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Saffron Walden Weekly News
27th OCT, 2005

Vandals wreck old tombstones

BY Pam Jenner

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THOUGHTLESS vandals have caused £3,000 damage to two ancient tombstones in St Andrew's Churchyard, Hempstead.

The boxed tombstones date from around the mid-19th Century and belong to two well known former Hempstead families – the Horners, who farmed in the village, and the Rutlands, who left money to buy the almshouses.

The damage was carried out between September 15 and October 13 and was discovered by one of the churchwardens, Zoe Hoar who lives opposite the site.

Alan Weedon, also a churchwarden, said: "There are bicycle skid marks on one of the tombstones and it seems the front tyre of a bicycle collided with a corner of one tombstone.

"We are not sure how the other one was damaged but one of the sides has been pushed in.

"Whoever did it hurt themselves because there has been blood left behind. There must have been some force used.



■ **THOUGHTLESS VANDALISM** . . . one of the damaged tombstones in St Andrew's churchyard. CP.

"This is a sacred place to the memory of all the ancestors of the village and is not the place to play silly games or to vandalise. It is thoughtless."

A Saffron Walden police spokeswoman said: "It is not just the cost of the

damage but the sentimental value of these tombstones."

Anyone with information is asked to contact Saffron Walden police on (01799) 513232 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 where callers can remain anonymous.

SAFFRON WALDEN

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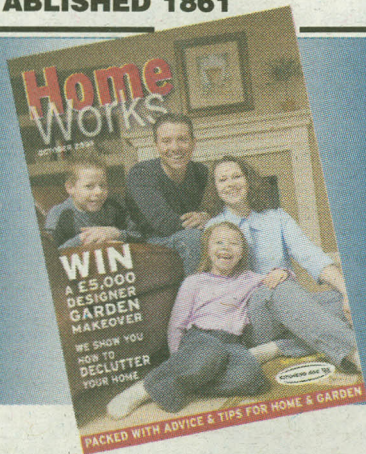
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'BMX VANDAL' DESECRATES

**WALDEN NEWS
 INSIDE THIS WEEK**

**New inspector
 to police town**

A NEW police chief has started work in Saffron Walden.

Insp Tom Boland took office after finishing a stint at Basildon



Full story: Page 3

**Park-and-ride
 plan for lorries**

TWO GRAVES

BLOOD left on a tomb is being examined this week in the hope it will provide a vital clue to the identity of vandals who desecrated two graves.

The sacrilegious act at Hempstead was the latest in a long series of wanton damage at churches in and around Saffron Walden.

The latest incident was discovered by Zoe Hoar and Alan Weedon, churchwardens at St Andrew's.

Initially, they hoped the first damage they discovered in the graveyard was accidental. The memorial to Elizabeth Horner, who died in 1850 and once lived at Hill Farm, appeared to have been hit by a bicycle as tyre tracks were visible on the stone "box" structure which sits on top of the

By **Sinead Holland**
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interred body. One of the hewn ends of the tomb had fallen out with the force of the impact as the cement holding it in place had eroded.

But then the pair discovered that the grave of Harriet Rutland had suffered a similar fate.

She was a philanthropist who left money in 1850 to found the village almshouses. The side of her tomb was pushed in; again after the corner column had been hit. Mr Weedon suspected that a BMX biker had been using the last resting place of both women as a ramp or jump for stunt riding.

He believed the vandal came a cropper at the second scene of destruction, leaving blood on the stone after a fall.

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SHOCKED: Churchwarden Alan Weedon with one of the damaged tombs

designed to keep heavy goods vehicles off the rural roads of Uttlesford has been proposed. The plan has been put forward by members of Saffron Walden Town Council.

Full story: Page 17

Celebrating Trafalgar Day

FRIDAY was the 200th anniversary of Lord Nelson's death at the Battle of Trafalgar and towns and villages in the **Observer** area put together their own celebrations.

Full story: Page 12



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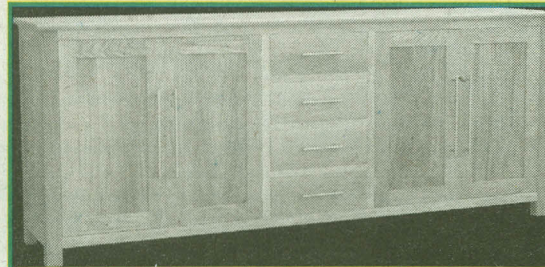
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A GRAVE has been desecrated by vandals, who caused £3,000 damage to a tombstone. The 8ft by 3ft tombstone is in St

Andrew's Church churchyard in Hempstead. The vandals struck between September 15 and October 13.

Anyone with any information is asked to phone Pc Ryan McNamara on 01799 513232.

Picture: SUBMITTED

By JENNY OLIVEIRA

OVER the next two months medical teams will be trying to persuade parents to have their teenage children immunised with the MMR vaccine in a bid to halt the soaring cases of mumps.

There are 1,600 youngsters at state secondary schools in the Uttlesford district who are not protected against the disease.

They are aged 14-18, in years 10-13.

Of this number, it is estimated that 200 have never had any protective injection, and after being vaccinated will need a booster shot three months later at their family doctor's surgery.

The remaining 1,400 students have been vaccinated, but need a booster shot.

The new campaign is being run by Uttlesford Primary Care Trust.

It was announced this week, after yet another official medical report cleared the shunned MMR triple vaccine of any link with autism in children.

Many parents' refusal to have their children treated with the MMR vaccine is being blamed for soaring numbers of youngsters contracting mumps.

Statistics for the East of England show that in 2002 there were 12 cases of mumps.

New campaign as cases soar

But in the current year that figure has risen to 2,088.

The highest numbers are in the 15 to 19 age group.

School nurses will be visiting Uttlesford's secondary schools to offer immunisation to years 11 to 13 during November and December and to year 10 students in the spring.

Sue Moss, a member of the PCT's school nursing team, dispelled what were described as two "myths" - that mumps is an illness you get as a child, and the autism link.

"Mumps can be caught at any time in your life, and the older you get, the more unpleasant it is," she said.

"We are very concerned about the increasing number of mumps cases in the East of England.

"Mumps outbreaks are also more likely to occur at universities where there are large numbers of young people.

"We are particularly concerned that our young people in Uttlesford will be going off to further education without being immunised.

"The MMR vaccine is a safe vaccine and numerous research papers have reaffirmed this. It is used by 90 other countries throughout the world."