

Calor Village of the Year 2008 – Entry from the village of East Bridgford, Nottinghamshire.

People

East Bridgford is an attractive, lively and caring village of about 1800 people, situated about eight miles north east of Nottingham, overlooking the Trent Valley // . It offers a wide range of educational, sporting and recreational opportunities to all of its residents, from the youngest to the oldest. With historical roots reflected in the nearby Roman settlement of Margidunum, its proximity to the Fosse Way and the old crossing of the Trent, the village is nevertheless vibrant and well adapted to the needs of the 21st Century.

East Bridgford has an incredible range of people willing and able to contribute wholeheartedly to the life and wellbeing of the community. It has a very healthy demography, as can be illustrated by a few statistics. Just over half of the population is aged from 22 to 64, with 22% aged 21 or younger, and the balance aged 65 or over. Nearly 40% of the population has lived in the village for 25 years or longer, attesting to its popularity and sense of settled community. Just 16% of the people in the village have moved in within the previous five years. Although most of those who work travel out of the area, a healthy 25% earn their living in East Bridgford or within a five mile radius of the village. Those who work out of the village go mostly to Nottingham, Newark, Derby, Leicester, or further afield. [All statistics are from the 2004 Parish Plan, see below for details.]

Educational opportunities are available to children aged up to 11, through a thriving, accredited Pre-School group, a *Mothers and Toddlers Group* which meets weekly in the Village Hall, and St. Peter's Church of England Primary School. St. Peter's has just received its second consecutive *outstanding* OFSTED rating and also has an excellent sporting record. Its pupils hold national, county or Borough titles in cross country running, football, lacrosse and table tennis. It has also been in the vanguard of providing healthy meals to its pupils, initially through the efforts of its then Head Cook Jeannette Orrey. Jeannette's book *The Dinner Lady* has become a best-seller, with a foreword by Jamie Oliver.

There are excellent sporting facilities for young people. Butt Field, named because it was originally used by medieval archers, is a substantial green space at the centre of the village, and is the site of most outdoor sporting activities, as well as being the home for the Village Show. The modern pavilion provides facilities for football, cricket, lawn bowls and tennis. The Tennis Club has over 300 members, with a junior coaching programme helping over 70 youngsters. Football in particular is so popular among both adults and young people that the Parish Council is currently looking for land to provide two new pitches for the seven teams of junior players. The Badminton Club meets in the village hall. All clubs compete in local leagues.

Butt Field also provides a range of play equipment for the village's younger people, and the Parish Council is currently making ambitious plans to upgrade these. With the help of one of our Parish Councillors Year 3 at St. Peter's have recently completed a questionnaire survey to help the PC understand what type of new facilities will be most welcome and most used. A village consultation day was also held recently for the same purpose.

Our young people are active members of local Brownies, Cubs, Beavers, Scouts and Guides, who meet in their own hall. More than 100 young people are regularly involved.

For a number of years the village has had a skate-board ramp, which is now no longer fit for purpose. A decision on its possible replacements has not yet been reached.

The views of the village's young people were surveyed when the Parish Plan was put together, and the results showed that most young people thought E. Bridgford was 'pretty good – for a village.' For more details see:

<http://www.1mission.co.uk/eastbridgford/villageplan/16-19.pdf>

Our Village Show is the highlight of our *Feast Week* held every June. It is one of the biggest in the county, with an attendance that regularly exceeds 1000, and it really does have something for everyone (<http://www.eastbridgfordshow.co.uk/>) Highlights in 2007 included the Dako Flying Angels acrobatic group, a scarecrow competition, and terrier racing! Sadly, a flypast by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight had to be cancelled due to heavy rain. In addition there are many horticultural and craft competitions, all keenly competitive.

Groups offering leisure activities to adult village residents include the Women's Institute, the Men's Society, the Local History Group, the Bridge Club, Art Classes, a varying range of WEA classes each year, the Garden club, the Horticultural Society, the Lifeboat Guild, the Royal British Legion, the King Edward (gentleman's snooker) Club and the Mothers' Union. The Drama Group, puts on productions each year, all of which pack the Village Hall for a five-day run. The Lifeboat Guild organises a bi-annual sponsored walk with over 200 participants, which raised over £8,000 in 2006. Each group gives a report on their activities to the annual Parish Meeting, and these reports can be found on our web site at:

<http://www.1mission.co.uk/eastbridgford/parishcouncil/ReportstoAnnualParishMeeting2007.html>

The spiritual life of the village is looked after by St Peter's (Church of England) and the Methodist Church, both of which are outward looking and thriving. St. Peter's has a full set of bells and an enthusiastic ringing team, as well as a large and active choir.

The Friendship Group offers a bi-weekly social meeting for the elderly, often involving a game of bingo. The Care Group provides a range of vital services to the elderly and immobile, including lifts to and from the Medical Centre, dentists and opticians, the collection and delivery of prescriptions, taking people to village events and services such as the hairdressers, and taking visitors to hospital and patients to outpatient clinics. Our nearest hospital is in Newark, ten miles away, so such services can be very important. Up to 20 residents are helped each week. The Luncheon club provides food and a meeting place to elderly residents once a week.

Older residents make a healthy contribution to almost all aspects of village life, from the Parish Council (6 out of 11 Councillors) to the Sports Clubs to the Bridge Club, Horticultural Society and the Churches. A number of local bodies, including the Tennis Club, Mothers' Union and the Horticultural Society, have successfully implemented decisions to devolve their operations down from pensioners to a younger generation, in the interests of continuity. Organisations actively attempt to recruit all age groups and in 2006 the village held an open day in the village hall for all groups to present themselves to potential new members. It is intended to repeat this in 2008.

The village has an excellent Medical Centre with dispensing facilities, where the staff are keen to encourage healthy living. The staff are also good at noting patients who may need further help, for example from the Care Group or Social Services.

The village has an active Neighbourhood Watch scheme, which helps to keep crime down and minimise anti-social behaviour. Our local beat Constable runs monthly surgeries, which are always well attended. The Parish Council is active in repairing any problems caused by criminal damage to communal facilities, and our Borough Council (Rushcliffe) guarantees to remove graffiti within two working days. They are also active in removing fly tipping, which is increasingly a problem in rural areas. As a result, residents are active in reporting problems to the PC or to their Borough Councillor.

Business

As noted already, about 25% of our population earn their living in East Bridgford or within a five mile radius of the village. This is quite a high proportion for what is often seen primarily as a dormitory village.

East Bridgford has its village store and post office, a newsagent, a hairdresser, a small marina and two pubs, one with a restaurant. The village shop makes a feature of several lines of local produce, including meat and eggs. Several building firms, a number of working farms and at least two design consultancies are based in the village, as are a number of small industrial units. A further site for industrial units has just gained planning permission. There is a residential home for people with very severe learning difficulties. On the edge of the village, beside the main A46 Leicester to Lincoln trunk road, there is a garden centre, a petrol station and shop, and a Chinese restaurant, all of which are managed locally.

In line with modern trends, people increasingly run full-time and part-time businesses from their homes in the village. These include IT, Geology/Hydrology, Electronic Publishing and academic consultancies, property developers, tax advisors, artists, gardeners and craftspeople. These activities are one of the reasons why East Bridgford has such a high take-up of broadband internet (see the communications section, below.)

Our local businesses support the community in many ways. The village shop offers free grocery delivery to elderly residents, the garden centre supplies free plants for village displays, a local farmer provides invaluable support to junior soccer teams, and specialist professional skills seem to be available on request. The hydro-electricity project team (see section on the environment, below) placed an article in the Village Magazine seeking help from a contract lawyer, a project planner and an electrical engineer, and volunteers were immediately forthcoming in each category. Local farmers and the marina owner are generous with the use of their specialist equipment for village projects.

Environment

East Bridgford is in a beautiful setting above the river Trent and the village, its inhabitants and its Parish Council all have proud records of respecting and enhancing our natural environment. A key contributor to this continues to be the *Parish Plan*, prepared in 2004 and available at:

<http://www.1mission.co.uk/eastbridgford/villageplan/plandocument.html>. The village's architectural character is preserved by much of it being designated as a conservation area, which has recently been extended. The Village Design Statement, which has the status of *Supplementary Planning Guidance* can be found within the Parish Plan. This statement is a key first point of reference in considering planning applications, and its stipulations are ferociously defended by local residents and the Parish Council.

East Bridgford was the first conservation area to be designated in the Rushcliffe area, and was the first to be reviewed and revised by Rushcliffe Borough. A formal Management Plan is currently being put in place by Rushcliffe. There will be a public consultation meeting in the village in January 2008, and we expect a lot of interest.

The Parish Plan fostered a number of action groups in the village, one of which has successfully facilitated a development of ten affordable homes under the banner '*Local Homes for Local People*' by Eastern Shires Housing Association, which is currently under construction. As a result of strong urging from the Parish Council these dwellings will have a high degree of energy efficiency, and through the installation of solar panels and other measures will be *carbon neutral*.

The village has a superb network of around ten miles of public rights of way, and we joined the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme in 1995. Volunteer Footpath Wardens regularly monitor the state of our paths and bridleways, and organise occasional village walks. The paths are always open and passable, because they are maintained by the volunteers on behalf of the County Council, who fund this activity.

A study group has recently looked at installing a small hydroelectricity scheme on Village land near the weir beside the Trent. A feasibility study showed that the first concept devised for this project is not economically viable, but the same group is now looking at new technological approaches. This project has the possibility of making the village self-sufficient in electrical energy, and possibly becoming a net exporter of renewably generated energy to the National Grid.

The village is enhanced by many fine trees, so that in the summer it is hard to see much of the village from the top of the Church tower. This arboreal quality helps to unite the varied architectural styles. Two significant woodland developments have been carried out in the last ten years, one a Millennium Wood (3.5 acres) planted in cooperation with the Woodland Trust, and the other a Parish Council initiative of one third of an acre. The Council also supervises planting of about 60 saplings a year, in appropriate parts of the village. A thriving *Wildlife and Biodiversity Group* protects the interest of the village's flora and fauna. The Parish Council provides about 30 sought after allotment sites, with a total area of 2.5 acres. The Parish Council also operates a tree nursery scheme, in which local residents donate surplus tree saplings for replanting elsewhere in the village. Many spring bulbs have been planted on the verges of our main roads, and tubs and hanging baskets are planted for summer flowering. The Parish Council employs someone to carry out a range of maintenance

jobs around the village and to collect litter. It has also provided litter picking sticks to a number of residents, who help to keep the village tidy. Last year we came second in our size category of Nottingham's *Best Kept Village* competition.

The Local History Group has recently been actively involved in investigations and a dig at *Pancake Hill*, a local archaeological site near the river Trent, in collaboration with the Notts County Archaeologist. This exciting two year project, which involved more than 60 local residents working as amateur archaeologists under professional supervision, identified unexpected evidence of a Roman house and of medieval iron working. It also suggested that a medieval castle of the Motte and Bailey type once existed on this site.

Butt Field has already been mentioned, and is an important part of the local environment, being at the centre of the village and of village life. The village has a number of other important facilities, including the Village Hall, the WI Hut, the Sports Pavilion and the Scout Hut, and all of these are self-funding.

The village has good transport connections, with hourly bus services to Nottingham and Newark and a 30 minute service to Bingham during the day.

Communications

East Bridgford has two excellent means of communication, its Village Magazine and the village website, <http://www.1mission.co.uk/eastbridgford/index.html>. Published monthly at 40 pence, the Magazine provides information on all aspects of village and local life, and has the very high circulation of almost 700, reaching three quarters of all local households. The December issue contains a Directory of village facilities and activities, and is distributed free to all local households. Each issue of the magazine contains a column describing the more important activities of the Parish Council and a column from our Borough Councillor updating villagers on what Rushcliffe Borough and Notts. County Council are doing on their behalf, as well as the more usual articles on the Church activities, clubs and societies.

The website has recently been revitalised and provides information on many aspects of village life. It is now visited by about 150 people each week, including a surprising number from overseas. According to BT, more than 70% of homes in the village have an internet connection, with more than half of these utilising broadband.

Local events are also publicised on four notice boards and there are a number of ‘informal sites’ – often telegraph poles – where village events are announced.

For many years the Anglican and Methodist churches have made sure that new residents of the village receive a *Welcome Pack*. This includes the village Directory (mentioned above), information on clubs and societies, a map of our extensive footpath network, and of course information on the churches and their services.

The Parish Council is active in supporting and improving the quality of village life, and its level of activity is reflected in it holding meetings 12 times a year. Its four committees also meet regularly. Village residents are welcome at all meetings, and each has an agenda item entitled *Public Comment*, when any resident can raise issues that they want the PC to consider, or comment on items on the meeting’s Agenda. The Parish’s *Annual Meeting* is held in April and is always well attended, with much lively discussion. We make a practise of inviting speakers to this meeting to talk about matters of current interest to the village, and this has been very effective in increasing attendance at the *Annual Meeting* and stimulating discussion.

Part B, What makes *East Bridgford* special

East Bridgford is an attractive place, as our photographs show, and it has a long and interesting history. People of all ages like to live here. Local estate agents tell us that properties in East Bridgford turn over much more slowly than in most other parts of the Nottinghamshire – when people move into the village they stay a long time, because they like it and quickly become part of the community. There is quite a lot of movement *within the village*, as individual circumstances change.

It is what the people who live in East Bridgford *do* that makes the village so special. Residents are active, sociable, caring and thoughtful. People muck in. That's the norm, and it's what gives residents a special quality of life. We have an unrivalled range of clubs and societies. East Bridgfordians are very good at helping their neighbours – without interfering when not wanted. People are proud of their community and are willing to take time and effort to make it better.

Come and see us, and you will wish that you could stay.