

14 Cambridge Evening News, Tuesday, November 2, 1993

# COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

## Ancient church survived crisis

**THE church of St John the Baptist dates back to the Domesday Book and is still thriving, thanks to villagers.**

More than a decade ago it was virtually deserted, and it was only through the hard work of those living in Woodhurst that it has survived and continues to be used.

The vicar, the Rev Colin Backhouse, said: "They worked very hard over many years to restore the church — it was all down to local effort."

Sunday services could often be poorly attended with just four churchgoers, but when there was a family service, often more than 40 villagers turned out, he said.

"For a small village, that is quite a good attendance," said Mr Backhouse.

Each June the patron saint is remembered in a feast week.



Saved . . . hard work rescued the village church from crisis over a decade ago, says the vicar, the Rev. Colin Backhouse, left

## Peace re-awakened in sleepy ba

**THE picturesque village of Woodhurst near St Ives, is one of the three remaining Saxon ring villages in the country — so called because of their formation.**

Thatched cottages and duck-filled ponds give it the air of a sleepy backwater, but until recently articulated lorries would thunder through it as a short-cut to March.

Now, thanks to a local campaign, there is a seven-and-a-half tonne weight limit — and residents can sleep undisturbed in their beds.

Having banished the trundle of lorries, the parish council is turning its attention to another intrusion of the 20th century — overhead power lines.

It will be trying to persuade the local authorities and the Eastern Electricity Board that they are an eyesore in a conservation village and that cabling should go underground.

Parish council chairman Col Bryan Barratt said: "They make the village look so grubby. We've just started the ball rolling."

Keeping the village small and pretty is very much on the agenda, as is the fear of what the Ministry of Defence may do about surplus land close to it when flying ceases at RAF Wyton.

Report: MILA VUCEVIC  
Pictures: ROGER ADAMS

"I wouldn't want to see an industrial estate there because as soon as that happens you get houses and you suddenly end up in St Ives," said Col Barratt, 66, who served with the Royal Engineers.

"We are very selective in allowing new construction because we don't want the place to be swamped. There are only about 120 houses here."

Many villagers are commuters who travel to London, with wives working as well.

There is only a small post office and a village hall, but no shops, pubs or facilities for youngsters.

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Grounded . . . Chris Cannon with the Canberra cockpit.

## Chris jets in for charity cash

**THERE cannot be many people with a Canberra aircraft in their back garden — but Chris Cannon is one of them.**

The aviation enthusiast bought the historic jet bomber from RAF Wyton last year — minus its engine.

The 42-year-old shed-maker now travels around air shows with the cockpit to raise money for charity.

Apart from being keen on planes and running his family shed-making business from the village, Mr Cannon is also a parish councillor, a tree warden

and a conservationist. He has turned a boggy piece of land at the bottom of a 100-year-old orchard into a miniature nature reserve.

"It is still in its early stages — it is a miniature wildlife area," said Mr Cannon, whose family has

lived in the same house, Hepworth Lodge, for five generations.

The house itself is much older. When he restored it six years ago he found a copy of a 170-year-old Rutland newspaper in a cupboard in the inglenook fireplace.

Quiet spot

## Theatre director returns to his roots -

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# WTLIGHT on Woodhurst restored to a backwater



Quiet again... Woodhurst is one of the three remaining Saxon ring villages in the country.

s - See What's On in tomorrow's News



Growing popularity... pupil riders at the stables in Woodhurst.

## Fun in saddle for owner and pupils

**TEACHING** She has been running the stables with daughters Anne and Clare for seven years and has built up such a reputation that there is now a waiting list for teaching.

She takes out children from Spring Common School in Huntingdon as often as she can.

"Over the last few years it has got very popular, especially with the Americans up at RAF Alconbury," she said.

"If we could find a millenium to put a roof over the arena, we could do a lot more," said Mrs Keenan, 63, who owns Woodhurst Riding and Livery Stables.

"We are constantly aware of the problem, but there is nothing that we can do. It is very difficult," said Mrs Keenan.

## Visitors' guide

Woodhurst is north-east of Huntingdon, behind RAF Wyton. It can be reached from the A141 and is on the road leading to Bluntingsham.

It is one of only three remaining Saxon ring villages in the country and a road still loops around the perimeter.

The village has just over 300 inhabitants and about 120 houses.

St John the Baptist Church is open for worship each Sunday with alternate morning and evening services. A Sunday school is starting in the New Year and a monthly meeting to discuss Christian matters has just begun.

Woodhurst used to have its share of pubs, but these have all closed. There is a sub-post office and shop.

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