

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

Yet again we started a fresh Parish Council year by way of a Virtual Meeting. In an emergency such as we have had over the last couple of years with the Covid 19 pandemic Virtual Meetings are acceptable but nowhere near as good as a face-to-face version as they lack the strength of personal contact. At least we only had to do it for the first Meeting, the AGM and the Annual Parish Meeting and after that we were back to face-to-face meetings.

Overall we have not had a bad year but there are one or two items that are dragging their heels, especially the removal of silt from the Duckpond, although a lot of that we have had little or no control over. Partial funding we have, sufficient to make a start, but Covid has had a major impact on this followed up by being badly let down by a contractor. To make the job possible we need to dispose of the silt that comes out ourselves, if the contractor does this it almost doubles the cost. Councillor Thirlby kindly agreed that we could use one of his fields but would need to do the work between harvest and re-planting. When trying to call our contractor, he appeared to have vanished and it wasn't until after our time slot had closed that we found out that he was an Agricultural Contractor and wasn't available when we required his services. This is still ongoing.

Financially we have kept within our budget, thanks to funding grants detailed later on in this report and again we have to thank our Clerk, Mrs N. Allton, for seeing our accounts sail through their end of year Audit. I should also thank our Auditor, Mrs A. Allsopp for her diligence in overseeing the accounts.

In the Children's Playground the original Spring Horse was found to be unsafe as the spring was loose inside the bottom holding brackets as they were badly worn. New brackets were obtained and the safety matting removed but then it was found that there was only a half of one inch clearance between the bottom of the holding plate and the top of the concrete, meaning it was insufficient to reach and remove the nuts on the bolts holding the spring down. It is thought that these bolts were installed before pouring in the concrete as no other way could handle this. Despite asking several people with generators and concrete breakers none obliged and it took a long time to find a cordless breaker but we were finally

successful. Parts of the spring and the horse have been restored and we are now well on the way to completion. This particular job has been an absolute nightmare. The rest of the equipment is well used with only the nest swing offering any concern and that is only down to the rather rapid wear in the chains.

The Playing Field again only had one team playing on alternate Saturdays, Tamworth 4ths. But we also had Appleby Juniors and it is good to see so many young people out in the fresh air and enjoying themselves. Equipment wise everything is operational with the odd hiccup on the way but with the good people we deal with they got sorted.

Our worst episode was having the tractor shed broken into in March of this year. When this happened before our Insurance company insisted on certain extra precautions. We carried out these and added several extra items ourselves and we think that the would be thieves spent so much time trying to get through all of our defences they left empty handed. The bad part was that they did an enormous amount of damage to the doors. It took 2 men a full day to carry out the repairs and that didn't include preparatory work carried out the day before. The doors are now reinforced and we have taken to parking the roller in front of them. Appleby Juniors acquired a short container to store some of their equipment and installed it at the rear of the tractor shed. It is larger than they need and have kindly solved a longstanding storage problem of ours by allowing us to use some of their unused space.

This Council have paid for the annual maintenance check of the village clock in the tower at St Mary's church for many years. This year's inspection showed a major fault with the striking hammers, the faces of which were starting to break up and could disintegrate at any time causing a safety issue from falling debris. Soon afterwards whilst the clock was being wound the weight cable snapped and the weight fell causing some damage to the church's structure. Smith of Derby who not only maintain the clock but also built it originally to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 were asked to quote for the repairs and they came out at a fraction under £6,000, beyond our resources. A grant was applied for from the Mercia Park Community Fund and was successful with repairs starting early in our next Financial year. A Mercia Park Community Fund Grant was also applied for so that a replacement defibrillator for the broken one in Newton Regis and also a new defibrillator installation for Seckington could be funded. These grant applications were successful and the defibrillators were ordered and Smith of Derby were asked to proceed with the clock repairs. It was decided that rather than just buying the defibrillators we would use a Tamworth charity, Tamworth Have A Heart, who would takeover and maintain these defibrillators on receipt of the cost of the new units. As this procedure is beneficial to the

Parish we went ahead with it. A requirement of the grants is that recognition of where the funding came from is shown on the items and this has been complied with.

This year we finally lost the May Tree that stood on the triangle of grass outside the church. This had been planted to commemorate the coronation of King George VI but had deteriorated badly over the last few years despite the attentions of our arboriculturist. It was on the books to be inspected to see if it could be saved for a bit longer but County Highways' tree man just came past and cut it down. Plans were already being discussed about a replacement so they were brought forward. It was decided that the replacement should be the same species of tree as the old one and the order was placed with Arbocare. The replacement was well planted and is now in full leaf. When it was announced what we were doing three villagers came forward and offered to pay for it, Mrs. J. Scott, Mrs B. Taylor and Mr. S. Turner, to whom we all owe our gratitude. Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Scott also paid for and installed the circular bench around the tree in memory of their respective husbands, Graham and Ken. As this year is Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee we all agreed that this new tree should be dedicated to Her Majesty as the old one was to her father.

Also on the highway the gateway sign on the left (leaving the village) was damaged by the County Highways' grass cutter and they are refusing to pay for the repairs. The damage to the one leg is quite severe and the County is suggesting a cost of almost £500 for the repairs. Case is still ongoing and the outcome will be reported in next year's report.

We are regularly having speeding vehicle reports into the Parish Council and we do try to look into them as far as we can so In June of last year we bought a radar speed check gun from Shuttington & Alvecote Parish Council. Unfortunately this has not been the success that we anticipated and has still not yet been used in anger. This is mainly due, I'm sorry to say, to the Police who do not have sufficient staff to train volunteers in the use of the equipment. As we are not allowed to use the equipment without prior Police training and agreement of location, also there has to be a minimum of three people to operate it, one to actually use the gun, one to record speeds and registration numbers and one to do everything else including the team's safety but as we are lacking in trained personnel we are unable to use the equipment.. So far we have two people trained in the gun's use, one from Newton Regis and one from No Man's Heath and we also have two locations agreed with the Police. There are other rules that include wearing hi-vis clothing and placing warning signs that advise drivers that Speed Watch operations are going on in our location Originally a circular was sent round asking for volunteers to be involved with the operations leading to training to become a trained operator but things have gone on for so long the accuracy of that list is in doubt and we will be repeating the exercise once we have some sense out of the Police. One thing that has come out of this is the request by residents of Kings Lane that

speed checks are carried out in their part of the village. We asked the Police to look into it to see if a suitable location could be found for our speed check gun to be used but they said “that there isn’t anywhere along Kings Lane within the village boundary where speed checks by us would be safe for us or drivers”.

The Council has responded to every Planning Application within the Parish, some favourably, some just noted and some strongly against. Examples of the latter are the Appeal against the rejection of Planning for 9 houses by the Village Hall and the Application to build 3 houses in Kings Lane behind those in St Mary’s Grove. We have supported the building of houses on the Manor Farm site as the village needs to grow to remain sustainable and they are being built within the village boundary line, the others haven’t. One problem that keeps cropping up is the use of heavy goods vehicles delivering to the Manor Farm site using Kings Lane by disregarding the signs put up by the builders. We do report these as and when we are informed but Kings Lane is a public highway and they can only ask the drivers to use the Hangman’s Lane route. If you do report it, please take the vehicle registration number so the culprit can be identified, or, at the very least the name on the truck, but both is ideal. The name has on one occasion allowed us to discover that this particular vehicle was not going to Manor Farm and on another the reported vehicle was seen entering Kings Lane from the Austrey direction.

As in past years we have purchased a Christmas tree to go on top of the church wall and set lights on it. We need to thank our Churchwarden and new Rector for allowing us to use the site and also allowing us to tap into the church illumination for our electricity. This year we provided mulled wine and mince pies in the church after our Rector had led the singing of some carols outside. She had invited Barbarama to sing in church and their singing, with the mince pies and wine, went down very well, a thoroughly enjoyable start to Christmas.

Due to the relaxation of the Covid 19 rules we were able to hold the Goosewalk this New Year’s morning after having to cancel it. Although it was sorted out at a very late date there were sufficient walkers to make it a success and by way of public donations £130 was raised for St Mary’s Fabric Restoration Fund. We did however have to cancel the traditional mug of soup as the social distancing rules were observed.