

The Riverporter

COVERING THE NEWS FOR ST IVES AND AROUND

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Issue I97: 21 November 2025

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

Vote makes St Ivo happy

On Wednesday 35 District Councillors voted for Option E in the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) debate, 7 voted for Option C and 7 abstained.

Public opinion, our MP and St Ivo himself, all urged councillors to choose that option, which could see Huntingdonshire becoming a Unitary Authority.

However with only our District voting for that option it is unlikely to become a reality.

As we reported in RP195 the County Council voted for Option A, Peterborough and Fenland chose Option D, which joins parts of North Huntingdonshire, including Huntingdon, with Peterborough and Fenland and with South Cambs, East Cambs and Cambridge City, most likely to endorse Option B, this leaves Huntingdonshire out on its own.

Briefly the process is this ...

Wednesday's decision will go to HDC's Cabinet, who will probably submit that as their preferred option to The Secretary of State for Local Government who will decide on the matter after receiving all the preferred options from Cambridgeshire (each authority can only choose one option).

How the government will determine which is the best option is unknown.

Why the reorganisation?

It has long been agreed that there are too many layers of local government and that it isn't sustainable.



Reducing them from three to two (Parish and Town Councils would remain) could allow greater efficiencies, better integration of services and an improved democratic process as most services become the responsibility of just one authority.

Add to this the likely savings then it makes sense to reorganise.



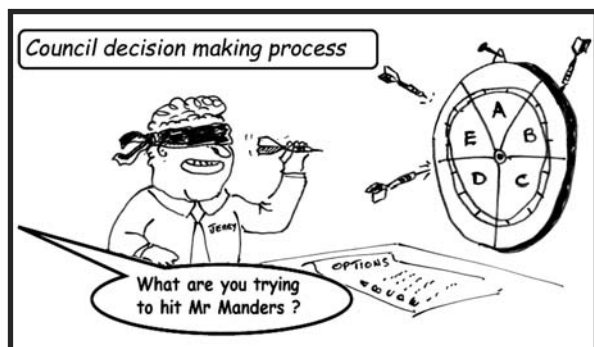
So what is wrong?

The whole process has frankly been a mess. From the outset the Government placed so many constraints on it that the best solutions have been excluded. The initial options agreed didn't suit all the districts and political gain became more important to some councillors.

Having lived in different parts of Huntingdonshire I know that the best solution is one that keeps communities together which already function rather than splitting them arbitrarily.

One option, ruled out by the Government at the outset, which could be less disruptive and less expensive, would be for most of Cambridgeshire to become a unitary authority. Peterborough, which is already a unitary authority, could be expanded to include some of its surrounding settlements that link to it socially and commercially, thereby creating two authorities of an appropriate size and less influenced by political gerrymandering.

This process has cost (wasted) £thousands, and by the time the new authorities are in place by May 2027 it will be £millions. Ultimately the decision rests in Downing Street, and it may have already been made, so all the talk and expense could be for nothing. I remain sceptical that the option chosen will be for the better. **Ed.**



DIARY OF EVENTS

Please email: editor@theriverporter.uk
There is much to do this Festive Season

NOVEMBER

Saturday 22nd - ArtsFEST exhibition. 10am St Ives Corn Exchange.

Friday 28th - COSI lunchtime concert - featuring a clarinet quintet. A free concert, 1pm St Ives Free Church.

Friday 28th - Chapel Arts Concert - Stella Hensley's Magical Colours St Ives Corn Exchange 7.30pm. see page 2

Saturday 29th/30th - BHF Candle Lighting in the Bridge Chapel. Light a candle for a loved one. 10am to 4pm both days.

Saturday 29th - Creative Christmas Decorations 7pm. Free Church. Tickets £10 include materials, wine/soft drink and nibbles.

Saturday 29th - A Truly Traditional Christmas - Bedford Gallery Quire. All Saints Church 7.30pm. Tickets from ticketsource.co.uk.

Sunday 30th - Christmas Craft Fair Burgess Hall 10am to 4pm.

Sunday 30th - The Amazing Technicolour Concert - St Ives Community Choir. Free Church. 6.30 pm. Tickets £9 adults, £5 children.

DECEMBER

Wednesday 3rd - St Ives Foodbank. 2pm St Ives Library. Donations.

Saturday 6th/7th - BHF Candle Lighting in the Bridge Chapel. Light a candle for a loved one. 10am to 4pm both days.

Saturday 6th - Christmas Charity Concert The Free Church 7pm.

Saturday 13th - Family Christmas Concert, St Ives Choral Soc. accompanied by Thorndown Primary School Choir. 6.30pm. Free Church Tickets from www.ticketsource.co.uk/st-ives-choral-society

Sunday 21st - Santa Arrives by Boat 11.30am The Quay followed by SnowFEST in the Corn Exchange with Grotto and Giant Snowdome.

Monday 22nd - SnowFEST continues in Corn Exchange 10am to 4pm.

Crowds enjoying St Ives

Right: Children enjoying the Hemingford Firework display.

Below right: Town Mayor, Julie Kerr and Town Vicar, Father Mark Amey, at his last Remembrance Day Parade in St Ives.

Below left: Crowds watch Father Christmas light up the Town.



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The Rotary Club of St Ives Raises £1000

On Friday 14th November, the Rotary Club of St Ives held another very successful Bridge Drive in the Hemingford Abbots Village Hall, despite the horrendous weather - thank you Storm Claudia!

Fifty enthusiastic players from the local Bridge circuit enjoyed a day of friendly competition, including a two course meal and a glass of wine, under the watchful eye of Rotarian Dennis Collins.

The Players were welcomed with coffee and biscuits, before settling down to the morning session. Promptly at 12.30pm a lunch of a hearty meal of sausage and mash, kindly supplied by Rotarian Philip Sadler and his wife Melanie from the Olive Tree Cafe at the Oakington Garden Centre, and homemade fruit crumble and cream and fresh fruit salad, was served, and enjoyed by all. Bridge resumed for the afternoon

session, and awards to the winners given out at the end. A raffle of exciting prizes completed an excellent afternoon. Volunteers from the Rotary Club ran the kitchen and supplied the work party. President Sandra King thanked everyone for taking part, in what was another very successful fund raiser, which will add approximately £1,000 to the support we can give to local charities and good causes.

Reflections

Hemingford Firework Display as captured by Jon Swain





Step into Mrs Claus's Cozy Christmas Corner at The Courtyard

Saturday 6th, 13th & 20th December

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Christmas mince pie or shortbread with
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Visit the individual pods for a unique Christmas shopping
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The Courtyard welcomes you 9am-5pm
Station Road, St Ives, PE27 5BH
Find us behind Hyperion Auctions

The Courtyard
would be a
perfect hiding
place for a
Snowman!

Friday 28th November

Stella Hensley's Magical Colours

This year has seen many great concerts, including a host of fine performances during the Jazz & Blues Festival. So why not end it in style with five of the very best of musicians around in the intimate Riverport Bar.



Chapel Arts
@ the
Corn Exchange

DOORS OPEN AT 7PM, CONCERT 7.30PM TICKETS £10 FROM THE VENUE
OR FROM WWW.TICKETSOURCE.CO.UK/CEXEVENTS

Thicket Woodland Improvement Group Founded

An enthusiastic audience from St Ives, Houghton & Wyton and other local villages attended the founding meeting of TWIG, the Thicket Woodland Improvement Group, held at the St Mary's Centre in Houghton on October 29th to hear a presentation by Christine Phillpotts, Chair of the Civic Society on its current health and status. She recounted local concerns about the thinning of the wood, its reduced flora and fauna, HDCs maintenance programme being largely felling of trees with no replanting programme planned, which had led to discussions with H&W Parish Council, with HDC Parks & Countryside Team and a site walkabout with the arboricultural team who maintain the Thicket.

HDCs 2022 assessment of the Thicket found its soil health to be poor, unable to sustain large trees, and with little flora. Christine also found the Ancient Woodland Directory had declined to include the Thicket 30 years ago on the grounds it was largely scrub. As the Parks & Countryside Team didn't provide volunteers to maintain it as a green space, it was time to form a volunteer group to help make it the best it can be! TWIG now has an allocated Ranger to design & oversee a work programme for the working party, 4 volunteers sharing the co-ordination of the working party, fundraising & publicity plus a few hardy volunteers waiting beside their gumboots and trowels ready

to get stuck in - but we need more!
It is intended to undertake an ecological survey to create a base-line understanding of its eco-systems from which to draw up a suitable programme of work to help conserve the Thicket for future generations to enjoy . The ecological survey is key to the Thicket's future health - if you can help us please get in touch at: TWIGecology@gmail.com
If you can give some time to clear and weed please get in touch at: Nikkimurden@hotmail.com
If you could help us publicise the project please get in touch at: Amandacchadwick@hotmail.com
Or for general enquiries contact Chair@stivescivic.org.uk

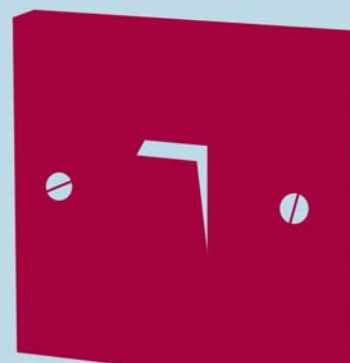
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having your say . . .

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

Milly and Tilly love your letters.

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 Milly and Tilly,

It's good news that the BBC are showing a new edition of David Olusoga's popular tv programme *A House Through Time* early in 2026. Your readers may not know that St Ives has its very own version, presently telling the story over the centuries of three of St Ives most iconic buildings and their occupants.

Your readers can access the content at <https://kutt.it/AHTT>

Kind regards, **John McKinnie**

Dear Milly and Tilly,

Your report in RP196 (Are our traditions under threat?) seems to reflect a repeated modern-day theme. Why would somebody choose to live near to an established, and active, parish church and then complain about the bell ringing? Lack of research comes to mind. My father and brother both rang every Sunday at All Saints, with one practice during the week. There is something very comforting about the 'English pastorate' provided by a peal of bells. It seems unreasonable to complain when bells are rung at times when folk are not normally trying to sleep.

Yours faithfully, **R King**

Dear Mr King, I believe the complaint may have been about the church clock ringing the time throughout the night. **Milly**

Dear Milly and Tilly,

Surely it is the height of arrogance, to move house and then complain about the Parish Church bells which have sounded across St Ives for a century.

Simple solution. Move again.

The complaint to HDC's Environmental Health Officer really is outrageous!
Regards, **John**

Dear Milly and Tilly,

Just noticed the new sign in Warner's Park. Can you spot the deliberate mistake?



Dear Milly and Tilly,

Ref: A response to the gentleman concerned that the new working party would damage The Thicket

I note your concern about what you perceive as an inappropriate planting project, so let me assure you that the new group, TWIG, evolved out of perceptions raised by residents to the Civic Society during the Neighbourhood Plan consultation in 2002-3. It was noted that the Thicket had deteriorated and was not regenerating strongly enough to sustain itself. There are many valued volunteer groups tending to Huntingdon's green spaces but none work in the Thicket. HDC's priorities are largely limited to felling and pollarding old and diseased trees.

There is no replanting programme so discussions with district & parish councillors, HDC's Parks and Countryside Team and Volunteer Coordinators supported the creation of a volunteer group under the guidance of a Ranger to remove litter and invasive species to encourage natural regrowth. (see article page 2). Without some TLC the woodland will eventually dwindle to nothing. It is worth more than that!

Christine Phillpotts

Chair, Civic Society of St Ives

The Riverporter

To listen to the latest **Riverport Radio Podcast** go to <https://riverportradiopodcast.buzzsprout.com>

OTHER NEWS

Sleeping Beauty tickets going fast

This year's seasonal offering from the Centre Theatre Players will be the traditional family pantomime 'SLEEPING BEAUTY' which they are presenting in the Burgess Hall of One Leisure St Ives on January 14th - 18th, 8 performances in total.

Written by Ben Crocker and Directed by Graeme Hammond this show has some great characters, super plots, catchy songs and of course plenty of comedy and audience participation. Over the past years the Players have gained a fine reputation for their high standards of performance winning several NODA awards.

Tickets for the show can be purchased on line www.ticketsource.co.uk/burgesshall or from the One Leisure main reception. Tickets for the show are selling fast with some performance already sold out, so to avoid any disappointment don't delay, book today.

Royal Residences at Sandringham



Ever wanted to know all about the Royal Residence at Sandringham in West Norfolk? Then join us the COPE Zoom event on Wednesday 26 November at 2pm.

Tom Kirby will be leading this fascinating online talk, open to all COPE members. Please register by emailing copetalkingtogether@hotmail.com or phoning 01223 364303 before Monday 24 November at the latest if you would like to be included.

Hunts Ramblers AGM

Hunts Ramblers have just held their 51st AGM, which reported on yet another successful year of walking. As well as their usual offering of walks within the borders of Huntingdonshire they had a coach trip to Norfolk to walk a stretch of the Peddar's Way, a very interesting London Walk, and supported the St Ives Big Green Week initiative.

They are keen to run a similar varied programme next year and would love new faces to join them. For details please go to <https://www.huntsramblers.org.uk>

Always check before setting out to join any walk, in case of last minute changes.

Beware of winter fuel payment scams

Between April and September 2025, Action Fraud has received 2,790 crime reports relating to Winter Fuel Payment scams totalling over £27,000. Winter Fuel Payments are made automatically, you do not need to do anything. If you receive any text messages about Winter Fuel Payments, it's a scam. Not sure if a message is real? Contact the organisation directly using the contact details on their official website, not the number or web address in the message. Your bank (or any other official source) won't ask you to supply personal information by email or text message.

If you think you've been a victim of fraud, contact your bank immediately and report it to Action Fraud online at actionfraud.police.uk or by calling 0300 123 2040.

Standing room only for Jerry

340 people attended Jerry Schonfeldt's funeral at Fenstanton Parish Church on Thursday 13th November. The church was completely full with people standing out of the door. Jerry would probably have enjoyed the event which continued in the White Swan in Conington, which Jerry's son Richard runs, and he hosted the mourners in fine style. A fitting send off for this very popular landlord.

Have you Looked at your water bill recently?

A visit by Natalie Leigh-Brown to talk at November's Eco Café taught us a lot and made us realise there is more to saving water than just not running the tap while cleaning our teeth.

The effects of Climate Change have accelerated faster than expected and water companies are starting to lay pipes to pump water to us from Lincolnshire, but still we use an average of 136 litres per person per day at home which we could probably cut to 90 litres without too much effort - reducing our bills in the process. We thought this would just be a talk about water, but had never thought of the energy

involved in moving water around; it is extremely heavy (pick up a full bucket and see) and takes 3% of the energy used in the UK to pump it around, as well as energy to clean it. Why hasn't anyone told us before?

We hadn't realised that the Eco Button on washing machines does actually reduce the energy used even though the cycle takes longer; think of hard accelerating in a car against doing so gently.

Of course, there's an eco button on dishwashers, too, and using the little button on the toilet flush halves the amount of water used. We realised that we really can do a lot to cut our water bills and to reduce

the energy needed to supply us. Thank you, Natalie, for a brilliant talk!

If you'd like to join our mailing list please message: stivesecocafe@gmail.com



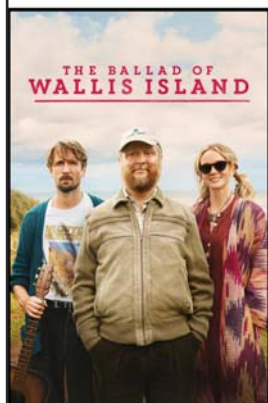
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Ed!!

Where to get your Riverporter

As we have increased the number of printed copies you should be able to pick up your copy from the following places.

Town Centre: TG Jones, Mace, The Corn Exchange, Library, Golden Lion and various cafés and shops.

Morrison's garage, the Coop, Kings Hedges Newsagent, Costcutter, St Ives Day Care Centre, the Premier store Green How, Baba News on Needingworth Road, Field Lodge Care Home on London Road and at Bluntisham Garage.



The Ballad of Wallis Island

Thursday 4 December 2025 at 7:30pm
Doors open 6:30pm. Tickets £7
Director: James Griffiths, 100m, Cert: 12

In the 2025 film *The Ballad of Wallis Island*, lottery winner Charles Heath (*Tim Key*) escapes the world by retreating to his remote island. He hires his favourite folk duo, Herb McGwyer (*Tom Basden*) and Nell Mortimer (*Carey Mulligan*), to perform just for him. The trio reunites on his idyllic island and as the music begins old resentments surface. They navigate humour, longing and the strange intimacy of an audience of one discovering that solitude nostalgia and friendship can collide in unexpected and moving ways.



Downton Abbey - The Grand Finale

Thursday 8 January 2026 at 7:30pm
Doors open 6:30pm. Tickets £7
Director: Simon Curtis, 124m, Cert: PG

Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale, Julian Fellowes' last outing of the Downton Abbey saga depicts the Crawley family in the 1930s facing social disgrace and financial difficulties. Lady Mary's (*Michelle Dockery*) divorce from Henry Talbot causes a scandal, while the family grapples with money problems. Amidst these challenges, Robert hands over the reins to Mary, who takes charge as the new Lady of Downton Abbey. The film ends with the family embracing change and securing the legacy of the estate for the next generation.

Tickets at screenstives.org.uk or in the Corn Exchange

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