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CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE, JULY 2021

As I write this, things are continuing to open up in the village and the UK government is set to remove all COVID restriction on 19th July. It has been wonderful to be able to meet people face-to-face and go to pubs and restaurants again as things have gradually opened up.

Whitchurch “unlocked” Social Event on Village Green – The Parish Council would like to organise a social gathering on the Village Green for the entire village on a Saturday afternoon on either the 4th or 18th of September as long as things continue to open up. It would be similar to past events where we hired a band and encouraged people to bring cakes and biscuits. If you have ideas for this or would like to volunteer to help out, please contact myself or our Clerk Jane Yamamoto at parishclerk.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com.

Parish Council Update – We held our last official virtual Zoom meeting in May and then held our first face-to-face meeting outdoors at the Polish Church Memorial Gardens on 1st July. Government legislation allowing us to make decisions virtually expired in May, so all meetings will held be face-to-face at the Village Hall again starting in September.

I would like to welcome new Parish Council member Paul O’Grady of Church Cottages by the Mill Pond. Paul and his family are relatively new to the village having moved here just before lockdown. He brings a wealth of planning experience from his work managing Belgravia Estates in London.

Parish Council Points of contacts and Working Group members were all updated at our annual meeting in May. The full list along with updated terms of references are posted on the Parish Council page of the web-site.

Annual Assembly – We had very good participation at the Annual Assembly held virtually in May. We were pleased to present the well-deserving Whitchurch Website team with the 2021 Whitchurch Award. We had updates from our County and District Councillors

and many village groups including the Allotment Society, the Football Club, the Green Team, the Whitchurch Wallowers bell-ringers, the Village Plan and COVID volunteers, the Village Hall Committee, and the Traffic and Parking and Village Green Working Groups. Whilst some groups such as the Football Club have only recently restarted after lockdown, some groups such as the Allotments Society were busier than ever during lockdown as some people spent more time growing food than ever. I gave a presentation on the last year in photos, showing that even though it was a very unusual year, we still made significant progress on things like village maintenance of roads, pavements, and drainage works and Jean Marc and the Village Hall team completed most of their planned improvements. There is a lot of interesting information in the full minutes and my presentation which are both available on our web-site.

Village improvements from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC):

You will have noticed that the drainage improvements by the Greyhound are now underway. These are intended to address longstanding limitations on the size of the drainage pipes under the High Street that has been a cause of flooding in the area since at least 2014. It is unfortunate that they were unable to do this before the recent resurfacing of the High Street, but the important thing is that we hope it will address the underlying drainage issues.

You will have also noticed that the white lines on the High Street have also been refreshed. This is something we requested for safety reasons following the tragic cycling accident last year. OCC has also confirmed that pedestrian safety trials at the lower narrows by the Ferryboat are now confirmed for early September when traffic patterns will reflect the school run and Summer holidays will be largely complete.

Polish Church Memorial Gardens – There has been a suggestion to plant some heritage apple trees on one corner of the new Memorial Gardens. There is a more detailed description of the proposal later in the Bulletin. Please provide any comments and suggestions to Cllr Higley as requested in the article.

EDITOR'S NOTES

The Whitchurch Society is organising a “Freedom walk” on Sunday 25th July (starts 10:30 at The Maze). This was mentioned in the last Bulletin (Spring Ed) but the original date (27th June) was deferred after the Govt delayed relaxations. Please see last edition, or posters around the Village, for further details.

The next Bulletin will be the Autumn edition and will be distributed towards the end of October. Please send any articles/content to me at rlwilliamsafcw@btinternet.com by Sunday 10th October.

Richard Williams

An update of the Flower List for Hardwick Road: In 2000, Sandra Parkinson carried out a plant survey for WoTHabs of the wild flowers found on the North verge of Hardwick Road (east), starting at the Chalkhills entrance and extending approximately 700m east to the Hardwick Estate gates. The South verge was also surveyed but was not as diverse, probably because it is more shaded and faces north. The results were published in a leaflet, which listed 102 species grouped by flower colour.

In March this year, we dug out the original files and I published the list of plants in Nature Notes #9. The leaflet was also re-published and it has been available for passers-by in the box on the gatepost between The Old Farmhouse and Chalkhills on Hardwick Road. There has been a lot of interest in this leaflet and more than 100 copies have been taken from the box so far this year.

In June, Sandra (with my help as the scribe) re-surveyed the north verge with the purpose of updating this plant list from 2000. It was very encouraging that we found 28 'new' species that were not in the original list. However, there were 18 species that we didn't find. I shall now be producing a new version of the leaflet, which will be available in the box, and also an updated version of the Nature Notes. These new versions will list all 130 species, which will include the 'missing' 18 plants. These may or may not still be growing on the verge – it will be up to the eagle-eyed amongst you to see if you can find them again!

Sally Woolhouse

Maintenance of Manor Road Trees: Heritage Tree Services performed maintenance work on the ancient yew trees and a number of other trees along the entrance to Manor Road and the Manor Road Playground in April. Cllr Higley is investigating recommendations for further work on a large Beech Tree in the playground.

Eastfield House Planning Application: Ross Healthcare continues to provide documentation required to discharge planning conditions that accompanied approval of their planning application. The Parish Council is continuing to review these and have raised objections to the documents related to their traffic plan and tree survey in particular.

A summary of the Parish Council Planning applications for the past three month period is available later in the Bulletin. We have had a resurgence in planning applications recently as we come out of lockdown.

Kind regards,

Jim Donahue

Chairman, Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR UPDATE

I am now just over half way through my term of office as a District Councillor, a point that was marked by the County Council elections. The Oxfordshire result, with the loss of nine Conservative seats, was out of kilter with much of the country, although similar to results in Surrey and Kent. Many people don't bother to vote in local elections, and if they do, in the absence of any knowledge of the candidates, vote along "tribal" lines. What is apparent is that some of the successful new councillors were elected as a result of making a significant effort to connect with the electorate. I read in the Henley Standard that Stefan Gawrysiak of the Henley Residents Group was returned with 62% of the vote, and that he had 25 people working on his campaign, so he is evidently a popular local politician focusing on local issues.

During the last two years, I have attended nearly all parish council meetings not only in Whitchurch but also in Kidmore End, Mapledurham and in my home patch of Goring Heath. This is really the only way to keep in touch, and to hear about issues of concern and to offer help where I can. Not all District or County Councillors are as assiduous as I am in this respect. Recently I was able to financially support projects in all four parishes through the councillor grant scheme, and this only happened because I was on the spot.

At the last full meeting of South Oxfordshire District Council in April, I proposed two motions which were passed unanimously. The first concerned power lines on the new housing sites around Oxford, and the second support for local pubs. The government, in statements of planning policy, has stated the need to have “beauty” in development, which I agree with, and my motion required that, where the Green Belt housing sites around Oxford were crossed by high voltage power lines, the lines are put underground. Any location for homes that is overhung by pylons and power lines is not beautiful, and already power lines across southern England are being undergrounded, in those cases for scenic reasons. When billions are being made through development of these Green Belt sites, a few millions spent for long term benefit must be good. The other motion was to the effect that the District Council will support the continued existence and presence of pubs for the benefit of the community, and so resist the loss of pubs.

There are some changes coming to the management of parking in Oxfordshire, which is one of the few areas in England where the police are still responsible for parking enforcement. After agreement was reached amongst all local authorities in Oxfordshire, the parking enforcement is going to be run by the Council rather than the Police, a project called *Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)*, which means traffic wardens issuing tickets. This has been a long process to set up, and should be in place before the end of the year. It will be interesting to see what the impact of this change will be in Whitchurch.

Councillor Peter Dragonett (District Councillor for Whitchurch on Thames, Kidmore End, Goring Heath and Mapledurham)

Please check the village website What's On section for dates – www.whitchurchonthames.com

Contact: gill@artcafe.co.uk

WoTHABS

Village Green: The June Working Party at the Village Green south end went very well. Our basic aim is to strike a balance between encouraging a diversity of plants in the wild area – which also has pathways through it to simplify maintenance and for the children and others to enjoy and keeping the car park clear and weed free. It was a pleasant surprise to find a pyramid orchid - first spotted by Peter Woolhouse, when he came specially to mow the paths for us, a few days earlier.

Thanks too to Howard Brett who did a sterling job controlling brambles, nettles and other over-dominant species, to Charles Cotgreave for clearing away the oak saplings from around the cricket nets, to Alistair Aitchison for digging out dandelions at the car park entrance, Geoff Weir for strimming along the kerbside, Clare and Max (volunteers from the football fraternity) for attacking goose grass with a will, Trisha Clapp for general assistance and Keith Brooks, especially for always finding the time. Indeed there was only one task on our long list that we didn't get round to, which was to empty the compost bin located near the cricket pavilion. Your next opportunity to help at the VG when we get together is Sat 24th July. All very welcome, at any time during the morning, from 10am onwards, even if only for half an hour.

Gill Goodwin

The working party schedule for the next three months follows – you can always find the up-to-date version in the village website What’s On section

24th July 10am Village Green working party
 7th August 10am Maze working party
 21st August 10am Village Green working party
 4th September 10am Maze working party
 25th September 10am Village Green working party
 9th October 10am Maze working party
 23rd October 10am Village Green working party

Charles Cotgreave

ART CAFE – SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Plans are afoot to re-open the Art Cafe as soon as social distancing is over (fingers crossed!).

The Art Cafe provides a place to make and strengthen friendships and will be open Saturday mornings from 10.30-12.30 in the Old Rectory Stables, opposite The Ferryboat Inn.

Join us to enjoy tea, coffee and delicious homemade cakes sold on behalf of local community and charity groups. Please check the village website the “What’s On” section for details.

Crafty Knit & Stitch is up and running! We’re back the first Thursday of the month 2pm-4pm or 7pm-9pm at The Old Rectory Stables.

It would be lovely to see you with your knitting, crochet, needlework and crafts or simply join us for a natter.

QUARTERLY PLANNING UPDATE FOR WOT PC – JULY 7, 2021

Planning Reference	Address	Comments by WOT PC	SODC status
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. The Council could not submit comments to the Amendment no. 3 dated May 22, 2021 as they were not able to meet online or in person.	Granted
P21/S0844//LB/HH	Thames Bank South High Street Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DB	The Council voted to object to this application and recommended that the applicant work with their neighbours on this application. The Council were not able to submit comments to the amendments no. 1 dated April 30, 2021 as they were not able to meet online or in person. The Council voted to submit a response of No Further Comment to the amendment	Granted

		no. 2 dated May 21, 2021.	
P16/S1919/DIS	Eastfield House Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ	The Council voted to submit comments to the Planning Officer to object to the application and they agree with 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 10/4/21 The Council voted to object to the discharge of the conditions. They do not believe that the Travel Plan is up to date or accurate and that it is based on assumptions that are unrealistic and which are unenforceable. There are serious concerns that the onsite parking will prove to be inadequate and that vehicles will park on the cul de sac road which has	Consultation Period

spinney at the northeast corner, building invertebrate 'hotels', and creating a more accessible wild area, including a small den that should appeal to children. Currently under discussion is a proposal to plant a small number of heritage fruit trees in the south east corner. More details elsewhere in this Bulletin.

- *North verge of Hardwick Road* Also in May, a working party led by Sarah and Adrian Dixon cleared undergrowth and fallen timber from under the trees opposite the west entrance to Swanston Field, greatly improving the appearance of this area.
- *Corner of High Street and Hardwick Road* In late May, Tim Hardwick, Pete Woolhouse and Keith Brooks installed trellises on the wall, and in June, Tim planted four honeysuckles.
- *Entrance of driveway to Walliscote House* In mid June a working party led by Leslie Maynerd weeded and tidied the flower beds, introducing some new plants, and removed weeds from the base of the walls. Work is now in progress to refurbish the bench donated by the sadly missed Stan Remington in memory of his wife 'Pockets'.

We welcome all who would like to help with Green Team work. Our working parties last from an hour up to two or three, but you don't have to stay for the duration. In (say) half an hour or an hour you can still make a worthwhile contribution. If you would like to know more or have a suggestion for work we might undertake, please contact me (details on the website).

Our goals for the remainder of the year include:

- Find guardians for every green space in the village
- Engage and involve more people to help look after our green spaces
- Involve the school and pre-school more in Green Team work
- Complete the Polish Garden Project

I can graft and propagate the trees and have so far found nine old specimens in the two orchards near where I live.

The Polish church site has been discussed as a possible location, which has room for a small number of trees. Please do let me know if you have any ideas and mention it to anybody you think may be interested. If you know of any old-looking fruit trees around the village, my email address is alastairdunstan5@gmail.com

Alastair Dunstan

THE GREEN TEAM

In mid-May, Alexa Duckworth-Briggs, who set up the Green Team, stood down for health reasons, and handed over to me as co-ordinator; so this is my first report for the Bulletin. Alexa remains involved with the Polish Garden Project and as guardian of Jubilee Walk.

Since the last Bulletin, 11 working parties have been held, and people throughout the village (our Green Elves) have, often unasked, contributed help with many and various tasks. Alternating periods of sun and rain have resulted in luxuriant growth of vegetation, ensuring no lack of things to do. Some key points are indicated below.

- *List of Green Spaces.* We are lucky to have many green spaces in the village; our primary goal is to care for these. The list can be found on our website page: <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/greenteam.html>. Photos of the team at work appear in the Pictures section of the website.
- *Village Green and the Maze* We have regular working parties maintaining these areas. Detailed reports elsewhere in this bulletin.
- *Polish Church Garden Project* Details and latest updates can be found here: <https://whitchurchonthames.com/groups/polishgarden.html>. In May we cleared undergrowth in the

		no footpaths and will consequently cause a major inconvenience and a safety hazard to the residents and to children going to and from the school at the far end of the road. There are also concerns about the attitude shown to the trees on the site. In the past, the applicant has cut down important trees on this Conservation Area site and has now presented plans of the remaining trees which are not accurate and does not take into account tree growth over the past decade. Finally, the applicant has presented floor space figures that do not add up, and, we fear that the total capacity of the Home could be increased beyond the forty-five beds stated on the application further	
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		exacerbating the parking problem. Even without an increase in capacity, the parking provision is inadequate and the proposed overdevelopment of the site leaves absolutely no room for increased provision on site.	
P21/S1447/HH	Willow House Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ	The Council voted to support this application.	Granted
P21/S1974/HH	The Gables Eastfield Lane Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7EJ	The Council could not submit comments as they were not able to meet online or in person.	Application under consideration
P21/S1497/LB/HH	Church Cottage High Street Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DL	The Council could not submit comments as they were not able to meet online or in person.	Application under consideration
P21/S2471/LB	2 Swanston Cottages High Street Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7ES	The Council could not submit comments as they were not able to meet online or in person.	Granted

which we may contact you to hear more about an idea that you have suggested. After that all e-mails and responses provided by other methods will be destroyed. Your responses will only be shared with other Cllrs and the Parish Clerk if strictly necessary. The Parish Council may choose to publish a report explaining the suggestions received and considered; no names of residents will be used.

- Please e-mail me (Cllr Higley) at cllrhigley.whitchurchonthames@gmail.com with your views.
- Alastair is interested to hear from anyone who has a heritage tree in their garden who would like to contribute to his project and have their tree grafted. He has explained his plans in detail below and how to contact him.

LOOKING FOR HISTORIC APPLE TREES

I am looking for old-looking fruit trees around the village, to take cuttings and propagate for a potential community orchard, and would be grateful to hear if you know of any. They may not necessarily be tall, but the trunk may be wide and perhaps hollow, and the bark will be weathered.

There is a nation-wide campaign to reverse the disappearance of traditional English orchards. A shared orchard in Whitchurch could be a focus and project for the community and a new piece of local heritage, and could be made using varieties of Apple and Pear from surviving old trees around the village.

Local varieties of Apple and Pear have been disappearing for a long time in favour of more common commercial varieties, but trees can survive for 200 years, and remaining old specimens from the local area are likely to carry forgotten old types which may have even been local to the area, or otherwise may now have been forgotten elsewhere. Propagating cuttings from these trees could give Whitchurch its own unique collection of Apple and Pear varieties. It would be quite straightforward if a location were approved –

If you would like to get involved with the planning and setting up of the exhibition, please do get in touch – all offers of help are gratefully received.

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

CONSULTATION ON THE POLISH CHURCH MEMORIAL GARDEN

The 2019 Village Plan defined the Polish Church Memorial Garden as a ‘quiet place for relaxation and remembrance of the church and those who worshipped there.’ Currently, the area has a seating area on the church site and a spinney where children can explore and be inspired by the insect life, the trees and the flowers.

The Parish Council have been asked to consider a proposal put forward by a younger member of the community, Alastair Dunstan, who is passionate about saving heritage fruit trees from old trees in the village. The idea is to plant a small number in the SE corner of the garden. One of the last remaining former residents of the Polish camp, Mrs. Kowal, said that she thought the idea was ‘a lovely tribute to the former community’ and that it reminded her of the fruit trees in her late husband’s village in rural Poland. The history of orchards in Poland dates to the 11th century. Interestingly, parts of Whitchurch had orchards up until the Second World War.

- The Parish Council are interested to hear your views on this proposal.
- The Parish Council are also interested to understand what other ideas people in the village may have for the different ways in which this space could be used.

Please note that the closing date for comments is Friday 3rd September 2021. The Parish Council will discuss the responses at their September meeting on Thursday 9th September. The Parish Council will store your responses for a period of four months during

TRAFFIC AND PARKING WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The newly named TAPWG, with five new members, now a total of seven, has held two meetings. The minutes of the meetings are on the Village website along with members’ names and the Terms of Reference from the Parish Council.

In November 2019, TAPAG put a plan to the Parish Council for twenty-four parking bays in four groups with heritage double lines between them, situated on the west side of the High Street. This plan was conceived after a High Street survey in 2017 and input from a traffic consultant and advice from Oxfordshire Highways Department whose agreement is necessary before any plan will be agreed by the County Council. TAPAG advised the PC to hold an informal consultation before putting the plan to the County Council. At this stage, the Village will be requested to pay a fee and the County Council will hold a formal consultation. The informal consultation was carried out in February 2020. Fifty-five residents approved the plan and five objected. Covid-19 then appeared; traffic and parking problems in the High Street vanished overnight from 23rd March. Over the next seven months, and after a second informal consultation on Zoom, another twenty or so objectors emerged. Because of uncertainties about future traffic volumes and, in particular, commuter parking, the Parish Council decided to put the plans on hold and ask a reconstituted group to look again at options.

In 2019 it was not possible to make progress with residents’ parking because at that stage enforcement was controlled by the Police rather than the local authorities. Now the local authorities, led by the County Council, are about to take over this responsibility which should be completed by November 2021. Soon after this date it should be possible for the Parish Council to apply for a residents’ parking scheme.

As four years have passed since the last survey, which was largely confined to the High Street, TAPWG has decided to carry out a new Village-wide survey to find out present parking requirements and

to canvass opinion from all residents about traffic and safety in the village. Questionnaires will be delivered to each household in the Village in mid-September with a request for return by the end of that month. It is hoped that, by then, traffic volumes and parking will be back to a “new normal”. The questionnaire will also be available on the Village Website. It will be your chance to have a say. So please complete and return the survey.

Whitchurch-on-Thames is a lovely picturesque Village, but our street plan has developed over 1,000 years and this fact together with our geographical location does not work well with 21st Century traffic and parking requirements. There is no easy solution to our traffic and parking problems and so compromises will be needed. Please help us to find the options which are acceptable to most residents.

Diana Smith (PC member and TAPWG Chair)

WHITCHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL ASTROTURF FUNDRAISER

The school is currently looking at replacing the well-loved astroturf on the school playground. The astroturf is a hugely valuable commodity to the school and used in lots of different ways, it is also a very expensive outlay at a time when funds are very low. We are hoping the wonderful community of Whitchurch might be able to help and donate some funds towards replacing the turf.

There is a go fund me page set up to allow you to donate and anything that you can give big or small would be greatly appreciated. The school will then create a mural or plaque with all the names of people who have donated that will then be displayed on the wall as a way of saying thank you to the community for their generous contributions.

For further details and to donate please go to: <https://gofund.me/73b931d2> and a huge thank you once again for your support!

The Parents' Association

WHITCHURCH ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION

The weekend of 20th/21st November 2021, Whitchurch-on-Thames Village Hall

We have started drawing up our plans for this year's exhibition so please put this VIP date in your diaries! You will recall that last year we were unable to hold the 'live' event (the first break in this annual fixture since 1972). However, we were very pleased that we were able to stage an online alternative, which proved very successful and popular.

This year, we hope to be even more ambitious and hold a live and an online exhibition, building on our experience from 2020. The live event will be held over the weekend and in the Village Hall. The exhibits on show will be judged by our external panel and the cups awarded in the traditional way. In parallel, the exhibits will be available for viewing online from 20th Nov for a period of approx. 3 weeks.

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. If you have never entered before, why not make 2021 your first time and I guarantee you will get hooked! We welcome all types of art, craft and photography on any subject – it is an enjoyable, friendly event and everyone in Whitchurch and Goring Heath parishes is eligible to enter. Also, children who attend the Whitchurch Pre-School Group, Whitchurch Primary School or The Oratory Preparatory School are all eligible to enter, regardless of where they live.

The theme this year for the Joyce Voysey class is 'New Beginnings'. 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!

The details of how and when to enter in all the categories will be posted on the village website by the end of August. Meanwhile, start working on your entries and help to make this year's event the best ever!