy group).

However, the view of the once familiar sight of the church, now looking colourful from the outside due to internal illumination, and where, 85 years ago this year, I was baptised at its 12th century font, it looked promising.

The illuminated path to the North door was less glamorous. Passing between the portable toilets standing by the gravestones.

The surprise that greeted me on opening the familiar heavy door, brought a heavy heart. I was met with expressionless faces in a sea of what seemed like 50 shades of grey departed souls, as I descended the steps into a Plato underworld. No smiling welcome, but feeling of being an illegal immigrant.

Seated in rows, all facing the same way, with a scattering of faces buried in smartphones and murmuring huddles. Attempting to make conversation was met with unknowing replies, and on the mention of the word 'philosophy', was greeted with 'What, in here?'

It was suggested that I ask the 'group of people sitting at the back'.

That group turned out to be the constituency MP, from whom I received a letter of thanks for some useful comments, (but now looked smaller in stature than when I had met him twice before). Having said 'Hello Ben', received only an embarrassed smile. I was, however, greeted by the bulk of Mark-a-Lager, in whose estate I was standing, but I declined his offer of a drink on account of the somewhat depressing atmosphere and turned to leave.

The only noticeable colour in this gathering, were the names on each of the approximate 40 'bought in' small round 'coffins' arraigned against the South wall of the Nave. From these, the congregation were purchasing the final carbon dioxide breaths of their contents, to add to the carbon footprint of All Saints. This was no more than a wake, and the sadness only Boo hoos in my mind for a while.

(These are just the observations and thoughts of an old St Ivisian benefitting from a C of E and Science education, rather than a Caf E culture, which prevails today). **Philip Noble**

### Watchdog to hold railways to account

Plans for a landmark bill to rewire Britain's railways, including setting up a powerful passenger watchdog to give passengers a voice and hold operators to account have been unveiled by the Government. A consultation launched on 18 Feb, on the GOV.UK website will last for 8 weeks.

### PLAYERS TO PRESENT 'SISTER ACT'

Following their recent very successful production of Beauty and the Beast the Centre Theatre Players are delighted to announce that for their Spring show they will be performing the Divine Musical Comedy **SISTER ACT** which they will be staging in the Burgess Hall of One Leisure St Ives on May the 8th - 10th, evenings at 7.30pm with a Sat matinee at 2.30pm. This amazing musical, which is still being performed professionally in the West End, will be directed by Sam Burke, making his debut for the Players in a directing role.

Tickets for the show are currently on sale and can be purchased on [www.ticketsource.co.uk/burgesshall](http://www.ticketsource.co.uk/burgesshall) or from the One Leisure main reception.

### GOVT Partner Member meeting & AGM

**5 April 2025 at 10.30am Grafham Village Hall**

Trustee Francis Mizuro, who runs the Electric Boat Company in St Ives, is giving a talk, **Tales from the River Bank**. Francis has lots of tales and knowledge from his many riverboat trips.

**Also on 20 July 2025 WOW! DAY**

Come and Walk the Ouse (Valley) Way with us. Organised walks, long and short, for all ages.



### £6.5m for walking, wheeling & cycling

A Government body, Active Travel England has awarded the funding, which will enable Cambridgeshire to design, upgrade and build paths across the region including:

- Removing barriers on walkways and cycle paths, allowing people to move freely
- Wider footpaths and safer school routes, helping children travel to school away from traffic
- Upgraded solar lights in the floor to create a safer experience day and night
- Easier crossings at side roads and roundabouts, ensuring safer access for all.

Dr Nik Johnson, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, said: 'Comparing Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's allocations to other Combined Authorities it can be seen that, per head, we have received the most funding. Dr Nik has said he will not be standing for re-election in May.'

### 15 bags of Asbestos dumped in cemetery

Libby White, St Ives Town Clerk has reported that 15 bags of asbestos roof tiles have been dumped at Hill Rise Cemetery. It appears that while these may have been paid for proper disposal, they've instead been fly-tipped, creating a significant burden on local taxpayers.



The Council now face the cost of having these professionally removed and safely disposed of to protect public health. It's a reminder of the importance of proper disposal and the consequences of improper actions like this. 'Please don't forget to check that whoever you employ to dispose of rubbish has the appropriate Waste Carrier Licence.' said Libby. 'We appreciate the community's understanding as we address this issue and work to maintain the safety and respect of our cemetery space.'

### Cllr Black says 'Hello' to absent Fuller

Cllr Mike Black speaking during a debate on Councillors' Allowances at Cambs County Council's February meeting said that 'in the spirit of being respectful to other members I would like to say *Sà wàtdii kráp* (hello) to Councillor Ryan Fuller who sadly can't be with us today [as] he has an amazingly long journey to get to council meetings [having moved] 6,000 miles to Thailand but continuing to draw his £11,500 annual allowance.'

### Almost 100,000 people sign petition

Almost 100,000 people signed a petition that aims to get the UK Government to immediately ban the use of dogs in scientific and regulatory procedures. Last year several celebrities joined long-time Camp Beagle protesters outside the MBR Acres site in Wyton.

### Good news about medieval oak beam

Last autumn The Civic Society commissioned timber conservators from Cambridge to examine the medieval carved oak beam in the doorway of 7 The Pavement (the old M&Co shop) and recommend treatment to protect it. Their answer surprised them.

To summarise, the wood is in as good condition as you would expect of a medieval beam and it should not be put behind glass but left in the porch where it is protected from the weather. The building's landlord has said that the beam will be preserved. The work will be undertaken in situ and Councillor Gleadow has had assurance from the new tenant, Mountain Warehouse, that they will undertake it - which all sounds promising. More on this in our next issue.





**The Miracle Club**  
 Thursday 6 March 2025 at 7:30pm  
 Doors open 6:30pm. Tickets £7  
 Director: Thaddeus O'Sullivan, 90m, Cert: 12

**Synopsis:** Set in 1967, THE MIRACLE CLUB follows the story of three generations of close friends, Lily (*Maggie Smith*), Eileen (*Kathy Bates*), and Dolly (*Agnes O'Casey*) of Ballygar, outside Dublin, who win a pilgrimage to the sacred French town of Lourdes, that place of miracles that draws millions of visitors each year. Just before their trip, their old friend Chrissie (*Laura Linney*) arrives in Ballygar for her mother's funeral. The women set out on the journey that they hope will change their lives, with Chrissie, a skeptical traveller, joining in place of her mother. Along the way, old wounds are reopened, forcing the women to confront their pasts even as they travel in search of a miracle.



**All We Imagine As Light**  
 Thursday 3 April 2025 at 7:30pm  
 Doors open 6:30pm. Tickets £7  
 Director: Payal Kapadia, 118m, Cert: 15

**Synopsis:** Payal Kapadia's second film after the acclaimed *A Night of Knowing Nothing* (2021) is a gentle, loving story of friendship and female independence set in Mumbai. Prabha (*Kani Kusruti*) and Anu (*Divya Prabha*) are two Malayali nurses who live and work together, each having her own rhythm when it comes to relationships and daily routines. Yet, they meet every night in the kitchen and take turns gazing at night-time Mumbai—a place that signifies different things for both of them. The first film from India to compete in the Cannes Film Festival main competition since 1994, *All We Imagine as Light* won the Grand Prix. A beautiful, comforting film to revel in.

Ticket at [screenstives.org.uk](http://screenstives.org.uk) or in the Corn Exchange

# Why pay eye-watering prices for eyewear?

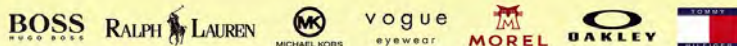
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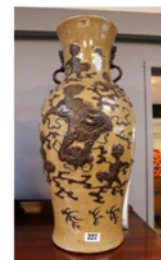
**George Best 1967/68 Man United Jersey**  
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