

THE EVILS OF CLINGFILM

With all the partying and food preparation involved over the Christmas period, I was quite dismayed to witness some of my beloved family members and very good friends' kamikaze use of the dreaded clingfilm. Advance preparation of food seemed to trigger the certain need of covering with clingfilm until it was required. Once served, the leftovers most certainly needed to be covered in (a new piece of) clingfilm ready to go into the fridge. We seem to have been brainwashed into thinking that we are being ultra-hygienic and thence protecting our families by using the evil stuff.

Here's why we need to re-think this attitude! Clingfilm was invented in the 1930's when a lab worker – Ralph Wiley accidentally discovered it when trying to remove a piece of film from the inside of a vial. He realised it was clingy and impervious to air and water pressure, so thought it might be a good idea to use it to coat cars to protect them from the elements.

Cling film may not be affected by ocean water or atmosphere around it, but the same cannot be said for the reverse. 90 years later, we are struggling to remove it from the planet!

Studies suggest that most plastic items release a tiny amount of chemicals into the beverages or food they contain. This is known as 'leaching'. Just like plastic bottles and takeaway containers, this happens with clingfilm too. Quite a few years ago, in August 2015, it was reported that chemicals contained in clingfilm could be released into our food if it came into direct contact with it, which caused a bit of a stir, but doesn't seem to have stopped us from using it.

So before clingfilm became widely used – we somehow managed to keep food fresh and safely stored! However was that done?



1. Beeswax wraps – they are washable and reusable, and you can even re-wax the sheets when they start to get tired. You can turn them into a piping bag for icing (which is one of the many uses for clingfilm). If you are a strict vegan, there are soy wax versions available. Made from cotton coated in beeswax, they have been

- used to preserve food for centuries – the warmth of your hands melts the wax enough so the sheets can be moulded around everything from bowls and plates to cheese, bread, fruit and veg – (not suitable for raw meat or fish).
 - Glass – in the 1800's when Napoleon Bonaparte offered 12,000 francs to anyone who could protect and preserve his army's food supply. The prize was awarded to Nicolas Appert who suggested using glass jars sealed with cork and wax.
 - Foil – not great because of what it takes to make it, but in fact I wash mine, hang it up to dry and re-use, so at least not a single use item!
 - Silicone or Tupperware containers – also not the best, but at least reusable. If you still own some of those orange lidded Tupperware items, it's likely you've had them for over 30 years!
 - And finally, and probably most sensibly – how about a plate over a bowl? Or a bowl over a plate! Just like in the old days!
- Oh – and just in case you thought the old clingfilm to lose weight ruse had legs! Body suits, body wraps, plastic wrap or any other formulated fashion that promotes perspiration does not lead to increased fat burning or fat loss – sorry :(

By Cathy Phillips

PROPOSED SOLAR FARM

You may remember from the last issue of the EAGLeS newsletter that in our communications with East Park Energy, we laid out our expectations, that in the event of a derivative of the farm transpiring it should include 25 acres in the Parish as a Country Park/Conservation Area. There are indications that this may be realisable. Later in the year we plan to hold an open meeting in the village hall to look at all things environmental.

On a related note, you will know, relative to other foods, lamb and beef have pretty poor carbon footprints. Henry Dimbleby (until recently the Government's food strategy advisor), advocates we reduce our intake of meats such as these. I am particularly partial to lamb and am finding the curtailment hard to maintain. As an antidote to my personal guilt does anyone know of a local farmer who can supply lamb, raised under panels? Solar lamb could provide a guilt free alternative.

Chris Davies

THE BIG PLASTIC COUNT 11TH – 17TH MARCH

Please join in if you can! Go to www.bigplasticcount.com for find out all about it!



Welcome to the January 2024 edition of the EAGLeS Newsletter. A very happy New Year to all. Let's hope that we can make a difference!

I seem to have temporarily gone back to work for a few months, which has actually been a lovely experience

apart from the trip to the office along the A1! That's not so nice, but it does give me the opportunity to listen to the radio from time to time, and it was good old Vernon Kay who did an epic marathon run recently for Children in Need (so I have great admiration for him!) who started his show by bemoaning the 'finding the end of the clingfilm scenario'. He was blaming Tess for putting it away with the end firmly hidden, and amusing his listeners with his story of his 45 minute efforts to extract the end/beginning so that he could cover some leftovers in the fridge.

Lots of listeners texted in with ideas for making the job easier, including putting the clingfilm roll in the fridge, but no-one suggested not using it. I was driving, so wasn't able to send a text, although I was shouting at the radio (yes, I was that mad-looking woman in the car next to you). Then I was rewarded the very next day, when Vernon read out a message from a listener who simply said, 'why not just stop using it and help to save the environment'. Good on Vernon for reading it out!

However, it did make me consider just how often it is apparent that the environmental message is not getting through, and probably needs shouting a little louder. Marion has written a little article reminding us of small ways that we can make a difference. We also have some lovely information about Muntjac from John Kearney, some words about ancient trees from Chris, more information on ways to go net zero from Natalie, and then some more advice on clingfilm (still going on about it!) from me!

Di and John have once again created an excellent word search for all to have a go at. So read on and enjoy!

Cathy Phillips

RSPB BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH 26TH – 28TH JAN

If you took part please send your results to me or another member of EAGLeS any format will do. We can use this to benchmark local fluctuations and add it to data recorded in previous years.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

While many of us are concerned about the environment, we don't always have the time, energy or inclination to become environmental activists, but every positive action makes a difference. OK, so somebody might not be recycling, but you are. Somebody else uses single use plastic, but you don't. Somebody else is mowing their grass to within an inch of its life and using weedkiller, but you have a wildflower patch and feed the wildlife. You ARE making a difference.

Everyday is your chance to make a difference. Try changing one thing every month, it all adds up.

Here are a few more ideas to help.

- Minimise waste - The problem with waste, is that it is precisely that – waste. We extract natural resources from the earth to burn fossil fuels to make it – what a waste. Consuming in ways that minimise waste (even potentially recyclable stuff) is a magnificent sustainable living opportunity.
- Use refillable cleaners – available online in most supermarkets. You can use your local refill outlet (Colmworth golf club) or The Refill Shop, St Mary's Street in St Neots. Making your own cleaning products is easy and costs less.

If you want advice or ideas, please feel free to contact one of the EaGLES team.

By Marion Kitchener

ANCIENT TREES

The Woodland Trust maintains a map of the UK's Ancient Trees. You can view the map at <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/> You will not see any recorded in Little Staughton Parish. The nearest recorded tree is over towards Keysoe, a 3.02m girth smooth-leaved Elm and is classified as a veteran tree. However we are not totally bereft! We have at least one locally notable tree.

This one is here:- 52.241717,-0.377940 TL 10851 6163 or if you prefer, on the right down Wicky lane just before the gate to the second field on the left. We measured it at a girth of 2.6m which makes it roughly 110 years old. It is magnificent!

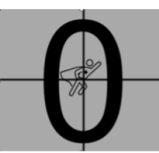
It probably warrants a name.

Does anyone know of any other trees in the Parish that are worthy of note?

Chris Davies



BE A HERO, GO NET ZERO!



We know where we need to get to on our climate, and we know it's urgent. It's essential we re-establish a stable global climate system in time to prevent the rising concentrations of heat-trapping gases from pushing the climate, ice caps and rising tides beyond the point of no return.

Here's how to do your part, and be a hero to future generations...

- 1)Reduce your own carbon footprint.
- 2)Offset the rest. Simple!!

Here's how it's done:

1) Reduce your own carbon footprint:

As much or as little as you want, here's some ideas:-

- Choose a low-carbon energy provider e.g Octopus
- Use energy efficient lightbulbs
- When you buy a new appliance – make sure it has a good energy rating. But keep old appliances and cars for as long as possible. There's a big carbon footprint in manufacturing goods that negates the carbon saving
- Use microwaves rather than hobs or ovens
- Use laptops instead of PCs.
- Don't leave electronic equipment on standby
- Turn down washing machine temperatures, -30 degrees works well for most clothes.
- Turn down central heating 1 degree
- Draw the (lined) curtains when it's hot. Cut down on air-conditioner use
- Walk or cycle instead of using the car. Make it a habit, and you'll benefit in all sorts of ways!

1) Offset the rest:

Offsetting is not a perfect solution but it's much better than doing nothing. Here's how:-

- Go onto carbonclick.com
- Use the calculator to calculate your household's carbon footprint (took me less than 20secs)
- Choose how much you want to offset, and which project (tree planting, solar water heaters, or woodland creation)
- Click on pay...

CarbonClick is accredited by the ICROA (accredits best practice in carbon offsetting), but there are others you can use, e.g

United Nations online platform: climateneutralnow.org or <https://footprint.wwf.org.uk>

Then – if you would like a Net Zero Hero certificate to show your children/grandchildren – email Chris Davies on chrisdavies300@outlook.com and you will be assigned a Net Zero Hero number and sent a certificate of achievement valid for one year from submission. And that is how to be a Net Zero Hero!

MUNTJAC

Many of you have probably seen small deer in the verges by the side of the road, some people may be lucky enough to have them visit your garden. Generally, these tend to be muntjacs.

Munjacs, also known as the barking deer or rib-faced deer, are a fascinating species belonging to the genus Muntiacus. These deer are native to Asia, inhabiting diverse environments ranging from dense forests to grasslands. They are now widely distributed across Southern England due to their descendants escaping from Woburn Park in the 1920's.

These deer are primarily herbivores, feeding on a varied diet that includes leaves, fruits, and vegetation. Their adaptability to different environments has contributed to their survival across a wide range of ecosystems. Muntjacs are known for their elusive nature, often avoiding human contact and preferring the cover of dense vegetation.



Despite their diminutive size, muntjacs are excellent jumpers and swimmers, allowing them to navigate various terrains with agility. Their reddish-brown fur, adorned with spots or stripes, serves as effective camouflage in their natural habitats. One of the main features of muntjacs is their unique, protruding canine teeth, which are more pronounced in males.

As their name suggests, muntjacs have a distinct barking cry, which serves as a communication method between individuals to alert others about potential threats, establishing territories, or attracting mates during mating rituals. This call can be heard occasionally around the village



Although some people regard Muntjacs as a pest, as they do eat crops, flowers and particularly courgettes (as I found to my cost!!) they are fascinating creatures and popping a handful of bird nuts for them generally steers them away from your crops!

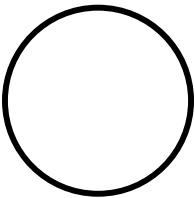
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ACTIVITY

What can you find in your garden that is nearly the same shape as :-

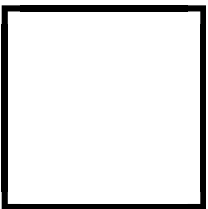
- A circle

I found a



- A square

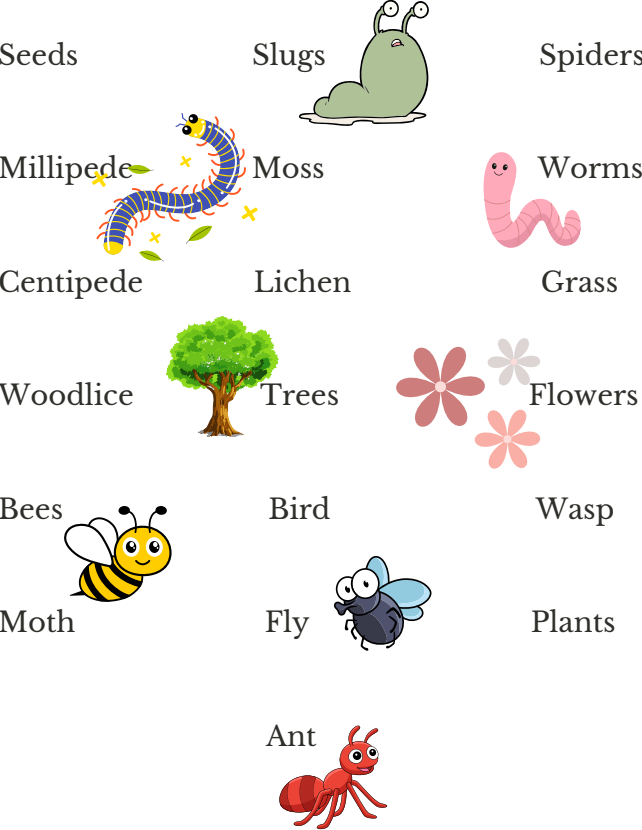
I found a



RECYCLING

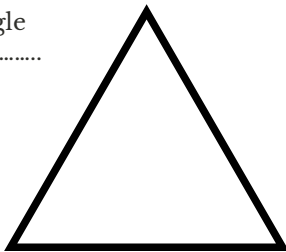
To help the overall village recycling effort, please deposit the listed items in the recycling boxes at the following collection points.

Blister Packs - Mary - Wyndham
Oral products - Cathy - Green End House
Pens - Chris & Natalie - Poplars
Ink jet cartridges - John & Di - Becklehurst
Spectacles - Asa & Paul - The Vines
Flowerpots & seed trays* - Sue & Ian - White House Farms



- A triangle

I found a



- A rectangle

I found a



Top End stores have installed an ASTCO recycling point for clothes, handbags, belts and shoes, accessible during normal trading hours.

Other ideas for recycling welcome, contact Cathy, cathy@cfsevents.co.uk or Chris chrisdavies30@tiscali.co.uk

*Please bag them and leave on the house side of the main gate

Interested in joining EAGLeS contact Cathy
(cathy@cfsevents.co.uk)
or Chris (chrisdavies30@tiscali.co.uk)