

South Leigh News

**SOUTH LEIGH ANNUAL GENERAL PARISH MEETING
COVERING THE PERIOD APRIL 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Nicky Brooks, Chair South Leigh Parish Council (Nickybrooks@Southleigh.info)

Wonderful things can happen when faced with adversity and South Leigh residents rose to the challenges of Covid-19 amazingly.

Lockdown activities

Faced with the lockdown and its implications for those without transport or access to public facilities, the Parish Council helped the village pull together to offer help to residents and to keep us all connected.

We started with offers of help collecting and delivering prescriptions and shopping. The disused bus shelter was turned into a library come jigsaw resource. Then we launched the scarecrow competition on VE Day, and the bus shelter has since been reinvented as a tableau for Santa’s Grotto, Valentine’s Day, the Easter Bunny’s Burrow, and currently the Limb Brook Live exhibition.

Over Christmas, people were encouraged to take part in an individual advent calendar display at their houses, and the Church provided a wonderful Carol Van with carol singing, all appropriately distanced, of course. Finally, a Christmas tree with twinkling lights appeared on the football pitch. I think everyone enjoyed these opportunities and maybe some will be revisited post Covid. I would like to thank everyone involved whether in the organisation or the participation.

The South Leigh News went digital for which I would like to thank John Ashwell and Lysette Nicholls. If and when the physical copies will become available again after Covid will be for the new Council to decide.

Turning to Parish Council Affairs

We welcomed two new people to the Parish Council during the year - Lysette Nicholls who joined as a Councillor, and Tammy Heavens, as Parish Clerk. Both are super additions.

John Ashwell stood down as Parish Clerk after 40 PLUS years of service for which we thank him sincerely.

Although not officially in the reporting year, it would be strange not to comment on the recent elections where our parish recorded the highest turn out in West Oxfordshire, at 74%. I want to thank everyone who was involved in any way as this really does underline how we think and act as a community.

In particular, I want again to thank the three Councillors who will be leaving the Parish Council, Eileen Mawle, Mark Walker and Martin Wilson. They all served our community for many years, and we all owe them our sincere thanks.

The recent election brings new faces to the Parish Council: David Auger, Dick Pears and Rita Sawrey-Woodwards. We also welcome Dan Levy as our new County Councillor and Andy Goodwin as one of our District Councillors. We look forward to working together. And especially, I’d like to congratulate Lysette Nicholls for also being elected District Councillor for Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt. So, to return to the reporting year: (Continued Back Page)



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A40 Update from the Parish Council - Nicky Brooks, Chair

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 :
newsletter@southleigh.info

NEWSLETTER COPY DEADLINE DATES

Please be advised copy
deadlines for 2021:

August 19th

November 19th

Please send any articles to
newsletter@southleigh.info

Since the two village meetings the Parish Council has had two additional Zoom (or equivalent) meetings with:

- Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). Duncan Enright – County Councillor for Transport Strategy.
- We also attended each of the Webinar consultation opportunities available, raising questions at each.
- We launched the straw poll via Facebook and the village e-mail address list asking for views on closing the Barnards Gate Road out of the village at the A40.

All this has crystalized our approach into the following headings for further action:

Shores Green Junction

- Narrowing of the entrance road into the village.
- Mitigating measures for noise, pollution, light, biodiversity and increased traffic.
- The new stretch of dual carriageway.
- Possible closure of the Barnards Gate Road onto the A40.
- Cycling and walking routes.
- Bus stops.

First, a general note: The current consultation is the first of many and is asking people to comment on the overall scheme. Each part of the scheme will have its own more detailed consultation covering all areas, including noise, air and light pollution, nature and biodiversity and traffic ameliorations. The first of these is a Scoping Paper which I am about to send out under separate cover

Shores Green Junction: We are pushing hard for the already completed (and any future) traffic studies and the assumptions that these studies made are released so that we can feel happy that the Oxfordshire County Council's favoured solution is indeed the best method and, if not, fight to have it changed to our preferred roundabout suggestion. We are in increasingly firm e-mail correspondence with the Council and if the study data is not delivered (as they have promised) we will be launching a Freedom of Information action.

If the suggested junction does go ahead as the Council proposes, we are told that proposed traffic lights will be as a traditional 'T' junction, and that the lights will be computer controlled so as to read the traffic situation at any time and automatically change to allow traffic to flow as smoothly as possible. We are constantly reminding them that this area is also covered by our Neighbourhood Plan which they have to take notice of.

Dual Carriageway: The new stretches of dual carriageway will take land from our Parish. We are very aware that we need it not to impinge on our

countryside and lives in any other ways, so we are insisting that some types of amelioration are vitally important

Barnards Gate Road and Roundabout: We launched a straw poll to gather views of our residents regarding the possible closure of this road and therefore not needing the access on to or off the A40. To date that survey is showing an 80% vote in favour of this proposal. The Parish Council is universally in favour and, therefore, we intend to pursue this further. We have already discovered that it would need the equivalent of a separate 'work number' and we, backed by Duncan Enright, County Councillor for Transport Strategy, are in the process of following this through and have already contacted the OCC officer in charge. We will keep you updated.

Cycle Paths and Public Transport: Although the whole A40 scheme is supposed to improve access via cycling and public transport, the cycle paths planned for our part of the scheme seem to be both complex and not well thought through. Dick Pears, on behalf of the Parish Council, is pulling together what we think might be a better solution which could allow our residents and people a better and safer access to Cogges and Witney. Again, more news as things become clearer.

Any changes at Shore's Green present an ideal opportunity to improve the siting of the bus stops there and, although nothing is under discussion at the moment, we will be forming a view and asking your opinion.

Traffic increase likely: OCC have now admitted that traffic through the village is likely to increase. We have started to have outline conversations with them regarding what methods of traffic calming could be used. Some villages (not in Oxfordshire) use average speed cameras – your Parish Council (led by Lysette) feels that this would be an ideal solution as it would mean only one camera at the beginning of the village and another one at the other end. This would reduce ugly street furniture and maintaining our rural aspect. It is expensive and we will have to fight hard but, in our opinion, it will be well worth a major effort!

I have tried to include as much detail as possible in this brief report without making it too long. I hope there is enough to show you that this development represents a major issue for South Leigh and High Cogges and that we are working hard on it on your behalf. Please do ask if you want more detail on all or any part of this process. Below is the link to the Council's relevant website.

Unfortunately, you have to copy and paste this link:

<https://myeplanning2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/Planning/Display/R3.0079/21?cuuid=64EB7804-A4E6-49C1-8918-B20543F0699C>

South Leigh Vicar's Letter June 2021

Yet another newsletter which drops into your inbox or onto your doormat amongst uncertainty over COVID and lockdown. It was all going so well and now as we arrive at the moment of full release, instead an extension to lockdown looms. However, there is still much to be grateful for – sunny weather (or at least we have had some sunny weather), seeing family and friends, clubs, pubs and shops are open and we can even take trips away and have holidays.

Also, summer is coming and our gardens, verges and fields are full of life and colour. When life is so uncertain it is good to still have the rhythms of the natural world – night and day, springtime and harvest. In a recent service in St James' church, we looked at a lively illustration of Jesus which he used to describe his work of drawing people back to God. It feels such an apt picture for this time of spring and early summer:

Jesus said "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

It doesn't take much experience in farming and horticulture to know that if you don't tend crops or gardens then you don't get a good harvest or a stunning garden. But Jesus is talking about the farmer not having any hand in the growth of the seeds he scatters – he doesn't even know what's going on. Jesus instead focusses on his sleeping patterns. His point is this: seeds, soil and harvest, ultimately these are the work of God through the power he has placed in the seeds and soil to bring growth. It may be hidden in the ground, but God is still overseeing the growth.

Jesus told this parable to explain the small start of his own work which would grow to be the worldwide church. Jesus was a seed buried in the ground when he died on the cross to rescue humanity. But like the seed he sprang back out of the earth. He rose again to life. From that small but powerful start, a worldwide movement emerged. Indeed, that was all to come; when Jesus told this story the reaction to him and his teaching was very mixed. But in defence Jesus was saying "my work might look small, hidden and obscure at the moment, but do not be in doubt God **is** at work".

I find that message that God is at work in the small and hidden, even when things seem otherwise a great encouragement at this time too. The flowers and crops remind us that God is still at work keeping the world going through day and night, springtime and harvest. Still at work in this world of disappointment and storms, to bring hope and healing. Still at work when hope might seem hidden and the future is still clouded and uncertain. God is at work and there are better days to come.

At St James' church we want to celebrate the new life that is springing up from God and the hope that he brings. We invite everyone to join us for a celebration on 25th July. It is the day the church celebrates St James the patron saint of our church. Our new bishop, Bishop Gavin, is joining us to re-dedicate the belltower which has been refurbished during lockdown. We start with a service at 2:30pm followed by ringing demonstrations and afternoon tea in the churchyard (weather permitting).

Do join us to celebrate the ending of lockdown (we hope) and the summer.

David Spence



Photo Above: South Leigh St James' Church : Wikipedia

SOUTH LEIGH BELL RINGERS' REPORT

JUNE 2021

EVADNE VALLANCE, TOWER CORRESPONDENT



Photo: David Smith (left) with Martin Spurrier (right), in the refurbished ringing chamber

Below: Churchyard Working Party

With bell ringing having largely been at a halt, this year has afforded different opportunities in the tower. Steeple Keeper, Martin Spurrier, seized the moment to embark on a year-long, much-needed refurbishment of the ringing chamber, restarting of maintenance and improvement of safety measures in the bell tower, and work in the clock chamber and on the clock.

This entailed significant highs and lows (no bell ringing pun intended). For example, what initially appeared to be the dreaded Death-watch Beetle was later identified by expert conservationists as Victorian sawdust and harmless hibernating attic flies; an alarming quote for £20,000 to overhaul the non-working mid-18th century turret clock was binned when an ingenious solution was found at a cost of only £210; the re-discovery of the original Record Book and Bishop's dedication, dating from 1907 when the present ring of bells was installed, was another exciting development.

The number and detail of tasks undertaken are too many to describe here, but suffice it to say that countless hours of work went into the transformation accomplished.

Tower refurb Gold Award On 14th June, Martin's effort got its just reward when, following an inspection for a Tower Maintenance Award, the Tower achieved the highest standard of Gold. Our gratitude goes to Martin, and also to Chris Moxon, our Ringing Master until October, who generously funded most of the refurbishment.



Picture: Harry Martin (14) working in the tower as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Churchyard working party Meanwhile, Heather Horner, Tower Captain, turned her attention to the churchyard, in places very overgrown. In December and again in March,

she led a working party of parishioners to clear large areas of rough growth, scatter wildflower seeds and plant new hedging in gaps. This was part of an ongoing community project to improve biodiversity. [Note from Heather: watch for an invitation to an additional working party early July, pulling resurgent nettles and brambles]

The working party in March coincided with an invitation from Marie Curie Foundation to toll a church bell at 12.01 in remembrance of a year of Covid. On a sunny day, the west doors of the refurbished ringing chamber were opened for all to admire its transformation.

A single bell was also tolled 99 times on the death of HRH Duke of Edinburgh and again for his funeral.

Since April 12th, the relaxation of Covid restrictions has allowed some Sunday service ringing to resume for up to four ringers at a time, in keeping with the distancing regulations.

Welcome and thanks We are delighted to have recently welcomed two more ringers to join our band: Rita Sawrey-Woodwards and Melody England, both of whom are 'false beginners', with a little previous ringing experience. This will expand our present numbers from five to seven. If there are any others in the village who are interested, now would be a good time to start. Discussions are ongoing with one or more ringing instructors who will carry us all forward, and evening practices will resume as soon as this is in place.

Thanks also to Harry Martin, joining us as Martin's temporary assistant. Harry, aged 14, is working towards his Duke of Edinburgh's Award and under Martin's instruction has already been negotiating the belfry and cleaning and oiling the bells.

David Smith, ex-Tower Captain at St James', has decided to step down as Tower Correspondent. We would like to express our great gratitude for his dedicated service in both roles over many years, and for his continuing interest in all tower matters. Evadne Vallance takes over as Tower Correspondent and hopes to welcome visiting ringers from other Towers and Branches when restrictions allow.

STILL HOLDING FOR A BETTER MOBILE SIGNAL DICK PEARS



BT/EE have continued to be the most helpful of the mobile signal providers. Chris Williams, from their Sales and Service Technology, e-mailed me on 8th June to say:

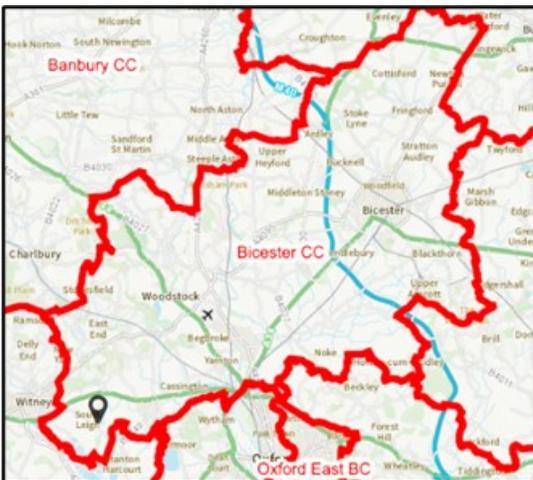
‘We have completed the optimisation to the local site (*Note: that is the mast on Oxford Hill*) to direct the antenna more directly toward South Leigh. We have engineers going out

to the location in the next 2 weeks to check signal and what level of improvement this has provided in the area. I will share with you in due course the output from their visit. As per previous note, if this has not fully resolved the issue, we are continuing to progress with the early stages of the height increase of the tower.’

I have asked him to keep in touch and informed him of the Parish Council Meeting on 13th July.

The other providers continue to be unresponsive, but we shall keep pressing them.

Boundary Commission review of our Parliamentary Constituency Dick Pears



The Boundary Commission (“BC”) is reviewing the Parliamentary boundaries – it is not reviewing the local authority boundaries.

BC is due to report by 2023 and before the next general election. It is charged with equalising the numbers of electors per constituency (between 69,724 and 77,062 to the nearest whole number).

There is an initial consultation process ending on 2nd August 2021. The Parish Council will be looking at the issue on 13th July at the next PC meeting - if you want to contribute, please advise the Chair or me.

Proposed new boundary. Image from bcereviews.org.uk

You can also give your views directly to BC at:

<https://www.bcereviews.org.uk> or <https://www.bcereviews.org.uk/node/6488?postcode=OX296UN>

South Leigh is currently in the Witney & West Oxfordshire Constituency. The BC is proposing a new seat called Bicester. Representations can be made to the BC about the proposed name of the constituency, which might currently be misleading and or unappealing - perhaps if it was called Woodstock and Bicester for instance.

What do the BC consider in coming to a decision? – that is laid down by Schedule 2 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 (as amended) – paragraph 5 and those topics include local government boundaries, boundaries of existing constituencies any local ties that would be broken by changes in constituency and the inconveniences attendant on such changes.

So, please express your views.

NEW DATE FOR MURDER MYSTERY

THIS EVENT WAS PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY 17th JULY BUT DUE TO THE NON-LIFTING OF RESTRICTIONS, WE HAVE HAD TO RE-SCHEDULE IT TO:

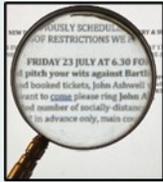
FRIDAY 23rd JULY AT 6.30 FOR 7.00pm

Come and pitch your wits against the Bartholomew Players

If you had booked tickets, John Ashwell will be in touch.

And if you want to come, please ring **John Ashwell on 01993 703534**
Limited number of socially-distanced tables of 6.

£12 in advance only, main course Salmon



The South Leigh Charity

The South Leigh Charity has been helping people in the Parish for centuries. It has wide-ranging powers and can provide help in many ways.

If you know someone who might benefit from what the charity has to offer, or would like to make a donation to it, please contact, in confidence, one of the Trustees:

Richard Law, Chair (01993 773355 or ralaw1984@gmail.com), John Ashwell (703534), Sue Washington (775574) or Karen Wilson (771346).

A history of the charity is on the village website at:

<https://southleigh.info/page38/index.php?s=south%20leigh%20charity&t=2517>



South Leigh United Gardeners

SLUGs are active everywhere, even in South Leigh, after an enforced period of hibernation. Events are starting slowly, as rules allow.

Next meetings:

JULY 21

Summer party in a village garden

SLUG is a sociable group of people interested in their gardens and its meetings are open to everyone.

Meetings are usually on the third Wednesday of the month. As further events and visits are planned, they will be posted on the village website and e-mails will be sent to anyone who expresses interest.

Annual membership is £10. Most events are free to members, £2 for non-members; trips, external speakers etc. may incur an additional charge for all attendees.

NOTE: SLUG members are available to do garden work for any villager who is unable to manage their garden themselves, in return for a donation to SLUG funds.

For more information, suggestions for meetings, trips etc. and enquiries: contact Richard Law on 01993 773355 or ralaw1984@gmail.com

New members welcome!

WITNEY TALKING NEWS

Do you know someone who is blind, or visually impaired?

If you do, you may like to know that **Witney Talking News** is a free service designed especially for them. We record items from the Witney Gazette and other local news publications, which are posted out to our listeners, weekly, on a memory stick. These can be listened to on a special player which we can provide. Sticks are then posted back to us (free of charge) for recording again the following week. This is a great way for blind or visually impaired people to keep in touch with local news and events across the district.

If you know someone who could benefit from this service, or would like to join us for reading, admin or packing sticks for despatch, we would be delighted to hear from you. We record every Thursday evening at High Street Methodist Church in Witney. If you would like to contact us please call **01993 444986** or go to **wtn.org.uk**

FUN QUIZ

Being a teenager in the 1960s I was very familiar with LSD—that is, of course, the old money of pounds, shillings and pence! To remind you (or help those under 50) a pound was made up of 20 shillings(s) and 12 pence (d) made a shilling. Well, it's now over 50 years since "Decimalisation" of our currency (February 1971).

Try this cryptic quiz to test your knowledge of pre-decimal currency. Answers appear on the back page.

RC

£ - s - d

- 1) GIRL'S NAME
- 2) BOY'S NAME
- 3) BICYCLE
- 4) SOUNDS LIKE MALE VOICE!
- 5) TYPE OF PIG
- 6) LEATHER WORKER
- 7) POORLY SEA CREATURE, IT'S SAID
- 8) SUN---STAR--- MOON

TOTAL £ - s - d

9) IF YOU RECEIVE A BILL FOR THIS TOTAL (IN ITS DECIMAL EQUIVALENT!) HOW MUCH CASH WOULD YOU NEED TO HAND OVER TO RECEIVE 86p CHANGE?

Join us on Sunday 25th July at 2.30pm at the Church as we ring the Bells to Celebrate the Festival of St James and Hopefully the End of Lockdown

On Sunday 25th July at 2.30pm the new Bishop of Dorchester the Rt Rev'd Gavin Collins will be re-dedicating the bell tower as part of our celebration of the life of St James. During the last year much refurbishment has taken place in the tower and a Gold award has been achieved from the Oxford Diocesan Guild Tower Maintenance Award scheme.

Do join us for a short celebratory service in the church yard

HELP WITH SIGNS



From time to time - when not in lockdown - there is a need to publicise something via a poster board on the seat at the 'T' junction in Chapel Road and elsewhere in the village. This could be for the Village Hall, the church etc.

The wooden poster boards are available for use but the artist with a pot of paint and a brush is not. Would someone in the village please volunteer for this not very demanding role? John Ashwell 01993 703534



NATURE NOTES

LIMB BROOK LIVE Rita Sawrey-Woodwards

A chance conversation between myself and Graham Soame in January of this

year highlighted the decline over recent years, in natural species of flora and fauna in our local stream, the Limb Brook.

As a result of this conversation, I have conducted a brief survey of the historical observations of wildlife in and around the Brook as seen and remembered by South Leigh residents. It seems that the decline in numbers and species has been very apparent from 2013 onwards.

I have considered the possible causes of this species decline and decided on a plan of action to try and redress the situation.

Firstly, we needed to consider the general health of the stream itself, as a physical entity, and I posted an article on the village website in April of this year, and, with Martin Spurrier's help in constructing and mounting, displayed the same information in the bus shelter, describing the basic features of a healthy stream, namely pools, riffles and runs, and highlighted the variety of wildlife we could expect to inhabit a healthy stream. The pools serve to promote breeding of and to protect water species in the event of the Brook drying up; they are places of refuge. The moving water of riffles and runs helps to oxygenate the water as well as to wash away any substances that may cause harm to the wildlife living in the stream and is essential to the health of the stream. The banks also need to be healthy and need to support a variety of plant species and to create damp and dry habitats. Where the Limb Brook flows within residential boundaries, I am hoping these residents will promote and care for the health of the stream, particularly in maintaining the maximum flow of water.

Where the stream passes through farmland, the plan is to make a friendly approach to the landowners to encourage them to manage and maintain the health of the stream too. We know that this may need some diplomacy, and persons with such skills have offered their help with this.

Secondly, the chemical composition of the water itself is

obviously important. Modern society is leaving a sad legacy to future generations of waterways polluted by toxic discharge from industry and sewage, leaching of chemicals applied to farmland to promote crop yield, pesticides and herbicides, and domestic run-off of detergents and garden chemicals. Our wildlife is hypersensitive to these chemicals and subsequent effects of these chemicals, particularly the invertebrates who live in the water and in the bed of the stream and which form an important part of the food chain for vertebrate species. To investigate this aspect of the stream's health, February 2021 saw the initiation of a chemical monitoring programme of the Limb Brook. Currently, I have no facility available to test for industrial chemicals, but there are some chemicals which can be monitored which are known to contribute to the paucity of life we are currently seeing in the Limb Brook. These are dissolved phosphates, nitrites, nitrates and ammonia, lack of dissolved oxygen and resulting changes in pH.

Since February 2021, I have tested the Limb Brook water each month for all those substances mentioned above, except for levels of dissolved oxygen. This is probably the most important chemical to test for but sadly the cost of the measuring equipment, just over £100, would need to be funded by grants or donations which are currently not available. If anyone has access to an oximeter or knows of one which can be borrowed, please contact me. It would contribute greatly to the data already being collected.

The data being collected will give a baseline of the chemical levels as seen throughout the year, and to observe the effects of seasons, weather, farming activity and human activity.



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



NATURE NOTES

LIMB BROOK LIVE

Site Locations

I have chosen four sites in the village from which to collect water samples.

Site 1.....the bridge just after Shuttles on the way to Witney. The water here should be the cleanest as it emerges from 2 sources South Leigh side of the A40.

Site 2.....the bridge by the Mason Arms, Chapel Road side. The Brook passes grazing pasture and several houses down Chapel Road; it could show any indications of pollution resulting from human habitation, cultivation, and livestock farming.

Site 3.....the bridge at the bottom of Lymbrook Close, upstream of the sewage effluent discharge pipe. Again, this stretch passes several houses and could show any further pollutant contributions made by human habitation.

Site 4.....the first bridge on the Barnard Gate Road driving from South Leigh to the A40, near to the Manor House. This site should show any contribution made from discharge of 'treated' sewage effluent from our local sewage plant in Lymbrook Close.

Summary of range of findings February-May 2021

Guide to acceptable levels

Phosphates: natural levels up to 0.10ppm

Nitrites: toxic for humans to drink at greater than 1ppm

Nitrates: toxic for humans to drink at greater than 10ppm

Ammonia: natural levels up to 0.22ppm

pH: 6.5-7.0

Table below showing results:

Site 1		Site 2		Site 3		Site 4	
Phos-phates	0 - 0.11ppm	Phos-phates	0.05 - 0.13ppm	Phosphates	0.10 - 0.23ppm	Phos-phates	0.15 - 0.72ppm
Nitrites	0 - 0.5ppm	Nitrites	0	Nitrites	0	Nitrites	0 - 0.5ppm
Nitrates	0 - 25ppm	Nitrates	0 - 10ppm	Nitrates	0 - 10ppm	Nitrates	25 - 250ppm
Ammonia	0	Ammonia	0	Ammonia	0	Ammonia	0
pH	6.5 - 9.0	pH	6.5 - 9.0	pH	6.5 - 9.0	pH	6.5 - 9.0



NATURE NOTES

LIMB BROOK LIVE

What are the results showing?

It is too early to draw any firm conclusions from the data so far collected.

What does seem clear is that at Site 4, downstream of the sewage effluent discharge, the levels of phosphates and nitrates are noticeably higher than at the other three sites, suggesting that this could result from the effluent quality not being as good as it should be. This could cause problems as the summer temperatures rise, contributing to excessive algal growth, then its death and decay resulting in oxygen paucity ie eutrofication, which can result in a catastrophic anoxic event, killing all wildlife dependent on dissolved oxygen in the water.

Results over time will show whether the chemical levels that are seen at the other three sites are constant or whether other factors contribute to their change. No inferences can yet be made.

Residents have been asked to check their domestic sewage drainage pipes for cracks and/or breakages and to make sure that their grey water drainage is into the 'for treatment' pipe and not directly into freshwater drainage which will ultimately flow into the Limb Brook. Detergents are particularly harmful.

Thirdly, myself and Graham Soame have the opportunity to become involved in the Riverfly Partnership (see www.riverflies.org) through a contact on the Windrush Valley Project, which is working to protect the water quality of our rivers, understand river fly populations and actively conserve river fly habitats. This partnership has extended their brief to monitoring many invertebrate groups which are very indicative of the health of a stream or river, and we will be applying our acquired knowledge to testing the Limb Brook and contributing this data to the national database they are creating.

These three stages are just the beginning, to try to find out what the problems are.

We have yet to finalise a plan to enhance the Limb Brook as a wildlife habitat. If you feel you want to be part of this initiative, please contact me. Many skills are needed and a little time from a lot of people will help to us as a village to achieve our aim.

Meanwhile, please continue to observe any flora and fauna in an around the stream and let me know what you see and when you see them. They are very good indicators as to the health of the stream.

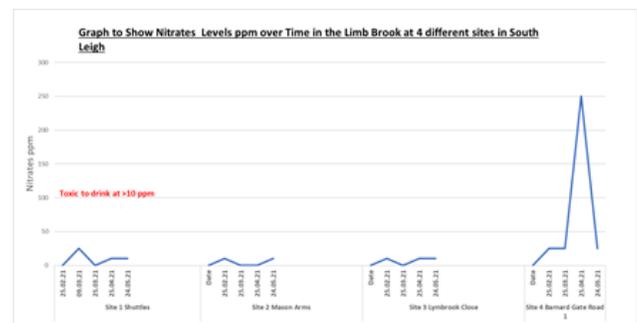
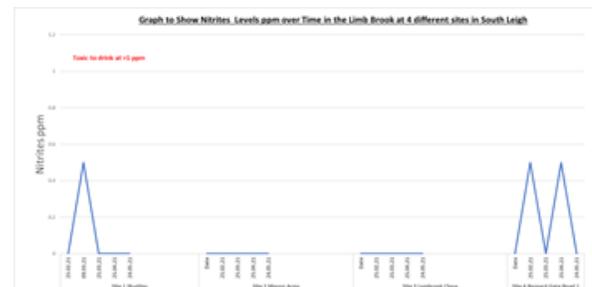
Also, if you actively promote the health of the stream on your boundaries, by physical structuring, maintenance, or planting,

please let me know so that I can construct a working map of stretches that have been done.

Photos are really useful as a record so please send those too. Thank you for your interest and for your help.

Rita E Sawrey-Woodwards Please Email:
limb-brook@southleigh.info

Graphs Below Illustrating Results



SOUTH LEIGH HOGWATCH



It has been a quiet time on the hedgehog front in Chapel Road so far this year. Despite providing food every evening as normal, sadly I can only report a few sightings of hedgehogs in the garden.

This has not been helped by at least three local moggies lying in wait and stealing the food before the hedgehogs got a look in.

Two of the feeding stations were near the Limb Brook and with one eye on not exacerbating the problematic rat issue, I decided to bring my feeding station closer to the house with view to being able to (at some point in the near future) purchase a wildlife camera to connect to the house WiFi with live streaming of hoggie activity directly to my phone. Anyway, I digress, with the feeding stations near to the stream it was impossible to ascertain who was eating the food.

Defeating the cats

Having moved the feeding station nearer to the house we customised an old wooden chicken nest box, turned it upside down and reduced the size of the door. Cats happily continued to munch the food, so after a little research I found out that hedgehogs are happy to tackle a kind of maze in the darkness of the feeding box, cats are not comfortable doing this and with a big block of wood near the entrance we have foiled the cheeky cats and the hedgehogs can munch away safely.

The unfortunate result of this is I now can't see the size or number of hedgehogs visiting the station. I have spotted the odd one, a medium sized hoggie dashing up the garden into the box and audibly crunching the kibble, but a wildlife camera is definitely needed.

Now, here's a mystery

I did have a wander down the garden with a small torch a few days ago and I was concerned to see a medium sized hedgehog on its back next to a hole in my electric fence netting. Initially thinking it was caught in the fence, on closer inspection I realised it was 'self anointing' something that hedgehogs do, although nobody is clear why they actually do it.

The hedgehog was writhing in a twisted position with legs outstretched, its head curled around and totally absorbed in its task of flicking foamy spit over its back. It ignored me and it was a very odd

thing to witness, apparently more common in males than in females, they go into a trance and spread deposits of foamy spit over their quills.

There are a few possible theories as to why they self anoint:

A new scent or taste they encounter.

Protective instincts, spreading toxins on their quills or masking their own odour.

Sexual behaviour to distribute their scent and attract potential mates.

A grooming purpose to condition skin and spines and possibly kill parasites.

Although slightly alarming, it is a completely natural behaviour and not a sign of distress or illness. Nobody is sure of the actual reasoning behind it, but it is a harmless act and other animals are also known to self anoint, capuchins, spider monkeys, lemurs, deer, dogs, wolves and goats to name a few.

Keep alert

I am hoping an increased hedgehog population will be apparent over the next few months. May to July is the time when they are fully active and breeding so will be foraging for food in the gardens and will need additional clean water to drink, especially during the hot weather.

We can help them, especially pregnant sows, with additional nutrition by offering dried meaty (not fish flavoured) cat kibble.

Please take care when strimming the long grass, hedgerows and other possible nesting areas. If you come across an injured or young hoglet or any hedgehog out in the daytime, please contact a local wildlife rescue centre for advice.

Tiggywinkles 24 hour emergency helpline: 01944 292292

Minster Hedgies : 07786 962211

Ally Urquhart



NATURE NOTES

Wildflowers Explode

I don't know if this year's crop is especially wonderful or if it is just because I am noticing them more because of our village's planting initiative, led by Graham Soame. But here are some pictures of wildflowers growing wild and some 'sown' wildflowers.



Top left, clockwise: Did you know that the ubiquitous daisy gets its name from 'day's eye' because it opens its petals at daybreak and closes them at night? Graham's garden display – 2 pictures – red and white Campion and Everlasting Betony, the blue ones are Evergreen Bugloss. Heather Horner's hard work on the Station Road verge is magnificent. St. James the Great's churchyard is a splash of colour. Barnard Gate Road's natural blooms.

If you'd like to see Graham's flowers or want to know more about planting wildflowers for next year, he's at planning@soame.co.uk 07932 172873

Martin Spurrier martinspurrier@hotmail.com
07799368464

The Northern Lapwing

Also known as the peewit, green plover or pyewipe, it is around too, as this photo shows. It was kindly sent to me by a resident but I have lost the original email. Many apologies. Please can you let me know who sent it? Thanks. This wonderful bird is in decline largely because of farming and its very unwise nesting habit. The peewit lays its eggs on the ground – in a scrape in spring-tilled arable land or in short grass land – no wonder only about 25 percent of chicks make it through the 4-5 weeks growth before they can fly. Frankly, its amazing any survive.

Between 1987 and 1998, lapwing numbers dropped by 49 percent and 80 percent since the 1960s. I hope they can think of a better place to nest.



King of the Road

This statuesque 'little egret' was back in Barnard Gate Road and behind Station Road in early May working the Limb Brook but, apparently, without a mate. They stand about 55-56 cms tall and have a wingspan of 88-95 cms. Our one also likes to perch precariously high in the oak trees overlooking the stream. The much rarer Great White egret is 94 cm with a wingspan of 155 cms (similar to the more common grey heron). There are only about 4,500 little egrets that winter in the UK. The males and females are almost identical with the male being the slightly larger of the two. The little egret has a black bill and yellow feet whereas the egret's bill is yellowy orange with black feet. Egrets were nearly wiped out in the 1800s for their feathers used in fashion. I haven't seen him or her for a while but I certainly hope our egret friend comes back.



Something Completely Newt

My grandson found this little chap under a rotting log near our ditch while searching for bugs for his terrarium. We had to move him slightly lest we squashed him. He is a yellow, or smooth, newt (also called the common newt) and this baby is just 15 mm. He will grow to 7-11 cms and will get much darker. When new born, they are called tadpoles, like frogs. Newts are protected.

These amazing creatures are amphibians breeding in ponds and spending the rest of the year feeding on invertebrates in woodlands, hedgerows, marshes and grassland, mostly at night.

Down to Earth

Talking of terrariums, this is the one we made (not for the newt!). It was unnecessarily expensive and can be made much cheaper. They bring a whole new meaning to, and interest in, 'bugs' to the kids. As long as you/they read up on them so they do not become a pressure cooker or a swimming pool or dry out, they are both interesting and charming.





NATURE NOTES

Hot and Cold Running Water

Never the twain shall mix, it seems!

Look at this! The water from the Limb Brook coming



from under the bridge in Barnard Gate Road refuses to mix with the water coming from the ditch that runs through from Stanton Harcourt Road near the old Crossing.

Who to ask why? Our resident biochemist, Rita Sawrey-Woodwards, of course.

“That is interesting”, she replied. “It is to do with the difference in temperature, speed, water density, e.g., of algae, dissolved salts and pollutants of the two streams. The deeper one will be colder, of course. The mixing time also depends on several other variables including stream bottom formations and turbulence”. So now we know. Thanks, Rita!

A week later, the very same grandson wanted to go rummaging in the mud

on the side of the Limb Brook. As I knew that Rita is always interested in feedback on life in the stream, we pulled up a single small plant with its roots from the water’s edge and took in home. There, we found a host and snails, leaches, worms and other living creatures. This is most encouraging as we are down stream from the sewage works, so there is hope. Rita is running the programme to understand pollution in our stream. Please contact her if you’d like to help: limb-brook@southleigh.info.



Something’s a bit Fishy



Another encouraging sign, is that Graham put a fish trap in the stream at Acre Cottage at the village end of Chapel Road thinking he’d catch a nasty American ‘signal’ crayfish. Guess what? He caught a little stickleback, 3 or 4 cms long.

‘Ratty’ is definitely here

Graham continues to see ‘Ratty’ and his family in the Limb Brook at Acre Cottage. In the evening the Soames family sits and watches them forage. By ‘Ratty’, I mean water voles as in *The Wind in the Willows*. He sent me a message:



“Yesterday, Janet, myself and Tim Partlett, stood mesmerised watching the return of the water voles. One fat one (male!) leapt into the pond like an

Olympic swimmer, while another adult, a bit smaller, was sitting partly hidden under the sedge grasses. So cute.”

The day before, Janet and I heard a “scrunch” while standing by the brook, and before our eyes, a very long piece of grass started to reduce in height, step by step as a “creature” ate it from the lower stem – classic vole action! Gets me excited every time. They don’t seem to care about humans talking, but don’t like sudden movements, so if anybody wants to see them, call of an evening and we can wait, and are usually disappointed but, if we are lucky, you’ll see their performances”. Lucy Stoddart, Bio-diversity Officer with the Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) recently visited Graham’s stretch of the Limb Brook. Here are parts of her report:



NATURE NOTES



"I recorded 27 feeding signs (+ 4 inconclusive + 1 old feeding sign), 1 old water vole latrine (these tend to be found more during the spring/summer months when the voles are maintaining territorial boundaries), 1 old dropping, and 6 burrows (+ 1 possible old burrow and 1 inconclusive – likely rat). Most of the water vole activity was focused around where

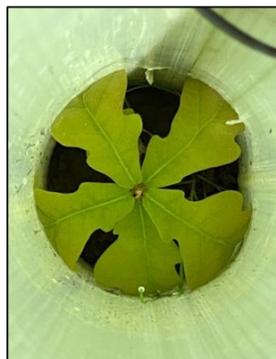
you had seen the voles in front of the house, particularly in the more open areas, with less trees/scrub and where sedge was dominant. I did however find a feeding sign as far east as the fence line just before the pub.

I'm sure you are very familiar with what the 45-degree angle cut feeding signs look like, but I have attached a few photos of the ones I found on your land in case of interest".

Forest Restoration group

And finally, trees. I am very happy to report that every single one of the 50 + trees we planted at the Football Field, in Chapel Road and in Stanton Harcourt Road (plus the others that we sheltered or rescued) are growing well. As the summer comes, though, more work starts and you'll see the old Land Rover out with our 500 ltr water tank! We mustn't lose any by letting them dry out in their first year.

Football Field trees are ...as are those in Stanton Harcourt Rd



A baby oak from an acorn is doing well doing well (Left)

We are still searching for land to plant on in the autumn. If you have any or know any that is accessible, visible and near the village, please let me know. Please see the village website for the annual report of the Forest Restoration group. Football Field trees are flourishing... ...as are those in Stanton Harcourt Rd A baby oak from an acorn is doing well

Deer oh deer!

When I say 'sheltered', below, you can see what can happen if you don't put the plastic tree shelters on. This is a lovely tree that we staked but left the shelter off by accident overnight and the deer ripped off the bark in the twinkle of an eye. We taped it up and it's doing fine.

MS



Please send me ideas, pictures and/or stories for Nature Notes. They are always welcome.

martinspurrier@hotmail.com 07799368464



North Leigh Common, Roman Villa & Evenlode Valley

By Russell & Anne Cherry

Distance: 6 ½ miles. Allow 3 ½ hours. Wear stout footwear.

Start/Parking: By North Leigh Common. Leave A4095 at Boddington Lane between North Leigh & Long Hanborough (at sign for Roman Villa), turn R after 200 yds and park on R after about 100 yds. G.R. SP 399136

Route: Go onto Common & take 2nd path from L (i.e. not path towards seat. You will soon reach 2 large oak trees, where pass to R of 1st one & to L of 2nd one to go onto well worn path into wood (i.e. not the wide grassy path to R). Stay on this path to reach concrete path, where go L for a few paces to reach tree on R with waymarkers on it. Now go R to soon follow alongside eastern edge of wood to reach path at far(northern) end of wood, where go R to pass waymarker post into field.

Here go immediately L alongside hedge, where path bears round to L to reach crossways by bottom of wood (Abel Wood). Go straight ahead past waymarker post with brook below on L & go L at next waymarker post, to drop down, cross footbridge, then climb gently at field edge. At top of field go R & follow alongside fence to bear sharp L to enter wood (Sturt Copse). Now go immediately L & stay in wood & in same direction to reach marker post at paths junction. Go R here, to soon descend on winding path to exit wood at gate.

Go straight ahead across field to pass alongside North Leigh Roman Villa on R. You will find boards here giving information on life here in the Roman period, & you can also see a fine mosaic in the building to R. This also makes a good place to stop.

Leave villa site on track from smaller building, climbing gently, go R at top to cross over railway (Worcester line), then pass through gate onto grassy track(bridleway). Descend to reach waymarker post at opening, with Stonesfield seen high up ahead on R. Pass through here & go immediately sharp L & through metal gate. This very pleasant winding path goes beneath railway & alongside the River Evenlode to join road. Go R to reach crossroads near Ashford Bridge(another good spot to stop).

The route is L here(SP North Leigh) & after 100 yds go L on bridleway, another leafy route alongside brook. Continue on track to pass Holly Court Farm on R to soon reach waymarker post. Go R here on wide track to cross brook, & go L to pass between farm buildings, then cottage on R, & continue on steadily climbing track(bridleway) to reach road. Now go L for less than

50 yds & take footpath on R at waymarker by metal gate. Follow alongside hedge to drop down then climb to pass through gate & continue straight ahead on climbing path in field(staying by hedge)& cross stile by metal gate onto lane (bridleway). Go L here to reach North Leigh church, which is well worth visiting to see its medieval wall paintings & read the church's history.

Go R on lane past church for 100 yds then take footpath on L to climb gently through 2 fields. Stop at top & look back to admire the extensive view, including North Leigh church in its setting, Wilcote on hilltop beyond, & you may be able to spot the spire of Ramsden church just below the horizon around to L a bit.

Go through metal gate around to L (not across wooden footbridge straight ahead) & pass through woodland. Then continue ahead in narrow field, alongside hedge, then follow alongside wall to cross cattle grid to reach the lovely aspect of the duck pond & buildings of Perrotts Hill Farm. Go L on drive to pass between farm buildings, cross 2nd cattle grid, then bear round to L to reach road. Go R here for a little over 100 yds, with great care (can be a busy stretch), then go L at junction to return to your car.

RC

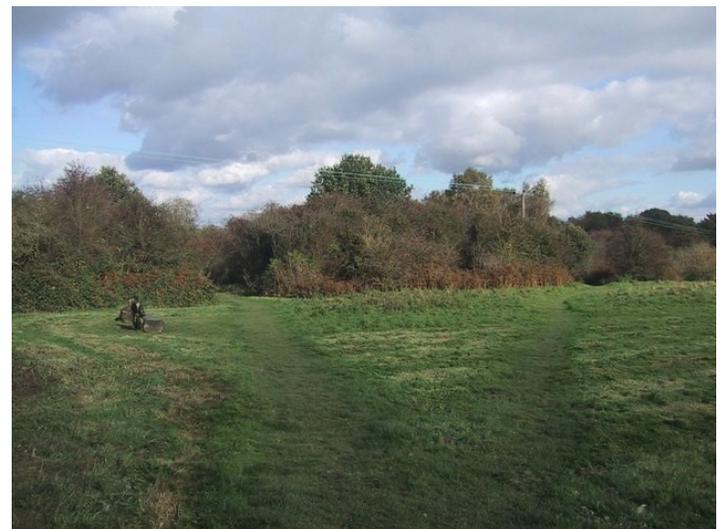


Photo Wikipedia Paths of North Leigh Common:
[Paths on North Leigh Common - geograph.org.uk - 1013794.jpg](http://geograph.org.uk/-/1013794.jpg)

Update From The Parish Wardens

by Russell and Anne Cherry



The weather extremes of April (sunshine, countless frosts and virtually rain free) and May (extremely wet!) also meant extremes of underfoot conditions along our Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) network. Generally, these routes are now clear for access. The footpath through the spinney at the highest part of the route between Old Crossing and Rushy Common has been cleared of the ever-encroaching blackthorn where the tall hedge has been collapsing in recent years.

Both blackthorn and bramble along our routes have been well cut back and as low as possible (beyond our remit!) over recent

years but, of course, these both grow very quickly at this time of year - particularly the bramble. Everyone using the network regularly can play their part, so a PLEA - do please occasionally take a pair of secateurs with you, and if you come across, for example, a long bramble which has “suddenly appeared” (as they seem to!) then simply cut it off; light pruning only is necessary and if all users do this it will help keep the way clear for the next user (who might be you!).

The dangerous and unsafe stiles/steps into field behind Homans Farm, in hedge at top of field on way to Church Farm, and those on the footpath from opposite the Old Crossing, beyond Gunn Cottage to Bonds Lane, have all been ‘sorted’, with one exception - 1 of the stiles (wobbly step) at the Limb Brook crossing (Gunn Cottage side) on the route to Bonds Lane was missed. We must also draw your attention to the dangerous condition of the footbridge at the stile opposite Old Farm, Chapel Road (footpaths to Village Hall & Furzy Breach, etc) where a plank has broken. These two issues have been reported to the ‘powers that be’ as well as to the Parish Council. So, until these two sites are made safe, take care when using these routes.

We are pleased to report that a new stile is in place on the footpath by the drive at Gunn Cottage. Furthermore, a new footbridge has recently been installed at the crossways in the middle section of Bonds Lane (See picture); we were about to report the sad state of the old bridge there, to then find it had been replaced! Similarly, at around the same time a new footbridge has been placed by the hedge on the Barnard Gate road, on the footpath from Church End to Twelve Acre Farm, Eynsham.

Users of routes that cross farmland (not just around South Leigh) will have noticed a considerable number of field margins (typically two metres wide) have appeared in recent years. These are provided by landowners under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme (run by DEFRA) for the benefit of nature and wildlife, such as encouraging wild flowers and ground nesting birds. Please note that, whilst these margins look inviting, they are NOT designated Public Rights of Way, and as such users should not deviate from the PRoW they are on.

With the longer days now well and truly here we hope you will take full advantage of our extensive network of PRoWs and, again, do keep to these routes.

As ever, good walking!

Anne & Russell Cherry - Parish Path Wardens

Village Hall

Village Hall Committee

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

Club 100 Winners

March Marby Martin and Rachel Murphy

April Gary Nicholls and David Brown

May Ken Brooks and Terry Ellis

YOUR VILLAGE HALL NEEDS YOU!

The Village Hall will, hopefully, be officially opening on July 23rd, although one or two outdoor parties have been arranged before this date.

Work has been going on in the hall by builders replacing the plaster where dampness has occurred and since you were last in the hall, sound absorbing panels have been inserted in the roof so we hope you will no longer find the echo a problem. The committee members have worked hard at keeping the hall ready for use and will have sanitisers etc. available.

The village hall does not run itself. It needs income. A good committee is necessary to oversee the smooth running of the hall and help arrange events for raising funds to keep the hall in good repair. We had a few regular bookings before the epidemic which brought in income and fortunately they have been in contact to rebook their slots.

Time is catching up with one or two of the committee and we need younger people to carry on the good work. We are a small friendly group who usually meet once a month and would be pleased if you felt able to join us. If you would like to have a chat please do so, the number is shown below. Events that the committee arrange are held at the hall in support of the community spirit in the village. The more people on the committee, means less work for the few.

Contact John Ashwell 01993 703534
Jandeashwell@gmail.com

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

£ - s - d

1 GIRL'S NAME---PENNY

1

2 BOY'S NAME---BOB

1 - 0

3 BICYCLE---PENNY FARTHING

1 ¼

4 SOUNDS LIKE MALE VOICE!---TANNER

10 - 0 - 0

5 TYPE OF PIG---GUINEA

1 - 1 - 0

6 LEATHER WORKER---TANNER

6

7 POORLY SEA CREATURE, IT'S SAID---SICK SQUID

6 - 0 - 0

8 SUN---STAR---MOON---THREE FAR THINGS

¾

TOTAL £17 - 2 - 9

9 £18



Finance

The Parish Council voted to raise the precept - by an average of just £3 per household *per annum* - to cover our increased costs particularly of employing a Clerk (previously this has been done on a voluntary basis but that is no longer considered best practice). I should add that the Parish Council is not allowed to operate at a deficit so we felt that this minimal increase was prudent.

Leases both on the football pitch and the playground have been negotiated and monies are now held on account to cover those costs when called upon.

Our grass cutting contract came to an end with the retirement of the contractor. We have since contracted a new person that will increase our costs by a small amount. However, that won't be recorded until next year's accounts.

*I should add that all the established costs continue and that, this year in particular, there is very little room in our budget for 'extras'.

The Solar Farm at 12 Acre Farm

This planning application came forward and although it is not in our parish it is very much part of our vista and borders our parish. Many meetings were held with the developer and WODC which resulted in the visual impact being softened by the planting of new hedges and trees together with infilling existing hedges, and the pathway through the middle of the site being made more visually pleasant and planted with a wide wild flower border.

In addition, the developer as agreed to pay the parish £40,000. The work on this site has only just started (it was delayed by Covid) but is due to finish in November of this year. The money is due in to us in at the end of the year and it will be for the new council to decide how best it is used.

Parish Activities

Several new groups or subcommittees were set up during the period - the Forest Restoration Group, Nature Recovery Group, the Paint and Scrape group, Speed Watch and a Churchyard Working Party.

Another, and the largest, is the Conservation Area Application Group, which has been mandated through a village poll to investigate the possibility of applying for Conservation Area Status.

The lack of Mobile Phone coverage throughout the parish has been stridently investigated and, with the help of our MP, is moving forward.

New playground equipment has been installed - there is now equipment suitable for a slightly older age group alongside some for the youngsters.

The Nature Recovery Group has been concentrating on the Limb Brook and it is their intention to widen the scope in the months to come to include village days both for information and action.

Speeding throughout the village is of great concern both to your Parish Council and residents. A very successful Speed Watch group was set up that made a significant impact on traffic for the few months they were allowed to operate before lockdown. It should be restarting very shortly with the additional benefit that the police have strengthened their support and the consequences for drivers who consistently break the law.

There are many people to whom we owe our thanks for all the above as well as people who just off their own back make this such a wonderful place to live. I want to say thank you to them all.

Looking ahead

Of course, the new Parish Councillors will elect a new Chair and Vice Chair but, whoever they are, we as a parish are facing some major issues that will be our priorities to fight together.

They are the proposed Shores Green Junction, the duelling of the A40 and the proposed roundabout at Barnard Gate. We'll need to battle these together with the proposed Anaerobic Digester site at the Witney entrance to the village.

There is also the ever-present threat of new housing as well as all the usual matters of planning applications, pot holes, the threat of flooding and more.

As we go forward, we will need to address these and, whether I am elected Chair or not, I shall be proposing that the Parish Council becomes somewhat more structured, and thus more efficient, to address each of these topics and the other challenges we face, more effectively. We have done well in the past with Gladman, the pub and the Neighbourhood Plan, but I feel that the upcoming threats may need even more effort.

In closing, I feel confident to say that the Parish Council promises to work hard on your behalf, but we will need help. So, if you feel that you would like to contribute in any way, or if there are issues that you would like us to take up on your behalf, please just ask.

Finally, I want to say thank you to all the council for supporting me over the past years and, whether *you*, as parish residents, voted for any of *us* or not, I know that will all be working for *you*. **Nicky Brooks**