

A dirt path winds through a wooded area, flanked by trees and bushes. The path is covered in shadows from the surrounding foliage. The overall scene is a natural, outdoor setting.

SPRING 2021

# WHITCHURCH BULLETIN

## CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE, APRIL 2021

In the three months since the last Bulletin in January, the UK's COVID-19 situation has steadily improved, and government lockdown restrictions are finally starting to ease. I hope that this will continue according to the government's roadmap and by the next Bulletin in July, restrictions will be fully lifted, even though I am sure many things will continue to be quite different in the village for some time to come.

The Parish Council has continued to meet via virtual Zoom meetings which allows us to carry on but government legislation allowing this is due to expire in May, so as it stands, we will be required to have in-person meetings commencing in June.

We have two vacancies at the moment and have prepared an article that you can read later in the Bulletin that provides more background on the Parish Council and what the role of a councillor entails. I would encourage you to read it for your own information, even if joining the Council is not something that you are interested in right now.

**Village Green.** Government Coronavirus Guidance was eased on 29 March allowing outdoor sports activities on the Village Green such as the youth football training sessions that have now restarted. The Football Club completed installation of the extended backstop nets with reinforced mounts and moved the goals back to the normal east-west orientation. After the first two weeks experience, further improvements are clearly needed to the backstop nets and Alistair Aitchison is investigating how they can be adjusted and increasing the height.

A new village maintenance contractor, Scofell Commercial Landscapes, has been selected by the Parish Council to manage grass cutting on the Village green and other parts of the village. Thanks to our Clerk Jane and Cllr Steward for leading the bid process. Scofell are a highly professional team based in Newbury with over 40 employees. Their customers include Newbury Showgrounds,

Thames Valley Business Park, the Downs Schools, and about 15 other Parish Councils including Lambourne and Pangbourne. I recently met the contract manager and team of three individuals that will be working in our village and was impressed with their professionalism.

**Village improvements from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).**

You should be aware of the work was completed in February and March on laying an asphalt slurry to improve the evenness and to extend the life of the pavements on Swanston Field, Manor Road and the High Street. I have had positive feedback from some residents that this has made a significant improvement to the appearance and safety of pavements throughout the village.

The only pavement that was not refreshed is the stretch between The Ferryboat and The Toll Bridge. I have had feedback from a few people that roots growing through it make it unsafe for some people. I have raised this to OCC and asked them to inspect it.

I have also asked OCC to prioritise the implementation of the drainage improvements by the Greyhound to enable it to be done before the road surface refresh of the High Street that is planned for this summer. They are still waiting for dates and pricing approval for these but will try to get it in as soon as possible before the High Street surface refresh work. They plan to clear the drains end to end on the High Street once the new drainage and street surface refresh work is completed as the tar and chips normally get into the drains.

**20mph Speed Limit.** Cllr Smith formally submitted our request for 20 mph speed limit in the village to OCC. The strategy for how a 20 mph speed limit will be supported in the county is still under development, but the following updates was provided by OALC: *“After Oxfordshire County Council’s unanimous decision in December 2020 to support 20mph in Oxfordshire they are now working on the strategy, plans and timing to implement this. A budget of £200,000 has been allocated to the project. A leader, yet to be appointed, will direct the initiative and create a project group which includes stakeholders*

*such as 20's Plenty for Oxfordshire to ensure external views are represented. This strategy group will explore where 20mph makes sense, different approaches and designs for different localities, and cost effective processes to make delivery more affordable and may well result in specified areas/parishes/towns generating a single Traffic Regulation Order. The plan and potential cost to roll out 20mph across the county will become clearer in due course."*

**The Greyhound Pub.** I have been approached by a few people showing support for the Greyhound Pub, given its risk of being sold as a private dwelling, and would encourage one or more residents to take the lead in organising a community support group.

SODC Cllr Peter Dragonetti's advice is that our best chance of success is to form a strong community group to spearhead our efforts and submit an application to register the pub as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). Cllr Dragonetti had a motion approved requiring SODC to do everything within their legal power to protect local pubs. However, he also believes that SODC will be unlikely to approve an ACV application unless they are supported by a strong showing of community support.

A second option is related to a new government grant scheme for community ownership of local pubs and other facilities. The government recently announced a budget of £150m to be allocated for this purpose with matching grants of up to £250,000 per community. I understand that these grants would go to communities wishing to purchase pubs and make them community run ventures. More information on this scheme is expected in June when bids will start to be accepted. Again, the grant would go to a community group wishing to own the pub and not to the Parish Council.

**Traffic and Parking Working Group (TAPWG).** Cllrs Smith and Leadbeater-Hart have been leading recruitment of new members of TAPWG to replace members who have recently resigned. They report that a number of volunteers have stepped forward and expect that a refreshed group with a new Terms of Reference can be initiated shortly.

**Polish Church Memorial Gardens.** The Green Team has made good progress on setting up the new Polish Church Memorial Gardens behind Manor Road with support from the Parish Council. There is a new foundation where the original church was that includes new benches and planters. It is shaping up to be a lovely, quiet, place to visit, but there are still plans for a cross, a plaque and information board. Well done to Alexa and the other Green team volunteers for making this new village open space a reality!

**Maintenance of Manor Road Trees.** The Heritage Tree Services will be performing maintenance work on the ancient yew trees and a number of other trees along the entrance to Manor Road is due to take place on 21-22 April. This will require closure of the Playground during that time. Please contact Cllr Higley with any questions related to this work.

**Eastfield House planning application.** SODC determined at the end of January that the original planning application for refurbishment of Eastfield House in 2013, P11/S0126, is still valid. Planning application approval normally expires after three years, but Ross Healthcare stated that a trench had been dug on site before planning permission had expired. SODC also admitted to making some errors in not discharging certain conditions. This approval is completely separate from the application to demolish and rebuild Eastfield House which is still rejected even after appeal. The Parish Council recently reviewed updates to conditions for the original 2013 application related to the Traffic and Landscaping Plans but objected to these, as had SODC officers, as there are still issues with them and they are not considered up to be up to date.

A summary of the Parish Council Planning applications for the past three month period is available later in the Bulletin. This summary is maintained by the Parish Council Clerk Jane, and we intend to have this summary published going forward.

**Second Parish Councillor Vacancy.** You may also be aware that Hanna Ferguson has resigned as a Parish Councillor recently creating a second vacancy on the Parish Council. Hanna and her

husband have decided to start a new business together which she feels she needs to focus her efforts on.

Kind regards,

*Jim Donahue*

Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

## **FROM YOUR DISTRICT COUNCILLOR**

After all the excitement and controversy over the Local Plan last year, South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse Councils have now agreed to develop a joint Local Plan, which would take the Councils through to about 2040/41. There would be significant cost savings from taking this route, in the gathering of evidence, the development of common policies and the inspection process. There is also strong logic in working together on issues such as the development of Didcot, affordable housing and on environmental policies and practices. A joint committee would oversee the process, but the final decision-making would still lie with the individual Councils in order to ensure local accountability

We have all now received notice of Council tax for the coming year and I am sorry to say that SODC has had to raise the Council tax again, it's going up by £5 to £132 a year for a band D property. I would point out that the current SODC element of the Council Tax at £126 is dwarfed by the County Council element of £1,527, and SODC's council tax is still one of the lowest in the country.

Recently I, along with Councillor Ian Snowdon who represents a ward in Didcot, have been appointed tree champions, encouraging tree growing and protection, promoting the value of trees and woodland and raising awareness of protection of trees and woodlands. The best time to plant a tree is 25 years ago, and I am pleased to say that I have been planting trees all my life, starting from when I was at school. One visible tree that I had planted in about 1987 was the Wild Service tree by the cross roads at Crays Pond, which is now a fine specimen of this uncommon but native species.

At a recent meeting of the full council, I proposed two motions which were passed unanimously, the first of which addressed the undergrounding of power lines in new housing developments, particularly in the sites around Oxford. It also addressed the issue of the power lines that bisect recent housing in Didcot. Although undergrounding is costly, in the long term it is not prohibitively expensive, and indeed the prospect of not having pylons dominating a townscape adds significant value to every home nearby. The same power line that disfigures Didcot runs close to Pangbourne, and indeed it is underground between Streatley and Upper Basildon. It was done there to protect the landscape, something I wholly applaud, and if we can do that for landscape, we can also do it for people's homes, either retrospectively as at Didcot or as part of the development around Oxford. I didn't want the Oxford green belt development, but if it's to be built, let's make sure it's a housing environment of which we can be proud, and not like something from a developing country.

The other motion was to strengthen the Council's backing for community supported pubs that are threatened.

*Peter Dragonetti*

## **MAKE A CHANGE, BECOME A PARISH COUNCILLOR !**

The Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council would like you to consider helping your community by becoming a Parish Councillor.

### **What do Councillors do?**

Local councillors are the champions of their community who invest time in local projects and issues to the benefit of residents and the neighbourhood. Councillors attend to local needs of residents, local groups and businesses, make decisions on local services, and work closely with both district and county councils to progress vital projects to invest in the future of the community.

In Whitchurch-on-Thames, there are a number of areas that councillors typically spend time addressing issues or making decisions on:

- Maintaining and improving open spaces such as on the Village Green, the Maze, the Manor Road playground. and the new Polish Church Memorial Garden.
- Addressing traffic and parking related issues.
- Liaising with Oxfordshire County Council to address issues with drainage, flooding, and road and pavement improvements.
- Maintaining and executing our village emergency plan.
- Supporting the Village Hall Management Committee.
- Working to address issues raised with planning applications such as Eastfield House and the Coombe Park fence along Hartslock bridleway.
- Liaising with the allotment's society.
- Working to address residents' issues as they are raised.

### **What do Councils do?**

In Oxfordshire, there are three levels of local councils:

- **Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)** – is responsible for maintaining all roads, pavements and drainage. They also fund schools and social care services.
- **South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)** is responsible for making planning decisions and managing local services such and waste removal and street cleaning.
- **The Parish Council** – leads on other areas where we own or rent land and facilities such as the Village Green, Village Hall, Manor Road playground, the War Memorial and the allotments. We are the first point of contact for residents to raise local issues. We either work to address issues within the powers we have, or work with SODC and OCC as needed.

Parish Council activities are funded by a local tax, called a precept, which is determined by the council. The Whitchurch Parish Council currently receives approximately £26,000 budget each year to spend in the village along with any other grants or fundraising we may seek.

In Whitchurch-on-Thames, the Parish Council worked with the community to develop the 2019 Village Plan (available on the village website) that defines the priority areas that the village wanted to improve. The Parish Council has been working to implement many of these recommendations that include:

- Making improvements to the Village Hall.
- Improve pavements in the village including addressing pedestrian safety issues.
- Forming a Green Team to better maintain village open spaces.
- Implement a community emergency plan.
- Finding solutions to traffic and parking issues.
- Implementing a 20-mph speed limit.
- Replacing the pavilion and tea hut on the Village Green.
- Re-assessing the Conservation Area by re-submitting a new appraisal for the Conservation Area.

### **How long does it take?**

A recent survey by the National Association of Local Councils found that councillors put aside, on average, three hours a week for council work. Some councillors will spend more than this, but this is not mandatory. Council work often includes attending meetings, engaging with residents and speaking to local groups and bodies on behalf of the council.

In Whitchurch, we generally have one two hour meeting each month that councillors are required to attend. Extraordinary meetings may typically be held a few times a year. Meeting preparation includes

reviewing all agenda items, including planning applications and preparing motions with background material for other Councillors to debate and vote on at the meeting. Councillors may choose to get involved one or more initiatives that requires participation in a Working Group or liaising with key stakeholders in the village.

### **What are the requirements to become a councillor?**

You must be:

- A British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth, or the European Union.
- 18 years of age or older.
- A resident of the village for at least 1 year, or own land or work in the Parish for 1 year.

Councillors need to run for election in an election year, which is normally every 5 years. In Whitchurch we have 7 councillors. When a vacancy becomes available between elections, the Parish Council is normally allowed to “co-opt” a new member without the need for an election. In an election year, all councillors must submit nomination forms to run as a candidate. In the last election year, 2019, all Councillors were re-elected without the need for a public ballot as there were 7 or fewer candidates.

### **How can I get involved?**

We need people of all ages, skills, and backgrounds to ensure that our Council can work professionally and effectively, representing a cross-section of views in the village. A full job description of responsibilities and desired skills can be found on the website, but please don't let the list of skills stop you from getting involved as we know that everyone brings different things to the Council and will continue to develop through their experience working on the Council. Training courses are available to all Councillors and more experienced Councillors are available to mentor new members. We expect applicants to have some knowledge of issues in the village that they would like to help address, but the most important traits

we look for are people who care about our community and want to make a difference.

**To find out more, please contact the Parish Council Clerk at [parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com](mailto:parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com) or any member of the Council.**

*Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council, April 2021*

## THE WHITCHURCH AWARD 2021



The Whitchurch Society is pleased to announce that nominations are now open for this year's Whitchurch-on-Thames Award. The recipient will be announced by the Parish Council.

The Award can be given to an individual, or possibly a group, in recognition of their contribution to the village.

Please email the name of your nomination, and why you think they should receive the award, to The Whitchurch Society at [TheWhitchurchAward@gmail.com](mailto:TheWhitchurchAward@gmail.com). The deadline for nominations is Sunday May 9th.

## WHITCHURCH NATURE NOTES

I do hope that many of you are still enjoying the Nature Notes that have been published on the village website since April 2020. The idea came about at the start of the first lockdown when getting out for a walk in our area and enjoying our lovely environment was increasingly popular. The footfall along Hardwick Road where we live is amazing and (on the whole!) to be welcomed.

I was kindly assigned the role as 'Nature Editor' which means that I have written some of the issues myself but have also edited great

contributions from other people in the village. Very many thanks to those contributors and also to those who have sent me interesting questions and photos.

There are now 9 available to read via the Nature Notes page, on a variety of topics covering our local flora and fauna. Also, there are 2 'Extras' covering more distant locations and unusual wildlife.

The most recent issue (#9) is entitled 'Wild Flowers of the Hardwick Road verges' which is a guide to the wild flowers on the Hardwick Road north verge, surveyed in 2000 and now re-issued in 2021. Hardwick Road is a good example of a road verge that is home to remnants of once widespread flowers found in meadows, along hedges and on farmland. Many are now lost as land-use has changed and farming has become more intensified.

Sandra Parkinson, who farms at Chalkhills on Hardwick Road, carried out the botanical survey of the verges for WoTHabs throughout 2000 and then prepared an A5 leaflet with the survey results. It was presented in an easy-to-use way with the species grouped by flower colour and their flowering season. I have re-published the leaflet which is available for passers-by to pick up a copy as they pass The Old Farmhouse on their way towards Hardwick. This coincides with the publication of the survey online as the latest Nature Note. Clearly, there are some changes since 2000 - losses but also some newcomers. Sandra is keen to hear about any changes to the list that you notice on either verge. An approximate location would also be helpful. Please contact her on [sparkinson7@googlemail.com](mailto:sparkinson7@googlemail.com)

The next Nature Notes will be on 'Gardening for Wildlife'. I know this is already a very well-covered subject even in the mainstream press nowadays but I will try and make it topical and interesting for everyone but especially for families with small children. Please do send me any relevant ideas or photos which I will try and include, space permitting!

*Sally Woolhouse*, WoTHabs [sally.woolhouse@gmail.com](mailto:sally.woolhouse@gmail.com)

## WOTHABS : VILLAGE GREEN

Recent work on trees at the south end of the Village Green near the school has let in more light and will help encourage a diversity of wild plants in that area. Reducing the spread of nettles, brambles and randomly sprouting hollies has also helped bring in more light. It will be interesting to see what thrives this year as we continue to give it a helping hand (helping hands?) with regular work parties.

We continue to look after the area along the roadside and round the car park. In general people seem to be good about using the litter bins now – though there are times it looks as if a bigger bin is needed! How about this for a slogan: If it doesn't fit, hang on to it!

We hope to restore the areas bordering the Village Green at the north end and east side of the VG in ways which encourage insects, small mammals and bird life. Our starting point is shifting fallen and falling trees where appropriate and creating wood piles.

*Gill Goodwin*

## THE GREEN TEAM CELEBRATES 2020!

- 12 working parties were held, an estimated 120 hours of volunteer time – despite lockdowns!
- **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.
- **New Core Team Members.** 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.

- List of Green Spaces. We are very lucky to have many green spaces in the village, the primary goal of the Green Team is to care for these. The list can be found on our webpage here; <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html>
- Polish Church Garden Project; Full details and latest updates here <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/polishgarden.html>. In spite of lockdown we have made progress; the church base has been built, garden cleared, regularly mowed, planted and weeded. Benches and planters were installed in March 2021.

2021 goals;

- 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

2021 working party schedule so far – you can always find the up to date version on the village website What's On section

<b>24th April</b>	10am Village Green working party (north end near football pitch)
<b>1st May</b>	10am Maze working party
<b>15th May</b>	10am Polish Church Garden working party
<b>22nd May</b>	10am Hardwick Road North Verges (opposite west entrance to Swanston field) working party
<b>5th June</b>	10am Maze working party

3rd July 10am Maze working party

7th August 10am Maze working party

## **GORING HEATH AND WHITCHURCH SHOW**

As many of you will know, the village calendar (in a normal year) includes this twice yearly show in Spring and Autumn. Taking place in Goring Heath Parish Hall this is an opportunity for gardeners, vegetable growers and those with a craft, baking, or a photographic interest, to enter into friendly competition. Entries are invited from residents of both Whitchurch, and the Parish of Goring Heath.

Needless to say there were no such shows in 2020 and with some doubt as to what opportunities will exist in 2021, the next show is planned for April 2022.

A new organising group is currently being put together in readiness and we are looking to recruit a few more folk to help. There are always preparations to be undertaken before the event, following a tried and tested planning schedule. Similarly there are things that need doing on the day itself – from setting up the room, to making teas and Coffees, supporting the judges, selling raffle tickets etc. What is that phrase, many hands make light work?

Might you be able to help? If you are interested please contact Liz Gibson on 0118 984 2012

## QUARTERLY PLANNING UPDATE FOR WOT PC – MARCH 17, 2021

<b>Planning Reference</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Comments by WOT PC</b>	<b>SODC status</b>
P21/S0492/DIS	The Limes, 14 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP	The Council voted to approve this application on March 11, 2021.	DIS March 8, 2021 (fully discharged)
P21/S0575/HH	5 Swanston Field, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP	The Council voted to approve this application on March 11, 2021	No update
P20/S4130/FUL	Uplands Cottage, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HH	The Council voted to object to this application and recommended the applicant to follow the feedback provided by SODC on February 11, 2021.	No update
P20/S4054/HH	Royal Oak Cottage, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HF	The Council voted to approve this application on February 11, 2021	Planning Permission granted March 4, 2021
P20/S4130/FUL	As above	The Council voted to submit a response that although unclear, many neighbours raised concerns about overlooking. The Council wishes to ask SODC to look into this issue and if there was a possibility to keep the bordering trees on a long-term basis on December 10, 2020	As above

P20/S3387/HH	4 Bridge Cottages, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DE	The Council voted to approve this application on December 10, 2020.	Planning permission granted January 7, 2021
P16/S1919/DIS/	Eastfield House, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HP	The Council voted to object to the application and they agreed with the comments and concerns made by the Forestry and Highways Officers and Senior Flood Engineer and residents in the surrounding area that the discharges are not made until the issues are addressed.	No update
P21/S0842/HH/LB	Thames Bank South, High Street, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DB	The Council voted to object to this application and that the applicants seek to work with their neighbours on the application.	No update

## **THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S & ST JOHN'S, WHITCHURCH** (AN INDEPENDENT CHARITY)

The Friends of St Mary's & St John's, Whitchurch is a charity that was set up in 2016 to bring together the communities of Whitchurch-on-Thames and Whitchurch Hill in support of the preservation of their two parish churches. People from all faiths and none are welcomed and for this reason the charity is run independently from day-to-day church life.

All money raised is contributed towards the maintenance, preservation and improvement of the two church buildings and their churchyards. This is for the benefit of current and future generations of Whitchurch and Whitchurch Hill.

Since the last Bulletin the Friends have still not been able to have any social and fundraising events because of the Covid-19 pandemic but this doesn't mean that the trustees have been idle in their activities. The Friends web site has been overhauled and the result looks very impressive. This web site can be accessed from the Whitchurch-on-Thames web page using the links either from 'Village Groups' or the 'Church' link. Please have a look and hopefully you will be impressed. We hope to have a link from the Goring Heath Community Web site in the near future.

The Friends have also fixed a date for a working party at St.John's churchyard on the afternoon of Saturday 22nd May at 2pm. General maintenance will help to keep the churchyard grounds in a presentable condition. All are invited to help out.

Plans are being made to hold a fundraising social event on the evening of Saturday 9th October in Goring Heath Parish Hall. We plan that this will have a 'cheese and wine' theme to it, but to be confirmed in the next Bulletin. Please make a note in your diaries and further details will come later.

If you would like to become a member of The Friends or would like more information, please contact either:

*Chairman Paul Witcher*, tel: 0118 984 4959 email [pwitcher@aol.co.uk](mailto:pwitcher@aol.co.uk)

*Secretary Sally Woolhouse*, tel:- 0118 984 4365 email [sally.woolhouse@gmail.com](mailto:sally.woolhouse@gmail.com)

## THE WHITCHURCH MAZE – AN UPDATE

In the previous issue of the Bulletin (Jan 2021), I described the work which was then underway to produce '**The Maze Guide**'. I am now very pleased to report that this has been completed and was published on the village website in February. Geoff Weir and I carried out the full audit of the bricks, then produced a draft version

of the Guide which we asked several members of the community to review for us. I would like to thank everyone for their helpful comments.

The Guide can be found by following the 'About the Village' and 'The Maze' links on the website. Its main purpose is to enable you to locate exactly any brick that you are interested in finding. It will also of course be an invaluable tool for future reference when another restoration is planned, and it can then be readily updated to reflect the changes. Please be assured that there are no personal details made public in the Guide – it simply shows the wording on the engraved bricks and when they were laid.

So, if you have a brick in the Maze but can't quite remember where it is, why not visit when you are out and about and put the Maze Guide to the test?!

I have agreed with Laura Lucas of The Whitchurch Society that I will hand over this audit project to her shortly because the Society is the appropriate body to hold the Maze Archive for future generations.

*Sally Woolhouse April 2021*

## **MAZE WORKING PARTIES**

These will take place on the following SATURDAYs each month for the 2021 season starting at 10.00AM:

1st MAY, 5th JUNE, 3rd JULY, 7th AUG, 4th SEPT, 9th OCT, 6th NOV (if needed)

PLEASE come along and help with edging, sweeping and general maintenance of the Maze and contribute to the important effort in keeping this special place looking good!

*Sally Woolhouse*

## WHITCHURCH PRIMARY PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Distance learning was yet again a necessity from the 5th of January; our school staff and parents were hard at work supporting children's learning under unusual and difficult circumstances. Fundraising took a backseat as parents juggled working from home alongside supervising school lessons. Whitchurch Primary School delivered excellent provision during lockdown through live and recorded lessons on Google Classroom, live kahoot quizzes, remote morning assemblies and break time virtual chats. We are enormously grateful to Mrs Chesters and her wonderful staff team for all their support during these challenging months.

We raised funds for the school with a Winter Warmer Challenge which encouraged our children to continue moving and exercising at home through the cold weather. Our parent body was enormously generous as they delivered treats and snacks to the staff room during lockdown to show appreciation to the staff for their hard work as they taught lessons in school for children of essential workers as well as remotely for children learning from home.

After welcoming children back to school a few weeks ago, we enjoyed some normality and the Parents' Association arranged an Easter fundraiser. We delivered easter eggs to school for each child and organised our first bunny trail for families to follow through Whitchurch Village and Whitchurch Hill.

We are planning on running more socially distanced outdoor events during the summer term to raise funds for our school and look forward to restrictions lifting.

As ever, our school needs your help. The Parents' Association will be replacing the school's astro-turf during the summer holidays and whilst fundraising has been challenging this year, we continue to run events and appeal to our local community for financial support which is needed more than ever before.

## **Ways that the local community can help:**

Shopping online from your sofa? You could also be helping 'Whitchurch Primary – Whitchurch on Thames' raise much needed funds for FREE during this time via [easyfundraising.co.uk](http://easyfundraising.co.uk)! Over 4,400 online retailers including John Lewis & Partners, Argos, Uswitch, eBay and M&S are ready to give a free donation every time you shop online. All you have to do is sign up to support us using the link below and the next time you shop online go through the easyfundraising website or App and we'll receive a free donation.

**<https://bit.ly/32bzTfT>**

You can also support us by shopping at [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) and selecting 'Whitchurch Primary School Association' as your charity of choice. The same products are sold at the same prices with the fantastic addition of Amazon sending us a free donation.

We really need all the help we can get at the moment and any funds we raise will make a big difference to us!

If you would like to support children in your local area, we would love to hear from you. One way of doing this is through matched funding as part of a charitable giving scheme offered by your organisation. Get in touch with us to learn more about matched giving or with any other ideas about supporting us at [whitchurchpa20@gmail.com](mailto:whitchurchpa20@gmail.com).

*Elaine Mullins, Chair*

Whitchurch Primary School Parents' Association

Registered charity 1114159

## **WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL**

It has been another busy term at Whitchurch Pre-School – the Pre-School team have run an engaging range of activities for the children, from singing along to Boogie Mites, practising throwing skills with bean bags and balls in PE, learning about water surface tension in Science, modelling clay mini beasts and playing at the allotment for outdoor learning. We have made a change to our Rising

Fives sessions, which prepare children for starting Primary school, to extend these from two dedicated sessions per week, to now incorporate these into all sessions. This allows all our older children can participate no matter what days they attended, whilst allowing our younger children to join all sessions. Short, regular activities, allow for better concentration and do not pressure the child.

We have been delighted to have received two council grants which have meant we have been able to invest significantly in our outdoor space, with the building of a large outdoor covered area, which helps when getting the children ready for time in the garden and ensuring their muddy kitchen stays dry! We made good use of this to stay dry for our annual Spring Day which was once again sponsored by Warmingham & Co. Although a rather soggy start, the children still had fun getting the garden ready, digging the beds, planting seeds and a huge amount of watering! They also enjoyed a range of Easter crafts and a little Easter Egg hunt around the garden.

We have once more received such generous support from local businesses and members of the community and raised £2,000 in our Spring Auction Fundraiser. The funds raised from this event will go to fixing the damaged sandpit area in the Pre-School garden.

Back in the autumn the local community sponsored the children walking 370km in the Whitchurch Walk raising over £2,000. We are delighted to be spending this and other monies raised through fundraising on completely revamping our indoor classroom at Pre-School over the Easter holiday. Out with the old worn furnishings and plastic, and in with the new natural and sustainable. It has been shown that the introduction of natural materials and resources in Early Years, help to create a calm environment, allowing for better concentration, imagination and freedom to explore using the curiosity approach, as well as an overall greater sense of wellbeing. We hope to create an enjoyable indoor space for the children that flows and is in harmony with the outdoors.

Three FREE and EASY ways you can support Whitchurch Pre-School

- Become a Co-Op Member and select Pre-School as your local community cause. For every £1 spent 2p will be donated to our cause: <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/48954>
- Sign up to easyFundraising and every time you shop on-line thousands of retailers will donate money to Pre-School: <https://bit.ly/37ZlgxH>
- Register with AmazonSmile and select Pre-School as your charity through the app or browser and when you shop with Amazon 0.5% of your order value will be given to Pre-School: [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk)

Or, you can help us reach our £5,000 fundraising target as we recover from Covid-19 by donating to our online fundraiser:

<https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/whitchurchonthamespreschool>

Thank you for all of your support.

*Kathleen Barrow*, Manager, Whitchurch Pre-School

## **WHITCHURCH SOCIETY FREEDOM WALK 27TH JUNE**

After a long break brought about by the pandemic and resulting lockdowns, the Society is organising a *Summer Freedom walk* on Sunday 27th June. This is subject to the Government's roadmap to come out of lockdown going ahead. All Villagers are invited and the walk is easy enough for young children and our canine friends (but see para below on "Alabama Rot" please)

The walk will commence at 10:30am at The Maze and will head along Hardwick Road through the Hardwick estate before climbing up through Bottom Wood past the Bear Pit. We then head towards Holly Copse and Collins End before arriving at Path Hill. There is then a steep downhill section as we pass The Baulk and eventually re-join Hardwick Road en route back to the Village. The walk is

22

about 4 miles and should take about two hours. There will be an opportunity for drinks etc at the Greyhound PH at the end.

Can dog-owners please be aware of the risk due to “Alabama Rot” which appears prevalent in woods around the Village. Here follows advice from the PDSA; *“Alabama Rot is a potentially deadly disease which damages dogs’ blood vessels. This can cause skin sores and sometimes renal failure. The disease only affects dogs. Nearly all cases occur during winter and spring (between November and May) and are often reported in dogs that have been walked in muddy or woodland areas.*

*If Alabama Rot has been reported near you, avoid walking your dog in muddy woodland areas. Washing any mud off your dog after a walk might help, although this hasn’t been proven. It won’t harm your dog and might help keep your mind at ease if you’re worried about the disease.”*

*Richard Williams*

## **THE TALES OF A CAT AND THREE DOGS**

We obtained *Cherubino*, our one and only cat, as the runt of a local litter. She was a toughie, brooking no argument from any nearby dog and, locally, in charge of her patch. We treated her as a pet dog, she went out at night and returned to a commanding whistle! She picked up the habit of accompanying the children to school until the headmaster complained, particularly since she followed them into the classroom!

Having been rejected she then lay in wait in the gutter opposite our house and attacked the children as they made their way home in the afternoon. She lived to the ripe old age of 21 and gave birth to two kittens in our shopping basket but only one survived and it too didn’t live very long although adopted by a nearby family.

We realised that what we really needed as a family was a dog. We obtained our first yellow labrador bitch, Lass, as a puppy from a breeder in Mortimer. We were away on holiday at the time she was

ready so she stayed with her mother and siblings perhaps too long. We hastened home as soon and as fast as we could to collect her. Naturally she was frightened and whined most of that first night but soon overcame the loss of her previous home when she realised that the five of us would dote on her for the next 14 years.

Her father had suffered an accident and only had three legs but Lass had inherited his strong, tough nature and shied at nothing wherever we walked: no gate, stile, fence or wall would impede her progress. She walked over 15,000 miles with us, climbed 44 mountains, some more than once, and generally was a strong, loving friend throughout her life. She was well known in the village and I wrote an obituary of her to bid a fond farewell when we regrettably had to have her put down, to close what had become an uncomfortable life for her.

In order to ease the pain of losing her we searched for a replacement, another yellow labrador, bitch of course, and found a breeder near Southampton. The house was notable for its complete devotion to breeding dogs, but these were special and the best ones were destined for the show ring at Crufts. *Holly* was the one for sale, 1 year old but already had been shown. She was for sale because her sister started to win the prizes. I was checked out to see if I was a suitable future owner and failed only on having the dog lead incorrectly placed round her neck for my usual position of having the dog on my left hand side.

*Holly* was a beautiful dog and did she know it, when we took her up to the Lake District to walk with me in the mountains she looked at me quizzically to indicate that she didn't mind walking miles with us on relatively flat terrain but there was no way in which she was going to roughen up her paws and claws on all those rocky and hard surfaces. We should have guessed because, unlike Lass, she would wait for any gate or stile to be opened for her and she required assistance for any necessary climb to overcome an obstacle. On one occasion I walked on for half a mile before I realised that she wasn't with me. I retraced my steps to find her patiently standing by a stile waiting for me to lift her over. She too lived for 14 years and

walked 15,000 miles with us. She also had to be put down to ease her discomfort. I wrote an obituary for her too, in order to recognise the pleasure she had given us.

We then had a period of 16 years without a dog but always recognised the absence and the need. I walked many other dogs in the village to accompany me on my weekly outings but was eventually only too happy to once again provide a home, this time to rescue Molly. She had been found abandoned and feral in Ireland at the defined age of 5. She was brought over by Labrador Rescue and rehomed with a lady and her family in Hampshire, she was devoted to *Molly* but unfortunately her children vied with the dog for her affections. After two years she reluctantly decided that Molly would have to be rehomed again. So on 28 May 2014 we became Molly's next proud owners. She was timid and concerned about her sudden transfer to Whitchurch. I slept in the same room as Molly for her first few nights and then, on a nighttime walk, Betty fell in the dark and fractured her wrist. She had to be admitted to hospital and thus the inseparable bond between Molly and me began to be formed.

In October that year I was admitted to hospital for a serious operation. After the surgery the surgeons enquired as to why I had a photograph of Molly on my bedside table and not Betty! I explained that Betty was perfectly well aware of what they had done to me but the dog wasn't and that they had to get me out of the hospital as fast as possible and I would endeavour to get fit and to start walking again. So a double rescue – we rescued Molly and she rescued me.

Although I now don't walk uphill or as far as previously, Molly has walked over 8,000 local miles with me and has provided us with a wonderful period at this time in our lives – thank you *Molly*!

*Eric Hartley*

## AFC WHITCHURCH (CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL)

We are an enthusiastic parent-run football club for children. We currently run five competitive teams (U12, U13, U14 and two U17s) plus a weekly training programme for our youngest members aged 5-7. This latter group is growing massively so please get your sons and daughters involved. Our training and playing principles for all ages are inclusivity, competitiveness, and fun.

The football club has been running for many years and many children have passed through the ranks. We currently have over 80 children representing AFC Whitchurch either competitively or just for fun!

Our coaches and parents are active supporters and advocates of the club and we are always looking for energetic new talent, team-members, and coaching support.

As the spring emerges and we seem to be turning the corner of the pandemic we are now delighted to have restarted training and competitive matches across all our year groups. The 2020/21 season will conclude, and our teams will continue to train through to the end of July.

The village green is a vital resource for us as we have no other local training facility. We appreciate the support of the Parish Council to make this work for all our local children as an important recreational facility.

We are always looking for new players and would welcome both boys and girls (we have no girls only teams at the moment). We would also love to fill some of the age gaps so if any parents would be willing to start a new year group, they would be most welcome. Any prospective players or parents should contact us at [afcwhitchurch@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:afcwhitchurch@yahoo.co.uk)

*Alex Hilton*, Club Chairman  
AFC Whitchurch

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The next Bulletin will be the Summer Edition. The deadline for content will be Sunday 11th July and contributions are welcome from anyone in the Village preferably in Word format.

*Richard Williams*

Email: [rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com](mailto:rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com)



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