

The Annual Parish Assembly 2008

Chairman's Annual Report

Sean Ryan, Chairman, Parish Council:

May saw the second fun run in the parish council's 'Look Good, Feel Great' campaign to get us running, walking, cycling or riding as we head into summer. I'm pleased to report that more than 30 people have taken part in the first two events - and that my own weight has fallen by 3lbs to a mere 15 stone 3 lbs.

As I panted up to the top of Hodcott Down - shortly before being overtaken by Tony Scriven - I looked down at West Ilsley and thought, as I always do at that point, how lucky we are to live here. It's not just the beauty of the place - it's the spirit of this village that makes it special. So I'd like to pay tribute to the community spirit of all the parish councillors who have taken so much time and trouble over their duties in the past year, and to everyone who contributes to that spirit by helping to run the church, cricket club, village hall, tennis court, under-5s, youth club, school events, Evergreens, the fete and of course the West Ilsley News which reports it all. On behalf of the parish council, thank you for the often thankless jobs you do.

As for the council's own activities, I'll highlight a few:

1) Our biggest achievement in the last year has been to get the play area up and running for more than 50 children in the village. A lot of people worked hard to raise the money for this project but no one worked harder to see it through than Dries Hagen, who supervised the installation during a fortuitous period of unemployment.

2) Philip Knight and John Mountford have done a great deal to reduce the risk from speeding through the village. Thanks to the support of Cllr George Chandler, a Vehicle Activated Sign is due to go up soon at the junction of Church Way and Main St which will warn drivers to slow down if they're going too fast.

3) A lot of work has been led by Alan Bloor after the flooding of July 20. Alan has liaised with West Berks Council to make sure that:

- * our drainage system has been thoroughly jetted and cleaned;
- * three large soakaways have been dug in Bury Lane;
- * run-offs along Catmore Road and the recreation ground have been cleared; and
- * a pipe to the pond has been adjusted.

There are further proposals from West Berks Council to:

- * bank the pond;
- * clear Main St gulleys more regularly;
- * look at improving drainage around areas that flooded, including the village hall.

4) The other weather-related damage - to the war memorial - has been repaired.

5) On Dries's initiative, a maintenance team has been set up to look after the mowing of the churchyard and other spots. This will prevent the burden falling on too few shoulders and should make a visible difference to the tidiness of the village.

6) The parish precept was frozen for the second year in a row at £2,515 - this year's council tax increase was dictated by West Berks Council with no added burden imposed by the parish council.

7) West Ilsley Trust has given more than £1,000 to the church, cricket club, tennis committee and village hall.

8) We've taken on responsibility for the village hall, although its own management committee still looks after the day-to-day running of the building with no interference from the parish council.

9) The parish council has been expanded in line with its responsibilities. Philip Knight stood down as vice-chairman after three years of sterling, meticulous work but we've added Sue Simmons, Jo Scriven and Fred Carter.

10) Finally, we launched our health initiative. Anyone who'd like to run, walk, cycle or ride - and thinks they can beat Tony Scriven round the course - is welcome to join us at 10.30am on Sunday, June 15, in Church Way.

Thank you again not only to everyone on the council but also to around 40 people who have come along to our various meetings - a big increase on the previous year. Your attendance is always welcome and your contributions are invaluable. Please keep coming along!

sean.ryan@sunday-times.co.uk

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West Ilsley Cricket Club

The cricket club goes from strength to strength with two teams playing regularly, more games on Sundays and a successful Wednesday team. This has been achieved with a fairly small player base.

Junior cricket has taken off well with over 75 children and their parents/carers attending Friday night sessions. There is also now a girl's team and more fixtures are planned for juniors. The club is very proud of its county level junior players and a cricket festival is planned for the summer.

Although the bar remains the main source of income and the club is financially stable with a steady growth, costs of equipment and maintenance are escalating and with a scheme planned for modernisation new members are encouraged and much needed. The chairman from the club reported that an increased level of engagement between WICC and the Parish Council would be welcome.

Downland Sports Centre

The past year has shown similar trends to the previous year. On a day to day basis the Centre has been very busy with Badminton proving to be a popular sport and taking up most of the free sports hall bookings. A junior Badminton coaching session was introduced for young people in 2007 and currently runs on a Monday night. A qualified coach runs this

The indoor Boot Sales again took place during the months of October, November, February and March. They were reasonably successful but did not attract the same number

of buyers and sellers as the previous year despite similar advertising.

Holiday activities for our younger customers are still well attended. The summer holiday sessions being the most popular – maybe use of the heated, outdoor pool has something to do with that.

While we have a core of dedicated gym users, we would like to see the number of gym members increase. We will be promoting the gym during the next few months but at this time we are not sure what format this will take. The young people who attend the Junior Gym session really enjoy learning how to use the equipment.

We are very fortunate to be able to offer a diverse range of activities including Aerobics, Indoor Bowls and Archery, to the public in this rural area and will continue to promote the Centre.

West Ilsley Youth Club

The club runs for children aged 8 to 15 years, who live in West Ilsley and Farnborough only. It was initially set up in November 2005 by Downland Youth Network Activity Project with the help of Mo Brickwood.

A grant was applied for and received. Some of the funds were used to buy equipment including a projector and screen, dance mats, table tennis, snooker and football tables. This year the children have enjoyed various arts and crafts and they help set up and clear away. The club is run by a group of parents that meet every two weeks.

The remainder of the grant was spent on weekend activities such as trips to Calshot Activity Centre. The children have enjoyed archery, rope climbing and cycling. At Christmas there was a well-attended trip to the theatre. The activities and trips have helped the children to form good relationships and to bond with each other. They are able to see their achievements and many have overcome fears with the help of their peers. This has encouraged the commitment of parents and carers.

The club has now reached the end of the second and final year of funding from the Local Network Fund, accounts have been submitted and the club is now looking for further funding to continue the growth of the club.

All Saints Church

After re-roofing in 2006, the remaining money was used to repair the ceiling, where it had been damaged by rain or loosened by the re-tiling. Repairs were also carried out on the west wall.

Following the departure of Trevor and Olive Maines to Newbury, the church has continued to hold three services a month, mainly taken by Denise Brown and with help from visiting clergy. At the end of June, Graham and Kate Stacey will be ordained and will job share a curacy in the benefices to which All Saints is attached.

The monthly children's church continues to be well attended. There were no weddings or baptisms and there was one funeral in the church this year.

Memorable events were the Flower Festival and Evensong, the Harvest Festival and a pet service. There has been a clay pigeon shoot and a Burn's night. The church continues to rely heavily on fund raising events and the plant and cake sale is taking place soon.

Grateful thanks go to those who look after the church (opening and closing, maintaining the churchyard).

The finances of the church continue to present a challenge with a small congregation. As well as the day to day running, the contribution to the Oxford Diocese last year was £7,100. This had not changed from the previous year, but in 2008, the Parish share will increase by approximately 2.5% to £7,280.

All Saints Church continues to provide a centre for worship within the village, as well as being a place of quiet where people are welcome at any time.

Downland Volunteer Group

This is our twenty-second year of operation and once again it has been a very successful year. Although the requirements of our clients have altered slightly, the need for the service appears to be as necessary as ever.

During the last year our volunteer car drivers have made over 2,000 journeys taking people with no transport of their own to Doctors' Surgeries, hospitals, dentists etc.

Our statistics reveal that our Handybus has made over 200 trips and carried over 1100 passengers. Combined with other uses, this makes ours the most used Handybus in the West Berks fleet.

In order to continue to provide a service, we always need more volunteer car drivers, Handybus drivers (age limit 70) and office workers. Although we have clients from West Ilsley, we currently only have two volunteers. It is rewarding and enjoyable so if anyone could give a few hours a month please contact the DVG Office (Monday – Friday 10.00-12 noon. Tel 01635 578394).

West Ilsley Village Hall Management Committee

Bookings have remained healthy over the past year with several village groups being regular users. After much deliberation a decision was made to increase the hourly rate from £5 to £7.50 (£10 to £15 for non- villagers) This was necessary due to increased insurance, maintenance and utility costs.

Popular events this year have included Bingo, the fireworks party and the village campout. Over £600 has been raised from these events.

Regular maintenance has been carried out and in addition double-glazing has been fitted and the back door threshold has been raised to stem flooding.

Thanks to the committee for another year of hard work and dedication. The committee held an EGM to discuss the relationship between the committee, WI social and recreation assoc. West Ilsley Trust and the Parish Council. It was decided that the hall would be managed under the West Ilsley Trust as an asset. Therefore the Parish Council as trustees will oversee the hall's activities. In practice the V H C will continue to run as it is with the PC being involved in major projects. The old charity will be dissolved and a new lease drawn up by Lockinge.

Objectives for next year include ensuring the new working arrangements are satisfactory and to apply for grants for an extensive programme of renovation.

Ilsley Evergreens

Our present membership is 56 – 27 from West Ilsley and Farnborough.

AGM was held in February and a programme of events drawn up with outings planned to Bristol, Winchester and Weymouth.. Further trips are planned for the coming year. Successes have included the Sheep Fair and West Ilsley Fete where our cake stalls are popular and our Christmas Bazaar raised £481 for club funds.

Our outings are subsidised and this is made possible because of generous donations and fundraising efforts. Our members as always appreciate our activities.

Ilsley Under Fives

The group meets weekly during term time with one major art/craft session a term. One outing or treat is planned each term e.g. Bucklebury Farm Park plus Christmas parties and teddy bears' picnic.

Membership numbers are beginning to flourish with 16 children attending regularly. The majority of members are from West Ilsley and efforts are made to encourage members from other villages.

The committee still needs volunteers, currently running with four members. Fundraising planned for this year includes stalls at West Ilsley Fete and the Sheep Fair.

West Ilsley Fete

After a problematic start to preparations for this year's fete, it will go ahead as planned. There are six members on the committee, some of whom were present last year.

Last year the fete raised £800, gates were low, possibly due to very poor weather leading up to the event and because of the number of fetes and fairs around the same time. Things were not helped by a power cut which lasted for two hours. Despite the disappointing returns last year, the committee was able to donate:

£200 - The Ilsleys primary School

£200 – WICC

£100 – West Ilsley in Need Trust

£100 – Evergreens

£50 – Compton Brownies

£50 – Under Fives