



RACKENFORD NEWS

Spring 2021
Edition 2



Rackenford Air Ambulance Community Landing Site

The Parish Council need your help to raise £3,378 to set up a night landing site on Rackenford Common, allowing Devon Air Ambulance to land in the hours of darkness.

This would be part of a network of night landing sites in rural communities, where specialist hospital services are some distance away. **It could mean one of us getting the help we need in minutes rather than hours.**

The site is a 50m² area in the centre of the Common and will require a 10m lighting column to be installed alongside the existing hedgeline. Devon Air Ambulance would support the project with a grant of £3203.37; we will need to find the remaining £3,378.48. The Parish Council would greatly appreciate any help you could give in raising this money.

To donate

You can donate, ideally before the end of April, through <https://justgiving.com/crowdfunding/airambulancerackenford>, or leave a donation in the shop. Thank you to those who have already made donations.

For more information, contact rackenfordparish@gmail.com

Fancy a Sponsored walk in September in aid of Rackenford Church?

All being well, the route will be one of those featured on Julia Bradbury's walks in Devon and Cornwall, shown recently on ITV. It will be a circular walk of the Three Tors on Dartmoor, Saddle Tor, Haytor and Hound Tor and will be 7.5 miles in distance. The walk is described as 'moderate'.

For info, call Liz on 07831869565 or email ecpaxton@hotmail.co.uk



Remembering Michael Lane

Michael led a remarkable and varied life. Son of an Indian Army officer, he had a peripatetic education involving 20 different schools in many countries. Destined for the army, he went to Sandhurst, a career that came to an abrupt end when they discovered that he was colour blind. Thereafter he modelled, he grew tea in Assam and, being a skilled sailor, he delivered yachts.

He was a born entrepreneur, innovative and original. He lived on a boat in Plymouth for eight years and had striking plans for the development of a marina there which, through no fault of his own, came to nothing. Undismayed, he qualified as a welder and started a new career as a craftsman who could tackle anything from the most simple to the most complicated and intricate: candle sticks, chandeliers, grilles, fences, tree guards, hearths and spits. Rackenford is full of his products.

He became a leading character in the village, parish councillor, one of the founders of Rackenford Shop, and a reviver of the Trinity well. He organized the welcoming of newcomers with gifts for each household. He was a well read and genial conversationalist and there was nothing more pleasant than to while away the time with him over a malt and a beer.

The courage with which he met illness was remarkable and his recent epic journey up the Tiverton canal in a small boat which he had to row most of the way was a fitting finale. Rackenford will not be the same without him.

David Cocks



At 93, Jean Cole is one of our oldest residents. Here's her story.

It was a wet and cold day in December 1950 when we moved to the village with our six month old son Peter. Being the daughter of a policeman, I'd lived all over Devon as a child, but I'd never been to Rackenford before. I wasn't that impressed actually, it felt bleak and strange and I was adamant I wouldn't be staying long. That was 71 years ago.

My husband George was already working here, driving a cattle lorry out of what was later to become our own Yard. The lorry was used for all sorts - even house removals!

So that was how we came to move into a newly built house at 6 Meadow View - only four in the terrace had been completed at that stage. The rent was 21s 6d.

The village grew on me as I got to know people - it wasn't nearly as big as it is now but we had two shops: one with an adjoining bakery where Acres Wild and The Old Bakery are now, and one round the corner with a Post Office. There was a shoe shop and cobbler, a butcher came round in a van on Tuesdays and Fridays,

and McFisheries once a week. After the Bakery closed (they built Cherry Cottage for their retirement), the bread was also delivered, and a man from Town End Farm - and later Prospect Farm before the Phillips family moved there - did the milk round. So we never really needed to go into Tiverton or South Molton except for the doctors. And of course there was The Stag pub and a Village Hall where the Sunday School Christmas party was held. There was a Sunday School outing once a year, to places like Paighton or Teignmouth, and George and I always went on it. Everyone looked forward to those big events and we wore our best clothes.

In the early '50s the mains water supply was a bit erratic. Sometimes you got it and sometimes not, and it was often brackish so you had to collect it from the pump in the brick shed on the main street instead, though some houses had their own pumps inside their homes. There was no electricity in the village, we used cold stone slabs to keep food chilled. Food was still being rationed long after the war and we also got clothing coupons.

Over twenty years later George got the opportunity to buy the haulage business and we built our

house next to the Yard: "Georjeana" was George's idea, being an amalgamation of both our names. I started doing the bookkeeping for the business. I hadn't got a clue when I started, but an accountant from Exeter helped until I got to grips with it. I also sang in the church choir, did party plans for Oriflame cosmetics, and worked in the pub for about ten years which I really enjoyed. Several landlords came and went during that time - including one couple that absconded in the middle of the night along with anything that wasn't screwed down, even the optics! A real scandal in the village.

The chap who owned a garage and petrol pumps opposite the school where three cottages now stand had a coach that took pupils to the secondary school in Bampton. The policeman in the police house changed periodically. One young constable had a very modern wife who sunbathed in her bikini in the front garden - which Rackenford wasn't ready for.

George was a very genuine person, kindhearted. He'd do anything for anybody if he could. When he retired we went on occasional coach trips and we would have liked to have bought a campervan and explored Devon and Cornwall but that never materialised. George died four years ago and though it's lovely to have my sons Richard and Simon living nearby, I miss him a great deal.

Update from The Stag

Spring is here and end of Lockdown edges closer! A very big THANK YOU to all our loyal takeaway customers, your support has been crucial in helping us pay our bills during this very difficult period.

Our Friday night takeaway menus are rotated weekly, and we send out the menu choices by Wednesday of each week. These have included haddock and chips, beef, lamb, chick or veggie-burgers, a whole assortment of sourdough pizzas (*half a portion is*

pictured here), steak & ale or turkey pie, salmon filo parcel - or beetroot, roast potato & feta wellington.

We also offer a wide range of desserts from spicy rum sticky toffee pudding to lemon posset or baked vanilla & sour cream cheesecake. So there's something for every taste!

We'll be re-opening the pub once customers can eat inside, which



currently is scheduled for **Saturday 15 May**. Our operating days will remain the same as last year until the summer season arrives, and then we hope to extend them a little. We are planning on taking a holiday in September so will close during that month.

Astonishingly, we have already received bookings for Christmas Day so do let us know if you would like to add your name to the list!

Steve and Oliver

It's been a particularly challenging time for young people, yet some offered to volunteer in the shop during the first lockdown. One of our helpers, Peggy Hookins, shares her thoughts of lockdown

"The past year has been a shock to the system for someone of my age: college finished abruptly and I was left with absolutely nothing to focus on apart from breakfast, lunch and tea! I was lucky enough to find myself a job in Morrisons and get a few shifts a week in the shop - this kept me preoccupied and meant that I actually had something to stop me going insane!! Since then, I've been given a permanent job there and have got myself a puppy to keep myself entertained! Other than that, walking, running and reading is a good time passer I've found. Here's hoping we can get out and socialise soon." 🙌🙌

Peggy Hookins

Thank you to Albert and Karrie Retter who live just outside Rackenford and took the time to tell us they enjoyed the newsletter...

"We love living in the this area (so peaceful). When lockdown struck in March we began to shop at the village shop. A lovely 'Aladdin's cave' staffed by equally lovely people. Everything we needed was there as well as a cheery hello.

We thought the last newsletter was absolutely charming, we had no idea so many things went on in the village."

Stay safe, shop locally

Rackenford Community Shop, run entirely by volunteers, has been operating for more than 13 years and continues to be an important part of Rackenford Village and the surrounding community.

Recent sad news has been the loss of co-founder Michael Lane, who will be greatly missed. He was the Shop Committee Chair from the outset, and created many of the fittings. Almost daily over the last few years he ensured the day's takings were safely tucked away, the ATM machine in working order with plenty of money and any waste was properly separated so that the shop recycled as much as possible.

After some supply problems due to COVID it has almost been a relief to have normal, if surprising, supply issues. Cadbury Dairy Milk bars were in short supply as Cadbury wanted a gap between old and new design wrappers - most of us just wanted the chocolate and didn't mind the wrapper style! A favourite with many village dogs, Happy Shopper Dog Food, is currently not available. We don't know if this is short or long term so are trying different options - please give us your dog's feedback.

We are delighted with the new energy efficient fridges. With sliding doors, more space and larger shelves it is easier to display and find some of the new items we have been trying, such as ready meals. The cottage pies seem successful, but less so the fish pies. The new microwavable steamed puddings (jam, golden syrup and spotted dick) seem to be a hit but we understand a spot of custard - tinned or homemade -

makes all the difference.

Grocery Boxes/special orders: The shop continues to make up boxes for collection (no minimum spend). Orders can be sent any time before noon on Wednesdays, with boxes available for collection on Friday. You can order fresh fruit & veg, general groceries, bakery items (bread, pasties, cake, etc from local Chanter's bakery delivered every Thursday), household items, chilled, frozen and alcohol (age restriction). Simply send your order to orders@rackenfordshop.co.uk. See <https://www.rackenford-devon.co.uk/shop> for full details.

We continue to support Fairtrade goods where we can and the items we stock are highlighted in the shop.



We love receiving your feedback and ideas. Let us know what items or services you would like; drop a note into the shop or mail orders@rackenfordshop.co.uk

Remember, Rackenford shop is just round the corner, a stroll or short drive away allowing you to catch up with neighbours and friends. We hope that soon you will be able to share a Miles coffee and a Rackenford biscuit with a friend - on the common or in your garden.

Church News

Church services will be starting in April, according to Rev Steph Gordon Jeffs' rota with the nine churches in the Exe Valley Mission Community. We need to keep checking the website for news and notifications of services and booking seats for now. We haven't got plans to restart lay led services in Rackenford Church at present, but would be pleased to do so if the demand is there. Let any members of the PCC know.

The PCC are looking for volunteers to help with grass cutting in the churchyard. If you can help, please let churchwarden Mary Cann know, Tel 01884 881696.

Look out for the Easter flower trail around the nine churches, 28th March to 4th April. You can find more details in the *Today* magazine.

Back to School

With all children back to school on 8th March the familiar buzz has returned to the village at drop off and pick up times. For the children, seeing friends, staff and getting back into the school routine is a step closer to normal life.

"I found home learning frustrating, so getting back to school has been really nice"

Louis Denno

"I like seeing my teachers"

Rupert Denno



Little Angels

This term we have continued providing an environment that gives children a voice, time, love and support as we unitedly work towards new hope and a safer world.

One of the highlights of this term, so far, has been our fundraising project for the night-time helicopter landing pad on Rackenford Common. The children and staff have had fun, laughter, worked together, been creative, explored colour and texture and discovered a whole range of emergency services and the impact they have on our world...

We all need an environment to learn from, and this year we have been given an opportunity to learn about what's important to us all: be kind, be patient and remember everyone's world needs a little extra love at the moment, and a reason to smile.

Big hugs as always,

Nicola Welsh, Little Angels Manager

Rackenford Parish Council by Zoom

In spite of being unable to meet face to face, except for occasional site meetings on the Common, your Parish Council has remained very active over the last year. We were extremely lucky in finding Rob Martin to be our new Parish Clerk, whose experience has been a great help in moving on with the big contract for the Children's Play Area, and we've welcomed two new councillors,



Peter Jones and Ian Lucas. Both live in the village; Peter is linked in to the community with one child at Rackenford School and another at Little Angels, and Ian together with his partner Madick has long been a very active Shop director. Peter has taken over the Rackenford website from Andy Francis who is retiring; many thanks to Andy for all he put into it. The new site will be more accessible and we hope it will be used by more local enterprise. Please add your email address to receive the latest PC updates as well as a digital copy of future issues of Rackenford News.

On the Common; we were very sorry not to be able to have a second public meeting to discuss details of the current and next phases of the regeneration project. The Zipwire was completed in April and was instantly popular. The same firm will build the Play Area, which has been held up both by the weather and Covid. It was to have started at the end of February but is now in the Earth Wrights

diary for April when the ground is hopefully going to be dry enough. That will complete the spend of the £80k grant from the Batsworthy fund. We are now discussing the second most popular item in the project, the small wooden shelter. If you have a view on whether this should be open on all sides or partly enclosed, let Peter or Ian know; they are collecting further existing designs before we agree a cost limit to guide our next grant applications. We are also hoping to conclude a contract for regular Common maintenance, which was another thing high on the wish list in 2018.

Sarah Child



Reuben, age 4: RNLI boat



Jessica, age 2: Helicopter



Anisa, age 1: Fire Engine handprint



Olivia, age 3: Ambulance

Can you share your stories or news of events? What would you like to read about?
We'd love to hear from you. Please contact viv@rackenfordshop.co.uk