

South Leigh News



Photo above taken by Marianne Glithero, High Cogges

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

Since the last newsletter your parish council has continued meeting every 6 weeks remotely via Zoom with the meetings publicised on the web site, via Facebook and the village email list. If you would like to be included on these lists please do let us know. As always the public are invited to observe our meetings and if there is anything in the parish that is concerning you please let us know and we will do our best to help. There is also a slot at meetings for members of the public to speak. Full Minutes of our meetings and agendas for future meetings are available on the South Leigh website.

We have only had two meetings since the last newsletter, both in January – which is unusual – one was specifically to agree the level

precept for the coming year – this is the amount that the parish council feels it has to charge you, as parishioners, to look after the parish. Its collected through the council tax system and then distributed to us. The main items of expenditure are the various insurances/leases for the public places within the village, grass maintenance, the village hall loan, paying our clerk and a small amount of sundry payments – again details can be found on the website. It was deemed necessary to raise the precept by £3 per household per annum.

The other meeting handled our normal agenda – matters included a change of use planning application at Church End Farm, progress on Shores Green junction and the A40 updates, the possibility of an anaerobic digester being sited within the parish, the flooding and the possible pollution that occurred in Lymbrook Close, how to increase biodiversity with the Forest Restoration Group undertaking planting of young trees on allotted sites, the improvement of mobile phone reception and finally the possibility of creating a Conservation Area to protect our parish.

We were unable to hold an AGM last year because of Covid but we are hoping to be able to hold one in May this year but we will have to keep you posted on this! (See Page 2)

I hope you are all bearing up in these really tricky times, I always find January and February a bit depressing in a normal year and this one has been a nightmare – but with the vaccination programme going so well hopefully we will all be able to meet up again soon. If you do need some support or help in any way please get in touch - there are loads of people out there who would be more than willing to help. Good wishes to you all.

Nicky Brooks, Chair South Leigh Parish Council (nicky@southleigh.info)



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The South Leigh News Photograph Requests

South Leigh News would like to publish photos taken by villagers in each edition capturing our Parish.

We won't be able to publish everyone's, however we shall choose photos that are best suited to the edition.

A star photo will be selected to go on the front page of the newsletter. Please can you email any photos to :
southleighnewsletter@gmail.com

WELCOMES & GOODBYES

Belated welcome to Alison and Matthew Lee, who moved in to Box Cottage, 71, Station Road

Welcome to Rozzi & Laurence Jennings at 19 Lymbrook Close along with Henley 8yrs and Iness 6 yrs, Leo a Goldendoodle and Teddy the cat.

Welcome to Baby Lyra to Alex & Mike, Old Chapel, Chapel Road

Condolences

I thought you might like to know that Buster died about a week ago. He was taken into hospital with internal bleeding. He was operated on, taken to intensive care but wasn't able to survive the operation. His family will be clearing out his flat this coming weekend.

Doesn't seem long since we were waving to him when we passed after our walks! (see page 6) - Karen

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LOCAL ELECTIONS

It looks as if these are definitely going to go ahead in May this year. This parish will be voting for County, District, Parish Councillors as well as for the police commissioner. It's not confirmed as yet but it's likely that we will be asked to vote by post this year. Given the COVID situation it would seem a sensible solution. Now is the time, if you are not already registered to vote, that you do so. It's a simple thing to do, just contact. WODC offices at:

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

Once registered, in the fullness of time, you will receive your voting papers

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

It has been many years since we have had an election. Half your Councillors have been co-opted (asked by current members to join). Although they do a splendid job it's not very democratic, the other half have served for too many years to mention. New blood would be very welcome.

Serving on the parish council gives you the opportunity to shape the future of your community, and to have an active role in matters of particular interest to you. We are only a tiny community but we increasingly have large issues put before us. To mention but a few, how the new Shores Green junction is implemented and how to mitigate the effects of extra traffic that it will bring to the village; the need to protect our countryside and increase bio diversity including the pollution in the Limb Brook; how we keep our community a living thriving place to live without losing its very special feel. Then of course there's the equally important matters of flooding, potholes and speeding traffic.

If you feel you would like to take part and join our merry team do please get in touch with me or any of the other councillors nicky@southleigh.info.
01993 701137

FORMER RESIDENT REMEMBERS SOUTH LEIGH

Author of the much loved "South Leigh Remembered" books and resident born and bred in South Leigh, Phyllis Broome, has dedicated an oak tree to her wider family.

Phyllis thought as her brother Chris was partly involved in felling some of the trees years ago it would be good to put a little back. Phyllis lived in South Leigh until she got married and then moved to Witney. Nicky Brooks, chair of the Parish Council said "Phyllis told me that she'd like to plant a memorial tree and happily the South Leigh Forest Restoration Group were about to plant a dozen trees along Chapel Road close to where Phyllis lived". So she has dedicated the oak that is nearest to Wayside Cottage.

Phyllis said "I am delighted to have dedicated an oak that will grow for many years in the place I love and I am thrilled that the current residents of Wayside Cottage have agreed to plant another tree, a Wild Cherry, in the garden".

Phyllis's family lived at Wayside Cottage for 60 years plus. It is owned by the National Trust and is medieval grade two listed and amongst the oldest houses in the village. Phyllis can trace her Harris family of South Leigh back to the 1600s.



South Leigh Vicar's Letter March 2021

What a year we have been through as a nation. Writing in February, I have no idea what we will be facing when you read this in March, other than the fact that the ongoing pandemic will have been affecting our lives in the UK for a whole year.

This pandemic has shown us just how hard it is to be sure of anything in the future – time and chance happen to us all. It is impossible to predict the future. Around Christmas, we were all looking forward to things slowly returning to normal and then suddenly we are faced with a new mutation of COVID which meant we went straight into another severe lockdown. As I write I guess we are wondering what will happen next. What will be announced by the government about when this lockdown will end? Will the schools return in March? Should we book our summer holidays? Will we be able to meet in groups again anytime soon? How hard it must be to make such decisions even with the best scientific data. It is impossible to predict how the tweaks and changes will play out and affect the ongoing situation.

For most of our lives we have got on with our life, confident in our ability to make plans and see them through. Yes, the unexpected and distressing happened now and again, but as the exception not the rule. In our current moment, however, we are facing unpredictability, disappointment and distress. All of us, all the time. As a world we have been reminded most starkly of the fragility of life and the uncertainty we really have about the future. We are desperately in need of hope.

In the middle of a long lament expressing bitter sorrow at the defeat and enslavement of his nation and the destruction of his city, Jeremiah the prophet writes these familiar words from the Bible, which are read at many church funeral services:

*But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.*

In the midst of his distress and hopelessness, Jeremiah remembers that there is one who does know what the future holds – and he is loving, merciful and faithful. And as Jeremiah remembers his God's love, his mercy and his faithfulness, hope rises.

As we head into April, we head into the Easter season. Easter is the season of hope in the life of the church. As Jesus died and rose again to new life, God showed how deep his faithfulness goes. God's faithfulness goes as far as the undoing of death through his own suffering as the man Jesus. The love of God is shown in that he did not just look down on our pain from heaven, but came and shared in our sorrows, pains and suffering. He was faithful to his promises that death will not be the end of the story. And he asks us today to trust in his promise of the hope that one day he will free this world from all tears and sufferings; pain and pandemics.

What a delight it is to see the new life of the spring bulbs emerge out of the frozen and lifeless winter soil, bringing hope of better days to come. This is a picture that God has placed in his world, of what Jesus has done already and will one day do for us. That hope of God's new life that is emerging out of the sometime frozen and lifelessness of the world today. A glorious hope of a future life of fullness found in Jesus.

David Spence



ALARM BELLS RANG AT ST JAMES'S

MARTIN SPURRIER



The very thought of deathwatch beetle has struck fear in the hearts of property owners for eons. If you stand still, reputedly, you can hear them munching your beams away. The noise is actually caused by the beetles tapping their heads on the timber to attract a mate during courtship and was believed to presage a fatality, hence the beetle's gloomy name.

The larvae bore into the wood, feeding for up to ten years before pupating, and later emerging as adult beetles only to start the process again.

So, when I spotted small, but growing, heaps of what looked like sawdust on ledges in the clock chamber below the bell chamber at our St. James the Great church in November, alarm bells

rang (*left*).

Photos and samples were despatched and there was a suggestion that it might be caused by the dreaded deathwatch beetle. It made sense as they bore mostly in oak and elm, nearly always where the wood is over a hundred years old and damp, plus, they produce a sawdust-like 'frass'.

The Vicar authorised the church's architects to check it out and, Steeple Keeper, attended.

Together, with Caroline Edwards from heritage building consultants, Andrew Townsend Architects, we approached from the bell chamber above and used Caroline's very flexible endoscope (*top left*) to investigate through small holes in the floor boards presenting the images on her mobile phone.

We then lifted two of the chunky oak boards in the tight space beneath bell

No 7 to find a wriggling mass of what appeared to be flies burrowing in the same-looking 'sawdust' that we'd seen in the clock chamber below.

Caroline called her colleague, Andrew Townsend, from the tower and he watched the images live via video-call at his office in Faringdon. (top left) He asked if the 'sawdust' was anywhere else. It was everywhere we could see in the gaps between the floorboards and the ceiling below, and about six inches deep.

Guess what?

Our death watch beetle 'frass' was, in fact, perfectly normal sawdust that had probably been put there as sound insulation (also known as 'pugging' or 'deafening') in 1907 when the bells were re-hung and was now slipping through cracks that had opened up over time between the boards and the wall!

And the squirming mass of what looked like flies, was exactly that, too. They were harmless, rather dopey attic flies, sometimes called cluster flies (not unlike bluebottles), that we had disturbed during their winter hibernation. These insects amass in places like attics and burrow in whatever they can find for warmth during the winter, before breeding in the spring. The Tower's 1907 insulation was just perfect for them.

Crisis over! No deathwatch beetle, no borers or their frass. Just innocent, snoozing attic flies, and good old Edwardian sawdust!

(With many thanks to Andrew Townsend and Caroline Edwards)

UPDATE ON MOBILE SIGNAL DICK PEARS

I wish I had something spectacular to tell you but nothing is like that and any time frames are extended, *but...*

1) I have asked that the issue of rural mobile connectivity be highlighted to the All Party Committee of MPs dealing with rural affairs.

2) Nicky Brooks and I are still due to have a meeting with Robert Courts M.P. in the village on 19th March and we will have a list of enquiries which we will send him in advance.

3) I had a helpful telephone conference with Tom Corcoran, Lead Political and Parliamentary Affairs Manager of 'Three' - much the most helpful of all the mobile providers. I urged him to try and get greater cooperation between the four suppliers as I readily accept that it is not economic for four companies to make separate provision for a community as small as South Leigh - I personally can't see why South Leigh could not be a 'Three' village say whilst Cassington is, say, a 'Vodafone' village and, indeed, in a recent industry newsletter the penny seems to have dropped.

"Until recently it was widely accepted that network competition was key to getting the operators to build out with urgency. Clearly collaboration and competition are two very different things, but the consensus now appears to be that a blend of the two approaches represents a sort of 'third way' depending on the circumstances."

I also asked him to send me a confirmatory email of the telephone call which he has done. The most helpful parts for

South Leigh are, "We expect the improvements in South Leigh will be delivered via the PNS programme, which we expect to make an announcement about soon." And, "The full SRN (PNS & TNS) is supposed to be completed by 2025, however it is our ambition that the PNS programme is completed within two years of it starting."

I have various concerns as a result of my conversation with Tom Corcoran about Ofcom monitoring but that is a matter for Ofcom and the minister and again I have raised the issue with Robert Courts. As for 'Three', I am far from clear that their four proposed masts, even with overlaid frequencies, will do the job for South Leigh - I asked Tom to seek information from his technical team and he has undertaken to do that.

4) Chris Williams of BT is still trying to resolve 'the landlord issue' which is preventing alteration / improvement to the Oxford Hill site and the raising of the mast. Then there will be a planning issue along the lines faced in 6 below.

5) We still have the problem that, as far as I can see, Vodafone and O2's position in that they have confirmed they are doing nothing which I believe is a clear breach of the Shared Rural Network Agreement with the Government.

6) As a footnote you may have seen the headline in the Witney Gazette (10/2/2021) which Nicky Brooks alerted me to. Planning permission was granted for a new 20 metre mast on Witney Road, Eynsham (Lowlands Planning Committee 8/2/2021). I will contact the case officer to find out more.

WELL DONE JANET

In case you are wondering how so much rubbish appeared at Margery Cross in January here is the answer from Janet Soame:-

"With the Christmas holidays coming to an end, so have my daily litter picking walks. Hours of fresh air & 90km later, my favourite circular walk past the gorgeous Tar Lakes is almost litter free. I simply couldn't stand looking at it anymore in our otherwise so beautiful spot of the country. I admit it's a bit addictive. Never going out without a litter stick or collection bag now! Should anyone fancy borrowing a litter stick, you are welcome to my spares. You might want to wear gloves to protect from muck & Covid. A fresh clean start to a hopefully much more positive year. So looking forward to nature and wildlife having more safe space to flourish this year. Janet and all like-minded litter pick walkers."



WELL DONE JANET and THANK YOU. OUR VERY OWN LOCKDOWN LITTER PICKER.



South Leigh WI will close on 31st March 2021.

Members are hoping to continue meeting on an informal basis.

Liz Ashwell

THE CHURCH IS OPEN

St James the Great

The church is open for private prayer. Please zap the QR code on the notice board in the porch for “Track and Trace” or sign the visitors’ book on the table inside. Please use the hand sanitiser provided. When you are ready to leave please use the spray and paper towel to wipe the pew you have sat upon and the door handle.

Let us hope we are able to resume collective worship soon.

Thankyou

”BUSTER” GRAHAM TOWNSEND REMEMBERED BY CALLY HILL

Graham was born 4th September 1951 in Bromley Kent.

He moved with his parents Evelyn (known as June) and Allen Townsend to Stanton Harcourt, growing up with his younger brother Roger, first living on the old airfield before moving to a house on Flexneys Paddock

When Graham left Bartholomew school in Eynsham he did an apprenticeship in HGV mechanics at Harcourt Motors. Later gaining his HGV licence and spent most of his working life as a lorry driver, which he loved. He did spend a period of time working at the car factory in Oxford - British Leyland as it was then and a period laying tv cables. But lorries were what he loved best.

Graham came from a family of Banger Racing, spending many weekends either racing or tinkering with his race car with his brother, he often would talk about Nova 176.

He was a big TeddyBoy and very proud of it. Loving Elvis and Shwaddywaddy.

He married Julie in 1978, taking on her two sons, Jake and Glenn as his own, before they had Cally in 1980. He was an excellent father to all three, calm, reliable and hard working. For Graham his family always came first.

Graham loved fixing cars. Not just his own but there were always regular knocks on the door while they lived in Standlake (1978-2007) and it would be someone asking if he could 'take a look at their car' or, in Julies words 'go out and play cars'

Then living in Lymbrook Close, South Leigh where even the postman would pop into chat with him, and everyone kept an eye on him.

Graham loved camping and caravanning holidays as a family and later with Julie and Odie. They camped all over the uk, walking many miles and climbing many hills and mountains.



Cally remembers the time when they had storm winds and had to tie the tent to the car, she remembers how it was dark out and he ran out to join the other campers, helping to secure the other tents that were not doing so well. Cally remembers one time that they woke up with a river running through the tent and Graham had to dig a trench round the tent to divert the water.

Graham loved wolves! He had a wolf tattoo and one of his favourite outings was to the Wolf Conservation Trust in Reading where he got to walk with the wolves.

Graham had a really close relationship with his grandson, Harvey. They would spend many weekends watching movies like Convoy (they once watched it twice in one night) or listening to his record collection.

Jake remembers the many times Graham would come and find him when he got lost on his motorbike, often travelling miles.

A gentle giant, always with a smile on his face, always ready to help in any way he could

Grampy Buster to Harvey, Freya, Albie, Eliza, Lanny, Thorn, Michael, Kaylen, Louie and Alysha.

(Photo above provided by Cally Hill)

OUR BUS SHELTER IS JUST THE TICKET

Do you think that the builders of our modest concrete bus shelter in Station Road ever thought that it would become a civic attraction? The Lockdown, however, has already given the little bunker several new creative leases of life, the most recent being on Valentine's Day.

The day before 14th February, it suddenly emerged in its fourth edition, as the perfect romantic Lockdown rendezvous standing in for posh restaurants that could



not host Valentine's Day couples because of Covid-19. (above right)

Hearts and roses were in profusion and the supper table was already set up for loving selfies. Plus, there was a bottle of fizz to be won in the 'Best Selfie' competition'. Congratulations to Heather and Keith Horner. (photo top right)



(below) Before and after 'Operation Paint & Scrape' in August 2020, and (below right) as the 'The Andrew Carnegie Memorial Library' Lockdown, swap shop.



Then, in November, as a



Polling Station (right) for the Conservation Area poll and (bottom right) as Santa's Grotto at Christmas.



WATCH OUT FOR FUTURE ATTRACTIONS!



NATURE NOTES

Flooding, Limb Brook Pollution and Water Voles

HELP IS NEEDED, PLEASE!

Three important environmental initiatives have started, and all hands and eyes are welcome!

They are Flooding, Water Pollution and the encouragement of Water Voles and other wildlife along the Limb Brook. We shall report on water voles (and Forest Restoration) in the next Newsletter, but while work on the other two has just started, here is an update and a **call for help** from anyone who might like to be involved. Much more will follow in the months and years ahead.

Flooding



Photo Above: Flooding of the Limb Brook at the east of the village.

This is a recurring problem in South Leigh and it has multiple causes. These range from inadequate drainage to blocked drains and seriously overgrown and congested streams. While the problem goes far beyond our parish, it certainly starts in it because so does the Limb Brook. There are steps that we can take locally to help, but first we need to understand the problem.

Parish Councillor, Lysette Nicholls, has taken this long-term project in hand and, with others, has been researching the Limb Brook and other areas where run off causes problems - most of which end up in the Limb Brook.



Above Photo: You will remember this light-hearted picture from 2019. But flooding is serious.

Lysette has been in contact with our County Councillor highlighting the flooding issues and has drafted an in depth email with photos which has been escalated to Oxfordshire County Council to get them to look at issues that are directly under their remit. The areas highlighted include High Cogges, the pipe inlets on Chapel Road near Shuttles Cottage, the pipe inlets by The Mason Arms and where the Limb Brook passes under the road on the Baynard Gate Road through to Station Road.

Thames Water is also going to be contacted in regards to the brook in Lymbrook Close once further investigations have been completed in regards to pollution.

How you can help?

We need help in several areas including regular observation and reporting of apparent pollution sources, and observation and reporting of any and all forms of life along and in the brook. Teenagers are welcome too, and might well be able to use the work as part of a school project.

Please contact either Lysette or Graham:
lysette.nicholls@southleigh.info 07766251125
graham@southleigh.info 07932172873



NATURE NOTES

Flooding, Limb Brook Pollution

HELP IS NEEDED, PLEASE!

Like flooding, water pollution is a serious and long-term problem that we believe has increased over the years and must now be assessed and addressed. Again, we must understand it, but what we already know is that it starts in our parish. Why? Because, like noted above, the Limb Brook starts in our parish. Also, like above, we need, help.

The pollution in the Limb Brook is there for us all to see. Murky water, thick brownish foam, even a smell. With polluted water, the whole natural cycle suffers - plant life, water-borne life and other animals all of which live, or would like to live, along the banks or in the stream.

Here, Parish Councillor, Graham Soame, has been making vital early steps and has formed a close alliance with similarly concerned people in Eynsham and the Eynsham Nature Recovery Network.



*Thick brown scum on the Limb Brook along Chapel Road.
(Photo by John Ashwell)*

The Preliminary Plan

Before we can do anything to **fix** the problem, we need to know what the problem **is**, and then the exact **extent** of it. In this, our neighbours in Eynsham have been very helpful through giving us some spare water testing kits.

Initial tests have been done and Lymbrook Close resident, Rita Sawrey-Woodwards, has brought her invaluable knowledge as a bio-chemist to the task to help us understand what the results mean and how to go forward. She has recommended a programme that is this, in brief:

- ◆ Map the course of the Limb Brook and its source. *This has been done.*
- ◆ Identify land use/industrial use/possible sewage sources along the brook.
- ◆ Start chemical water testing to identify the pollutant/s.
- ◆ Start regular fauna/flora observation.

The above schedule of activity would be monthly for a year so as to cover the farming and climate cycle and to see 'patterns'. Then:

- ◆ Collate, quantify, analyse and understand the data.
- ◆ Understand what levels are acceptable/liaise with local and national bodies.
- ◆ Approach possible polluters to make changes of practice.

This process will continue until the pollution itself can be eliminated at which point the re-wilding can be started. As noted, this is a long-term initiative and supporters are most welcome to help build the data and clean up what was in living memory, a natural haven for wild life.



NATURE NOTES

Nippy or what?

Certainly, it was pretty cold in South Leigh in February, this year.

The annual Bond's Lane winter lake at the crossways froze solid with 30mm of ice (*below, left*) and ornamental troughs in the village struggled to keep going (*below, right*).

We don't have a weather station here, but the maximum/minimum thermometer in my sheltered carport read just above -5 C (*right*).

The coldest *winter* on record in the UK, according to Dailyinfo.co.uk, was 1962-3, with a mean temperature of -1.0°C. This was also the snowiest winter on record, with 67 days of snow cover.

The coldest *day* on record was 27th January 1776 with a midday maximum of -8°C.

On this day Dr. Hornsby, who kept these early recordings, was moved to add a personal note to his meteorological journal: *'Wine keg froze in study!'* More recently, on 13th January 1982, the mercury



The average temperature was 2.2C. This made it the coldest January since 2010, when the average was 0.9C. The coldest January on record, according to Sky News, was 1963, when conditions averaged -1.9C.

February, this year, got even colder. On 11th the Met Office reported that the overnight temperature at the weather station at Braemar dropped to -23.0°C, one of three stations in the UK to dip below minus 20.0°C.

I wonder if anyone recorded anything below -5C?

martinspurrier@hotmail.com

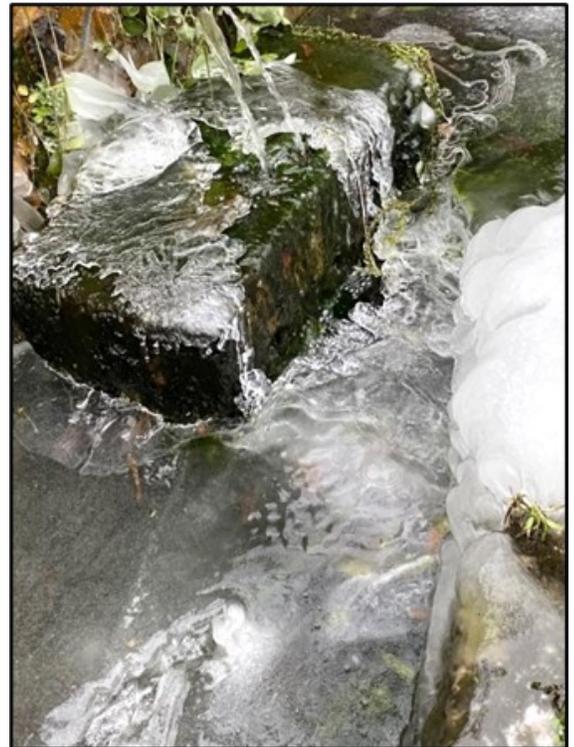


Dogs on ice

failed to rise above -7.1°C.

The Met Office reported that, nationally, January this year was the coldest the UK has seen in 10 years.

Cold Trough





Ever wondered... which bin to put out, or when?
Who's on the Parish Council, or how to join
the bell ringers at St. James the Great?

Well, don't forget...

you have a village web site where you can
find *all* the up-to-the-minute village news
you need and much more* besides ~
available for you 24 / 7

at

www.southleigh.info

* Waste collection info, Clubs and Associations, Events,
Church news, Parish Council updates and information,
Campaigns, Forest Restoration progress, Nature Notes, Local
History, Villagers' News, Walks, Seasonal Recipes...

South Leigh

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Love South Leigh

& High Cogges

Our Conservation Area bid

Conservation Update & Recap

After the Parish Council Poll on 1st December 2020 when

64% of the voters decided (with 27% disagreeing and 8% being undecided) (the figures have been rounded) that “the Campaign Group should prepare a draft application for Conservation Area status (with options, e.g. boundaries etc.) for the Parish of South Leigh including High Cogges, for consideration by the Parish Council and Parish residents and to be voted on by residents in due course”, the following initial steps have been taken:

Heritage Consultant

The Campaign Group had a meeting by Zoom on 23rd January 2021 between Graham Keevill (GK), a Heritage Consultant, and Gary Nicholls, Martin Spurrier and Dick Pears. Graham Soame had been invited to attend as a PC representative but could not do so but was sent a formal note of the meeting.

There was a summary given to GK of where the village was at and the detailed and extensive prior consultation that there had already been with meetings, fact sheets distributed and the poll on 1st December 2020.

Conservation Area / Neighbourhood Plan?

One of main points of this initial meeting with GK was to ask whether there were advantages in having a conservation order in addition to a Neighbourhood Plan. He said it was sensible to have both if you could and that the advantages of a conservation order over a Neighbourhood Plan were threefold:

A conservation order gives 'statutory' protection whereas a Neighbourhood Plan is 'advisory'.

A Neighbourhood Plan is time-limited whereas a conservation order is permanent.

A Neighbourhood Plan can be interpreted at the whim of a local authority whereas that is not true of a conservation order.

Costs

We had established in earlier email exchanges that GK's overall costs would be about £2000 + VAT and in subsequent discussions between the three of us on the Campaign Group we thought we should allow a contingency amount of £3000 + VAT to include all the potential costs to be on the safe side.

It may be that we will be able to claim back the VAT.

Next Steps

We asked GK to take us through the process and he suggested that he would like a “walk round the village” with him being supplied with all the material that had already been collected. Martin agreed to do that and get it to him. We suggested March/April for the walk round when lockdown restrictions might have been lifted. The cost of that first stage (consideration of documentation and walk round) would be about £600 + VAT. Informal fund raising has now taken place and there are funds in place for that stage - independent of Parish Council resources.

There was also discussion about which areas of the Parish might be included and the themes of that discussion were (1) the application should be inclusive rather than divisive and (2) the landowners needed to be protected, if that were possible.

Thereafter the process would involve GK writing a draft report which he thought would take him only about 3-4 weeks.

By Dick Pears



A Message From Our MP Robert Courts



I know how challenging 2020 was for all of us and that, in some ways, 2021 feels all too familiar. However, though we may be in lockdown now, there is light at the end of the tunnel. With three vaccines now approved for use in the UK, including our own local Oxford/AstraZeneca jab, we are now well on the way to vaccinating our top four priority groups in record time. At the time of writing, over 10 million people have been vaccinated and this grows every day. This is a hugely significant achievement which is testament to the inspirational leadership that has been shown by local NHS organisa-

tions', GPs and health coordinators. This, along with longer days, lighter evenings and the beginning of a beautiful West Oxfordshire spring is sure to lift spirits in this challenging time.

I have seen the excellent work of everyone at our local vaccination hubs for myself. The professionalism and efficiency they are showing is proving everyone's dedication to this vital cause. I am also encouraged that so many people across West Oxon are taking up the vaccine when offered. It is this dedication and resolve which speaks to me in these challenging times and shows me that we will overcome this.

We are also once again seeing the huge outpouring of community spirit and good will that warmed us all in 2020. I would encourage everyone to check in on family, friends and neighbours, particularly those who may live alone, the vulnerable and those separated from their loved ones. Sometimes even just a phone call can do the world of good.

My team and I continue to work hard from home on your behalf and we remain accessible throughout lockdown. Please do not hesitate to get in touch at robert@robertcourts.co.uk if there is anything at all we can do.

GRASS CUTTER REQUIRED FOR VILLAGE HALL

The gentleman who has been employed to cut the Village Hall rear garden grass is retiring. The Village Hall Committee is keen to hear from anyone who is interested or knows of anyone who may be interested in fulfilling this role. A certain amount of flexibility regarding frequency of cutting will be useful to allow for the peak growing season and hall bookings.

Rates are negotiable. (Or volunteers considered)

Please contact John Ashwell on 01993 703534 or john@southleigh.info

QUIZ

Simply insert the missing vowels to reveal Oxfordshire place names—well, almost, as one place is JUST over the county border. The spaces are not relevant—just for confusion! Answers appear elsewhere.

1 ST NRW NT

2 CL SHL L

3 D NST W

4 PT N

5 RS HM

6 YN H

7 ST HS TK

8 S TP LS TN

9 KN GS TNL SL

10 DRC HS TRN TH MS

11 RDN GT N

12 N RT HST N

QUIET COUNTRY LANES AROUND HAILEY & DELLY END

By Russell & Anne Cherry

With extremely difficult underfoot conditions following all the winter deluges and flooding, here is another walk using quiet country lanes (mostly), and minor roads (quieter during the week).

DISTANCE: 4 miles. Allow 2 hours

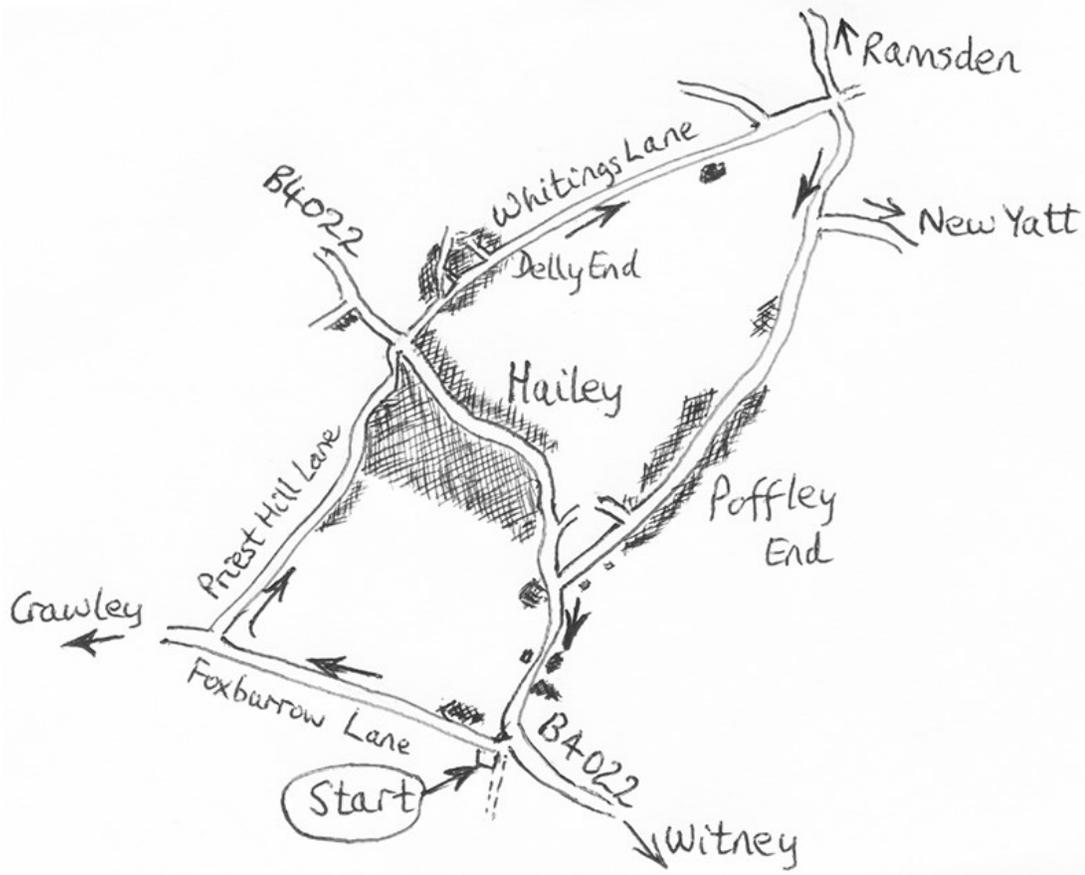
PARKING/START: Foxburrow Wood Car Park, on L on Foxburrow Lane, a short way off B4022 Hailey Road from Witney. G.R. SP354117.

Go along Foxburrow Lane and before dropping down to Crawley go R along Priest Hill Lane. Cross B4022 at Hailey and go onto Delly End. Fork R at green to go along Whittings Lane to reach the Ramsden road. Now go R, pass through Poffley End to join the B4022. Go L here to bring you back to Foxburrow Lane (walk behind the hedge at Rugby Club to avoid walking on this busy road).

If the ground conditions are favourable, and you have suitable footwear, you may also wish to walk around Foxburrow Wood, a Wychwood Project plantation ; see the information board. RC



Photograph Above: Peace Memorial at Delly End; Acknowledgement Wikipedia



Update From The Parish Wardens

by Russell and Anne Cherry

Despite all those winter rains many of our Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) have continued to be used. Hopefully, conditions will now improve so that the whole network can be accessed again. We have been told that there are at present around 4,000 outstanding PRoW issues across Oxfordshire! Whilst we continue to report such issues to the Countryside Access Team, O.C.C., as instructed, we also report these matters to our Parish Council, as we have found that this will inevitably bring a quicker resolution to the matter.

We are pleased to report that the much needed replacement stile into the field behind Homans Farm has been sorted. Looking ahead, we are asking the P.C. to contact the relevant landowner(s) to ensure that PRoWs are reinstated where crops are planted across these routes (as indeed they should be). Last year some routes proved difficult to use throughout the summer, and worse when the crops were wet!

Longer days are on the way! Good walking.

NORTH LEIGH ROMAN VILLA

by Matthew Lee



Step into England's story

The North Leigh Roman Villa volunteers are a new group, only formed in the summer of 2019, so 2020 was quite a first full year to try to be up and running. The group works closely with English Heritage who manage the site. It has been a very challenging year for the charity too, but there are grounds for cautious optimism in 2021. English Heritage were delighted with what the team of volunteers have been able to achieve at the villa. While visitors were complimentary about the safety of arrangements on the site.

Highlights in 2020 included:

Over 1,250 visitors to the mosaics; almost 90% more than in 2019.

155 people are "Friends of North Leigh Roman Villa"; an increase of c. 50% on 2019.

Almost £1,000 was received in donations; more than a sixfold increase on 2019.

The first **deep clean of the mosaic** for over a decade, involving volunteers, Friends of the villa, and some young visitors too.

Over 1000 Hours of volunteering during 2020; from our team of two dozen volunteers, 75% of whom were able to volunteer safely on site in spite of covid restrictions.

To become a Friend of North Roman Villa is free and keeps you up to date with developments via email.

Email:

[nlrvols@gmail.com](mailto:nlrsvols@gmail.com)

Alternatively, visit the website or follow us on Twitter.

website: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/north-leigh-roman-villa/>

Twitter: @villa_north



Village Hall

Village Hall Committee

Richard Law (Chair)
773355

Dorothy Carden – Noad (Secretary)
703840

John Ashwell (Treasurer)
703534

Debi Diacon (Bookings)
773314

David Brown
703765

Sue Washington
775574

Caroline Auger
834899

VILLAGE HALL 100 CLUB

Thank you to all those people who have recently supported the Village Hall 100 club this year. There are a few more participants than in previous years so the monthly prize money has been able to be increased to £20.00 for 1st prize and £12.00 for 2nd prize. This means that even with the 2nd prize you will get your £12 subscription money back, but still with the possibility of winning again later in the year.

The winners names are always put on the village website immediately following each draw.

Club 100 Winners

January

The winners' in January were Evadne Adrian-Vallance and Karen Wilson.

CHURCHYARD RESURRECTION By Heather Horner

South Leigh's ancient churchyard is getting a makeover. Although never completely neglected, in course of time the brambles and nettles and ivy have overtaken parts of the perimeter, and nature has taken its toll on the ancient elms that once flanked the western boundary. A project is underway to refresh the outer parts of the churchyard and reinvigorate and extend the wildlife biodiversity. This will be done in stages, so that the existing populations of flowers and animals are not completely disrupted and have the chance to adjust.

A start was made in the summer, with the removal of some inappropriate self-set sycamores and brambles growing among the tombstones. Then, at the start of December, a healthily large band of village residents joined a working party to tackle the dead elms which had persisted in inconveniently falling into the roadway whenever strong winds blew. Much of the rotting wood has been piled into wildlife refuges for bugs and fungi and small animals. Large areas of brambles and snowberry have been cleared into an enormous pile, which will either be allowed to rot down gently, or maybe some judicious burning if the weather ever improves. Or if you have a domestic fire, there should be some rescuable firewood, come and help yourself.



Photo Above: Before elm removal

The northern and western boundaries were planted with Italian limes in 1832, so these trees are nearly 200 years old. Italian lime was very popular and fashionable in the Victorian era, but it has a strong tendency to send up shoots and suckers from the base, using energy at the expense of the main trunk. No doubt the Victorians had extra labour available to trim these suckers off every year, but ours have not seen such attention for many seasons. Added to that, ivy has been climbing some of the limes, making them top-heavy and at risk in a high wind. Ivy is a very useful plant in the wider environment, it flowers late in the season, providing nectar and pollen for overwintering insects; my bees love it. But the combination of extra growth at the base and ivy up the trunks is putting the limes in danger, so a big part of the churchyard renovation is aimed at reducing this extra vegetation.

Photo Left; After dead elm reduction, glimpses of St James the Great. Right, members of the working party.



CHURCHYARD RESURRECTION

Now the undergrowth has been reduced, it is delightful to see how many snowdrops and daffodils are emerging from the bare earth. There are plans to replant much of the exposed soil under the trees with native shade-loving flowers – a start has been made with Solomon’s Seal and stinking iris and hellebore. The less shaded parts need some more help, please, to reduce the bramble roots and nettles, then my own mix of local wildflowers should have a good chance to establish, with some cornfield annuals to hopefully give a good show this year. The roadside hedge is now a bit gappy, though it gives tantalising glimpses of the historic church within; the gaps should be replanted with native hedgerow shrubs before spring.

This is the first chapter in what we hope you will see as a community project, increasing access to our 1000 year old churchyard as well as increasing biodiversity. For instance, we are confident that we already have slowworms on site; their favourite refuge and sunning spot is a sheet of corrugated iron, which you may see tucked into a sunny corner. For the future, we need help with planting, maintenance, adding microhabitats (bird-boxes, anyone?), monitoring wildlife, all suggestions and offers welcome. Come and talk!

Heather Horner, Windrush Cottage, Station Road, tel. 01993 357389, email hahwindrush@aol.com

Photo below; A new view to the west (photo Martin S)



Below; New open views and members or the working group (photo H.Horner)



SNAPS OF JUST SOME OF THE HELPERS ON THE DAY - THANK YOU TO EVERYONE

(photos below by Anne Peake)



The Clock Goeth



Our lovely old turret clock in the tower at St. James the Great is ticking again after resting silent for some two years.

The clock, reckoned to have come from Gloucestershire and made in the mid-18th century, was overhauled at the time of the millennium but, more recently, kept stopping just before it was due to strike the hour.

Specialists were called in from Cumbria and the estimate to re-condition the clock and update its wonderfully ingenious, chain-driven, electric winding mechanism (below right) was to be more than £20,000.

So, noting that it always stopped just before it was due to strike, we thought that if we simply disabled the striking mechanism with one cable tie, the clock should run, but without striking. The specialists agreed to try. (Right)

Hey presto! It runs perfectly and it cost £210 plus VAT. Long may it tick.

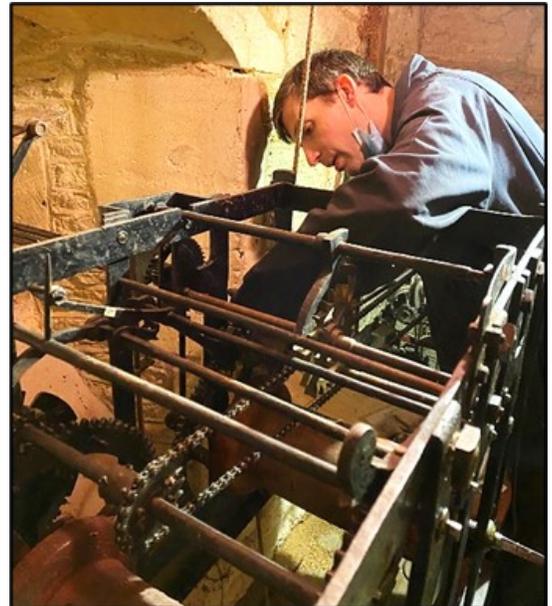
Martin S

PS: Please don't set your watches by the church clock as we can only expect a clock of its age to be accurate within a good few minute a month, depending on the weather, bats and how it feels. After all, it is over 250 years old and so the hour hand will have gone around more than 2.2 million times.

The biblical quotation on the clock face is from Matthew 24.42. Google has over 70 different translations of the original text, but here is a handy description of its meaning:

"Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" Then let me always live as though my Lord were at the gate! Let me arrange my affairs on the assumption that the next to lift the latch will be the King. When I am out with my friend, walking and talking, let me assume that just round the corner I may meet the Lord. And so let me practise meeting Him! Said a mother to me one day concerning her long-absent boy: "I lay a place for him at every meal! His seat is always ready!"

John Henry Jowett—My Daily Meditation for the Circling Year



Seasonal South Leigh Recipes

These buttery, cinnamon or rich chocolate twists are the perfect weekend indulgence and will make coffee at home an event.

Cinnamon Sugar Twists (Makes 16)

275ml full fat milk
40g butter
500g strong white flour
7g dried yeast
50g caster sugar
pinch salt
one small egg, beaten

For the filling:

100g butter, softened
150g caster sugar
3-4 heaped tsps ground cinnamon

For finishing:

a knob of butter
50g caster sugar
1 tsp ground cinnamon

Gently heat the milk and the butter together until the butter has melted. Remove from the heat and allow to cool. Mix together the flour, yeast, sugar and salt in a large bowl. When the milk and butter mixture is just tepid, stir into the flour and mix until you have a fairly sticky dough. Add the beaten egg and continue working the dough until it is all combined.

Dust the work surface with flour and tip out the dough. It will be very sticky, that's ok, just continue to knead for about 10 minutes or until it becomes a smooth, pliable dough. Transfer to a floured bowl, cover and leave in a warm place for about an hour, or until the dough has doubled in size.

Meanwhile, prepare the filling by blending together the butter, sugar and cinnamon. Set aside in a warm place as you need the filling to be spreadable. Prepare two baking trays lined with baking parchment.

When the dough has doubled in size, tip it out onto a floured surface and gently roll it out to a rectangle measuring 30 x 40 cm. Spread the filling evenly over the entire surface of the dough.

Fold the dough in half so that you have a rectangle measuring 15 x 40 cm and press down gently. Cut this into 16 or so short strips measuring approx. 15 x 2.5 cm.

To make the twists, hold both ends of a strip and twist in opposite directions until you have a spiral shape. Holding on to one end and still gently twisting the dough, wrap the twist around the end you are holding, until you have a slightly messy bun shape. Tuck the loose end in to the centre of the underside of the bun to stop it unravelling.

Arrange the twists on the prepared baking trays, leaving space between the buns to allow them to rise a little before and during baking. Set aside in a warm place for a further 30-40 minutes. Heat the oven to 190° C / Fan 170° C / Gas 5. Check that the twists haven't become untucked. If any of them have, gently tuck the end back

in place. Bake for 15-20 minutes. The twists will be golden brown and some of the filling will have oozed out, don't worry but be careful this doesn't burn you when you lift the twists on to a cooling rack.

Brush each twist with a little melted butter and dust liberally with a mixture of caster sugar and cinnamon. Best eaten warm.



Indulgent Dark Chocolate Twists...

Follow the recipe for Cinnamon Twists but change the filling to the following:

100g butter
100g soft light brown sugar
20g cocoa powder
2 tsp ground cinnamon
100g dark chocolate, chopped

Gently heat together the butter, sugar, cocoa and cinnamon. Stir in the chocolate and continue to heat very gently until the chocolate has melted and you have a smooth thick sauce. Set aside until ready to use.

TIP: You can freeze these twists uncooked. Simply shape the dough after the first rise then arrange the twists on a lined baking tray and freeze. When frozen, transfer the twists to a plastic freezer bag. To bake, place as many twists as you want on a baking parchment lined baking tray, cover loosely and leave for about 2 hours at room temperature. When ready to bake the twists should have risen slightly, and the dough should feel slightly puffy, leaving an indentation when prodded. Bake, finish with a good dusting of sugar and cinnamon and... enjoy!

NEWSLETTER

Any opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editors.

Please keep up to date by looking at the Facebook page or the website www.southleigh.info

If you are not currently on the residents' circulatory list please contact Nicky Brooks on nicky@oxcomm.co.uk to receive important updates.

If you know of someone who hasn't got access to a printer please let us know via email:

southleighnewsletter@gmail.com

QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) ASTON ROWANT
- 2) COLESHILL
- 3) DUNS TEW
- 4) UPTON
- 5) ROUSHAM
- 6) AYNHO
- 7) SOUTH STOKE
- 8) STEEPLE ASTON
- 9) KINGSTON LISLE
- 10) DORCHESTER-ON -THAMES
- 11) ARDINGTON
- 12) NORTH ASTON

