

The Annual Parish Meeting for Blisworth was held on 16 May 2022 at 7:30 pm at the Village Hall.

The Annual Parish Meeting is open to all electors of Blisworth Parish, who have the right not only to attend but also to speak on any matter of local interest.

This meeting has its own minutes, which should be kept separately from the Parish Council minutes.

Present:

Cllr S Billing, Chairman
Cllr J Hawkins
Cllr B Brown

Also present:

Angela Billing, Parish Clerk
4 Members of the public

The Chair of the Parish Council, Councillor Billing took the Chair for the meeting.

1. The Chair of the Parish Council welcomed all to the meeting.
2. Apologies for absence received from Estelle Williams and Margaret Holiday and reports for groups were sent to the clerk to be read by the Chairman.
3. The minutes of the previous meeting of 28th May 2019 could not be approved. Previous clerk (from May 2019) sent her apologies as she could not produce May 2019 minutes.

4. Chairman's report:

Thank you first to Cllr Wilson for his hard work as the chairman through the years and particularly during the difficult period through the Covid pandemic and remote meetings.

The Council have been working hard to accumulate the evidence it needs in order to persuade Highways to make improvements with regard to the traffic and speeding issues in the village. Please can I refer you to the surveys on the Blisworth Parish Council website and Facebook page and ask you to remind your friends, family and neighbours to add your voice to the Council's if you are also concerned about the increasing level of traffic.

The Council has purchased extra traffic signage and a new VAS machine, (in addition to the one situated on Towcester Road) you may have seen Cllr Wilson, Read and Bunker installing it on Stoke Road. We hope to move the traffic monitoring devices around the village to get a more detailed picture of traffic numbers.

Eastfield Play area will see a lot of new play equipment in the near future thanks to Cllr Read submitting a successful lottery grant application - in addition to some funds from Blisworth Parish Council. Thanks also to Cllr Wilson for monitoring and maintaining the play area.

There has been work on the Closed Cemetery, including pollarding trees, removing damaged trees, clearing vegetation and rebuilding several sections of the wall. Our thanks to Mr Newbury, who continues to cut grass paths in the Closed Cemetery and at the moment it is looking very nice and to all the volunteers who help the village.

We are welcoming a new councillor, Belinda Brown to the team but we are still actively recruiting further councillors as we have 3 vacancies. It would be great to have a full-strength council.

Cllr Bunker and Cllr Read and Cllr Gardner continue to work hard to update and maintain our street lighting. During the last year all the lights that are the responsibility of the parish have been replaced with LED lights which has led to a significant reduction in electricity costs for the parish.

Cllr Read updates our Facebook account so that villagers have up-to-date information that concerns the village and villagers can let the council know about issues that are important to them. The clerk is also maintaining the Council website page so hopefully this is another way of providing strong communication between the council and the villagers.

We have also started to have Council Surgeries on the 2nd Tuesday of every month – again so that villagers can come and discuss any issues that concern them. These are held at the Baptist Church in Chapel lane between 10:00 and 12:00. Thank you to the Pastor for loaning their facilities at no cost to the community.

Thank you also to Cllr Hawkins for liaising with the school and helping to set up a school allotment along with the help of myself and Cllr Gardner

The accounts for the year end 31st March 2022 will be available in June.

5. REPORTS FROM THE COMMUNITY:

THE BLISWORTH VILLAGE HALL AND PLAYING FIELDS ASSOCIATION MAY 2022

The Village Hall has had a very mixed year with the slow opening up of the Hall following the second lockdown. Our major concerns with revenue have been the closure of Pre-school in January 2022 and the reduction in sessions from both Bowls Club and Pilates. WI, Heritage and BMC returned to the Hall in the autumn and the Parish Council now uses the Main Hall for meetings as this provides more circulation of air. Masks are no longer mandatory for use of the Hall but hirers still have that option. There were 8 birthday parties during the year, the May 2021 local election and Film Club resumed in April 2022. Many thanks to Hugh Davenport for taking over the organisation of the Club. There was a New Year's Eve party and the Pottery Group continued to use the Hall in the summer before returning to the Chapel.

Our thanks to Margaret Holiday for providing the cushions for the chairs in the Village Hall.

We agreed for the new Committee of Pre-school to pay a retainer so that the space remained available to them but they do not seem any nearer to resuming. We have other interested parties and are asking for a decision from that Committee. It was noted that unfortunately, these parties have since found other premises.

The Wi-Fi which is available at the Village Hall is in the name of the Pre-school. We would like to change the details so that it is in the name of the Village Hall and playing fields association but at present, we cannot contact the Pre-school to discuss this with them.

Our main improvement to the Hall for 2021/22 was the repainting of damaged areas in the Main Hall and the painting of the front and back doors. We have also replaced the hand rail. Further grants have been applied for none received.

Our caretaker continued to maintain the Covid standards until the restrictions were lifted.

We have had concerns over the use of the car park by local residents who are not visiting the Hall for activities. It was not a problem during lockdown but now we need the space for users of the Hall. Notices have been put up asking that the car park is only used by those visiting the Hall.

ACRE has continued to keep us up to date on all the guidance, risk assessments and paperwork. They are always ready with help and advice.

The accounts for the year end 31st March 2022 will be available at the AGM on the 19th of May 2022.

The 250 Club

The 250 Club continues to thrive, thanks to Estelle Rose and her band of collectors. Our bank HSBC intends to charge both for any cheques written and a monthly charge for use of a cheque book. The Club relies on cheques and as the cost would reduce the amount of money available to help run the Village Hall, our Treasurer is looking into the possibility of moving to a more accommodating bank.

The Playing Fields

We have still not yet finalised the new lease for the Football club as they have changed their status to that of a charity and a limited company, so the details all need amending. We have a new lease for the mast but unfortunately the Government has reduced the amount such providers need to pay for the mast rental and our income has been reduced. The FC is still in negotiation with the FA on funding for the new club house and the erection of the building should take place later this year. Safety inspections have been carried out regularly on the MUGA and play equipment.

BELLRINGERS

The Benefice Bellringers, although based in Blisworth, continue to ring throughout the Benefice for Divine Service, manpower permitting. We resumed ringing following a ban on ringing due to Covid on 13 June 2021.

Prior to this a single solitary bell was chimed to honour the passing of Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh on the 10th of April by Mason Masterman, with the help of Peter Banks Mason who also tolled a single solitary bell for an hour before his funeral on 17 April.

We not only ring at times of sadness but also in celebration and on the 6 July, the National Health Service celebrated its 73rd Birthday. This time Mason, Peter and Chris Clayson chimed the bells. We were all honoured to ring at the funeral of Jim Cameron on 2 September. Jimmy joined us in January 2014 as a lapsed ringer having learnt to ring in his youth at Whittlebury. He quickly became a very valuable and competent ringer and maintained one of his greatest personal achievements was to ring a quarter peal at the Canal Festival in 2018 with our friends from Bobbing in Kent.

Blisworth also hosted a Branch Practice for the Towcester Branch of the Peterborough Diocesan Guild of Bellringers and were joined by 15 members along with some of our own band. Since November - and the change of practice night to a Wednesday - we have been joined at most practices by two experienced members of Towcester Branch. This has helped us enormously to make new friends, learn more methods and progress with our practice.

Through illness we were rather depleted during the Christmas season but were able to ring for the Annual Carol Service at St. John's but unfortunately this was the only service we were able to ring for in Blisworth partly due to the timings of services.

We would welcome anyone who would like to Have-A-Go or any lapsed ringers who would like to return. It is a good way of keeping fit and we are a very friendly band.

We extend our thanks to the P.C.C. and Canon Richard Stainer for their continued support

PARISH CHURCH

It was good to be able meet as normal as covid restrictions began to lift last spring, but we remained very cautious, as advised to all churches, and retained the wearing of masks, apart for those preaching or reading.

Our five yearly inspection was held in October 2021 and as usual has highlighted areas of concern, graded, 1, 2 or 3. Most of the high priorities are roof work, and we have areas where rain comes in along the north aisle. Some of the work of clearing gutters, high and low level, the down pipes and the gullies round the church has been done. We are obtaining quotes for the most urgent roof work, but some of the items are beyond our means at the moment, requiring scaffolding. We will continue

to do what we can to keep us with repairs and maintenance - but we cannot afford to do all that we would like, or indeed all that is necessary.

One of the South aisle lights burned out, and we are awaiting a replacement fitting, but the electrician is having difficulty in sourcing what is needed. The light bulbs are now obsolete, and we have only a very few spares, so replacement lighting will sooner or later become a priority. The boiler has been serviced, and the fire extinguishers have been serviced. The church is now open again during the day.

In November we held a Christmas bazaar and coffee morning, which was well attended, with a great atmosphere, and raised a useful sum. During the summer, Pat and Mason Masterman restarted the monthly coffee mornings, initially using three adjoining driveways, so that social distancing could be maintained, but now back in their house. We are very grateful to them for these mornings.

We should do regular work in the churchyard and are grateful to those who cut the grass regularly. However, in some places ivy needs to be reduced, and we have set aside an area for burial of ashes which needs to be planned and kept weed free. We would be very grateful for offers of help.

St John's continues to hold the village in their prayers, and to welcome all who come for whatever reason.

BLISWORTH W.I.

Blisworth W.I. re-started face to face meetings in September 2021 after the world went crazy for 18 months, On the cover of one of our W.I. Life magazines during covid, three words, Adapt, Survive and Thrive epitomised that time for us and we certainly embraced all three.

We gave out members surprise Easter, Christmas and Valentine gifts. We organised a diverse range of Zoom meetings, learnt about Climate Change, Fashion to Ration during W.W.2 and Life in the Arctic.

We enjoyed our first meeting back together in August for a cream tea at the Royal Oak Pub. The following month, back in the Village Hall, saw us entertained by a retired Police Protection Officer to the Royal Family who had danced with Princess Diana and had some amusing tales to tell us.

As our November meeting was on the 11th, we had a speaker from the British Legion. We held a two-minute silence and learnt about the incredible work they do, supporting ex-servicemen and women.

We supported the Queen's Green Canopy by planting small sapling trees on the perimeter of the playing field.

We had an extremely interesting talk about Cyber Security from two very knowledgeable Northamptonshire Police Protection Officers.

We learnt about silver and its hall marks from another interesting speaker and were entertained by another amusing speaker on National Trust Gardens.

We continue to support Cynthia Spencer Hospice and donated cakes and knitted chicks for their Easter Fayre.

We continued to support Towcester Food Bank throughout Covid with regular donations and we will continue with monthly donations for the foreseeable future.

To end this unprecedented year's report, I can say Blisworth W.I. certainly adapted, we definitely survived and we continue to thrive, gaining new members and most importantly having fun, enjoying each other's company and are privileged to belong to such an amazing national organisation.

ABILITY PLUS

Ability Plus is a not-for-profit organisation. It is local community bus service which aims to reduce isolation and loneliness in rural areas and identified this need particularly in the light of cuts to bus routes in rural areas. We have six buses and have capacity for wheelchairs. We operate between Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. There is also an on-demand service which can be booked in advance. The service usually operates from 9:30 am and bus passes are recognised. Currently on Tuesday and Thursday there are services to Northampton and Wednesday services to Towcester but with more interest and demand, we will adapt and add bus routes. We also take out groups which again can be booked in advance. All the drivers are DBS checked and First-Aid trained. It is a very happy service with friendly and helpful drivers. We have arranged many day outs to garden centres, places of interest and even over-night stays. We are open to suggestions, so please contact us with your ideas.

BLISWORTH ARTS SOCIETY

After an 18 month break due to the Covid pandemic the society started to meet again in September 2021. The following have been our main activities

- Weekly meetings on a Monday Afternoon and a Monday evening to paint or pursue crafts
- Workshops led by members of the group
- An Art Show
- Sketching in the Garden of the Old Rectory in Summer 2020 and planned for 2022
- We continue to support village events such as the Jubilee celebrations

Sadly our organiser, Maggie Turton, died in the autumn of 2020 so a new committee has been formed to ensure that this vibrant group continues to move forward.

BLISWORTH HERITAGE SOCIETY

The group resumed regular monthly meetings in September 2021. During the pandemic we kept in touch with members and enjoyed a summer outing in August 2021. Our membership is buoyant, and our monthly meetings are well attended.

We are actively involved in several projects

- Upgrading the Information boards around the village as well as producing a new one (planned for outside the chapel to highlight the chapel and the Blisworth Tapestry)
- We have assumed custodianship of the Blisworth Tapestry and are actively looking at ways to raise awareness of it both in the village and across the county
- We are working on the production of a Platinum Jubilee scrapbook to complement the existing coronation and diamond Jubilee scrapbooks.
- We continue to support village events such as the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

STITCHERYDO

StitcheryDo is a newly founded independent craft group, set up in October 2022, following its break away from the Blisworth Tapestry Trust. It continues the role originally set up by the Trust in enabling people with an interest in a range of crafts to meet regularly to learn or improved their skills in a variety of different activities, such as knitting, crochet, embroidery, dressmaking, patchwork, quilting, creative stitching, lacemaking etc. The emphasis is on self-help, with guidance from amongst our members and occasional visiting speakers and demonstrations.

It is currently being run by three former trustees, Margaret Holiday, Angela Cadd and Ros Bedford, who are happy to answer any questions from prospective members. We charge an annual membership of £1, we meet in Blisworth Chapel Coffee House, on the first Thursday of each month. The cost is £4 per session, from 10.00 -2.00pm including refreshments and use of a wide range of equipment and resources.

We currently have 22 members who attend regularly, but welcome new members to join our friendly, creative group.

B.M.C. BLISWORTH MOTHERS CLUB

During 2021 Blisworth Mothers Club met only four times due to the rules and regulations imposed by the Corona Virus epidemic.

At Easter we were able to give every member a plant, card and mini-Easter Eggs.

Our first meeting of the year was a "Plonk and Natter Evening" on a beautiful summer evening in August in a member's garden which was much enjoyed by everyone. We all caught up with one another, some members having not seen each other for many months.

In September we welcomed a special four-legged guest to our meeting - Crawford a Retriever puppy in training by "The Dogs for Good Causes". Crawford will go on to help a disabled person to live an Independent Life. Katy explained the work of the charity and was thrilled to take away craft items made by members to sell at various Autumn/Christmas events they fund-raise at.

Our October meeting was a quiz set by two members which created much discussion and difficulty for some members.

A fashion show by "Rock Those Frocks" took place in November but this year members were not able to try on outfits. The range of accessories proved popular and most of us came home with an early Christmas present or two.

Unfortunately the Christmas Party was cancelled at the last moment following a poll of members by email as to whether they would come following the latest covid outbreak.

This year, too date, we have enjoyed a Wine Tasting, learned about the work of Northants Film Archive Trust and in March celebrated a belated Christmas/early Easter Party with appropriate dress for both Christmas and Easter. Organised for later this year are a talk by the Northamptonshire Carers, Life as a Celebrity Security Officer, The History of Wicksteed Park, Photography with A Difference and again a party in the Summer and at Christmas.

We welcome any lady from Blisworth or the surrounding area who wishes to join us.

BOOKWORMS

Bookworms is a group of like-minded people who meet on the fourth Monday of each month, in the afternoon, to discuss books we have been reading.

We had a break during the lockdowns, and sadly our founder, Maggie Turton, passed away. We had always met in Maggie's house, and when we restarted the group, decided to meet in rotation in members' houses.

Unlike many book groups who all read the same book each month, we read a great variety, and then take the books to be discussed, exchanged, retained by the owners, or sent to a charity shop.

We were so sad to lose Maggie, but it is a tribute to her, that we continue with a happy and sociable afternoon each month.

6. PUBLIC FORUM:

It was noted that the local nursery in Chapel Lane have to place much of their recyclable products in the black bin since as they are a business, they have to pay extra for recycling waste collection. WNC should be encouraging business to recycle.

Members of the public discussed the road closures on Towcester Road roundabout and growing concerns about the Gateway development and its effect on Knock Lane and the increase in traffic through Blisworth.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 21.00pm by thanking all for their attendance.