



**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY OF WHITCHURCH-ON-THAMES**  
**Virtually at 20:15 Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

**Members Present**

Chairman Jim Donahue

Members Hanna Ferguson  
Jean-Marc Grosfort  
Diana Smith

**Officers Present:**

Clerk Jane M. Yamamoto

**Public and Press:**

John Bradon, John Coupland, Peter Dragonetti, Alexa Duckworth-Briggs, Peter Ferguson, Carrie Leadbeater-Hart, Lady Hoskins, Laura Lucas, Richard Wingfield, Sally and Peter Woolhouse.

The meeting started at 20:15.

1 Chairman Statement

20:15

Welcome everyone and thank you for making the effort to attend this year's Annual Assembly. I realise many groups have had to cancel activities this year, but some are managing to carry on in new and different ways as is the Parish Council. Where previously the Parish Council could only vote and make decisions in face- to-face meetings, the legislation has changed quite quickly to allow virtual meetings. So, we can at least carry on with meetings to make decisions that are needed for the village, even if some activities have been delayed or put on hold.

First, I would like to welcome our new members to the Parish Council in the past year:

- Diana Smith and joined the council in November, having been involved with TAPAG for a number of years. She has since become active in many areas, including leading the continued review of some planning applications, such as Eastfield House. I am pleased to say that she was elected to the role of Vice Chairman last month, replacing Rachel Hatcher, who recently resigned.
- Jean Marc Grosfort also joined in November. He is also someone who is no stranger to the Parish Council, having led much of the activities to refurbish the Village Hall with Keith and others. He will give an update shortly. I think people will be impressed by the changes taking place under lockdown once it is open for business again.
- Our Clerk, Jane Yamamoto, joined us in December, and we are very pleased to have found such a suitable candidate here in our village.
- Hanna Fergusson joined us in February, bringing yet another international flavour to the council. Hanna is originally from Finland and spent a number of years working for the UN Development Program in Kenya and Myanmar. She will be acting as the PC contact for the Green Team and other activities related to Open Spaces along with Cllr Jon Steward.

Clearly everyone is still focussed on the Coronavirus and pandemic. It's been just over two months since lockdown, but it already seems much longer than that. Many things have changed, and some things will never quite be the same. There are two main areas the Parish Council have been involved in:

- The Coronavirus emergency team – to help those most vulnerable in our community. This was based on the emergency team process we had also set up earlier this year. I am very grateful that John Bradon stepped up to lead this. He will provide an update shortly.
- While it is not the Parish Council's responsibility to enforce the social distancing rules, clearly, we had to make some changes to some village common spaces. The playground and the Village Hall are closed until further notice. The Village Green is very much open and even more important as a place for residents to exercise. Given the guidance to close sports pitches, we decided to have the football nets removed in mid-April to discourage its use as a playing field and posted a notice regarding keeping dogs on leashes.
- We were able have the nets put back up after a few weeks when the government guidance again changed to allow unlimited exercise, additional sporting activities, and changes in sports regulations giving Parish Councils more discretion on local activities.
- The temporary removal of the nets highlighted that the situation with the football playing next to the paddock was not entirely satisfactory to the owners of the paddock and a WG is being set up led by Cllr Smith to look at how this can be improved longer term.

There has been a lot of other activities in the Parish Council in the past year, but I would like to discuss this in the context of the 2019 Village Plan update. It was finally issued in December by John Bradon and the Village Plan Team after a lot of hard work. Hardcopies were provided to all households in February.

The Parish Council and other groups in the village have been making good progress with implementation of many of the recommendations, even if some initiatives will need to be put on hold during the Coronavirus lockdown.

The nine top priority recommendations are being progressed, including:

- **Traffic and Parking improvements:** considered to be the highest priority initiative from the Village Plan based on surveys of village residents.
  - TAPAG had a very good turnout for the Open Day in February for informal consultation on the first phase of the Traffic and Parking improvements on the High Street. 50 out of 55 residents attending the event registered their support for the proposed changes.
  - We are now planning to hold a follow-on session to address further feedback that has been received. This will be open to all residents, although we cannot provide a date for the meeting at this time.

- The Parish Council will not make a decision to proceed with the next step of requesting formal OCC consultation until after this follow-on meeting.
- **Improvement of Community buildings:**
  - Village Hall improvements – progressing well as you will see shortly
  - New Pavilion – again a lot of progress by the new WG in the past year. Neil Huntington has issued a statement on behalf of the group that I will read as he could not be here tonight.
- **Open Spaces:**
  - Creation of the Green Team led by Alexa to coordinate Open Space volunteer actives and also to define maintenance plans for each of the Open Spaces in the village. I think everyone will agree that Alexa is doing a great job with this. She will provide more later.
- **Other top priorities included:**
  - As mentioned earlier, the establishment of the Emergency Plan is complete - this was officially approved in February
  - Resurfacing of pavements was also listed as a priority. We have over £4,000 in grants now that can be used for this and are now working with OCC to get formal estimates and will then prioritise improvements based on available funds.
  - We have engaged a contractor for Conservation Area Assessment – that Cllr Higley is leading along with the Whitchurch Society.
- Most of the eleven minor Village Plan recommendations are also being progressed.
  - The PC agreed to fund the establishment of a Polish Church Memorial Garden on Manor Road based on the recommendation of the Green Team
  - There have been several working parties to refurbish the playground on Manor Road, led by Keith and John and involving many others.
  - We have appointed Warren Beard as the drains czar and managed to get OCC to refurbish the main drain gullies coming down Whitchurch Hill that will have reduce the runoff into High Street drains.
  - Monthly community meals have been organised in the Village Hall by Cllr Grosfort, even though they are clearly on hold for now.
  - There were also recommendations to encourage hard-to-reach groups to participate in sporting activities, and to investigate setting up a netball team. This was being done as part of the New Pavilion WG as this facility was intended to encourage this.

This list of Village Plan recommendations is something that I will remain focussed on over the course of the year. As you can see, we have made good progress in almost all areas, but are clearly not finished yet.

One significant planning application that the Parish Council has strongly objected to is also worth mentioning:

- **Coombe Park Fence** - We have been working with SODC and Coombe Park representatives for over a year now to try to find a solution for the new 2.4m

green metal fence that was installed on Hartslock Bridleway and has been proposed for their border along Manor Road. A new revised planning application has finally been approved in April:

- The fence design has been changed to round-topped vertical timber palings mounted on a steel frame, overall height 2.2m, for the full length of the boundary alongside the bridleway. The gaps between palings are the same width as the palings and there are no spikes at the top.
- There is also extensive landscaping planned between the fence and the bridleway.
- A note on the drawings states that the fence is 'located 1m back from the bridleway'.

The Parish Council made some further comments on the application, but welcomed the improvements to the planning application and look forward to seeing the fence replaced.

**Finance:**

- The annual audit is delayed due to the Coronavirus, so the financial summary will be provided in the coming months.

To close, I'd like to thank everyone, first of all, for being here tonight to show your interest in our community, and secondly for the work you do for our community. Volunteers running local groups contribute to our community and are at the heart of our vibrant community life.

2 County Councillor Report – Cllr Bulmer

20:20

ACTIVE TRAVEL PLAN

Due to some councillors and people raising expectations with speculations, I feel it necessary to put the record straight.

Since the announcement by Grant Shapps of the funding for active travel there has been a lot of speculation and raised expectations.

To date, we have still not been told our allocation of the £250 million, nor the criteria that will be used. Any of the rumours and amounts you may have heard about have not come from OCC.

Normally Oxfordshire receives 1% of the national pot, so we could expect around £2.5 million. We are keen these funds are used across the county to promote active travel, not just restricted to Oxford City, where there has been a lot of noise. In itself, £2.5 million is a lot of money, but when it's spread across the county, it won't go far. There is the other longer-term funding of £2 billion, which was already announced as part of a longer term £5 billion back in February. So, lots of re-announcements with lots of funds that raise expectations.

The highways team has been working on various ideas and proposals, but without knowing the level of funding, it's difficult to put forward any schemes without raising expectations.

We are doing a lot of work, but until we know what the funding is we need to keep expectations levels down.

Once we know how much funding is available then we will share that and our ideas with you.

3 District Councillor Report – Cllr Dragonetti

I have now been the District Councillor for just over a year, and I think it has been a quite eventful year, starting with the change of control from the Conservative to the LibDem/Green partnership, and then leading on to the controversy over the Local Plan and then, just as that was settling down, the impact of Covid.

Starting at the end, if I may, Covid has resulted in almost all SODC staff working from home, and meetings being held online only. SODC has also been helping local community groups and businesses, as it is part of the structure put in place to deliver support locally as directed by the government.

All local business premises that are listed for business rates have received a flat £10,000 grant, and that, I am pleased to say, has included many village halls, including ours.

There are also other grants that are administered by SODC to certain businesses, particularly in hospitality.

SODC officers are also actively involved, delivering food parcels to needy people.

Planning Committee meetings are now just restarting, and the first one was held earlier today. They are live streamed, but at the moment only District Councillors and officers can speak. Paper planning applications are no longer being sent out. As the vice chair of the Planning Committee, I am able to challenge and, sometimes defeat, ugly and inappropriate development.

That leads on to Planning, where the Local Plan which envisaged a huge amount of development, particularly in the Oxford Green belt, and which resulted in the loss of control of the Council by the Conservatives, has been forced through to its next stage, Inspection, by the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick.

Normally, the Inspection includes a public hearing, but it now seems increasingly likely that that this will also be done online. Many of the new councillors, including myself, challenged the Plan at the consultation stage, and are now being supported by a former Chief Planning Officer in preparing our challenges for the Inspector to consider. It is becoming even more apparent that the plan that was submitted has many flaws, and I hope that the Inspector will address these in his report. On a personal note, I stood in the election to protect the AONB, and will continue to do so in the Inspection.

4 Coronavirus Emergency Volunteer Team – John Bradon

20:35

This started with the Village Emergency Plan and nearly 50 people volunteered with well over 30 people that could help.

To keep track of tasks, a simple process was created. Lily King has been key to co-ordinate the efforts. A paper summary went to everyone in the village with social media coverage, including Facebook. Great support and so far, a total of 62 calls, which is not that busy. Lots of people are asking friends and volunteers directly. I wish to thank everyone in the village that has been helping.

If you would like your prescription to be collected, some shopping to be done or if you just want someone to keep in touch with how you are, please contact local volunteers by emailing [WoTVolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:WoTVolunteers@gmail.com) (please let us have a phone number). You can also ring the phone number on the leaflet you should have had through the door last week. As you can see from the list below, there are volunteers in every road.

Requests for help are coming through fairly slowly so we are not busy yet and would be very happy to help. Lily King is checking the emails and tracking the requests. John Bradon 07789 944676 is maintaining the list of volunteers.

We're on Oxfordshire County Council's list of volunteer groups and they are helping to coordinate requests for help. In Whitchurch Hill, Amanda Holland, the Parish Clerk, is coordinating volunteers and she can be contacted via this email: [goring.heath.parish.council@googlemail.com](mailto:goring.heath.parish.council@googlemail.com).

#### List of Volunteers by Location

Location	Name	Email
Bozedown	Sally Woolhouse	<a href="mailto:Sally.woolhouse@gmail.com">Sally.woolhouse@gmail.com</a>
Eastfield Lane	Sarah Hanfrey	<a href="mailto:Sarah_hanfrey@hotmail.com">Sarah_hanfrey@hotmail.com</a>
Eastfield Lane	Neil Huntington	<a href="mailto:Neil.hunters60@gmail.com">Neil.hunters60@gmail.com</a>
Eastfield Lane	Alastair and Pippa Ruxton	
Hardwick Estate	Sasha Gibson	
Hardwick Estate	Peter Watson	
Hardwick Estate	Sasha Gibson	
Hardwick Estate	Peter Watson	
Hardwick Road	Adrian Dixon	<a href="mailto:adrian@adriandixon.com">adrian@adriandixon.com</a>
Hardwick Road	John Bradon	<a href="mailto:john@jbradon.co.uk">john@jbradon.co.uk</a>
Hardwick Road	Kirsty Baker-Smith	
Hardwick Road	Danielle Burns	
Hardwick Road	Mary Kernan	
Hardwick Road	Annie Jones	
High Street	Geoff Weir	<a href="mailto:geoff.weir@btinternet.com">geoff.weir@btinternet.com</a>
High Street	Jean-Marc Grosfort	<a href="mailto:cllrgrsfortwhitchurchonthames@gm">cllrgrsfortwhitchurchonthames@gm</a>

High Street	Caroline Cresswell	<a href="mailto:caroline.cresswell@sweetspotrecruitment.co.uk">caroline.cresswell@sweetspotrecruitment.co.uk</a>
High Street	Matilda Oppenheimer	
High Street	Lily King	
High Street	Mel Taylor	<a href="mailto:mellyctaylor@hotmail.co.uk">mellyctaylor@hotmail.co.uk</a>
High Street	Lesley Gray	
High Street	Andy Heaps	
High Street	Alice Blackham & Clive Finlay	
High Street	Suzanne Parke	
High Street	Sophie Paddick	<a href="mailto:sophieblackham@hotmail.co.uk">sophieblackham@hotmail.co.uk</a>
High Street	Esther Schutzer-Weissman	
High Street	Lesley Gray	
High Street	Andy Heaps	
High Street	Suzanne Parke	
High Street	Esther Schutzer-Weissman	
High Street	Alice McGlyne	
High Street	Bernarde Hyde	
High Street	Emily Davies	
High Street	Alice Blackham & Clive Finlay	
High Street	Sophie Paddick	
Hillside	Jane Yamamoto	<a href="mailto:ParishClerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com">ParishClerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com</a>
Hillside	Hanna Ferguson	<a href="mailto:cllrferguson.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com">cllrferguson.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com</a>
Manor Road	Jon & Lissie Steward	<a href="mailto:Cllrsteward.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com">Cllrsteward.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com</a>
Manor Road	Katherine Higley	<a href="mailto:Cllrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com">Cllrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com</a>
Manor Road	Jo Smith	<a href="mailto:Joanna.s.smith@gmail.com">Joanna.s.smith@gmail.com</a>
Manor Road	Alan Boarder	<a href="mailto:alanboarder@aol.com">alanboarder@aol.com</a>
Manor Road	Richard Lamb	
Manor Road	Ben Gosling	
Manor Road	Alan Boarder	
Swanston Field	Kathy (& Alistair) Aitchison	<a href="mailto:theaitchisons@hotmail.com">theaitchisons@hotmail.com</a>
Swanston Field	Michael and Jane Haas	
Swanston Field	Laura Lucas	
	Caroline and Stephen Taylor	
	Mark Davis	
	Alison Rieple	

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

We targeted first some charity associations and individuals for donations to finance our mission. Between March 2019 and March 2020, we raised just over £7,500. Plus, recently we just received a great £800 donation from a resident of Whitchurch.

Up to now we have:

- 1- Changed all the old curtains for new fire-retardant roller blinds
- 2- Re painted the hall with the free help of a lovely company in Reading as part of their community support
- 3- Re-designed and renovated the kitchen, which now is not only beautiful but far more operational, including new fridge and freezer
- 4- Restructured all storage rooms, so that no banqueting or meeting materials are stored in the kitchen and we have added 2 new cupboards (1 for chess group and 1 for Art and Exhibition group)
- 5- Installed a telephone line and a WIFI system- greatly appreciated by our photo club
- 6- We have started free afternoon teas every second Thursday of the month. All costs were sponsored by my company and so all donations given were for the Village Hall, helping us to buy some crockery and cutlery needed. In one year, we raised just under £400
- 7- Installed new beautiful and hard-wearing flooring in the kitchen and in the small meeting room
- 8- Cleaned all the roof and gutters and repaired some damage on the side of the roof-this was paid by the PC as contribution to our plan
- 9- Linked the two toilets to the main water system- they were previously linked to an old water tank, which needed to be replaced but which is now obsolete
- 10- We are installing a new combi boiler which will replace the old non efficient system we have and will also provide hot water for the kitchen- this is being installed today and tomorrow
- 11- We have structured and will purchase this summer a new computerised reservation system for the hall-it should be fully implemented and on the Village Hall website by end of September 2020 latest. This will give us a far better control of activities and availabilities. When that is done, we plan to review the website to update it and make it more appealing in order to try to develop more businesses/groups for this VH
- 12- Finally, but not least, we have registered for COVID-19 government help and we have received a £10,000 grant.

Our AIM is to finalize the kitchen equipment and improve the main entrance so that this Village Hall can become a lovely place where clubs, associations and residents of the village can be welcome for any occasion they wish to celebrate.

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

6 Village Green Working Group – Keith Brooks

The village green continues to be much used by villagers and also visitors from the surrounding areas showing what a valuable asset for the village it is.

To keep this area in tip top condition for its continued use involves many people and I would like to thank them one and all for their efforts over the year.

The present contractor keeps the outfield in perfect condition for both football and cricket, whilst other areas are cared for by volunteers, which we are so indebted to. The memorial trees on the village green are mostly thriving, although one had to be replaced. There has been much work around the car park and the new habitat, which has been created since the tall beech trees approaching the school have been coppiced. We have WoTHabs to thank for organising this and the essential working groups keeping this neat and tidy. There is now a sensible hedge allowing light to this area providing a new area for wildlife to flourish and the children to explore. The ugly concrete posts have been removed to enhance the school approach with Parish Council funding for both this and the coppicing.

We also have had new benches installed as the previous benches installed 7 years ago were showing signs of deterioration and we thank the Parish Council and Cllr Steward for organising this.

The Maze is maintained by a group of stalwarts, who ensure that it is a beautiful area for picnics and quiet contemplation. We must congratulate those who created it in the first place and their forward thinking.

The Village Green Working Group look forward to the return of football and cricket once the unusual circumstances which we are living under have passed.

7 New Pavilion Working Group – Neil Huntington

The NPWG completed the plans for the proposed new pavilion and obtained an estimate for the total cost which at £250,000 to £300,000 is somewhat higher than the initial outline budget. Several recently replaced pavilions close by were visited as comparables and the estimate is in line with what they had cost. The NPWG produced a detailed business plan in order to raise the required funds and began to apply for grants and to set up a charity. It was established that grant-awarding bodies and the Charity Commission would only support the project provided sports or exercise for a wide range of people, e.g. enabling girls' and boys' teams to be set up.

In the Cricket Club AGM early in March, the Cricket Club decided that it could not raise more than £15,000 to £20,000 or develop the range of teams. They want to promote a cheaper alternative, which would involve refurbishing the existing pavilion and replacing the tea house. The CC have been asked for details of their alternative scheme,

including budget costs.

The NPWG feel that raising the required funds for the original design would be very difficult without the full support and involvement of the CC.

Recent meetings have been suspended during the Covid 19 lockdown, but the proposed next steps are:

- The NPWG will ask for a meeting with the CC committee to establish whether we can come up with new options that meet the needs of both the PC and the CC. We will discuss how the Cricket Club can be a full part of the NPWG.
- The NPWG will report the findings of the above to the PC at the earliest opportunity.

In the meantime, we are actively seeking the views of a wide range of people in the village.

## 8 Green Team – Alexa Duckworth-Briggs

### **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;

[https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/](https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/Terms%20of%20Reference%20for%20the%20Green%20Team%20Agreed.pdf)

[Terms%20of%20Reference%20for%20the%20Green%20Team%20Agreed.pdf](https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/Terms%20of%20Reference%20for%20the%20Green%20Team%20Agreed.pdf)

### **2019 Working Parties and Work Throughout 2019**

We carried out a number of working parties 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; - Planting spring bulbs - Lots of leaf clearing (in addition to District Council road sweeping team) - Working parties at the Maze to mow and edge the grass around the bricks - The Friends of St Marys & St Johns have also had 2 working parties at St John's churchyard to clear all the vegetation along the fence line at the front (so that the railings can be painted and repaired). - Working parties to maintain the wild areas and hedges etc on the Village Green - Trimming back verges on Hardwick Road and the High Street narrows - Clean and trim the Manor Road Playground - Sweep and tidy Muddy Lane - General clearing of leaves throughout the village

### **Polish Church Garden**

The Green Team have one new project on the go. A project is where an area needs investment and development, as opposed to just maintenance. We are working to restore the Garden at the Polish Church site off Manor Road. We are planning a Memorial area for the chapel, with a long-lasting base, benches, planters, information board and cross. Funding for the base, planters and benches was granted in the

February 2020 PC meeting. A start was made on the preparation for the work, but had to pause due to lockdown. The rest of the site is planned to have; - a mowed area for picnics and activities - a wooded area for native trees and children to explore - a meadow area for grasses and wild flowers We've held get togethers at the site in 2019 and 2020 to get input from local residents and those with personal connections to the site and to the chapel. We've taken the ideas and feedback from these get-togethers to inform our plans for the area. More details on the plans can be found on the dedicated web page for the project. <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/polishgarden.html> I'm keen to involve as many people with connections to the site in the project as possible, please contact me on alexa@ontherunhealthandfitness.co.uk of 07557 852600 if you'd like to share stories, pictures or get involved!

### **2020 Work**

The start of spring coincided with the start of lock down, so there have been no working parties in 2020 so far, and those that had been organised had to be cancelled, including the village litter pick. Core members of the Green Team have been hard at work continuing to care for and maintain the Green Spaces in the village. I've also had good results from emailing the extended Green Team mailing list and posting on Facebook specific tasks that can be done by individuals or households - many thanks to those who have got involved!

### **List of Green Spaces**

The list of Green Spaces that the Green Team maintain and look after are details on our webpage, one of the goals for 2020 is to get more owners/maintainer names against each space and create more detailed maintenance plans for each area; <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html>

### **Thank yous!**

A huge thank you to Sally Woolhouse, Pete Woolhouse, Keith Brooks, John Bradon, Gill Goodwin and Leslie Maynerd for your dedication and hard work on the Green Spaces around the village as part of the core Green Team. On a personal level, your support and experience has been very useful. 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!

### **Postscript**

Green Team Support Role Definition - Alexa Duckworth-Briggs - To help and support the Green Team with organisation and communication - Recruit and communicate to the wider team of Ad-hoc volunteers who help in the village - Help plan, organise and communicate Green Team core team members and ad-hoc volunteer activities - Assist in the definition and communication of the Green Team's work and priorities - Assist in

the creation of schedules for maintenance of all identified Green Spaces in the village and organise the work required to implement them - Work with other Green Team core members and required stakeholders to identify, agree and implement any new areas of “project” work (a new piece of work, as opposed to an existing areas requiring maintenance) - Identify and help to manage and communicate with stakeholders; those who have an interest in the work we do, those who volunteer or do paid work with the Green Team (both core and ad-hoc volunteers) and those in decision making positions or other third parties.

9 Whitchurch Award 2020 - Laura Lucas

20:55

The Whitchurch Award is given to an individual or group in recognition of their contribution to the village. The Award was created early last year 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 Eric Hartley.

We’re 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 2020 Award, and provided a summary and a recommendation based on the results to the Parish Council, who have now made their decision. So, with no further ado, I will now pass you back to the Parish Council Chairman to announce the recipient of the Whitchurch-on-Thames Award 2020.

**Parish Council Chairman – Cllr Donahue**

I am pleased to announce that the winner of the 2020 Whitchurch Award goes to two people, Sally and Peter Woolhouse.

There were a number of nominations for them individually and jointly, and the Parish Council agreed that they were both highly deserving of the award. While I know they have contributed to the village individually and together, in their own way, I am sure that they are happy to share this award.

Peter and Sally moved to the village 42 years ago, raising their family here, with children at the school and have contributed so much to the village in that time. Everything from organising events, picking up litter, digging drainage ditches, or cutting hedges and planting trees. Importantly, they have been just as active during the past two months of lock down.

I know Peter, who is a retired bricklayer, originally laid the bricks for the Maze, free of charge, now almost 20 years ago. They were both instrumental in the subsequent two

refurbishments to it, and of course, are the organisers of the monthly Maze Working parties. Currently, they are maintaining it on their own. Peter arranged for 21-gun salutes at the Maze from his flint musket group on at least two occasions.

Sally, a long-time member of WoThabs, has a special interest in fostering the Maze as a place of biodiversity through its wildflowers and specially designed maintenance plan where certain areas should be cut at just the right time of year – after they are fully seeded, I am told. I know she is particularly proud of the two elm trees which were planted at the Maze by the Butterfly Conservation in 2018. These elms are the essential foodplant for the caterpillar of the rare White-Letter Hairstreak butterfly, which can be found at the Maze.

I am a former member of WOTHabs so know how much she has done to help organise so many activities ranging from the annual Haymeadow walk to the Explorer Days for young people.

I have many fond memories of Sally and Peter at Apple Day at the Maze with Peter playing his gramophone and recordings of 1930 and 40's American Jazz.

Aside from the Maze, Sally often spends time with the children at the village Primary School teaching them about nature and she recently started the Nature Notes on the village website, which everyone should be reading if you haven't already. Sally has also been involved for many years in the Whitchurch United Charity where she has held many different positions, including Treasurer and Secretary. She also meticulously organises the annual Arts & Crafts Exhibition and makes an enormous contribution to its success.

Peter has carried out maintenance around the village, often at short notice to repair damage or to improve facilities, such as the recent improvements to the fence at the Village Green by the paddock, and repair of benches when there were problems on the Village Green. Pete has, without doubt, saved the village a great deal of money getting these little odd jobs done with very little recognition.

And it is not just what they do, but also how they do it. It may be difficult for me as an American to appreciate all the subtleties of their charm, but I would say they are two of the nicest people you will ever meet, always having time to listen and talk to you and always putting others first. Their dedication to the community life of the village is clear, and together with their complementary skills, they have set a great example. They have made a huge difference to life in our village, and for that we should all be grateful.

AFC Whitchurch football has been suspended since March across all leagues and training. We're hopeful most will restart for the new season in September as our 70+ kids are keen and eager to play!

11

PAWS – Lady Hoskins

20:55

I am pleased to report that PAWS has had an exciting and successful year, with new members, new ideas, new events as well as our previous successful programmes. It has been a good year for interest in climate change. The young people realised that it was their future that was at risk and, led by Greta Thunberg, they held protests around the world. These actions galvanised many governments, including that of the UK, and our local governments to announce a Climate Emergency. Our Parish Councils, West Berks Council, Oxford and a number of other local Councils have recognised the need to start making plans to meet the demands of a low carbon budget. When the pandemic is over, PAWS will make every effort to ensure that we are at the forefront of raising the issues again. We, as a community, must make the new 'normal' based on 'new' energy sources, technologies and ways of doing things rather than going back to the 'old'. In light of this, one of our new ideas for this year is particularly apt. Rob Hill and his team are working to create, A Community Energy Scheme for Pangbourne, recognising that Oxfordshire have a number of such schemes up and running already. Also, Jackie Simpson has been working to get the information together to see how we can help the Pangbourne Parish Council to draw-up a carbon audit so that it can make plans to reduce the carbon emissions associated with the village. Jackie and Jo Smith have been actively working to introduce the Terracycling initiative, that takes hard to recycle items and the money raised goes to charities. This will be done on a monthly basis at the Pangbourne Village Hall on Sundays. This facility will be available to both parishes. If it is successful then, perhaps, we can organise to do the same in Whitchurch. (Dates will be arranged when the Hall re-opens.) Last year that we tried a children's clothes swap, and this coming year we hope to build on this initiative. The Pangbourne Fete, held June 2019, was again a recycling success thanks to the amazing work of the volunteers, as all the bio-degradable plastic went into the recycling bins. Once again, the amount of litter was reduced as people were more aware of the need to bin it. This year we were hoping to build on this success. George Tubb is our representative on the Fete Committee and has plans in place for a future, completely plastic-free Fete when the pandemic is over. Following the 2019 Pangbourne Fete, we have established a new membership. We have a Junior PAWS Group. Under their own initiative, the Group were very active at the Pangbourne Fete where they engaged with the public to raise awareness of sustainable world issues. Another new initiative for this coming year was introduced by Whitchurch Pre-School fundraising Committee. They wanted to hold a WhitFest, and requested that we help them make their festival completely plastic free. We agreed to do this but because of

the pandemic the festival has had to be postponed. They are hoping to go ahead in September 2020 but this again depends on the pandemic.

Our three old favourites from previous years, the Meadow walk, Apple Pressing and Barn Dance were all once again a success. We had fine weather for the Meadow Walk and Apple Pressing which always makes a difference. The meadows were once again a great pleasure and, amid fears of there being no apples for the pressing, an amazing number of them turned up. Part of the enjoyment of these events is the enthusiasm of Sally Woolhouse and James Norman for the Meadow walk, and the refreshments on both occasions provided by Sally and her husband. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the Barn Dance.

We continue to publish an article in every Pangbourne Magazine thanks to Heather Thorne. Her interesting articles not only encourage behavioural change in our local community but maintain the high profile of these issues.

This year we have been able to upgrade and modernise our Web site and Facebook. Our thanks go to Rob Hill for doing this. The Facebook page now has 50 members. In February we held a vigil for the plight of the people of Australia and included all the areas of the globe that had suffered from extreme weather-related disasters in the previous year. Rather fittingly, the rain poured down on the evening and the vigil had to be held in the Pangbourne Village Hall.

Our last event, just before the lockdown, was the opening of the new drinking fountain on the outside wall of the toilets in the Pangbourne Village Hall car park. APT Trustees (the Charity that runs and maintains the toilets) wanted to raise the profile of the drinking fountain and so they arranged for the toilets to be 'dressed' for the occasion, as in the medieval style. They asked me to open the fountain and I asked the Junior PAWS members to help. Once again, they did a brilliant job by producing posters and talking to the gathered 'crowd' (a very impressive number given it was pouring with rain) about the importance of reducing the amount of single use plastic.

Thanks to all our active members, our activities and publications have raised the profile of PAWS in the Community to a new high, and we are hoping with our new calendar of events to build even more interest in PAWS and the issues we raise, when this becomes possible.

- 12      Whitchurch and District Allotment Society – John Coupland      21:10
1. WADAS held a successful and well attended AGM on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020.
  2. The National Allotment Society, who are the owners of the Whitchurch-on-Thames allotment site, tasked Mike Brannigan to carry out an inspection of the four sites in the country owned by the Society. The visit to WADAS took place on 4 March and Mike Brannigan was accompanied by Jenny Crawford and Mike Cantillon representatives from the NAS Southern Region. I, along with Mike Marshall and Cllr Higley, hosted the visit which took place on a very wet and miserable day but the visitors left satisfied and impressed with the running of the site.

3. Working an allotment was one of the approved Government activities allowed at the start of the Covid19 lockdown. The National Allotment Society issued clear and practical guidance of procedures to be adopted on allotment sites due to Covid19 that WADAS implemented and copied to our members.

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

The lockdown also resulted in a surge of enquiries to the availability of plots. This has given a 100% occupancy of plots and a small waiting list of three.

4. The Whitchurch Pre-School had applied and been allocated an area at the start of this year. Claire Jeffs the Pre-School Lead on this project plus a team of helpers have been busy clearing and preparing the area for use by the Pre-School when they are eventually allowed to restart. This is an exciting new addition for WADAS which we very much look forward to seeing progress.

13 Whitchurch Twinning – Vicky Jordan

### **Visit**

We didn't think it would be possible to follow the amazing visit arranged by Martine for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of twinning last year. However, in our own way, we put on a varied programme, which was appreciated by the 24 people of La Bouille who we welcomed to our villages.

Many attended the Fun Day where we had a cake stall (and thanks to those who braved the weather to help us raise funds) and were shown the boat decorated in their honour by the Knit and Natter group.

The evening reception at Goring Heath Parish Hall was addressed by Peter Dragonetti and Jim Donahue as well as the two Presidentes. The three-course meal prepared by Alison and her team went down a treat and the entertainment was provided by Peter Ferguson's band of hand bell ringers who played well-known songs.

Our Sunday outing with picnic was to the Savill Gardens in Windsor and we then boarded a French Brothers boat at Runnymede for our cruise on the Thames, during which we were served a cream tea.

There was just time on Bank Holiday Monday to watch the Kennet Morris Men at Goring Heath Almshouses before our visitors had to board their coach for the return journey. Each was given a knitted cockerel as a souvenir.

### **Other Activities**

At the end of May we had a cake stall at Whitchurch Hill fete, with a raffle of a basket of French produce.

We were pleased to see Martine in August as normal, and receive many meilleurs vœux for the New Year.

14 Whitchurch United Charities – Sally Woolhouse

21:05

The trustees of the Charity have continued to provide valuable 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 2019, the trustees have not awarded any grants. No applications were received by the charity during this period. This is of course very disappointing but the numbers of applications do vary from year to year. However, in the forthcoming year, the trustees expect to receive new demands on the charity funds, due to the financial challenges being experienced by many families at this difficult time.

Two new trustees, John Bradon and Katharine Martin, were appointed at a meeting of the trustees on 8th October 2019.

Therefore, as from that date, the ex-officio trustees are:-

Sue Matthews and Ken Baker

and the representative trustees are:-

Peter Hawley (Chairman), Sally Woolhouse (Secretary), Sarah Dixon (Grant Applications Secretary), Nick Leadbeater-Hart (Treasurer), Katherine Higley (Publicity Officer), Sarah Dragonetti, John Bradon and Katharine Martin.

15 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 have not been particularly active over the past year, due to other commitments, but we continue to act in an advisory role to the Parish Council on the management of the green spaces in the parish. We are pleased to be consulted on the maintenance of the Village Green, the Maze area and the Polish Church site. Gill Goodwin is the WoTHABS' representative on the Village Green Working Group and we are grateful to her for taking on this important role.

Last June, a walk in the wonderful Hay Meadow at Hardwick was held in conjunction with the PAWS group. It was an enjoyable and very informative event, led by knowledgeable botanists and hosted by James Norman who manages this important site.

Sandra Parkinson, one of our founder members, organised the first ever Bio Blitz at the Maze, last May. The aim was to identify as many plants, trees, insects, birds, animal signs, etc. as possible during the afternoon. It was well attended by families and the children who came along particularly enjoyed catching mini-beasts – no surprise there! Sandra also ran a series of monthly family-friendly local wildlife walks last year. She was disappointed that these did not attract enough families to make it worth her while, so were discontinued after July, when the walk was a visit to the Iron Age Hillfort at Bozedown.

In April this year, I was pleased to be appointed as Nature Editor for the village website. The aim is to publish a 'Nature Notes' at least once a month on a topical and

seasonal subject. I will write some of them and others will be written by other local contributors. Six have been put online so far, on a variety of topics.

Finally, although there has not been any positive progress for several years, we still plan to continue with our long-term project for the restoration of the once flower-rich verges on Hardwick Road. The Parish Council has kindly authorized a grant towards the work needed to protect the verges from further erosion by vehicles. The plan is to restore and re-seed approximately 220 m of damaged verges (on both sides of the road) as far as the Hardwick Estate gates. This should make it a safer and more pleasant walk out of the village for everyone.

16 Village website – Richard Wingfield, News Editor

21:10

Fortunately, there is no need to give a long description of website activities during the year as they have been visible in a continuous supply of news and information, available to all free of charge.

I am delighted to say that our long-lasting team of the same five people has now chalked up more than nine years of trying to keep the Whitchurch website up-to-date, lively and relevant.

I would like to thank our Page Editor **Hilary Jensen**, our Events Editor **Pam Scott**, our IT host **Phil Weir** and our Photographer-at-large **Nick Brazil** for all their work over the past year.

I would also like to thank **Sally Woolhouse** for accepting the role of Nature Editor. She has made a great start with a series of Nature Notes, well timed for the lockdown period, to help us all identify socially distancing birds, flowers and butterflies.

It seems to me that we are well provided in Whitchurch with the Bulletin, the Church Magazine, the Facebook page 'Wonderful Whitchurch' and the Website. Whichever medium people prefer, they can find plenty of interest. I would like to make one suggestion for the Bulletin – the cost to the community could be considerably reduced by accepting more local advertisements.

Please keep sending in messages, news and photos to the website. Thank you.

17 WOT Sing – Geraldine Witcher

20:45

We welcome all people: those who do not have a musical background, or read music or sing in tune and there are no auditions. We meet the first Thursdays in each month at St. John's church in Whitchurch Hill, but are not a church choir. We meet at 1930, sing for ¾ hours, then coffee and then sing for another half hour. Usually, 20-30 people meet in St. John's Church and are fortunate to not have to make any contribution. Since we have been in lockdown, we have met on zoom once a week. We all like the contact and sound more like a pub voice. When you sing on Zoom, you can hear the

background noise. Tim Taylor plays brilliants for us and Richard Windfield is supportive and places WOTSing's news on the website.

18 WOT Bell Ringers – Peter Ferguson

We are now renamed Whitchurch Wallapers!

We meet every Sunday afternoon at 21 Swanston Field at 3.30 pm and finish about 5pm with tea, coffee and cakes.

We have 10 regular ringers and are looking for two more to help ring the large bass bells. However, we can accommodate 6 more ringers, as explained below.

We currently have 36 bells arranged in 3 octaves with chromatic scales which means we have sharps and flats. This enables us to play any music.

We made an early decision early that we would all learn to read and play from music, rather than numbers. In fact, this has paid off as we have grown more confident in picking up the gist of new pieces quickly.

We currently ring with two bells, one in each hand. Some of the professional ringers can ring with four bells two in each hand that are rung by turning the wrist at 90 degrees. But actually ringing two bells does require concentration, mostly counting the beats to the bar and making sure you ring on the beat and know which bar you are in which we try to do most of the time, but the occasional the occasional clanger is dropped which does not really matter and we generally improve in time.

The bells that we ring were fabricated at the Whitechapel bell foundry which is famous for making Big Ben and the Liberty Bell. Alas the foundry has gone out of business but the proprietor's wife Katherine Hughes still fabricates hand bells. In fact, Queen Elizabeth loves handbells and recently bought a set from Whitechapel to give to a church in Canada celebrating their centenary.

We have been extremely fortunate and honoured to have Carol Wheeler join us, who is one of the leading bell ringers in the country and rings with the well-known Barfield ringers in Thatcham. Carol also is famous for her one-woman bell show and is immaculately precise in ringing bells with precision and speed.

Carol guides us immaculately with new music and we are becoming more adventurous as our confidence improves.

One of our ringers Alison Broadbridge purchased a further 12 bells from Whitechapel and it is possible for others who wish to join us and have no experience, to play these bells at the same time as we ring along.

I think we have made great improvement in a short time and what we ring can sounds quite beautiful. The bells are perfectly in tune and can play with other musical accompaniment.

We played last year in front of our French twinning friends from La Bouille and performed a small Christmas concert by courtesy of Graham Dednum at the Ferry Boat.

We shall continue as soon as we can and if you would like to try your hand, please contact me and turn up on Sunday afternoon at 3.30pm when we start again.

You will be most welcome. You do not have to be a music expert, but it does help if you can count up to eight! It is great fun.

19 Whitchurch Primary School – Dawn Chesters

For those of you who follow our Twitter feed will have seen that , up until March the 18<sup>th</sup> our pupils had continued to enjoy a wide range of enrichment opportunities this past year including a trip to a rainforest, a theatre group production for anti-bullying week, voting in our own version of the general election and a trip to Didcot railway museum. Meanwhile, our youngest children in Willow have embraced outdoor learning with weekly visits to South Stoke to visit Forest School where they learn about the environment we live in and enjoy activities such as fire building.

We have taken the children on residential trips to Youlbury and Dorset, giving the children chance to take part in a range of educational activities away from the classroom including history and geographical studies and outdoor physical challenges. Our lower school children have wowed their parents with exhibitions of their home learning projects at the end of their topics.

We also launched our new mission statement and core values

***Our mission is to provide an innovative, safe and caring learning environment where children leave us well prepared for life as global citizens in an ever-changing modern world.***

Excellence   Respect   Courage   Friendship

Our school year was going well.....and then everything changed. With very little notice we had to reinvent education for 140 pupils who could no longer come to school. Fortunately our computing teacher had already been doing some work with G-Suite and the Google classroom set up, so with some carefully selected Youtube tutorials we set to work training our selves on how to move our school online.

One of the first things we had to do was identify who the key worker families were so we could offer to support them to enable them to continue to go to work. We have offered this support consistently every week since the 18<sup>th</sup> March right up until May half term. The children that have been in school have made volcanoes, learnt circus skills, made banners and bunting, whilst at the same time keeping up with their maths, literacy skills set by their teachers.

Teachers have learnt how to schedule work, create videos, set challenges across different websites and hold virtual assemblies and playtimes.

Perhaps the steepest learning curve has been for the parents, who have taken on the 1 to 1 role supporting their children with their learning. We would like to thank them for their continued support of the school through this new and ever-changing situation.

We are extremely grateful to our Parent Association and parent body for their support of the school. They not only organise fundraising activities enjoyed by the parents but also fun activities and experiences for the children.

This week we welcome back our eldest children, Year 6, to a school that has changed since that day back in March, when we didn't know if we were going to see them again before the end of the year. Next week we will be welcoming back children from our reception and year one classes.

Although the school may have changed, 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.

20 Whitchurch Society

Last year, Peter Smith, Ian Bruce and Mike Scott retired from the Committee after many years of service, although they continue to be invaluable and active members of the Society. The Society's Treasurer, Richard Williams, stayed on a further year to kindly aid with the Committee transition.

Will Barclay, John Bradon and Sarah Hanfrey joined me on the new Committee.

The Society held another successful Arts & Crafts Exhibition in November, organised so faultlessly by Sally Woolhouse.

Sadly, this year's garden walks had to be cancelled but we will be holding a virtual version on the village website in June.

The Parish Council has appointed Asset Heritage to carry out a Conservation Area Appraisal and the Society will offer as much assistance to them as possible over the next couple of years with this project

21 WOTJam – Leslie Maynerd 21:50

We are a group of about 8 -10 Jazz musicians who get together every Friday morning at The Stables We have a workshop before coffee where we play a few songs and try ideas out and after coffee play more of a jam session We have a rhythm section of drums, bass guitar and rhythm guitar who keep us in order and about 6 front line instruments - saxes trumpet violin

We have huge fun and over the years (5) feel we have really improved We occasionally have a professional player come to take a workshop with us

We are really missing getting together in the lockdown but doing things virtually - quite fun but a bit hit and miss! Can't wait until we're allowed to get together again

We're also up for concerts if anyone fancies booking us!

22 St. Mary's – Peter Ferguson 21:25

The Reverend Claire Alcock took up a new assignment as priest in charge at St John's and St Philips in Reading.

We are now in the interregnum period. Someone has applied for the vacancy of Associate Priest at St Mary's and St John's Whitchurch. A preliminary interview has been undertaken by the Rector the Reverend Canon Kevin Davies, the Reverend Linda Smith, our church wardens and Archdeacon by zoom. A further face-to-face meeting is being arranged.

Graeme Pearce has led a working party and appointed architects, Jessop and Cook & Partners, to undertake preliminary drawings for a new community room at St John's and a new toilet facility to the south wing at St Mary's.

With the coronavirus pandemic the churches of St Mary's and St John's have been in lock down until further notice. However, the Reverend Kevin Davies undertakes a zoom service at 11 am each Sunday morning. Also, there is a weekly zoom Compline prayer meeting each Wednesday at 8pm lead by Peter Ferguson welcome to all, particularly with specific prayers for the community.

23

Meeting Close

21:25