

NORTH ASTON NEWS

JANUARY 2014

No: 279



Welcome to 2014

*Calling Responsible Adults! Lady Flora's Farm,
Meeting Minutes & Being Resolute in the Face of Christmas Cake*

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JANUARY 2014, No: 279

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Upcoming Events

Parish Meeting

Thursday 9th January, 7:30 pm, The Bakery

Deddington Farmers' Market

4th Saturday of the month - 25th Jan

Just a reminder that the monthly Coffee Morning in the Old Bakery has now ceased.

Seeking Responsible Adults

The Village Meeting AGM is to be held on Thursday 9th January in the Old Bakery. This will involve the annual "Election of Officers" - an event that always seems to be met with fear and trepidation, although I'm not sure why. I have fulfilled one or other of the three roles for more than ten years now and I seem to have survived. Some while back Clive Busby held the post of Chairman for even longer, and other residents, including Peter Durnin, Mary Healy, Sue Hatzigeorgiou, Vicky Taylor, the late Chris Tuffrey and, of course, Kildare Bourke-Borrowes, have all done their bit.

With all the current incumbents retiring we now need three fresh and generous souls to offer a modest amount of their time and effort to the cause. If we cannot, then North Aston's status as a Parish Meeting may have to lapse, and that could mean either an amalgamation with a neighbouring Parish Council (Duns Tew or Steeple Aston) or the dissolution of the Meeting.

So, what is involved in these apparently onerous tasks? Well, in truth, not a great deal, and the job is only as demanding as the person who takes it on wishes to make it. It is possible to get by without doing a huge amount at all, but someone with spirit and determination, as Chris Tuffrey frequently demonstrated, can get their teeth into a cause and spend hours on projects and ideas - all to the benefit of everyone else in the village, of course.

The most responsible job is perhaps that of **Treasurer**. Niel Nicholson has intimated that he might be prepared to take this on, for which we're hugely grateful (but I'm sure he'd be happy to face competition for the post, if anyone else fancies a go?). As a Village Meeting, North Aston receives an annual precept from Cherwell District Council, and because of this, accurate accounts must be kept and audited annually. In addition, money is raised for the Village Fund, though events like the Fête, and this must also be accounted for. Roughly an hour a month (often less) will be enough to keep everything up to date, and *Treasurer's Reports* need to be presented at each Village Meeting.

In the past some Treasurers have also performed the role of Secretary, but it's probably better to share these tasks and lessen individual burdens. The main duty of the **Secretary** is to prepare the Minutes for all the Village Meetings (see elsewhere this issue), write the occasional letter, and act as another point of reference and contact for the community. Likewise, about an hour a month (more just after a Meeting, less at other times) should be sufficient.

Finally, there's the role of **Chairman**. The primary responsibility here is, as the name suggests, "chairing" the Village Meetings and keeping the discussions in order. However, most Chairmen/women have traditionally done more, and have taken on individual projects, help steer them through, written letters, and generally tried to "do what's right" for the community. The Chairman is also the first port of call for anyone in the village with a concern, so will occasionally receive phone calls and letters from residents. In truth, a Chairman who wished to might not do any more than "chair" meetings, but anyone with a sense of 'civic responsibility' and the drive to do so, could devote as much time as they wished to the job. It is a rather 'open-ended' undertaking.

We often hear prospective (and often ideal) candidates saying that they don't have the time to take on one of these roles. What a shameful cop-out! Anyone and everyone in North Aston, without exception, has the time to perform one of these essential roles, so please, give it some thought, and come along to the Meeting on the 9th and put your name forwards. You won't receive any financial reward, but you will earn the appreciation and gratitude of the rest of the community.

Marcus

Village Meeting

Thursday 9th January, 7:30pm in the Old Bakery



Letters

Mail to: info@north-aston.co.uk

Thank you North Aston

To each and every one of the fantastic people in this village who sent letters, cards, visited me and attended the funeral when Chris died - you are all marvellous. Despite it being an awful time, I had a great sense of support. I really appreciated it. My door is open and you will always be welcome. If I can ever be of any help - just ask!

Thank you again,

*Eileen, Freyja, Thea & Family*s



The lucky winners of the September draw were

First Prize (£10): P Brown (#83)

Second Prize (£5): Richard Boss (#104)

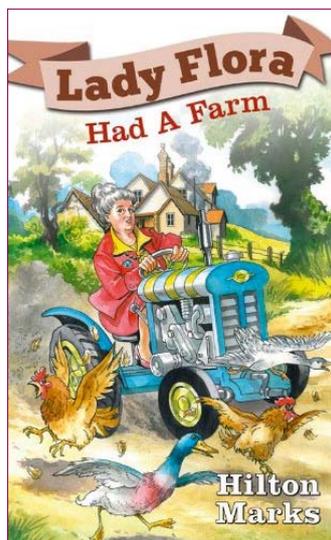
Anyone who missed out on renewing their membership last year - or who hasn't previously been involved - should think about signing up before renewal time in April. If you'd like to reserve a number, please speak to Norman West, or call him on 340368. You've got to be in it to win it!

There They Went A-wassailing

The North Aston Carol Singers performed their traditional house-to-house Wassail in December, spreading the load over two days this time.

They received a tremendous reception, and would like to say thank you to everyone who not only donated so generously, but also kept throats moistened and offered sustenance. Apologies to anyone who was 'out' when the Singers called - you missed a real treat!

A total of some £370 was collected "on the day" and will be split between *Save The Children* and two local charities; *The Gatehouse* (for the homeless in Oxford) and *Homestart* (Helping young families in Banbury).



Lady Flora Had a Farm

by Hilton Marks

You may be asking why we're promoting this book in the *North Aston News*, but once you know that *Hilton Marks* is the pen-name of Mark Hichens,

and "North Hathaway Hall" is loosely based on North Aston Hall, then it all falls into place.

The book tells the story of Lady Flora Valentine, who becomes a widow and, in the hope of saving the family home, turns to farming. She has little knowledge of agriculture and few ideas of the snags and difficulties that may lie ahead. Also, she does not have the full support of most of her family, whose interest in farming is peripheral. However, she goes ahead with intrepid determination and learns the hard way.

Written with humour and a style reminiscent of P G Wodehouse, this charming vignette is replete with larger-than-life characters from all walks of life, bustling in and out of North Hathaway Hall, some bringing love and laughter, some gloom and trouble. Those of you who've lived in North Aston longer than most may be searching for familiar references, and the chances are, you won't be disappointed.

The 'blub' suggests that this will be the kind of book you'll read from start to finish in one go, "stopping only for waves of nostalgia". The official publication date is 30th December, but the title can be pre-ordered from Amazon, priced £6.69, while one or two other book retailers are already offering additional discounts. Have a search online - bibliographic details are: The Book Guild, 64 pages, paperback, ISBN 978-1909716216.



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North Aston Gardening Club

We held our last meeting of 2013 on the 18th of December generously hosted by Chris and David Hazle to look back on the events of the outgoing year and to plan for club events for 2014. We are hoping to have a late spring **Plant Swap & Sale** and a **Summer BBQ** at the Allotments.

Of course the major event of the year will be the annual **Flower & Produce Show**. There will be some changes to categories for the 2014 F&P Show: full details of the schedule will be published in the March newsletter. However I wanted to let everyone know that the photograph categories will be:

1. Seasons
 2. Circles
 3. Pink
- Get snapping now!*

In the meantime, any suggestions for new categories, especially ones which you think may encourage more children to take part will be most welcome and will be considered before publication of the schedule.

There is some space (approx. quarter chain) going spare on the allotment, perfect for someone who is keen to give vegetable growing a go. Please contact Norman West for further details.

Our next meeting will be sometime mid-March, when the growing season will be starting again: date and venue TBC. In the meantime, I hope that all you gardeners are taking a well earned rest (apart from the winter digging) and having fun planning for the growing year ahead.

Lynn

This Month's BIRTHDAYS

Valerie Beck (née Rees, 6th)

Kyle Hite (19th)



Many Happy Returns to all the North Aston residents who celebrate birthdays this month. If you're not listed, or know someone who should be, please let us know.

Announcements

Happy Birthday Kyle!

With best wishes to Kyle for a very Happy 8th Birthday on 19th January. With love Mummy & Daddy.

Welcome to Clare & Ed

A warm welcome to Ed and Clare Hathaway, who have just moved into Magnolia Cottage. We wish them a very happy stay here in North Aston.

Dick & Margaret Hodge

We were delighted to receive a seasonal message from Dick & Margaret Hodge, who were jetting off to warmer climes over Christmas but wished to pass on their best wishes to "everyone who remembers us". Dick has promised to send us an item for the *News* to let us know how life has been treating them both since they moved to the Isle of Man. Watch this space!

Understanding Food Waste Processing

A tour of the food waste recycling plant at Cassington, just west of Oxford, has been organised for 23rd January at 3pm. This tour has been surprisingly popular in the past and provides an interesting insight into how food waste is processed and turned into energy and fertiliser.

If you would be interested in joining the tour, then please contact: Rebecca Lake, Oxfordshire Waste Partnership Communications Officer, Tel. 01295 221961 / 07967 580 023.

Email: oxfordshirewastepartnership@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk.

Road Works

The works in North Aston are now complete, but the on-going closure of the bridge across the railway between Somerton and Fritwell is expected to remain for the remainder of the month.

Thames Water is carrying out repairs to the mains supply pipe alongside the **B430** Middleton Stoney Road near Ardley, and will be operating two-way traffic controls (6-31 January). Delays are possible. Further along the road, Southern Electric will be operating two-way signals near the lay-by at Middleton Stoney to excavate the road and install fresh cabling (7-20 January).

Meanwhile, Southern Gas will be installing a new connection in Deddington High Street (6-10 January) and may need partial road closures, but traffic disruption is unlikely to be serious.

A Recipe for the Church

It's not too late to donate your favourite recipes for inclusion in the PCC's *Window Restoration Appeal* Recipe Book - see previous editions of the *News* for further details. Please forward recipes to Jane McArdle at Windana or via e-mail (janechenies@hotmail.com). Alternatively you can give them to Beryl Greenwood.



North Aston Village Meeting

Thursday 5th December 2013 ~ The Minutes

Present: Kildare Bourke-Borrowes, Sue Hatzigeorgiou, Marcus Potts, Mary Healy, Alison Bailey, Chris Hazle, David Hazle, Mark Stay, Sarah Bourke-Borrowes, Niel Nicholson, Clive Busby, Jan Liberadzki, Jocelyn Parsons, Jane McArdle, Beverley Rees, Tony Rees.

Apologies for absence: John Harvey-Lee, Liz Nicholson, Annie Savage, Franca Potts, Sandra Reeves, Tuck Hatzigeorgiou, Trudy Busby.

Village Meeting

1. Welcome & Apologies

Chairman Kildare Bourke-Borrowes welcomed everyone to the Meeting and proposed a minute's silence in order that all present could think about and be grateful for the life of Chris Tuffrey. KBB suggested that CT had made a great contribution to the life of North Aston, especially in the five or six years when he had been Chairman of the Parish Meeting. He said that Chris would be sadly missed, and that our thoughts should be with his family, Eileen and the girls. Those present sat quietly for a period of reflection before KBB resumed the Meeting with a request for Apologies for Absence.

2. Approval of Minutes

KBB asked if the Minutes of the previous Meeting, as published in the October issue of the *News*, had been a fair and accurate representation of events. There were no amendments, comments or objections forthcoming, and the Minutes were proposed by Niel Nicholson and seconded by Jeremy Taylor and approved unanimously.

3. Treasurers Report

Sue Hatzigeorgiou stated that the only changes to the Treasurer's Report since the last Meeting related to receipt of the second tranche of the Parish Precept and the accrual of approximately £1 in bank interest. She advised that the balance stood at £2,628.98, and that much of this figure was earmarked for the "kerbing of the Green". There was little else to add, and the Report was approved by NN, seconded by David Hazle, and passed unanimously.

4. Nomination of Officers

Secretary Marcus Potts introduced the notion of appealing for nominations for the posts of Officers to the Parish Meeting, to be elected at the AGM in January. KBB had stated his intention to stand down at the previous Meeting, which he reaffirmed, and MP now added his name to the list of retiring officers, announcing that he would also be stepping down in January. SH said that she had tried to do so "a year ago" and did not wish to stay on for yet another twelve months. It was confirmed therefore that new officers would be required to fill all three posts of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

KBB explained what would happen if there were no 'takers', and that failure to elect new officers would mean he would be required to advise the appropriate authorities that North Aston had no functioning Parish Meeting. NN appealed to KBB not to be "too hasty" and to wait until the January AGM, as he felt sure a solution could be found. Jan Liberadzki wondered if "the world would come to an end" if officers were not elected. KBB suggested that, if no officers stepped forwards, then the decision as to what might happen would then rest with Cherwell

District Council, and matters would move "out of our hands", although he suspected the process would not be very fast.

JL wondered if failure to elect officers might result in North Aston being amalgamated with a neighbouring parish, perhaps Duns Tew.

KBB suggested that CDC was seriously under-resourced at present and that this might add to the problems. Clive Busby asked if North Aston could not be like Middle Aston, and have just one Meeting a year. KBB explained that, in North Aston's case, this was not possible, because this village receives a Precept payment – Middle Aston does not. DH pointed out that we might not need three officers, and could have only two, if one person was prepared to double as Secretary and Treasurer. Jeremy Taylor wondered if all three could be combined into a single post. KBB briefly outlined the roles of the three posts, and it was thought unrealistic to expect one person to perform all these duties. DH asked if it might not be possible to publish brief "job descriptions" in the January *News*, and MP agreed this could be done.

Mary Healy said that she had taken on the role of Chair some years ago, when nobody else had been prepared to do so, and said that she felt that a process of delegation, whereby individuals with an issue might take on the responsibility of investigating and sorting out these matters themselves might work, meaning that a single officer might be left with solely the duty of chairing each Meeting. "Let the people who care about issues follow them through and report back," she suggested.

JL asked if officers had to exist for a year, or some minimum period, and perform their function between meetings, and then adopt a system whereby officers were elected meeting-by-meeting. However, SH said that people needed to remain in office for longer periods in order for them to be cited in the annual Audit, and also to be able to sign cheques, since the process of changing the signatories is lengthy and complicated. MP added that the names also needed to be registered with CDC, and this too was a lengthy (and not always successful) process.

KBB pointed out that the requirements of the Meeting are enshrined in the *Local Government Act*, and cannot be changed. NN then asked if there was anyone present who might be willing to take up one (or more) of the posts? There was no obvious response. JT suggested that nominations needed to be published well in advance, and MP thought they could appear in the January *News*, if any were forthcoming.

NN then asked if KBB might be prepared to stay on as Chairman. KBB said that he had personal reasons for being reluctant to do so, stating that he might be absent from North Aston for long periods in the near future and would be unable to fulfil the role. JT added his appeal to KBB, saying that he

would really like KBB to carry on, but KBB was insistent that he felt it would be a “bad option”. He did suggest that the alternative was to adopt the Middle Aston system, but that this could only be done if NA gave up its precept. “If they need money, they go door-to-door through the village,” he said. Would North Aston be prepared to do this?

SH said that the precept was only really necessary to cover the cost of insurances. DH asked for clarification – if we had only one Meeting a year, would we need officers? KBB said “no”, and that the MA approach was much more informal, since there was no money to “treasurise”. SH wondered what might happen to the existing money in the account. NN thought it would be necessary to continue to account for the money until it was all spent.

KBB looked around the room and observed that only 10% of the village was represented at the Meeting. “Clearly you are all engaged in village life,” he said, “but 90% of the community is not.” Could we go knocking door-to-door asking for money, as they do in Middle Aston, and expect our much larger community to respond in the same way? It was thought unlikely. MP pointed out, however, that NA already had a good track record for raising money for the Village Fund, and could not this means be used to cover expenditures in the future?

NN asked if the process (of ending the Parish Meeting) was reversible. It was presumed so. SH thought that, even if we didn’t have a Village Meeting, we’d still need a Treasurer, as well as someone to steer the Meetings, minute them and account for money spent, so officers of some kind would still have to be chosen. Chris Hazle wondered if, with a more informal structure, Minutes might be unnecessary. JT thought it would be a shame to take the step of ending the Parish Meeting, as he felt “it works”.

So, KBB asked if the Meeting could agree to the publication of the Job Descriptions in the *News*, and this was agreed. NN tackled MH again, asking if she might take up the reins once more, but she declined. CB asked if Bev and Tony Rees might be prepared to take on the tasks. BR said she could not “at the moment”, but TR acknowledged that he had “considered it” but felt that his current workload would make it impossible – and anyway, perhaps it was time North Aston had another “lady chairperson”.

KBB then looked to NN, but NN said that, as he ran a major business in the village, it would not be appropriate, but while he would say a definitive “no” to Chairman and Secretary, he might be prepared to stand as Treasurer.

On this encouraging note, but with the topic otherwise starting to go round in circles, KBB suggested the Meeting moved on to the next item, but appealed to all present to “think about” the matter over the coming weeks.

5. Broadband

Following on from the discussion at the September Meeting, MP introduced JL, who had been investigating the prospects of bringing high-speed Internet to the village.

JL explained that a recent article in the *Guardian* had referred to an organisation called “Cotswold Broadband” which had been formed following the August announcement of gaps in the proposed roll-out of high speed broadband to villages in the Chipping Norton area and was striving to help the affected communities fill those gaps.

JL gave some background to Cotswold Broadband, and said that he had spoken with Hugo Pickering, who had explained

how the system might work. There were various options, but one of the most cost effective would be a wireless link with Deddington. Provided a direct line-of-sight was possible between two linked properties, one in each community, then perhaps 30 or 40 households could be offered a new, much faster connection. There were potential obstacles, with reference to British Telecom, perhaps, and the relative distances between North Aston and the exchanges in Steeple Aston and Deddington, and procedures that would need to be followed, but if the connection with Deddington could be made - where speeds of 100 Mb/sec are now possible – then North Aston might be able to benefit from broadband connectivity of a similar magnitude. This was, he said, far preferable to the best we might ever expect from the Steeple Aston system, which could only offer around 20-25 Mb/sec within Steeple Aston itself, perhaps peaking at 40 or 50 Mb/sec from 2015, but would have a significant drop-off across the 2.5 miles of conventional copper-based wiring between the SA exchange and North Aston. This might mean a best of 10 Mb/sec for North Aston residents – 10% of the speed inherent in the Deddington option. He concluded by saying that a meeting with Hugo Pickering had been arranged for the following Monday.

There were some questions from the floor. The cost was queried, but the exact figure would not be known until after the meeting with HP. CB queried “line of sight”, and JL explained that the options were either to install a fibre optic system, or a wireless one. While there was negligible loss of speed with the physical connection, it would be significantly more expensive, and the wireless system would still offer a vast improvement in speed for much more modest cost. However, there had to be a directly visible, unobstructed “line of sight” between the transponder and receiver in order for the wireless option to work.

A brief discussion on potential funding options then followed, with JL explaining that there were grants available, and he had contacted James Macnamara and asked the Councillor for his help. There was also possible money available from DEFRA, although only for a limited period. JL invited others interested in the idea to attend the meeting on Monday and said he would report back to the Meeting in January.

6. Highways – Lanes & Roads

MP said that, following the September Meeting, he had been in communication with CDC’s Highways Department, concerning the “kerbing of **the Green**”, although this had now been downscaled to a “fencing” and reinstatement exercise. He read out the email he had received from CDC, which confirmed that North Aston can carry out the proposed works, and reclaim the edge of the Green lost to successive road widenings, and that railings would need to be 450 mm from the (new) highway edge. However, the reduction in perceived road width would require the approval of Oxfordshire County Council’s Highways Department. MP said that he had followed this up, but had yet to hear anything further.

JT wondered if the situation couldn’t be left “as-is” for now. MP agreed to await further updates from CDC and OCC.

CH was concerned about the state of the turning at the western end of the Green, where lorries had repeatedly driven over the grass verge outside Norman’s house. TR said that the company at fault had tried to make good the damage, but it was still not good. KBB asked if a letter should be written,

or was a more informal approach likely to be more effective. The consensus was that Nigel and Miranda Doggett had already been very accommodating and it was thought certain that they would sort out the problem in due course.

The discussion moved on to the subject of **Traffic Calming** – a perennial topic of interest. NN said he would like to see the matter of chicanes reconsidered. MP read out an email he had recently received from OCC's Environment & Economy department concerning Street Lighting, which requested confirmation that NA Parish still opposed the idea, but stated that any traffic calming schemes would "need lighting". The Meeting discussed this at some length, with the proposal that any chicanes could be individually lit, at low level, without the need for high-level conventional lighting. KBB asked what the feeling was for "lit chicanes" but a show of hands revealed that the majority of those present were not in favour.

JT asked about the possibility of adding more speed monitors or signs, perhaps with one at each end of the village. The cost was thought prohibitive. CB felt that the current positioning of the single display unit was "not right". MP explained the background to the current site, and said he would personally like to be able to position the monitor on the pole holding the mirror at the western end of the Green, but that this would add to the problem of regularly replacing the battery. He said that the batteries now lasted little over five days, whereas the period had been almost two weeks when they'd been new. It was a burden, he suggested, having to replace them so regularly. KBB said he was grateful of JT's offer to investigate.

MP then explained the situation regarding the state of the **Middle Aston Lane**, which has suffered noticeable deterioration in condition during the period that works have been carried out on the new driveway and lakes feature in The Park. He reminded the Meeting that he and CT had met with Kevin Cash more than a year ago and discussed the state of the Lane, where the passage of heavy plant, lorries and machinery had already caused significant damage to the verges and passing places. At that meeting, KC had given assurances that the Middle Aston Lane would be restored to its previous condition once the work had been completed. However, following an exchange of emails during which MP had thanked KC and Trevor Green-Parkes for the excellent work on **St Mary's Walk**, it would appear that TG-P was preparing to go back on those assurances. MP read out an email, received on 17 November, in which TG-P had stated that "NAH and/or our appointed sub-contractor are not the only ones using this lane and we (NAH) are certainly not responsible for how anyone navigates this other than a direct employee. However, I will be speaking to CDC pertaining to the decline in the lane and reminding them of their responsibility particularly when the school bus is using this route twice daily."

It was pointed out that the school bus had been using the Lane for decades, but the damage had only arisen during the time that the works had been done on the Hall's land. It was generally agreed that the deterioration in the state of the Lane was a direct result of the passage of the heavy lorries associated with the Hall's projects, but JT expressed his belief that perhaps there should be a sharing of the cost between NAH and CDC. CH suggested that part of the problem was that drivers were now reluctant to reverse or give way, although it was agreed that this was largely down to the fact that the

damage had meant it was now hard to see where the previously accepted "passing places" had been sited. The prevalence of four-wheel-drive vehicles was also thought to be a factor.

SH said that she had a recollection that when TG-P had attended the Village Meeting in July, and the state of the Middle Aston Lane had been discussed, he had agreed to the proposed restoration of the Lane. Subsequent examination of the Minutes from that Meeting supports this observation, with TG-P assuring those present that "all would be 'put back to order' eventually".

KBB asked if the Meeting could agree to MP writing a letter to NAH, expressing disappointment in the apparent change of heart, sympathising with the Hall's position, but communicating our hope that the previous assurances would still be upheld.

7. Any Other Business

(a) **September Meeting & PCC.** KBB referred to his support of CB's planning application, as discussed at the September Meeting. He said he had heard things that he didn't want to hear, and would not repeat. However, he said that he was affected by a feeling coming from a small number of people that there is a schism between the village and the PCC, and a perception that the PCC is some kind of 'secret society'. That is not the case, he insisted. The church is here to serve the village, and the PCC serves the church. The Anglican Church is very transparent, Minutes are always kept and freely available to peruse, and there is no basis whatsoever for thinking the PCC a secret society in any way.

He added that the PCC was grateful for having received a cheque from the Treasurer (of the Village Meeting) that day, as a proportion of the profits from the 2013 Village Fête, and insisted that the church accounts were currently okay, and that the church's expenses would be met for the coming year. He referred to the forthcoming appeals for the restoration of the windows on the south side of the nave, and the proposal to ease disabled access via the existing lychgate, possibly using a ramp or a new footpath.

(b) **Hillcrest & Park Farm.** KBB said how much he had enjoyed attending the recent Open Day at Park Farm, and how impressed he'd been by the redevelopment work and the facilities. He asked Alison Bailey if any "clients" had arrived yet. AB said that they had not yet arrived, but the first residents should be in the facility before Christmas. It was suggested that a contact number be published in the North Aston News for Park Farm, and MP agreed to include this in the next edition. The number given will be (01869) 349922.

That concluded the agenda for the Village Meeting, and the evening moved on to the agenda for the Village Fund.

Village Fund

1. Welcome & Apologies

The same notes of those present and *Apologies for Absence* were taken as for the Village Meeting.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were approved with no matters arising; proposed by NN and seconded by JT and approved unanimously.

3. Treasurer's Report

SH explained that she had prepared an interim report, which showed a balance of £6,579.91, but that this was not quite up-to-date, and £36 needed to be subtracted (payment to MH) and £1136 had been paid to the PCC (see above). She also confirmed that certain funds were being held "in trust" for the Village Hall project, being a part contribution from the 2012 Village Fête, and money raised through events such as the *Quiz Night* and *French Supper Evening* (also staged in 2012). In the light of the fact that the final figures required updating, NN suggested that there was no need to "propose" the Treasurer's Report at this stage.

4. Nomination of Officers

The Meeting was referred to the previous discussion, and no further time was devoted to this topic. The same officers were anticipated for both the Meeting and the Fund.

5. Village Hall Project & Old Bakery

MP briefly outlined the status of the Village Hall Project, as previously published in the North Aston News. He concluded by mentioning the proposal to renovate the Old Bakery. DH expanded further on this, and CH said that quotes had been obtained for the redecorating of the room. AB suggested that perhaps Community Service volunteers could be asked to help with the redecorating, stating that the quality of the work, in her experience, was usually very good. CH said that the first quote received had been for approximately £420 for the main room, and a similar figure for tackling the hallway and toilet areas. KBB asked whether the Meeting would like to consider AB's suggestion. DH insisted that the sooner the work could be completed, the better, and was not keen on any delay. KBB said that, as a magistrate, he had sent many people to do CS, and he would like to ask AB to investigate this option. CH asked if it would be possible to look into possible funding for some more "comfortable furniture", and this was thought to be a good idea. KBB wanted to see the decorating done first, and then debate other improvements at a later date.

JL wanted to investigate the possibilities of improving sound insulation between the Bakery and the rooms above. He explained some of the options, including incorporating a false ceiling with added sound-deadening properties. He insisted it could be done cheaply and easily. The alternative was to add suspended plasterboard but this might be prohibitively expensive.

DH again asked that we consider getting the redecorating done first. JL agreed that sound-deadening could be added later. KBB said he would investigate the Community Service options. JT suggested that, if the Village Fund would cover the cost of sorting out the main room, North Aston Farms would "do" the lobby and toilets, as these were communal facilities. KBB asked for the Meeting to propose the funding to do this, and it was unanimously approved.

NN said that he and Liz N were still happy for the Orchard Barn to be used occasionally for larger functions.

6. Preparations for Christmas

(a) Carols on the Green. SH said she had received a letter from the insurers concerning liabilities associated with staging public bonfires, and was concerned that the Officers of the Meeting could be held liable if anyone was hurt as a result of the bonfire on the Green. DH thought that the *Carols on the Green* was a "village event", so would the Meeting be

responsible? NN insisted not, as it was a church event. DH asked, therefore, if the PCC had suitable insurance. JL said that, if someone rich and litigious got burned, and decided to sue, what would we do then? NN insisted that there should be no cordon, and the bonfire should be lit well in advance of the arrival of visitors. Someone should stand nearby at all times, and warn those who step too close, and CB would "put it to bed" once everyone had left. "It is a well known event, but it is not advertised outside the community and people are not 'invited'. It is self-generating by word of mouth," he said.

KBB agreed that the village should not be responsible for *Carols on the Green*, and that it is a spontaneous event taking place on private land, between friends, and without any official organising. CB said he had contacted Bodicote House about the bonfire last year, and had been reassured by their response. NN repeated that the event is private, but anyone is welcome to attend at their own risk. It was decided to go ahead without further debate. KBB asked if the Meeting was agreed that CB could decide not light the fire if the wind direction looked likely to take sparks in the direction of thatched properties, and this was agreed. Volunteers were asked for the preparation of mulled wine, and MS, NN, MP and BR offered to assist.

(b) Children's Christmas Party. The details as stated in the previous edition of the North Aston News were reiterated, and thanks were expressed to Jane McArdle for offering to organise the party again this year.

(c) Wassail. As noted in the NAN, MS explained that the Wassail this year would be staged over two days, with the Carol Service in the church also on the first of the two days. The bulk of properties would be visited on the Sunday, before and after the Service, and then the remainder visited on the Monday evening. Victorian costumes would be available from Saturday afternoon in the Bakery.

(d) North Aston Choir. MP briefly repeated the invitation, given in the NAN, for singers to join the *North Aston Choir*, and meet at the Old Vicarage on Monday evenings.

(e) Gifts for Over 70s. CB said that he and Trudy would organise gifts for the over 70s, and SH proposed that the spend be "whatever it was last year" plus any extra to cover those newly eligible for the gifts.

7. Any Other Business

(a) North Aston News. CB commented on the improved appearance of the Newsletter, which was put down to a new photocopier installed at Nicholsons.

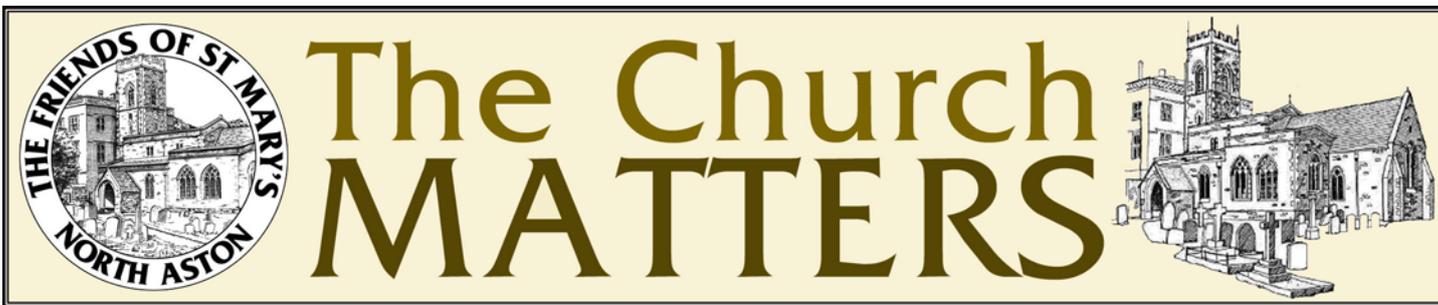
That concluded the Meeting. The date for the next Meeting and AGM was set as Thursday January 9th, at 7:30pm in the Old Bakery.

Village Meeting & AGM

The Village Meeting & AGM will take place on Thursday 9th January. The following topics will be considered for discussion:

Nomination of Officers - Nominations are invited for all three officers for the Meeting. Please see feature elsewhere in the News.

Plus: Broadband - Update on discussions with Cotswold Broadband; **Christmas Review** - thoughts arising.



Resolute...

About four or five years ago, I actually managed to achieve one of my perennial New Year Resolutions - 'must lose a few pounds'. In fact, I shed rather more than I think you might believe!

There was no silver bullet: I simply had to change my diet and do hard exercise.

I'm getting to the point where I need to remember this again. I kept the numbers down for a long time, but the move, the diet, the lack of exercise have all combined: I've gained going on for half of those pounds back again.

Something in me keeps hoping for an easy answer to this problem. I enjoy eating; I don't enjoy running; why can't my body just sort itself out by sleeping off all that sugar? Wouldn't that be efficient?

Why can't life be like the January Sales: all I need is a cut-price answer to a gilt-edged problem.

Of course, we all know (from experience) that cut-price solutions seldom provide everything we had hoped for. And in the end, if something has real value for us - or if something is in that remarkable category of *beyond value* for us - then we will give anything, pay anything, do anything in our power to take hold of it and make it safe.

In the church, there are all sorts of things where we just stumble through, all sorts of things where (*per force*) we make do with easy answers, and just a few things where real value kicks in and we can accept no substitutes. What might those be? Forgiveness is usually extraordinarily costly, but the real deal is so amazing (both to give and receive) that it's always worth it. Love is a word that gets thrown around all over the place, but when God's love is looked at full in the face it challenges and changes us and makes us live better lives. We can all settle for the easy words there, but actually aiming for the life behind the words - that's priceless.

And above everything, there is Jesus. My challenge to the church this year is to make Jesus clear. This means remembering he is our ultimate value, and that everything we do should help our whole community find him - in our worship, in our hearts and lives, in our words and understanding. Those emulsions of our own inventing, our favourite personal preferences we pretend are doctrine or scripture or tradition (but deep down know are just how we like things) might need toning down. It's time to strip back. Making Jesus clear is about making him stand out again where we have allowed him to fade into the background. It is part of the human condition to chase gaudy bargains - but wait; here is matchless quality.

For the central truth of our faith is that for him - for God - the thing that has real value, the thing that is in that remarkable category of being *beyond value*, is people. You and me. And he gave everything, paid everything, did everything in his power to take hold of us and make us safe.

My invitation to those in the wider community or who only come occasionally to the church is to check if the rest of us are having any success in making Jesus clear. Ask awkward questions of me and of every church member! In spiritual life, real questions need real answers. Let's make 2014 deeper than words.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I've been eating cake whilst typing this, so I think I need to go for a run...

Revd Marcus Green



Any comments about the above are very welcome.

Please email our Rector Marcus Green: steeplerector@hotmail.com or tel: 340 903

If you wish you can also email Kildare: k.bourkeborrows@btinternet.com or tel: 340 200

or Clive: casb@north-aston.com or tel: 338 434

Any other member of the PCC will also be very happy to talk, and they are: Bill Adams, Richard Bailey, Nick Bevan, Beryl Greenwood, Jenny Martin, Jane McArdle, Ted Short, Jeremy Taylor and Norman West.

From Thames Valley Police

This month's update and information:

Bogus Callers

There have been some reports of phone calls being made to residents across the Thames Valley from people claiming to be police officers. The "officer" tells the victim their bank account has been involved in fraudulent activity and then asks for the details or pin number.

Det Supt Paul Hayles said: "We are in the early stages of investigating these claims but I want to remind people that the police will never ask for your bank details in this way, and nor will your bank.

"Never give personal or account details to anyone who contacts you unexpectedly. Be suspicious, even if they claim to be from your bank or the police.

"If you do have any concerns about a police officer contacting you, please contact Thames Valley Police on 101 or contact your local neighbourhood team and we would be happy to confirm the identity of an officer and put you in touch with them."

Was it worth the risk?

The Christmas & New Year *Is it worth the risk?* anti-drink-drive campaign has come to an end but TVP officers will still be on the lookout for drivers who are still prepared to take the risk and get behind the wheel after drinking alcohol.

In the Thames Valley 245 drivers were arrested on suspicion of drink driving between the start of the campaign on 1 December and the end of the month. 200 of those were men, and just 45 women were arrested. Currently this year this shows there has been 17 percent decrease in arrests of women (down from 54 this time last year) and a 1 percent increase in arrests of men (up from 198 this time last year).

In total, 139 of the arrested people have been charged, with 71 bailed and 35 released with no further action. These arrests show a 3 percent decrease on the 252 arrests made during

the same period in 2012.

The campaign saw police targeting individuals they suspected of driving under the influence of drink or drugs, both on the way home from nights out and the morning after a heavy night.

Of the arrests, 89 have been made in Berkshire, 94 in Buckinghamshire and 62 in Oxfordshire. Chief Inspector for Hampshire Constabulary and Thames Valley Roads Policing Unit, Henry Parsons said: "Having a drink and getting behind the wheel can cost lives, and those caught will face serious consequences. I would like to thank the public for their ongoing support for our 'Is it worth the risk?' campaign".

During the first nine months of 2013: 17% of people tested failed the breath test, 21% of those caught drink-driving were under the age of 25, and 21% of people tested after a road traffic collision failed the breath test. A total of 25,508 drivers were breath-tested in the Thames Valley region between January and September.

Scary Burglary

A burglary occurred overnight between 27th and 28th December at Bucknell where an outbuilding was forced open and items removed from inside including bird scaring equipment and propane bottles. Please contact Police on 101 if you have any information in relation to this offence quoting CRN JF/4380464/13.

Contacting TVP

Should you wish to contact the police about any non-urgent matter, please use the 101 number. They want to hear from you, no matter how trivial you think the incident may be. In the event of an emergency, use the familiar 999 number.



Oxfordshire Community Woodfuel Programme

News from the Oxfordshire Woodfuel Programme: Jan-Feb 2014

The Oxfordshire Woodfuel Programme is running a series of 'logs for labour' events, where participants get free firewood in return for a few hours of work managing their local woodlands. Do come along! The nearest events are:

Sat 11 Jan,	12:30-3:30pm	Rollrights	nr. Chipping Norton	Hardwood thinning, 4 to 12 inch diameter
Sat 18 Jan	11am-1:30pm	Raleigh Park	West Oxford	Large willow branches up to 10 inch diameter
Sat 25 Jan	11am-1:30pm	Shotover	East Oxford	Oak thinnings, 4 to 12 inch diameter
Sat 1 Feb	12:30-3:30pm	Rollrights	nr. Chipping Norton	Hardwood thinning, 4 to 12 inch diameter

Find out more on www.oxonwoodfuel.org.uk/logs-for-labour.

Please buy your firewood from a local supplier to minimise 'fuel miles' and support local businesses. When you buy firewood ask (1) what the moisture content of the wood is (it should be 25% or less), (2) what volume of wood you are getting (you should know what weight or volume you are getting, not just 'a load'), (3) whether it is soft or hardwood (a hardwood log has more energy than a softwood log of the same size), and (4). how long the logs are. Alternatively buy OxLogs: see www.oxonwoodfuel.org.uk/oxlogs.

The woodfuel programme now has funding to advise community groups on installing biomass boilers in their buildings. Please feel free to contact Riki Therivel with any ideas and questions about woodfuel. Her postal address is: Wood Fuel Programme Manager, 28A North Hinksey Lane, Oxford OX2 0LX.



01865 243488 ~ manager@oxonwoodfuel.org.uk

Councillor Calling



CDC's Housing Policy

The Housing Policy suddenly popped up as the issue of December – perhaps appropriately as we remember a homeless couple who had to deliver their baby in a stable for lack of other shelter. In Cherwell's case it's a classic example of unintended consequences.

Some months ago, the *Localism Act* encouraged councils to streamline their "allocations" policy, which sets out who should be entitled to social housing and in what priority. Though Cherwell are no longer landlords, they retain "nomination rights" to ensure that Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations, as was) house those in greatest need, judged fairly and transparently. As you can imagine, drafting this took months of agonising: to understand why, you try to prioritise disabilities, homelessness, ageing, domestic violence, overcrowding...

All this against a background of massive demand. There were around 3,000 families on the Register but the annual house building target for the district is some 600 homes, only a third affordable, and, with people (happily!) living ever longer, less and less turnover in existing homes. Result: those in housing need but not in the most urgent categories stood little chance of ever being allocated an affordable home. This was unfair to them yet still cost many man hours maintaining the Register, better spent preventing homelessness. As a result, the new Register kept only the three most urgent categories of need.

This policy went through so many tiers of review and scrutiny and seems so reasonable (it caused hardly a ripple in the Press so it's not just council officers and councillors who didn't spot the problem) but actually contains a serious flaw. What happens with social housing that is allocated not only on grounds of need, but also with other criteria in mind?

There are two such instances in the Astons & Heyfords ward. Firstly, *Rural Exception Sites* are built on village land that would never normally get planning permission to house people with strong local links. Rarer are *Local Lettings Plans*, which prioritise a certain group of residents for specific housing - for instance, at Heyford Park, the people who already form a community, whom it would be a complete travesty to displace in favour of others.

The people these policies are specifically designed for qualified for the old Housing Register's lower, now

abolished, categories because they were not in extreme or urgent need, just in need of good, local and affordable housing. Result: disaster.

Happily, our communities comprise people who combine sharp intelligence, sharp eyes and sharp pens! Such people did the right thing: with local knowledge, they spotted the problem and raised an instant outcry with council officers.

Also alerted by them, I've got the Council Leader and the Housing Lead to take this up and, hopefully (it's highly risky writing up an issue where I don't know the outcome!) there'll be a happy ending: there'll be hell to pay if there isn't.

This being a time of parables, some morals of this story:

- don't be shy to buttonhole your councillors: we can only act on information received
- sensible policy produced by intelligent people for the best of reasons can go horribly wrong
- so time spent scrutinising the small print is never wasted

and if that last is not a good resolution for the New Year, I don't know what is!

James Macnamara

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CHURCH SERVICES

PARISH WORSHIP IN JANUARY 2014

NORTH ASTON

STEEPLE ASTON

TACKLEY

Sunday January 5th - Second Sunday after Christmas

8:00 am
Holy Communion
Rev Marcus Green

11:00 am
Holy Communion
Rev Marcus Green

9:30 am
Family Service with Baptism
Rev Marcus Green

6:00 pm
Holy Communion
Rev Marcus Green

Sunday January 12th - First Sunday after Epiphany

9:30 am
Family Service
Rev Marcus Green

11:00 am
Holy Communion with Baptism
Rev Marcus Green

9:30 am
Holy Communion
Rev Geoff Hunter

6:00 pm
Evensong
Rev Marcus Green

Sunday January 19th - Second Sunday after Epiphany

9:30 am
Matins
Richard Bailey

11:00 am
Holy Communion
& Children's Church
Rev Geoff Hunter

10:30 am
Covenant Service
at Tackley Methodist Church
Rev Marcus Green (speaking)

6:00 pm
Evensong
**Rev Marcus Green and
Fr Robin Gibbons (speaking)**

Sunday January 26th - Third Sunday after Epiphany

9:30 am
Holy Communion
Rev Marcus Green

11:00 am
Holy Communion
(Book of Common Prayer)
Rev Marcus Green

9:30 am
Holy Communion
Rev Geoff Hunter

6:00 pm
Evensong
Fr Robin Gibbons

Sunday February 2nd - Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

8:00 am
Holy Communion
Rev Marcus Green

11:00 am
Holy Communion with Baptism
Rev Marcus Green

9:30 am
Holy Communion
Rev Marcus Green

6:00 pm
Holy Communion
**Rev Marcus Green and
Rev Geoff Hunter (speaking)**

Families are welcome to all Sunday services.