



VILLAGE OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2009

Name of village	Brandeston
Number on electoral roll	210
Sponsor (E.g. Parish Council, Community Council, Village Hall Committee)	Brandeston Parish Council
Contact Name	Mary Mitson-Woods
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Notes

1. This form may be filled in by hand or electronically (please ring 01473 833713 or jo.mael@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk for an electronic copy.)
2. Villages with up to 500 local government electors are eligible to enter in 2009
3. A separate entry should be made for each village even if administered by the same parish council
4. **Any organisation within your community may enter a village for the awards**
5. Please use additional sheets if necessary
6. Completed forms should be sent back (by post) to your District Organiser by Friday 15 May 2009

Jo Mael, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Council Offices, Melton Hill, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 1AU

The district competitions will be judged in June and the winners will go through to the semi-final in July. The final round will be judged early August by Mark Murphy and Lesley Dolphin of BBC Radio Suffolk.

The winning village will enter the National Calor Competition in October/November 2009

Marks will be awarded under the following categories:

Community Spirit	30
The Parish Council	20
Natural Environment	20
General appearance of the village	20
Special achievements that impress judges	<u>10</u>
	<u>100</u>

Please enclose with this form:-

- A copy of any information circulated to every home in the village (e.g. parish council newsletter, welcome pack or parish magazine)
- A diagram of the village showing any special initiatives (completed, current or proposed) plus a clear map of the village showing specific places of interest.
- Any information produced to welcome newcomers
- A sample copy of the parish council agenda and minutes

Judging for the awards

The judges will appreciate being met in the village hall or somewhere else where they can talk to village representatives about their village and community life. This is the opportunity to make sure that all the good things about living in the community are highlighted to the judges.

Don't forget, you won't get marks for even the most marvellous facility or event if the judges are not told about it!

COMMUNITY SPIRIT (30 marks)

How you tell us about you community is up to you but here are some suggestions to help you. **General**

- How do you keep people informed about what is happening
- How are newcomers welcomed
- How do you try to ensure **everyone** can be involved in village activities
- Are there any IT facilities for general use?

Remember to tell us about your village hall, the relationship with businesses in the village and whether you get together with other villages.

Don't forget to tell us about special initiatives for children, youth and older people

THE VILLAGE HAS A NUMBER OF WAYS OF KEEPING THE COMMUNITY UP TO DATE AND IN TOUCH

The Brandeston Website www.brandeston.net

This records events in words and pictures and provides a gallery for individuals to display their own photographs and experiences. It is managed by Darryl Morgan and is dynamic and kept very current. It encourages villagers to share photos of village events as well as travel photos and pictures taken in the village throughout the year.

Pictures of village weddings are particularly popular.

Parishioners are kept abreast of parish council meetings and all village events through the web diary.

The Parish Magazine

This traditional magazine is available to all residents who pay a small subscription of £4. It records village events, contains a timetable of activities, has local history items, obituaries, church services and is a vehicle for anyone to publicise their activity/event. It is run and distributed by volunteers. Easton and Kettleburgh share this publication with Brandeston

The Brandeston

A colourful newsletter that is published periodically and circulated to all homes. It is a platform for opinions and takes a wry, sideways look at the village, its activities and the actions of those outside the village boundary that hold power over all things Brandeston. The Brandeston won the title 'Suffolk newsletter of the Year' in 2007

Notice Boards

They are notice boards in the village hall, at the church, outside the gate to the village hall, at the old post office in Mill Lane and the inside of the bus shelter is also used to display information. Notice boards are kept up to date and tidy by users.

The Village Hall Foyer

The notice board is filled with information and copies of the Village Hall Management Committee minutes are in a file for villagers to read. Contact details for hall officers are also shown together with information on how to hire the building. Theatre programmes from as far away as Ipswich can also be found in the foyer.

Coffee Morning

Another great opportunity to share information!

Newcomers

When people move into the village they encounter a strong culture of neighbours inviting them to events. A long tradition of asking the most recent family to move in to open the village fete is indicative of the warmth of the Brandeston community welcome. The weekly coffee morning is the perfect venue for newcomers to introduce themselves and be introduced to their new community. Care is taken by immediate neighbours to make sure they are invited. All new residents are given a copy of the Parish Plan by the Clerk to the Parish Council.

Newcomers are welcomed and pictured (with pets if applicable!) in The Brandeston.; pictures allow everyone to recognise a new neighbour.

Our inclusive community

The wide range of social activities provides something for people of all ages and all tastes. When events are planned this inclusion is always uppermost in organisers' minds. This is reflected in choosing events, pricing entry tickets and timing village 'dos'. Helping with transport is an important element of this.

IT

The village hall has computers but these are not in use. Households in the village took advantage of the Suffolk Online project and it appears that everyone who needs a computer has one. Villagers have been asked if they have a use for the computers or would like training on them; a decision will be made based on the answer to this.

OUR REGULAR MONTHLY OR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

- 1. The **Anglican Church** holds a range of services from traditional Prayer Book worship to more modern family services. A Rogation Service takes place each May and this year a **Beating of the Bounds** is to be held for the more active parishioners. This will be a ten mile walk with a pause in the middle for lunch at the Queen's Head. Brandeston, Kettleburgh and Easton are very fortunate to have a parish priest who only has three parishes and is able to be an integral part of village life. An annual **Rogation service** is held to bless the crops and livestock. Each Good*

Friday the children make an Easter Garden as part of the worship. Christmas is also a very special time at the church for all ages.

- 2. **Table Tennis Club** - this attracts young people and those nearer middle years to the village hall. A lovely opportunity to mixing the age groups.*
- 3. **Coffee Morning** - Every Thursday morning throughout the year people gather in the village hall to enjoy coffee and a chat. There is a **Post Office presence offering a full range of services** - even foreign currency. Those who attend range in age from the very **elderly to mums and little ones**; **passers by** are also attracted by the lovely A-board that advertises the coffee morning outside in the village street. There is also a Post Office sign to indicate availability of postal services to passers by. Bread is delivered from Woodbridge to supply the village orders. Both the bread delivery man and the post lady have become integral friends of the village; they stay for coffee and join the community lunch. A local farmer provides free range eggs for sale. Books and videos are available to borrow, fruit and vegetables are on sale in season and it is another opportunity for people to keep an eye on the older parishioners as well as those who do not enjoy robust health. The coffee morning was recently mentioned at the funeral of someone who was born in the village, his son described it as **'providing a life line in his latter years, something to look forward to every week'**.*

A late villager who was a regular coffee morning and community lunch participant left a sizeable legacy to the village hall in recognition of the importance of the community in his later life. He came to the village as a somewhat lonely man and made so many new friends.

The coffee morning organisers also take bookings for the Parish Lunch. They actively encourage new residents to participate.

The Police have a monthly presence with their community vehicle and mobile office and the local officer is a welcome visitor to the coffee morning.

Phyll, from neighbouring Easton, attends most of the clubs and regular events. She believes that without the support and friendship she finds here her life would be seriously diminished.

- 4. **Community Lunch**. The second Tuesday of every month is the day when anyone in the village can attend the Community Lunch. Between 30 and 40 people pay £4.00 for a two course meal, followed by tea/coffee/mints. There is also a lucky prize each month. Special birthdays are celebrated and villagers who have passed away are remembered by a short silence. After lunch a short entertainment, which can be anything from holiday slides, nature photography, special interest talks and local scenery to singing and accordion playing by Mary Moore and Valerie Fellowes and*

comedy by local comedian Margaret Doe. Local dialect is also celebrated here.

*The profit from the lunches is saved to provide a full turkey with all the trimmings Christmas lunch with wine or non-alcoholic drinks, crackers et al. at a nominal price. **If anyone is too frail to attend their meal will be taken to them; others are offered transport if needed.** The lunches are available to anyone in the neighbouring villages and Brandestonians often bring family members from further afield to join them. The kitchen equipment was purchased with Suffolk County Council Locality funding. Food is cooked from scratch in the village hall kitchen from traditional recipes **using locally sourced produce.** A team cook, prepare and decorate tables, take bookings, serve and wash up. Rev Robin Alderson attends regularly and takes the opportunity to talk to a large gathering of his flock, including those he would not meet in church. He is an excellent waiter!*

- 5. **Strictly come Brandeston!** Every fortnight Nick and Anne Hayward lead ballroom dancing classes under the grand name of Hayward's Hoofers and organise dances for people to practice their skills through the year.*
- 6. **Whist Drives** - Rick and Pam Reade welcome large numbers of eager Whist players once a month in the village hall. The Whist drives attract players from a wide circle of Suffolk villages.*
- 7. **Brandeston Film Club** is held on the second Friday of the month. The programme includes old black and white classics, current block busters, foreign films and those that challenge the audience. The equipment was bought with an Awards for All grant. One member said " I don't enjoy all the films but I always have something to discuss about them!".*
- 8. **Wine Club.** This club provides an opportunity for people to learn more about the wines of the world.*
- 9. **Tap Dancing** is held for the very energetic amongst us!*
- 10. The **100+ Club** has been run by the Parish Council for many years, it provides funding for the maintenance of the village hall. The draw takes place at the Thursday coffee morning each month.*
- 11. A **Mothers and Toddlers group** meets in the hall every Friday from 9.45 - 11.30am.*
- 12. **Yoga and Pilates classes** are held on Mondays and Tuesdays in the village hall.*

13. *The Mid Suffolk Carriage Driving for the Disabled* is very active in the area. It takes disabled people from Brandeston and the surrounding villages out by horse and specially adapted traps into the countryside. It holds the majority of its fund-raising events in our village hall.

ANNUAL OR OCCASIONAL EVENTS

- *Eastern Angles* are always hugely anticipated and enjoyed when they bring productions to Brandeston. In May 2009 the production not only sold out, but attracted a long waiting list for any returned tickets.
- *Christmas Fair* - an essential part of the pre-Christmas fun and fundraising. Money is raised for the church.
- *Friends of the Old Chapel* - this group warms up the Victorian chapel in Mill Lane for a Candlelit Supper on the Saturday before Christmas. The start of Christmas for many of us. The Friends maintain the building for future generations.
- *The Fete* - a new initiative for 2008 combined the **traditional fete** with a **Beer Festival at the Queen's Head**. This was a huge success and raised £3000.00 to be shared between the village hall and church. It is to be repeated in June 2009. Part of its success was in welcoming more people from outside the village in addition to our usual neighbouring villages.
- *The Harvest Horkey* - This takes place every October and combines a hot meal with entertainment. In 2008 80 people attended.
- *The Scout Duck Race* - local scouts provide a hilarious evening of duck racing in the river Deben each year.
- *Annual Christmas shopping outing to Southwold*, complete with fundraising raffle on the journey home
- *Valentine's dance* for the romantics in the village
- *Christmas dance* in the village hall
- *Firework display and BBQ* especially enjoyed by the younger village members, held at the Old Vicarage, by kind invitation of the King family
- *A Talent Show* brought the actors out in lots of Brandeston residents
- *Jumble sales* are always popular; the most recent was to raise funds for the East Anglian Air Ambulance.

- *At this year's **French evening** parishioners had the opportunity to broaden their horizons and experience an evening of French food, wine and music*
- *A **Swish evening** (clothes exchange for the uninitiated!) organised by the younger mums gave participants an opportunity to pick up a bargain and clear out their wardrobes*
- *Bell Tower captain Chris McArthur leads an enthusiastic group of bell ringers in the village. They also ring in neighbouring villages by invitation*
- *The church holds a very popular **Gardeners Question Time**, with a panel of experts, including our own Peter Arbon, famous for his horticultural skills*
- *Quiz evenings always attract a full village hall*

BRANDESTON'S WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES

The church congregation supports Nansambo school in Malawi; the funding recently purchased a significant supply of stationery which was delivered in the rainy season by four wheel drive vehicle.

An assistant teacher is being funded and plans are being made to drill another water borehole as the present one is shared by 14 communities in the area.

Individual parishioners support a school in Uganda, a kitchen was built to provide school lunches for children who have to walk and paddle their canoes across a lake to reach their school. Lunch is often the only hot meal for these children and better nutrition has been proven to improve their ability to learn substantially. For the first time they are gaining exam success and regular attendance has been hugely improved.

Local young mothers support the Kariandusi school in Kenya. Two years ago they cycled 100 kms through Kenya and visited the pupils they support. Fundraising continues.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES

*The **Queen's Head** holds a number of events each year to enhance village life as well as providing a refreshed venue for the annual fete by combining it with the beer festival. It also allows a local notice board in the pub to raise awareness of events. The pub is also able to offer food at the village hall for hirers. During the recent financial downturn it has offered excellent value meals through its '**Credit Munch**' scheme, a meal and glass of wine for £6. The Queen's Head provides part time work for youngsters in Brandeston.*

GreenThumb Lawn Treatment Company provides a large marquee for the fete and other outdoor events to help proof against inclement weather.

*The **Stearn** family produce organic beef on their farm in Wriggles Lane.*

***Bridge Farm, Brandeston** has a mix of units for small businesses.*

***Brandeston Hall** is the prep school for Framlingham College. Pupils join in village events and the school uses the village hall for karate, fencing and dance lessons. Every year the Hall invites parishioners to share tea with boarders. Staff from the Hall keep the playing field mown. The school is a major employer in the village; it employs at least 7 people in the village.*

*The **Chapman family and Janet Weston** provide piano, flute and singing tuition.*

PARISH COUNCIL (20 marks)

- Does your parish council have a newsletter?
- Do your councillors and clerk receive training?
- How do you encourage people to become councillors?
- Has your council undertaken a Parish Plan or other appraisal?
- Does your parish council have Quality Parish Status or is it working towards this?

*The **Brandeston** provides a mouthpiece for the parish council, as does the parish magazine.*

***Council Minutes** are available on the **Brandeston website**.*

*The **Clerk, Mark Hounsell**, was trained by **SALC** in 2005 when he took on the role of the Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer. **Councillor's Elsom, Fielder and Saxon** have also completed the **SALC New Councillor's Course**.*

*People are encouraged to become councillors through the website, the **Brandeston** and the Parish magazine. Village notice boards also contain information on how to stand for election*

*A copy of our **Parish Plan** is included with this proforma.*

*Before the beginning of council business there is a **public forum**. At some meetings 6 or 7 parishioners attend. People are actively encouraged to attend and bring their concerns and suggestions.*

*Using feedback from the **Parish Plan** the Parish Council held a **Parish Meeting** to discuss the **Local Development Framework's** part in the future development of Brandeston. This was very well attended and residents were able to voice their opinions to guide the council's response. (Minute of PM attached). The*

council's open forum has also provided a discussion platform to air the views of electors.

The council has not yet taken a decision on applying for Quality Parish Status.

The village historian, Wilda Woodland, attends parish council meetings. She has researched the history of the village and its buildings. She tracks and records house sales and is prepared to help people from abroad to trace their ancestors from Brandeston. She writes a 'Times Past' column in the parish magazine.

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT (20 marks)

Suffolk villages and their surroundings often contain areas that are important for wildlife, such as village greens, ponds, hedges, churchyards, woods or green lanes. These areas may also be valuable as educational, recreational or amenity resource for the local community. Please refer to Suffolk Wildlife guidelines for more help.

- i) Are there any areas within the parish boundary that are valuable for wildlife? Who looks after them and how are they managed?
- ii) During the past year have you undertaken any projects to enhance your local environment?
- iii) How do people become involved in conservation initiatives?
- iv) Are you planning any conservation projects for this year or the future?

There are a large number of private ponds and lakes in the village that are cared for by land owners. The pond at the pub was improved for wildlife with the help of village people. The old Chapel has an area of burial ground that is managed under a Suffolk Wildlife Trust plan; it is mown at appropriate times of the year to allow the wide diversity of plants to flourish. A large network of footpaths is maintained by local landowners for the enjoyment of villagers and visitors. The paths are very well used. The village has a multitude of valuable wildlife sites including the environs of the river Deben that flows through the village. Woodland, hedges, open fields, ancient water meadows, ponds and wonderful trees are plentiful. Green woodpeckers are beloved residents. Crested and common newts can be found in ponds all over the village.

There are owl boxes in Mutton Lane and across the fields down the Drover's Road on the bridleway to Earl Soham. Recently a villager saw two barn owls in one place, a very rare sight.

GENERAL APPEARANCE OF THE VILLAGE (20 marks)

This does not mean you have to be a naturally pretty village; judges are looking at how you care for it.

- Who looks after your public buildings and spaces? (Church and churchyard, village green and other spaces, recreational areas etc.)

- Do you have work parties/special initiatives/tidy up days?
 - Do you have any problem areas?
 - How do you care for footpaths in the parish?
1. *The village has a number of wonderful circular walks, one of which criss-crosses the river Deben. On this walkers can go through managed water meadows that are still grazed in the traditional way by sheep and cattle. The management of these special areas is done by the landowners.*
 2. *The village is linked to Kettleburgh, Cretingham and Earl Soham with its network of paths and bridleways. These are shared with cyclists, horse riders, dog walkers, runners and hikers. Local landowners care for the paths and the heavy usage helps keep them clear.*
 3. *The PCC and parishioners care for the Anglican Church and care of the graveyard and the land outside the church is supplemented by staff of the Hall School. The church attracts visitors from around the globe. It is beautifully kept by a rota of volunteers and there are always fresh flowers in the building.*
 4. *Friends of the Old Chapel care for the Victorian chapel in Mill Lane and ensure it is used at least once a year.*
 5. *The village hall has work party days to keep its environs clean and tidy. The new village hall was completed four years ago; it is very well used by user groups, villagers and neighbouring villages.*
 - *Local businesses hire it for training seminars and business meetings.*
 - *It is running on a very strong financial footing (it is not only debt free, it has good reserves) with money being put aside for upgrading and refurbishment each year.*
 - *It is a popular venue for village wedding receptions, christenings and family parties, so much so that to be successful hirers have to book well in advance.*
 - *The garden at the village hall is planted and cared for by villagers.*
 - *The village hall has a beautiful patio with a view of the playing field and church; this is furnished and can be used for informal BBQ's. In July last year a group of parishioners could be seen having an informal game of Boules in the car park - not particularly level for playing on but great fun!*
 7. *The village hall committee cares for the lovely **children's play area** that is just across the village hall car park. The imaginative play equipment, set in a safely enclosed area, was provided some years ago by fundraising by local parents. A work party of volunteers spread tons of new bark chippings last year to keep the surface safe.*
 8. *The **bus shelter** is always clean and tidy thanks to the hard work of Peter Smyth. The shelter was a gift from the late Lady Jane Turnbull, the last living descendant of the famous historical figure.*
 9. *The village sign was made in the village forge by our late famous blacksmith Hector Moore, from a design by his wife, Mary. It depicts the tragic hanging of Rev Lowes, a victim of the infamous Witchfinder*

General, Matthew Hopkins. The sign includes a coat of arms and a tiny bat, added for fun.

- 10. As well as our historic church, larger houses and cottages, Margaret Catchpole's Cottage is named to commemorate the fact that this famous Suffolk girl used to visit her aunt in the village. It can be found tucked in a fold in the landscape down the bridleway to the Deben at the Triangle in Low Street.*

PROBLEMS FOR THE COMMUNITY

The village is on the route from the A1120 at Earl Soham to Wickham Market. Morning and evenings can be made hazardous by speeding motorists. This issue is being actively pursued by the parish council in partnership with the local community police officers and the SCC.

A mediaeval barn, with permission for conversion to residential use, was demolished by the developer despite the very best efforts of the parish council to alert the relevant authorities to rescue it. It has now been replaced by a new oak skeleton which has been left for a considerable time. Villagers were very sad to lose such a wonderful building and felt let down by the local authority over the sorry saga.

An ongoing drainage problem in the village street is the subject of constant discussion at the Parish council and action is continuously being requested from SCC.

A private yard down Mutton Lane has been allowed to become derelict. This is outside the control of the parish authority.

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS (10 marks)

Tell us about any special initiatives/events being planned or held recently which are special to your village

NEW INITIATIVE FOR 2009

It had often been remarked that there was a huge range of artistic and craft talent in the village. A group of people led by Jackie Hounsell and Mary Moore, co-ordinated the first Brandeston Arts and Crafts event in March 2009. Entries were invited from villagers or those with a workshop in the village. The hall was crammed with very high quality exhibits and was full of visitors throughout the day. This will become a regular event in the future. One villager remarked that it had done more than any previous event to make her feel that she belonged to the community. She now attends most village events.

This success has led to a proposal that an Arts and Crafts Group be established; this would be a vehicle for people to be helped and encouraged to develop their skills and learn new mediums to work in. This would then build towards more

exhibitions. It was also an affirmation of how seemingly ordinary village people possess extraordinary skills and imagination.

And finally.....

We believe Brandeston is such a special place because of its 'good neighbourliness'. The coffee mornings, lunches and large range of activities allow everybody to 'keep an eye out' for everyone else.

The information below is not about a new initiative or special activity but is indicative of how the village cares for both those who have lived here for years and those who have more recently joined the community.

In January one of our most beloved parishioners died following a long and distressing illness. He was cared for by his sister in the home in which they had been born. His sister wrote in the parish magazine: -

"I'm finding it hard to express my deep heartfelt thanks to my neighbours and friends for all your concern for my well-being, and loving care for Ivan, especially during his last six months or so of his illness. Your visits and messages of love meant a lot to him. Without your wonderful love, prayers and support.....I'm sure I would not have been able to keep my promise to Ivan, to spend his last days in the house he loved. Many, many thanks."

These words sum up the thoughts of many villagers who have needed care, lifts, shopping, prescriptions, visits to hospital, help with tasks they find difficult or just a chat and cuppa now and then. All without officialdom or formal organisation!

It is this neighbourliness that makes people of all ages recognise what a special village this is and how fortunate they are to live here. Very young parishioners have a strong sense of this appreciation of their community.

The village street does resemble a picture postcard but behind it there is a caring, supportive and inclusive community.

REMEMBER YOU MUST COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM TO DISTRICT COUNCIL ORGANISOR BY Friday 15 May 2009.

Jo Mael, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Council Offices, Melton Hill,
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