

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE: JULY 2020

It's been a memorable three months since the Spring Bulletin at the beginning of April. I know the lockdown has affected us all in many different ways, ranging from trying to support home schooling, to missing loved ones, to job losses and furloughs for some. Many things will never quite be the same as we try to transition to the "new normal". The Parish Council has continued to meet virtually and we have tried to address challenges that have been raised during this period as well and progress new initiatives that residents have asked for in the 2019 Village Plan.

Coronavirus support team – I'd like to thank John Bradon and Lily King and all those who have been helping others in the village over the past three months by answering support requests made via WOTvolunteers@gmail.com. I know this service has been an essential lifeline for many in the village. Support is still available, but the number of requests has gone down significantly with the easing of lock down restrictions and as residents are now arranging direct support for others now that connections have been made.

Village Open Spaces – The Village Green and other Open Spaces in the area have seen increased use for family exercise especially during the glorious weather we had in May. Use of the football pitch has also increased as youth have limited other options at the moment. The Parish Council has initiated a few changes:

- A new litter bin has been installed next to the bench by the football pitch to address increased litter in the area. Many thanks to Alistair Aitcheson and the football club who have volunteered to empty this on a regular basis. The contract we have with SODC for litter and dog bin emptying only applies SODC bins that are located adjacent to a road. We have also requested that the bins at the south end of Muddy Lane by the school be relocated to the Village Green car park area.
- Thanks to Cllr Diana Smith for working with the owners of the paddock by the Village Green, the Cricket Club, Football Club

and others who have taken steps to strengthen the fence and stile used for retrieving balls that are kicked into the Paddock. A new “back-stop net” has been installed to limit the number of balls that go into the paddock.

- The Parish Council agreed at our July meeting to have permanent signs installed reminding people that “We love our Village Green” and asking them to be respectful in terms of dog fouling, litter, and noise in this residential area. This builds on a recommendation from Keith Brooks and the Village Green Working Group.
- Police operation signs remain in place along with increased patrols by Thames Valley Police while they investigate repeated incidents involving broken glass left at one of the football goals. The Parish Council is investigating temporary use of CCTV following advice from the police.
- We were pleased to re-open the children’s playground at Manor Road on 10th July following an easing of lock-down restrictions. Thanks to Cllrs Jon Steward and Hanna Ferguson who organised this by carrying out a risk assessment which calls for daily cleaning of the play equipment with disinfectant spray and also the installation of a foot operated sanitation station.
- Cllrs Steward and Ferguson are also reviewing options to improve the security of the Village Green to protect against access from travellers. Options include use of security bollards to reinforce the main gate at the car park and an additional gate at the north access point.

Flash Flooding – After the driest May on record, we experienced a very brief, but intense, flash flood on the 16th June. This caused damage to the Greyhound including its floor and carpets, and there were close calls for many other houses on the High Street, as well as some on Hardwick Road and Swanston Field.

- A Flood Forum has been formed by members of the Emergency Team that include Warren Beard, John Southey, Richard Wingfield, and Geoff Weir. They have done an analysis of the

problem causing flooding at “The Greyhound Bowl” and made recommendations to the Parish Council.

- We have asked Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to support these recommendations and OCC have responded positively. Actions include asking drainage specialist contractors to perform investigative work with remote CCTV viewing of culverts near the intersection with Eastfield land that are also believed to have contributed to the 2014 flooding.
- We have escalated some longstanding Fix My Street drainage requests to clear the drains on Swanston Field and Hardwick Road, and OCC contractors have now been confirmed to support this work. They were on site this week and the work should start shortly. Thanks to Melanie Hardwick, John Bradon and other residents for continuing to raise these requests.

Manor Road Intersection with the High Street – A number of improvements have been completed in this area in the past few months:

- The damaged pillar repair has now been completed thanks to work to engage a contractor by Cllr Diana Smith.
- The Phonebox has been converted into a used book exchange and repainting has been completed. Thanks to Jean Marc Grosfort for providing the shelving and Allen Scriven for volunteering his time for the painting! The original idea was from Kathy and Alistair Aitcheson.
- Removal of the old mail storage box has been completed courtesy of Nick Plumridge.
- Logs donated from Hardwick estate were placed along Manor Road verge to protect it from damage from parking courtesy of Francis Dixon and Martin Bengtzen of the Green Team.
- The Parish Council selected a conservation tree specialist to draft a management plan for the trees along the Manor Road entrance and playground area including the historic Yew trees

along this majestic entrance to Manor Road. This work will include cutting back of trees as recommended by the specialist. Thanks to Cllr Katherine Highley for her clearly passionate work on tree preservation in this area.

Traffic and Parking Improvements – A follow on Open Day for the traffic and parking proposal for the High Street and other areas is now planned for Thursday evening 3rd September. This is being organised by the Traffic and Parking Advisory Group (TAPAG) and will be a virtual meeting due to continued social distancing requirements. The objectives of this meeting will be to provide an opportunity for follow-on questions from the initial Open Day and to give an opportunity for residents that couldn't make the first Open Day to attend. Details will be published closer to the time on the village website, or by contacting TAPAG Chairman Will Barclay or a member of the parish council for more information.

Pavement Improvements in the Village – The need for pavements improvements throughout the village has continually been raised as an issue by residents over the years and this was rated as the second highest priority issue by residents surveyed in the 2019 Village Plan after Traffic and Parking issues on the High Street. The Parish Council has agreed to contribute funds to OCC get pavement work prioritised for the village. The funds have been budgeted as part of the Parish Council's three-year Village Plan budget and includes OCC grants and Community Infrastructure Levy funds that we need to spend or they will expire. OCC have committed to do a complete resurfacing of Hardwick Road pavement in time for school drop-offs in September and are also identifying fixes required on most other streets in the village as indicated by the yellow markings you may have seen. The Parish Council is also committed to improving safety of pedestrians on the pavement in front of the Ferryboat, but OCC has provided several reasons why they don't believe a raised kerb there is feasible, so we will look at other options.

Other activities to watch out for in the coming months:

- **The Village Hall will be re-opening in September** – Cllr Jean Marc Grosfort is working with the Management Committee to get necessary provisions in place. There are numerous new improvements, including new flooring, a new kitchen, and a new boiler that will be part of this re-opening.
- **Polish Church Memorial Gardens behind Manor Road** – A contractor has been hired to make the agreed changes under management of Alexa Duckworth-Briggs of the Green Team. Work is targeted for the end of July. We look forward to welcoming this new addition to our Village Open Spaces!
- **Conservation Area Appraisal** – Another recommendation from the Village Plan was to work with the District Council to record what it is that we value in the village to give us a stronger basis to protect and maintain this into the future. Asset Heritage Consulting has made an initial visit to the village and are working to prepare their appraisal. There will be a public consultation on their findings once it is available. This work is being led by Cllr Katherine Higley working with the Whitchurch Society.
- **Coombe Park Fence** – Approval of the planning application to replace the metal fence along Hartslock Bridleway to one with timber palings was finally approved by SODC in May. This change will include installation of similar fencing along the Manor Road border with Coombe Park and agreed changes to trees along the border and planting of agreed shrubs in front of the new fence. We understand that this work is due to be carried out in the next two to three months.
- **New Pavilion** – The Cricket Club and Parish Council are in discussions about looking at alternative options to the previously proposed New Pavilion. The Cricket Club has made it clear that they have limited funds to contribute to this effort and have asked that we consider lower cost options such as refurbishment of existing facilities.

Parish Council changes:

- We are pleased to welcome Carrie Leadbeater-Hart back as a Councillor after an absence of about two years.
- Cllr Diana Smith was elected as Vice Chairman at our Annual Parish Council meeting.

Whitchurch Award

Finally, for those who may not be aware, the Parish Council was pleased to select both Sally and Peter Woolhouse as joint recipients of the Whitchurch Award at this year's Annual Assembly in May. There are so many ways that they have contributed to the village, having moved here 42 years ago, raising their family here, with their children attending the school. The website has a more complete description of their contributions including a link to an article about them in the Henley Standard. They have made a huge difference to life in our village, and for that we should all be grateful!

Kind regards,

Jim Donahue, Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

WHITCHURCH PRE-SCHOOL IS BACK

The Pre-School re-opened for key worker children on 15th June and, a couple of weeks later, for the children going to school in September. It's taken a huge amount of work from the staff and the volunteer parent committee to get the Pre-School ready for opening.

We all continued to work extremely hard throughout Lockdown to provide our children with physical and virtual activities including activity packs from the staff, Teddy Bear Pilates with Tania and Outdoor Learning activities with Claire. Alongside this, our experienced and talented staff were offering parental support and guidance to try to make this challenging time easier for our Pre-School community.

The fundraising team has been using creative ways to raise funds and have delivered two successful online events. On 2nd May, we held QuizFest, a quiz night social for Pre-School parents to mark the date of *WhitFest*. At the beginning of June, we took our ever popular Bingo night online (normally hosted by The Ferryboat) and raised a fantastic £431 for Pre-School. This event brought together 50 people from the local community, lots of fun was had and some great prizes were won. Huge thanks to the local businesses who donated prizes to the event: Warmingham & Co, The Ferryboat, The Co-Op, Camper Cafe, Birch Bread, the Pangbourne Cheese Shop, Little Bowden Wellness and Royal Oak Hair Design.

Since reopening once again, every child has been incredibly happy to be back, despite not having been in Pre-School for three months. And the parents have welcomed our efforts to provide some kind of Pre-School for the children who will shortly be going to school in September. We are also continuing a slimmed down virtual Pre-School for other days, and for the children who can't join us in Pre-School.

Early years settings, both those run for profit and not-for-profit, are struggling to break even. We have been exploring how we can make our Pre-School financially viable so it can continue to provide for the next generation of Whitchurch children. With the growing interest in Forest Schools and the recorded benefits of children spending time outdoors, we have been working with our trainee Forest School leader, Claire Jeffs, to create a wild outdoor place for our Pre-School.

We're renting a double plot from the Whitchurch Allotment Association and are turning it into an exciting place for the children to use from the autumn term. We believe investing in the Forest School ethos will be attractive to future parents and help the Pre-School remain financially viable. If you want to know more about project or even get involved, please have a look at our website www.whitchurchpreschool.org/outdoorlearning. If you want to volunteer to dig, build fences, lay paths, prune or even take rubbish to the tip, we'd love to hear from

you! Please email Claire Jeffs ClaireBearOutdoors@gmail.com for an up-to-date list of volunteer tasks and dates available.

Our final major project is building a new Pre-School. The Pre-School has nurtured a generation of children from Whitchurch and its surrounding area. We want the Pre-School to benefit future generations, but our building is no longer fit for purpose. Bought second hand thirty years ago, it is costing us more and more each year to maintain. We now need to bite the bullet and replace it. We are looking for volunteers who want to get involved in this project. Do you have experience of project managing building projects like this or would you like to get involved applying for capital grants? We would love to hear from you. Please email Mel Uglow at chairpersonwhitchurchpreschool@gmail.com for more information.

If you would like to support this cause in a different way, then we also have a crowdfunding page where we are looking to raise funds to enable the build to go ahead before our existing one crumbles. <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/whitchurchonthamespreschool>

Thanks again for all your continued support of our small, village Pre-School. It makes all the difference.

Mel Uglow – Chair, Whitchurch Pre-School

WHITCHURCH UNITED CHARITIES

The Secretary of Whitchurch United Charities would like to remind all families that the Charity has funds available to help meet the costs associated with educational needs such as books, equipment or educational trips. We have not received any applications recently and we are keen for appropriate applications to be made during the next six months.

Eligible students are young people between the ages of 5 and 25 years and whose permanent residence is within the parish of Whitchurch.

Applications are processed twice a year, with the closing dates being 31st March and 30th September. However, late applications are considered if the available funds for the previous 6 month period have not been fully allocated.

All applications and decisions are treated in strict confidence by the Trustees.

If you would like to know more, please do contact Sarah Dixon (our Grant Application Secretary). Contact details: telephone: 0118 984 4262, address: Flint House, Hardwick Road, Whitchurch on Thames, RG8 7HH or e-mail – whitchurchunitedcharities@gmail.com

Katherine Higley

WHITCHURCH & GORING HEATH HISTORY SOCIETY

It is hoped that in the autumn halls will be open and speakers willing to come to us.

On Thursday 17th September, we are expecting to welcome Mark Davies, local historian from Oxford, to tell us of the crimes, escapes, and punishments at Oxford Castle in the 17th and 18th centuries.

On Thursday 15th October Stephen Barker will give a talk on “Saints and Sinners”, the Oxfordshire characters of the English Civil War.

Both meetings will be at Goring Heath Parish Hall, and start at 8pm. Non-members £3.

Of course it will be necessary to confirm these arrangements nearer the time.

THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S & ST JOHN'S, WHITCHURCH *(an independent charity)*

Well, all the 2020 plans for the Friends events have, of course, been cancelled or put on hold because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, the Friends Trustees would like to thank the members for their continued financial and moral support during this difficult time.

At present, it is not clear as to when we can make arrangements for events and future projects. Recently, the Trustees had a 'virtual meeting' to review the financial situation of our independent charity and to reiterate our commitment to continue our activities as soon as possible.

In the meantime, a reminder of the Friends main aims :-

- + Preserve the heritage of our beautiful, historic church buildings.
- + Bring together the people of Whitchurch on Thames and Whitchurch Hill.
- + Support the use of the churches by the wider community.

Keith Williams, Chairman

Tel: 0118 984 1139, Email: keithc.williams@btinternet.com

THE GREEN TEAM

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.

What's Happened Recently

A big thank you to all the volunteers who've helped with these tasks over the past month, this has included;

- Maintenance at the Village Green and Maze
- Tidying of the Manor Road verges and logs placed to protect them from people parking over them. Care plan for the ancient yew trees being worked on.

- Clearing of fallen trees
- Weeding the High Street and Swanston Fields
- Ad hoc tidying, weeding, watering and litter picking

Polish Church Garden

As lockdown restrictions lift we are looking to re-start work at the Polish Church Garden, starting with a get together on Saturday 19th July. If you have ideas about or connections to the site, or want to find out more about the plans please come along. Alternatively you can find out more at our dedicated webpage or by contacting Alexa <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/polishgarden.html>

How you can help!

We are very pleased to announce that we are able to re-start working parties, with guidelines in place (see below) from the 4th July.

We now have a few dates for the next working parties; all at 10am, and all bring your own tools due to Covid guidelines.

Maze 1st Aug	Village Green 15th Aug
Maze 5th Sept	Village Green 19th Sept
Maze 3rd Oct	Village Green 17th Oct
Maze 7th Nov	Village Green 21st Nov?

Guidelines that all working party attendees must adhere to for the safety of everyone in the village are;

- You must not attend a working party if you or any members of your household have displayed symptoms of covid-19 in the last 14 days
- A maximum of 6 people working in one working party
- The working party organiser will ask those who plan to attend to let them know so participate numbers can be kept to 6. If more than 6 people arrive during the working party they will be asked

not to take part, or given an individual task in a different part of the village to do

- Tasks to be distributed between people to enable them to work in separate spaces to each other and maintain social distancing
- 2m social distancing must be maintained between all people in the working party at all times
- All working parties must take place outdoors, and no one must enter homes or other enclosed spaces
- Every individual must bring their own tools/equipment and not share anything with others
- No food or drink to be shared or provided. Bring your own if required
- Wash hands thoroughly before and after the working party
- Encourage attendees not to use public transport to attend the working party

There are still small tasks that can be done by individuals or households available, if you are interested in helping with those just drop me a line!

Let me know any questions – about working parties or any of the volunteer work we do in the village – and I look forward to seeing some of you soon!

Find out more

Visit our page on the village website <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html> or contact me on 07557 852600 or alexa@ontherunhealthandfitness.co.uk



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WHITCHURCH 2020 OR 1920?: A SHORT STORY BY ERIC HARTLEY

We can hear the birds singing and they can hear each other

We have gone back almost 100 years. It is so quiet – there is little through traffic and very few people driving locally. There are no obvious overflights in the sky and only the occasional sound of a passing train with no noise from the M4.

Where there are people outside their homes they are on foot. The change is that at any time of day there are walkers on our paths and roads with or without children or dogs, many early morning runners and numerous cyclists (most passing through) and the occasional horse rider. Even the church clock is now chiming the time of day (it is now an hour out, since it cannot be accessed to change to BST – again back 100 years). There are still workers in the fields tending their flocks (sheep or Alpacas hereabouts) and workers in the local market garden picking and preparing vegetables for sale daily, horse owners and stable-girls caring for the horses at the Stud and I think the woodsmen may still be preparing timber for future sale. The allotments are busier than ever. Everyone is obeying social distancing which, with a reduced population size, might have been normal when the local gentry and maybe the Norman Lord and his entourage were out and about?

Even the road sign at the junction of Hardwick Road and the High Street is similar to that of old and were it not for the many vehicles in driveways and parked on the roads (as though all strangely abandoned) we could almost replant the many trees that once lined the High Street.

Eric Hartley

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY PARENTS ASSOCIATION

The last few months have been some of the strangest that I can remember as a parent. Our school community has been disrupted

and has had to change in ways I could not previously have imagined. As parents we have juggled work, home learning, uncertainty and some isolation as we have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whitchurch Primary School Parents Association exists to support our school by raising as much as we can in order to enhance, enrich and improve learning experiences for our children. We continue to raise money for the maintenance and eventual replacement of our astroturf. As you can imagine, our fundraising has been impeded by school closures and one of our main annual fundraising events was not able to take place. Sports Day is a glorious and highly anticipated event with enthusiastic parent participation as we usually cheer our kids on whilst they compete for the much coveted Sports Day house award. In its place this year we ran a Sports Week @ Home challenge for our school community, encouraging whole family participation with a bonus Grand Prize Draw for one lucky winner.

Lockdown has affected us all in various ways, in order to capture this unique season in our lives, our Parents Association compiled a Lockdown Book of Memories for Whitchurch Primary. We had close to 70 families contributing, with an introduction by our Head Teacher, Mrs Chesters, hundreds of photos, poems from our Year 6 Leavers as well as spectacular photos by local photographer and parent Scarlet Page. The initial idea blossomed into an 88 page full colour visual representation of the last few months from our perspective.

Ways that the local community can help:

Whilst we have all been staying at home, we have continued to support our school by naming Whitchurch Primary Parents Association as our charity of choice as we shop at the Co-op or online through easyfundraising and AmazonSmile. The good news is that we are a registered charity, so every online purchase through easyfundraising or smile.amazon.co.uk results in a donation to our school. You can support us by shopping at Amazon.smile.co.uk where the same products are sold at the same prices with the fantastic addition of Amazon making a donation to "Whitchurch Primary School Association".

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.

Elaine Mullins, Chair

Whitchurch Primary School Parents Association

Registered charity 1114159

WHITCHURCH NATURE NOTES

I hope that many of you are enjoying the Nature Notes that have been published on the village website over the past three months. There are now six available to read via the Nature Notes page, on a variety of topics covering our local flora and fauna. Also, there are two 'extras' covering more distant locations and unusual wildlife.

I have been 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.

The next issue will be on 'Insects in Summer' – an enormous subject but I will try and make it topical and interesting for everyone. 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:WoTHabs.sally.woolhouse@gmail.com)

WHITCHURCH ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION

The weekend of 14th – 15th November 2020

Don't forget to put this VIP date in your diaries! It will come around sooner than you think so now is the time to start planning your imaginative creations, ready for this year's show in Whitchurch Village Hall. I'm sure some of you will have taken up new hobbies

during lockdown so do consider entering – we welcome all types of art, craft and photography on any subject

The theme this year for the Joyce Voysey class is 'Happiness'. This separate class is open to all age groups and the entries can be in any media – art, photos, sculpture, crochet, video – whatever inspires you!

Of course, we are really keen that we will be able to hold this popular event in its usual format. However, we will obviously be keeping a very close eye on government guidelines and will modify the way we do things as necessary.

The details of how and when to enter in all the categories will be posted on the village website by the end of August.

Sally Woolhouse, Chair of the organising committee
0118 9844365, sally.woolhouse@gmail.com

NOISY LIGHT AIRCRAFT

Fed up with the noise of light aircraft flying in circles in the skies above Whitchurch? Well I am, so I've decided to launch a campaign to stop it. I will engage with White Waltham airfield where they're based, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Chiltern AONB Board and anyone else who can help.

Everyone has the freedom to spending their time and money as they wish, but it must be unacceptable for I pilot to be able to fly in a way that maximises the noise they make (which is probably part of what they enjoy) and to disturb the peace and quiet of the 4,000 or so people in Pangbourne and Whitchurch.

If you wish to complain to White Waltham airfield, their phone number is 01628 823272. They'll ask for the plane's registration number, but if you give your postcode and time the plane was overhead they'll probably know the plane involved from their flight plans etc

I'll call the campaign SNOW – Stop Noise Over Whitchurch.

Geoff Weir, (geoffweir@btinternet.com)

VILLAGE GREEN WORKING GROUP REPORT 2020

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 copiced and we have WoTHabs to thank for organising essential working groups keeping this neat and tidy. There is now a sensible hedge allowing more 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 copicing.

We also have had new benches installed as the previous benches installed seven years ago were showing signs of deterioration and we thank the Parish Council and Councillor Jon 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.

Keith Brooks

Chair Village Green Working Group

EDITOR'S NOTES

The next edition of the Bulletin will be Autumn and the deadline for content will be Sunday, 11th October. We have our usual contributors of course, but articles are welcome from anyone in the Village and should be in Word or PDF format.

Richard Williams (rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com)



A beautiful 18th Century country style pub and restaurant
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