



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES
Virtually at 20:00 Thursday 20th May 2021

Members Present

Chairman Jim Donahue

Members Paul O'Grady
Diana Smith

Officers Present:

Clerk Jane M. Yamamoto

Public and Press: Alistair Aitchison, John Bradon, Cllr Bulmer, James Burton (Henley Standard), Charles Cotgreave, John Coupland, Cllr Dragonetti, Peter Ferguson, Alex Hilton, Hilary Jenson, Rev James Leach, Peter Ferguson, Pam Scott, Richard Wingfield Sally and Peter Woolhouse and 5 residents

The meeting started at 20:00.

- 1 Chairman 20:00
Cllr Donahue made a presentation of The Year in Review in Photos. A copy of the presentation can be seen on the village web-site [here](#).
- 2 County Councillor Report - Cllr Bulmer 20:15
Cllr Bulmer echoed the difficulties of our village contending with years of flooding issues outside of Goring. He also advised that there is a changed County Council as the new administration is a combination of Liberal Democrat, Labour, and Green alliance, working through priorities. He does not know what the policies will be. Fixmystreet will continue to work with Parish Councils on High Street issues. He also stated that he noted that our village is also seeking a 20 mph speed limit throughout the village. He advised that this was not within the powers of OCC, but Westminster legislation and it can take years. He is on the shadow cabinet for transport development.
- 3 District Councillor Report – Cllr Dragonetti 20:20
Over the last twelve months South Oxfordshire District Council has, under the direction of the Secretary of State, adopted the Local Plan drawn up by the previous administration, which facilitates a significant amount of development in the district, most controversially in the Oxford Green Belt.
The Council has also done a new corporate plan to guide decision making.
The 6 themes in the plan are: protect and restore our natural world, openness and accountability, action on the climate emergency, improved economic and community well-being, homes and infrastructure that meet local needs and investment that rebuilds our financial viability.
One of the issues locally is of course affordable housing, and the Council is working towards the provision of Social housing which, we hope, will more properly meet the needs of people in our community not otherwise able to afford to live here.

The Council has also continued to bring back in house services that were outsourced to Capita; the outsourcing proved financially and operationally unsatisfactory. Similarly, in conjunction with the other District Councils and the County Council, Civil Parking Enforcement is being adopted, so that the Police are no longer responsible for parking controls. The costs and revenue for this is ring fenced, so parking fines cannot be used for other purposes.

Changed patterns of work have obviated the need to rebuild a large council office at Crowmarsh, so plans are now pressing ahead with a smaller office in central Didcot opposite the station on land already owned. This will be easier to access via public transport.

Although the Council has been operating something like normally over the last few months, there has been a 40% increase in planning applications in recent weeks over the same period last year.

On a more personal note, I have continued to be an active councillor, attending more District Council meetings in the last 12 months than any other District Councillor as well as all meetings of all the parish councils in the ward, unless there was a clash. The use of Zoom has helped me to be in two places at once. I also had motions passed unanimously at Council to support threatened pubs in the District and for pylons and power lines on new housing sites to be put underground.

In addition to awarding grants to organisations in each of the four parishes, I also helped the Whitchurch Preschool get a Covid business support grant. I am still on Goring Heath Parish Council and supported the White Lion ACV when the owner appealed.

I am pleased to be able to support the residents of the parish of Whitchurch, the Ward of Kidmore End and Whitchurch and the whole of South Oxfordshire District and I look forward to continue to do so in the future.

4 COVID-19/Village Plan - John Bradon 20:30
Village Plan

A village survey identified a number of things about our village. Many would like to see the village maintained better and that a rural feel should be kept with not too many developments.

Lots of improvements have been made to the village including its pavements, open spaces by the Green team, and to the Village Hall. Two things that some may not know of are: the Conservation Area Assessment under the Whitchurch Society that will help with planning issues, and the Community Emergency Plan. The flooding group is working under the auspices of the Community Emergency Plan. Also, with COVID-19, it was helpful to have a group of contacts for people on each street to get the emergency volunteer group started so quickly. Thanks goes to Lily King who coordinated this volunteer list. I am pleased to know that we have a village that look out for each other. Finally, two big things that remain: Cricket Club Pavilion – we had a good design for a sports facility and a good team to help develop this (Warren beard, Neil Huntington,

John Bradon, Frances Dixon). It became clear that unless the cricket club could extend the sport to a much wider group, grants would not be accessible. Traffic and Parking is a good group who objectives include improving safety and traffic on the High. The Parish Councillors are all volunteers and we should not forget this.

5 TAPWG – Cllr Diana Smith

20:35

You may remember that in last year's Report it was said that the Informal Consultation held in February 2020 produced 50 out of 55 residents who approved of the plan for traffic and parking presented at that Consultation.

Three things have happened since then: not including that fact that we have not been able to hold any meetings in person which has hampered consultation.

1. The first Covid 19 lockdown dramatically changed the dynamic of traffic and parking in the village.
2. The District and County Councils are moving strongly forward to acquiring Traffic enforcement powers from the police making residents parking a realistic goal.
3. The follow-on Sessions, promised last year, revealed that around 20 residents disagree with some, or all, of the Traffic and Parking Plan and these views have been taken on board.

All these factors meant that a pause and rethink were clearly needed.

The Parish Council have invested time to produce new Terms of Reference for TAPAG, now renamed Traffic and Parking Working Group (TAPWG).

The Group has had quite a few members coming and going since 2017 and was down to two members by April. Five new members have been recruited giving a reasonable coverage of all areas of the Village. Building on the work done to date, the new TAPWG will work to provide options to be put to the Parish Council. It will take into account the recent changes outlined above and also the fact, as we can all see, that traffic volume is now increasing and parking has taken on a different pattern compared to 2019. It will look to canvas residents' views. It will, as far as possible, look to future needs. A public Forum will be held later in the year as soon as there is something to report and discuss.

6 Village Hall – Charles Cotgreave

20:40

18 months ago, the Village Hall team started on a mission to renovate and improve our Village Hall.

First, we targeted some associations and individuals for donations to finance our mission. Between March 2019 and March 2020 we raised just over £7,500.

Up to now we have:

- 1- Changed all the old curtains for new fire retardant roller blinds.
- 2- Repainted the hall with the free help of a lovely company in Reading as part of their community support.

- 3- Redesigned and refitted the kitchen which now is not only beautiful but far more operational, including new fridge, new freezer and a new convection oven
- 4- Restructured all storage rooms so that no banqueting or meeting material are stored in the kitchen and we have added 2 new cupboards (one for Bridge Club and one for Arts and Crafts Exhibition group).
- 5- Had a telephone line installed and a WIFI system- greatly appreciated by our Camera Club.
- 6- We have started Free afternoon teas every second Thursday of the month. In one year, we raised just under £400.
- 7- Installed a new beautiful hard-wearing flooring in the kitchen and in the small meeting room.
- 8- Cleaned all the roof and gutters and made repairs to the roof where needed.
- 9- Linked the two toilets to the main water system- they were previously linked to a very old water tank which needed to be replaced but which is now obsolete and not used.
- 10- Arranged for a new combi boiler (paid for by the PC) which replaced the old non efficient system we had and provides hot water for the kitchen.
- 11- Added flower hanging basket outside to improve the look of the Hall
- 12- Change the old notice board for two new lockable notice boards
- 13- Structured a new computerised reservation system for the hall - it should be purchased at the end of this year and fully implemented on the village web site by Spring 2021. This will give us a far better control of activities and availabilities. When that is done we plan to redo the village hall web page to make it more appealing in order to try to develop more businesses/groups for the village hall.
- 14- Changed the doors of the toilets and repainted both toilets.
- 15- Last but not least we registered for COVID 19 gov help and we received a grant of £10,000.

The Hall has now also been equipped with all Covid related products and material to make it safe for any user and we look forward to opening again so that everyone can enjoy our fantastic community facility.

Our most sincere thanks to the VH management team and to our friends and supporters.

7 Village Green Working Group – Alistair Aitchison

20:45

Between the newly re-formed Cricket Club, WoTHabs, Primary School and AFC, we continue to maintain a wonderful common space for villagers and others. We all respect the beautiful space we have. We now have new maintenance contactors and we will, with lots of working parties, try to keep the diversity of flora and fauna. This past year

has brought many controversial issues. We are all grateful to Cllr Smith with her help with neighbours, the litter, the ball-catcher-net and hope things will calm down and we can enjoy looking after the space. At the moment, we need to maintain and rotate the pitch as it is the only space we have for younger people to enjoy. It is good to talk to those younger people who use the green and if they are not from our village, ask them where they are from and just remind them on its appropriate use. For the most part, visitors are compliant and friendly. Thanks to the Green team and WoTHabs, the open spaces are looking great. This year has presented its challenges but by being patient and continuing to work together, it remains a beautiful space for all to enjoy.

8 Green Team report

20:50

Our Mission

The Green Team is a team of both core and ad hoc volunteers who help look after and maintain the green spaces in Whitchurch-on-Thames. Coming together in this way also encourages a sense of community and is a good way of getting to know people.

Terms of Reference

These can be found here;

<http://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/Terms%20of%20Reference%20for%20the%20Green%20Team%20Agreed.pdf>

2020 Working Parties and Work

Throughout 2020 we carried out 12 working parties (in spite of Covid!) as well as individual work

to maintain the Green Spaces in the village, thank you to all those involved in these. Here are

some of the things we did;

- Working parties at the Maze to mow and edge the grass around the bricks
- Working parties to maintain the wild areas and hedges etc on the Village Green
- Working parties on the Manor Road Verges
- Working parties at the Polish Church Garden
- Working party at the entrance to Wallingscote Drive
- Sweep and tidy Muddy Lane
- The County Council Litter Pick
- General clearing of leaves throughout the village
- The Friends of St Marys & St Johns have also had working parties at St Johns churchyard

The Green Team Elves;

Over 20 individuals and households have responded to requests for help in the lockdowns, from weeding, litter picking, leaf clearing, tidying, watering and clearing.

The village also has a set of wonderful “elves” who do all sorts of tasks throughout the year across the green spaces in the village without anyone having to ask! I estimate over 200 hours of work has happened thanks to individuals and households this year

Polish Church Garden

The Green Team have one project on the go. A project is where an area needs investment and development, as opposed to just maintenance.

Despite lockdown we’ve made progress on this project with the wild area being restored with paths and a hideaway for school children, native trees planted, the church base being built, planters and benches being installed at the base and in the garden and plaques to remember two key local volunteer residents.

The final steps to complete this project are the installation of the cross on the base and an information board. The latter will need grant funding.

More details on the plans can be found on the dedicated web page for the project.

<http://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html>

2021 Work

We’ve been able to start working parties this spring with a new schedule available for the first half of the year on the What’s On section of the website.

Our 2021 goals are;

- Find a guardian(s) for every green space in the village
- Continue to prioritise looking after and maintaining what we have
- Engage and involve more people in helping look after our green spaces
- Involve the school and pre-school more in Green Team work
- Complete the Polish Church Garden Project

List of Green Spaces and Guardians

The list of Green Spaces that the Green Team maintain and look after are details on our webpage, one of the goals for 2021 is to get more owners/maintainer names against each space and create more detailed maintenance plans for each area;

<http://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html>

We now have Frances and Martin, Adrian and Sarah as well as Tim who’ve joined us as Guardians of Green Spaces. They join Sally, Pete, Gill, Charles, Keith, John, Leslie and Alexa in the core team.

Thank yous!

A huge thank you to the core Green Team members who give so much time and energy to the village’s Green Spaces and nature.

A massive thank you to everyone who has joined us on a working party, picked a task to

help with this year or otherwise looked after and cared for our Green Spaces!

Green Team Coordinator Role

I (Alexa Duckworth-Briggs) am having to step down from the Green Team Coordinator Role at the end of May 2021 due to health reasons. Charles Cotgreave has volunteered to take on the role on a temporary basis. Many thanks Charles!

I hope that Jill Bradon may be able to take on the role from September, I'm waiting for confirmation on this. I'll leave it to Charles and Jill to determine how they work together but I'll be available to support them with a full handover and for any questions.

9 Whitchurch Society Award – Cllr Donahue 20:55

The Whitchurch Award is given to an individual or group in recognition of their contribution to the village. The Award was created in 2019 by the Whitchurch Society, in association with the Whitchurch Web, in order to give thanks and recognition to some of those people who contribute a great deal to village life. You may remember that last year's award was made to Sally and Peter Woolhouse.

We are not short of volunteers in Whitchurch, this year perhaps more than ever. The countless good deeds done by many of our villagers are what makes living in this village so special.

Earlier this year, the Whitchurch Society collected nominations from residents for the 2021 Award, and provided a summary and a short-list of candidates based on the results to the Parish Council. The Parish Council then voted for the winner.

I am pleased to announce that the winner of the 2021 Whitchurch Award goes to the Whitchurch Village Website Team!

10 Whitchurch Village Groups 21:00

10.1 AFC Whitchurch – Alex Hilton 21:00

AFC Whitchurch has a number of football teams. Alistair has trained nearly all the age groups. All members are boys at the moment. However, there are some girls in the 5-7 year age group, which is non-competitive and a very important group to train up for the next generation of players.

Will Moffat has done a great job. The club has been going since at least 2000. This is tremendous.

There is a Dad's football match which is Whitchurch Hill versus Whitchurch Village on July 2nd at the Upper Basildon recreation ground. All players are welcome.

Alistair has done a tremendous job maintaining our vital training space at the Village Green. We have much respect for Alistair with a hopefully successful resolution with

the ball catch net. Thank you also to Leslie Prater for the football kit for many of the club players.

10.2

PAWS – Lady Hoskins

21:05

Our programme for this year has been set by two International Meetings that will take place in 2021. The first, hosted this summer by China, will be the UN COP 15 Meeting on Biodiversity. The second, the UN COP 27 on Climate Change hosted by Britain, to be held in Glasgow in November. Both problems need prompt action by national governments, local governments and individuals to stop the degradation of our planet to enable our children and grandchildren to live on a planet somewhat similar to the one that we have been so lucky to have experienced.

Thanks to Zoom, PAWS have been able to hold regular meetings on various subjects from the complexities involved in wilding gardens and villages to the best way to heat homes using renewable energy.

Apart from our regular meetings, PAWS has worked with various sustainability/environmental groups in the area to promote the use of insulation for reducing energy loss in homes and public buildings, and has been involved in discussions on promoting cycling as a benefit for the individual and the area. On promoting cycling, we have also cooperated with West Berks Council and The Pangbourne Parish Council. At the beginning of this year we had the idea to run a Questionnaire to find out what the local residents of Pangbourne and Whitchurch and the surrounding villages think is important about cycling, and what needs to be done to increase the use of bicycles. We had 143 respondents, far more than we envisaged when we started the project. The results of this questionnaire will be shared with residents through the various village magazines, and we will forward the information directly to Pangbourne and Whitchurch Parish Councils and West Berkshire Council. We were very pleased to note that PAWS has been active for ten years. Unfortunately, because of the Pandemic we have been unable to celebrate this year. However, we are very grateful to Heather Thorne who has used the Pangbourne Magazine as a way of communicating with residents for the whole of that time. This year we renewed our website and Facebook Page. We have been delighted with the response to the Facebook Page and I strongly recommend using that to find out all that PAWS is involved in.

Another of our successes for this year has been the PAWS interaction with the Whitchurch and Pangbourne Parish Councils. We continue to welcome the very active role that Whitchurch PC play in increasing the biodiversity of the area through its Green Group. We have been pleased with our discussions with Pangbourne about carbon reduction, insulation of public buildings, cycling, tree planting and village wilding to increase the local biodiversity.

Our most recent meeting was a talk on biodiversity, centred on village and garden wilding. Following this meeting we are hoping to roll out various projects including the design for Pangbourne of a leaflet similar to the WoTHabs leaflet on the flora of the

Hardwick Road verges, as well as helping with the Pangbourne Parish community tree planting in the Autumn over the coming year. We have been in touch with BBOWT and we are hoping to arrange a meeting with Simon Claybourn, Wild Verges Project Officer, and Sally Woolhouse to discuss the Hardwick Road verges.

We have already started work on a hedgehog interactive map so that everyone can note where, in the area, there are hedgehogs, and then we can promote actions to hopefully increase their numbers.

Perhaps when we are at last able to move on from the Covid 19 pandemic the residents of Pangbourne and Whitchurch will be ready to build back better, with less carbon, fewer cars, reduced pollution, and an increase in numbers and a wider variety of plants and animals present in our two villages.

10.3 St. Marys PCC – Rev James Leach

We have had services on Zoom and hopefully, look forward to the future Carol and Christmas services.

Thanks to Graeme Pearce for his hard work to mend the room and from Historic England to mend the drainage as well.

Also, during the year, Keith Williams stepped down after 5 years as Chair of Friends of St. Marys. Paul Witcher is now Chair and a new trustee.

Thanks to the PCC members who include Wardens Tim Suiter and Sue Matthews. I love being in the village and look forward to meeting more people as things open up.

10.4 Whitchurch and District Allotment Society – John Coupland

21:10

WADAS REPORT 2021

1. WADAS AGM traditional takes place in January but this year due to the pandemic restrictions the AGM has been postponed and is now due to take place at the allotment site on Saturday 22 May.

2. The allotments have been in greater demand than ever throughout the pandemic with a surge in applications for plots during the first lock down. We very quickly filled all unoccupied plots in March/April of last year and have taken on a number of new members over the last twelve months. We currently have eight applications for an allotment on our waiting list.

3. Being able to visit and work the allotment site during the prolonged lockdowns has been a great release and the extra time that many members have had is clearly evident by the many well-kept plots.

4. The Whitchurch Pre-School have made considerable progress in developing the allotment area that they set up at the beginning of 2020. Claire Jeffs the Pre School Lead on this project is continuing to enhance the facility and it is a joy to see the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the young children as they go about their activities at the allotments.

In conclusion the allotments have a larger occupancy and with the number of new and enthusiastic members are better utilised than in pre pandemic times.

10.5 Whitchurch Twinning – Vicky Jordan

21:10

On our visit to La Bouille in 2016, the year of the Brexit referendum, we assured our French twinneders that whatever the outcome our friendship would continue. We indeed weathered that storm, continuing our visits, and we celebrated forty years of our connection.

The pandemic however succeeded in putting a stop to our activities. Last May we were due to visit La Bouille and the only problem we saw was the moving of the traditional May Day bank holiday to May 8th, to celebrate VE Day. We had decided to stick to our original date when it became apparent that neither we nor the French could risk infecting each other!

In the year that has passed we have kept up communication, but do not expect an exchange to take place, except possibly private visits. We received condolences on the death of Tanya Hawley, a founder member, and Pam Wilkinson. Two other active members have moved away, so it will be necessary to recruit new members if the Association is to survive. New officers will also be needed as the current holders will be retiring, and they will no doubt call on the Parish Council, which has been so supportive in the past.

OWL (Our Woodcote Library)

At the time of the last AGM of OWL in March last year there were about 25 volunteers who supported library staff during public opening, and ran Storytime and Book Club sessions. When the library reopens on April 13th 2021 there will be less than a dozen, and the library will be open for only two days a week. In between, there has been an on/off situation, with new covid rules applying. Many volunteers felt unable to continue in light of the possible dangers to health. OWL funds the employment of a Saturday assistant, but this post has been vacant for a year. It is hoped that Oxfordshire County Council will shortly find a replacement so that the library can open on Saturdays again.

Volunteering at the library is a pleasant task, and it is hoped to recruit new people to cover the extended hours as things return to normal.

THANK YOU

Please let everyone know how grateful we have been for the work of Amanda Holland and the Goring Heath Volunteers for their support during the last year. We've had to call on them more than once, and their efficiency and good humour were inspirational.

10.6 Whitchurch Primary School – Dawn Chesters

In what has been another, necessarily, fragmented year of education, due to Covid restrictions, we have continued to operate, during term time, to educate our children both at home and in school- with a much larger group of key worker children on this occasion. Whilst things are still starting to return to some form of 'normality', we are still continuing to operate differently as a school. Examples of things that we are continuing to do differently at school include:

- Regular high touch surface cleaning throughout the day
- School split into 3 bubbles of age groups
- Parents wearing face masks to drop off
- Very few in school visitors
- Clubs in bubbles
- Inter school sport curtailed with some 'virtual' competition
- Parent, PA & Governor meetings still all held, as tonight, via video conference
- Residential visits have been cancelled for this year
- School National Assessment tests have been cancelled this year
- Year 6 children transitioning to secondary schools have had to rely upon virtual tours
- All trips & visits have happened virtually- such as a 'visit' to Windsor Castle

During our second lock down, announced with short notice in January, we again embraced the use of our online google classrooms to deliver the home learning. This time round our days were very structured, and every day started with an online register, where we could all share little bits of news and keep in touch. Many of our lessons were delivered 'live' and we recognise the fortunate position we were in that almost 100% of children had access to devices to work on each day and the school was able to loan some families the equipment they needed.

Yet again in this lockdown, many parents were taking on the 1 to 1 role supporting their children with their learning. We would like to thank them again for their continued support of the school through this ever-changing situation.

We would also like to thank a member of staff from the Oratory school who supplied us with some refurbished laptops to help support children with further access to technology at home, and a member of the community who donated some handheld devices to be used to access the learning.

We are extremely grateful to our Parent Association and parent body for their continued support of the school throughout lockdown with their ever-creative ideas. You may have seen they have currently launched a 'go fund me' page to raise money towards replacing the astro turf on the field to the rear of the school which has served the children well over the last 13 years, insuring they have a large play area on which they can have break times and their PE lessons regardless of inclement weather as it drains so well. It has now reached the end of its serviceable life and will be replaced this summer by a third or fourth generation of Astro turf which is softer and more grass-like rather than the green carpet it is currently.

The PA are also busy organising community events around the village including a family 'orienteeing/treasure hunt' to encourage them to discover some of the beautiful areas of the village that they, perhaps, haven't seen before or visited regularly. However, the usual Sports days and end of term activities are still unable to happen due to current restrictions.

Although the school may have changed the way it goes about its daily business, the people and the ethos of the school remain the same, and we look forward to playing our part in supporting our children to become well prepared for their lives as global citizens in an ever-changing modern world.

10.7 Whitchurch Society – Laura Lucas

Like most societies, it's been a quiet year for us, with no in-person events due to the pandemic.

Last year, we held a virtual garden walk with photographs on the village website and Sally Woolhouse and her team organised an excellent online Arts & Crafts exhibition. Both events were very well-received.

We were hoping to hold this year's garden walk in the village as usual, but find ourselves fallen between 2 stools. The usual date of mid-June would still be subject to some Covid restrictions and, any later, and our usual hosts are busy getting lives back to normal. Because villagers can now visit each other's gardens, we felt that there wouldn't be a need for the virtual garden walks.

The Society Committee has reviewed the initial draft of the Conservation Area Appraisal as provide by Nick Doggett of Asset Heritage Consulting and passed on our feedback, but we aren't expecting to contribute much in this area until the public consultations begin, which may still be some time away.

The Village Walks have also been on hold this year, however, Richard Williams and Mike Scott have arranged a "freedom walk" on Sunday June 27th which we are hoping will be well attended.

Richard Williams retired from his post as Society Treasurer this year. We thank him enormously for his many years' excellent service to the Society and for helping the new Committee transition into their roles.

10.8 Whitchurch United Charities – Sally Woolhouse

21:05

The purpose of the Charity is to provide support to local students, in the form of grants to help with funding of essential equipment such as books, and any other costs associated with educational needs. The trustees meet twice a year to consider applications which have been made in the past six-month period.

Since the previous report made in May 2020, the trustees have awarded three grants which will support students at primary level and in further education. The trustees are pleased to have received applications from across the permitted age range of 5 to 25. In the forthcoming year, the trustees expect to receive further demands on the charity funds, due to the financial challenges being experienced by many families at this difficult time.

Peter Hawley retired as our Chairman and as a trustee in October 2020. He had served the charity since 2007 and had been chairman since 2016. His dedication to the role was much valued by the trustees. We were very pleased to welcome Rev James Leach to our meeting in April, now that he taken up his ex-officio trustee position since moving to Whitchurch parish last September.

Therefore, as from April 2021, the ex-officio trustees are:-

Rev James Leach, Sue Matthews and Ken Baker

and the representative trustees are:-

Sally Woolhouse (Chairman), John Bradon (Secretary), Sarah Dixon

(Grant Applications Secretary), Nick Leadbeater-Hart (Treasurer),

Katherine Higley (Publicity Officer), Sarah Dragonetti (Safeguarding

Officer) and Katharine Martin

10.9 WoTHabs – Sally Woolhouse

The Whitchurch-on-Thames Habitat Study Group (WoTHabs) continues to aim to meet its main objectives, which are to encourage the protection and enhancement of habitats in our parish and to promote local interest and enthusiasm for the natural environment.

We are pleased to act in an advisory role to the Parish Council on the development and management of the diverse green spaces in the parish. We are pleased to have been consulted on the Village Green, the Maze area, the Polish Church garden and the Manor Road north verge. Gill Goodwin is the WoTHABS' representative on the Village Green Working Group and we are grateful to her for taking on this important role. We also are actively involved in the various working parties organised by the Green Team in the green spaces in the village.

As for so many other events in 2020, it was not possible to hold the popular walk in the wonderful Hay Meadow at Hardwick, which is normally held in early July (before hay-making). However, we are planning to hold it this year, on Sunday 18th July, in partnership with the PAWS group. It is always an enjoyable and very informative event, led by knowledgeable botanists and hosted by James Norman who manages this important site. Do try and come along!

Last April, I was pleased to be appointed as Nature Editor for the village website. I aim to publish a 'Nature Notes' approximately every two months on a topical and seasonal subject. I write some of them but others are written by local contributors. Twelve have been put online so far, on a variety of topics. I hope the community find something of interest in them. New contributors are always welcome!

10.10 Village website – Richard Wingfield

21:10

What a nice surprise to discover that the Whitchurch Web team has won the Whitchurch Award this year! Thank you from us all.

I am delighted to say that our core team of four has now chalked up ten years of doing its best to keep the village website up-to-date, relevant and lively.

I would like to thank our Page Editor **Hilary Jensen**, our Events and Message Board Editor **Pam Scott** and our IT host in London **Phil Weir** for their good work. Thanks also to our Photographer-at-large **Nick Brazil** and our newest member, Nature Editor **Sally Woolhouse**.

It has been a special pleasure for us to host Sally's series of beautifully illustrated Nature Notes, on subjects as diverse as bumble bees, butterflies, Egyptian geese, fallow deer, otters and lizards.

During lockdown, our What's On page became rather quiet, apart from the vital Bin Days, but it is now rapidly filling up again. Plenty happens in Whitchurch and on average between four and five news items appear each week.

We would like to find one extra person to join the team. If anyone would like to help by checking from time to time that the links on **Sport, Keep Fit, Schools and Young People** are kept up to date, please contact me.

Please do keep sending in news, messages and photos to the Whitchurch Web. Also, any suggestions. Thank you.

10.11 WOT Wallapers – Peter Ferguson

COVID has curtailed our hand bell ringing activities for the past year, until now. We hope to resume practice in late June when our team of nine ringers hope to congregate in the garden of 21 Swanston Field on Sunday afternoons.

We have been privileged to have as our mentor and coach, Carol Wheeler who is famous and known as 'Carol of the Bells' and able to ring 24 bells as the incredible one woman bell-ringing ensemble. Carol has graciously graced us with her presence and experience, as our coach and mentor. Carol has demonstrated and taught us many techniques like damping the bells to articulate the tune and has an eagle ear and eye for mis-hits. Just before the covid crisis, absorbing practice, allowed us to grow in confidence, with the ability to read music with two bells, one in each hand for the two adjacent notes. The requirement being to count each numbered bar carefully and ring on the beat.

During the COVID slack time, foam cushions and covers have been made and new interesting music has been selected and carefully arranged for each ringer in ordered files. To assist reading the music, the left and right hand bells have been colour coded for ease of identification. We have a couple of experienced ringers who can manage four bells two in each hand, positioned at 90 degrees, allowing the appropriate bell to be struck as the flapper mechanism only rings in the plain parallel to the swing. Our three octave bells are arranged in chromatic scale. The treble high octave bells are smaller and lighter, whereas the lower octave bells are larger and heavier. The bells were fabricated at the Whitechapel foundry, London, which unfortunately closed a couple of years ago after four centuries of manufacture, including Big Ben and the Liberty Bell in America. The hand bell section, still survives though and hand bells are manufactured in Bromley, Kent. We are thinking of adding a new and exciting dimension to the quality of our sound with additional chimes that resonate. I also know

that hand bells are a particular favourite of Queen Elizabeth, as she paid a surprise visit to Whitechapel and purchased a set of hand bells for a centenary church celebration in Canada.

Of course, we need to renew our practice again to regain our confidence and expertise in order for us to perform at concerts. Christmas time is popular, particularly when we rang at the Ferryboat with kind permission of Graham Dednum as carols seem to go well with bells. But as we have a large repertoire of songs, live concerts will be our goal, to entertain and raise money for charities.

If anyone would like to give hand bell ringing a go, please contact Peter Ferguson. One of our members has also bought an additional set of hand bells from Whitechapel and this would make it easier for a newcomer to learn how to participate alongside an experienced ringer. It is all rather fun and no one minds dropping the occasional clanger. Although like vintage wine and a good woman, hand bells must be handled with gentle, tender and loving care.

10.12 WOTSING AND COVID - Geraldine Witcher 21:50

Well it has certainly been a strange year for WOTsing. In January 2020, we met together and sang, In February 2020, we met together and sang. Thereafter until May 2021, we have been meeting on Zoom. It hasn't done anything for the standard of singing, as anyone who has tried singing on Zoom will know, but it has been fun to get together and laugh as well as trying to start and end songs together and who cares what happened in the middle. And it kept the choir going.

WOTsing is the village choir for everyone and anyone. You don't have to be able to read music, pass an audition, or even sing in tune. But if you enjoy singing along to pop songs, songs from the shows, folk songs that you sang at school, hymns, Christmas carols and songs, then this is the choir for you.

From June this year we hope to be able to start meeting in person again. We are very grateful to the Vicar and PCC of St John's for allowing us to use the church – but we are not a church choir!

For more information or to find the dates and venue of the next few meetings contact Geraldine on gelwitcher@gmail.com or 07766463132.

11 Meeting Close 21:25