

Annual Parish Meeting, 5th May 2021

Village reports:

Group	Report sent by	Report
Village Hall	Nigel Merriam	See below
Speed Indicator Device	Nigel Merriam	See below
Tea and Chat	Dave Challinor	See below
Bacton Benefice	Mary Paine	See below
Lunch Club	Jenny Elphick	See below
History Club	Peter Davidson	See below
Friends of St. Andrew's	Shelia Wright	Not yet received
Hilltops	Margaret Knights	See below
Tree Warden	Melinda Appleby	Verbal report. See minutes of WSPC meeting 5 th May 2021
Gardening Club	Rosie Bassett	See below

Village Hall: Nigel Merriam

The Village Hall has been unused since mid May of last year due to national restrictions. We successfully applied for the Business Rates Covid grant in the early stages and that has covered our costs during the time of the pandemic.

We have been able to do some maintenance in the hall over the last couple of months, primarily thanks to Dave Challinor's expertise and eye for detail. Jill Colchester has been giving the hall a deep clean.

At this time of writing, Elections are booked in the hall for 6th May and both Yoga and Tai Chi classes are hoping to start after 17th May, within the distancing protocol. Further activities are unlikely to begin until after 21st June.

The committee are considering arranging some events on the Green later in the summer.

Speed Indicator Device: Nigel Merriam

The SID has worked well and I am sure that it is having an effect on the traffic approaching The Street. It is set to run from 7 am to 7 pm and at the moment the batteries need changing every 10 days. Late afternoon and evenings when the sun is shining, it does not show up very well, especially compared with those newer devices in other villages. So far I have only had it on the Finningham Road approach, which I am sure is the direction that sees the faster moving traffic.

I have monitored it on a random basis on a number of occasions and the majority of cars approach it, at between 35 and 50 mph, but in ninety percent of cases you can see their brake lights come on.

When the Parish Clerk next has reason to visit the village, it would be good to download the data to get a definitive figure of the recorded speeds.

Tea and Chat: Dave Challinor

Tea and Chat stopped last March, and has not restarted. We are hoping we might start when it is legal for people to meet indoors without limiting the numbers. We think that this may be in June. Tea and Chat is open to everyone however those who attend are often in the more vulnerable groups so it seems wise to be cautious. When it is running, it costs £1 to attend and as stated above everyone is very welcome.

History group: Peter Davidson

Nothing really to report for History Group. We are hoping to restart meetings in the autumn. In the meantime I've been contributing articles on the history of the village to the newsletter. A number of people have said they enjoy reading them so I'll keep going on that!

Gardening Club: Rosie Bassett

We are hoping to restart our meetings in September but as we stopped having meetings and trips last March and have done nothing at all this last financial I don't have a report to give.

Hilltops: Margaret Knights

There is nothing formal to report, as, like all other clubs and societies, we have been unable to hold any meetings.

This is our 50th year, so we are hoping to hold a celebratory event in July. This is still woolly round the edges as we will have to obey rules at the time and be sympathetic to members' circumstances, but we hope we can go ahead and start our meetings after the summer.

Lunch Club: Jenny Elphick

The lunch club has been running successfully for many years now and I took on the role as co-ordinator and secretary at the beginning of 2020 having assisted Margaret Jones Evans in her last year in role. We have a committee of four, Romaine Elsdon, Jenny Harvey and Peter Davidson. Peter looks after all the finance and booking.

We have about 40 members on our books and about 30 to 35 people attend our lunches each month.

We serve a particularly good 2 course, hot meal each month followed by tea and coffee. We take good care to make the hall warm and welcoming which is much easier now with the lowered ceilings and heating system. The tables are colourfully dressed in cloths, napkins and flowers and it is a great opportunity for some friendly chat and laughter. Each month we run a raffle using donated prizes and this helps to keep the finances afloat. Of course, our big village Christmas raffle run by Romaine and Jenny did not happen this year which will mean our finances will soon need a boost.

As is the case for many organisations we have not been able to meet since March 2019. We keep this situation under review with the hope that we can meet again in the Autumn, possibly even starting again for those willing to venture out in August.

In order to stay in touch with our members, and to bring them a little seasonal cheer, we did distribute small Christmas parcels to each person on our books. We know that this was very well received, and for many who had not been able to get out at all, it brought a little of the village camaraderie to their homes.

Sadly, over the last year we have lost a couple of well-loved members who will be sorely missed in the future.

I am aware that over the last years our numbers have been steadily declining, and I would encourage those in the village who are 60 or over, and who are able to join us, to give us a try.

We have a rota of cooks, vegetable preparers and washing up assistants each month to whom we are so grateful. One limiting factor that we do face every month is the relatively small size of the kitchen where it is difficult for more than 2 or 3 people to easily work alongside each other and entrance/exit is through only one door. As I am also a member of the Village Hall committee, I am aware that discussions have started about the extension of the kitchen, but I am also aware that this will incur considerable cost, and of course with the current pandemic, all plans are on hold.

Lastly, I would like to thank all those who so willingly give of their time and energy to make our lunch club what it is.

Bacton benefice: Mary Paine

Our Annual Parochial Church Meeting was rather different this year, as our new incumbent held a Benefice wide APCM (online because of the pandemic), with a report which encompassed all six parishes in the group. Please find this below. I have also included our own Fabric Report, which details work done on the building over the past year. The village is wonderfully supportive of all our fundraising efforts to keep our beautiful church in good order, so it seems pertinent that the Parish Council should have sight of this.

'Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.'
1 Corinthians 15: 58

It was only a few months ago we gathered virtually for 2020's APCMs. I don't think we would have ever thought that a year on from the first lockdown we would only just be emerging out of our third lockdown.

I arrived here as Rector just a few days before that first lockdown. It wasn't the year that any of us planned. My licensing and installation was postponed to September, services suspended and planned events and fundraising cancelled. I think I worked out that we only worshipped *in* our buildings for about 24 weeks in 2020. We have collectively "stayed away" from our buildings in order to protect the sacrifice made by so many, fighting against the Coronavirus. As 2021 unfolds, we must continue to pray for the many doctors and nurses still waging a war against the invisible enemy, for the scientists as they continue to develop vaccines and for those who mourn the loss of loved ones.

Over the year we have been presented with challenge after challenge and our spiritual lives have been tested. However, we have faced each challenge with a sense of positivity, joy and hope. When unable to physically see other members of our church family, people have found ways to stay in touch – by phone, post, email and zoom. When limited to groups of six, our church family provided safe spaces for chat, worship and prayer. When things were tough at home, our church family continued to give generously – time, money and food. When our communities were shaken by the challenges posed by COVID, our church family remained steadfast, grounded in the God who loves us and who holds us in the palm of his hands.

The BOB foodbank has continued to go from strength to strength. We initially thought it would be a very temporary initiative, but continues to serve the needs of our six villages. As the pandemic deepens, and as the aftermath unfolds, we have helped households finding themselves in need. We've provided endless food parcels, helped with school fees, bus fees, school uniform purchase, emergency or unexpected bills, food vouchers, school and home learning books and lots more. The project will continue for as long as it is needed. I am so grateful to the team of volunteers who have collected and delivered food, given out vouchers, identified needs and visited households.

Social – you might think that our social life would have been crushed. However, as a benefice, we have come together in many ways to enjoy each other's company. The benefice quizzes have raised hundreds for the benefice churches. Our Star Trail around the six villages was incredibly successful with well over 250 stars on display. A coffee morning after church on zoom each Sunday has proved popular for a quick get together. It is at these social events that we see people who wouldn't usually join us for worship.

Services – our worship has changed so much over the past year. The way we present our worship, and access it, changes regularly! We started on facebook live, then zoom, moved to Drive In services and then returned back on YouTube using the OBS system. As the standard of worship online has developed, I hope I have kept up with technology. Each

service takes hours of prep to create and edit the worship slides, songs and liturgy. Despite the changes, we have journeyed through the liturgical year with a sense of excitement and wonder.

Since March 2020 we have been worshipping at home, or in cars, except for a period September – December 2020 when we were able to worship in our buildings, socially distanced. Our benefice worked in bubbles, each church paired with another to create a worship bubble, alternating services between the two buildings.

Our Drive In services in January were a huge success and we must find ways to grow and develop these for the future. Thanks go to James Black and Blacks of Bacton for use of the premises.

Christmas saw our star trail, using the Church of England 2019 campaign materials. Our village organisation all got involved. Wyverstone's walk through star light display in the church was a huge success. Our open air carol services have taught us something new about how accessible our carol services are. Each one was a success and we will look at ways to develop these and enjoy other open air worship events. Our thanks must go to Andrew Stringer for attending each service to set up the sound system in the cold and dark!

Christmas services that would usually pack out our churches were moved online and were a great success, for many different reasons. Thanks go to Henry Matter and Helen Matter for putting the Christingle service together online.

A huge collection at our Summer Drive In service meant that I could purchase six Suffolk apple trees – one for each of our parishes.

Discipleship, Evangelism and Mission continues to happen naturally. It is lovely to see a benefice who seems confident and proud in “being a Christian” in the community.

In the middle of the pandemic we delivered “welcome” leaflets to houses in our benefice, highlighting our welcome and open arms.

Our Beginner's Course attracted a number of people new to church, as well as those who have been worshipping with us for some time. It gave space on Zoom, and for a few weeks face to face, to ask questions and explore our Christian faith.

Our online services have attracted people who might not otherwise come to church, and we have seen folk who usually come once a month, attend weekly. Simply by sharing our worship session on our own facebook pages, or sharing the link by email, we are able to invite our family, friends and community to church in a non threatening way, allowing them to watch and ‘dip in’ in their own time.

Helen Matter's Tuesday Night Bible study goes from strength to strength. It has provided a chance for people to deepen their faith. The Advent course based on the great hymn ‘O Come, O Come Emmanuel’ was popular and the Lent courses will run throughout Lent.

Schools – throughout the difficult year, our school teachers have shown what it means to be steadfast! In both our benefice schools they have gone above and beyond their usual job description. Although I haven't been able to visit the schools for in person collective worship, I have been able to record weekly assemblies for those attending school and those children learning from home.

The schools have been heavily involved in supporting our star trail and more recently, our heart trail.

Occasional Offices – weddings and baptisms have been almost non-existent, except for a few weddings outside of the various lockdowns. Post-Covid, we must explore ways to engage with those who come to us for weddings and baptisms.

The number of funerals has been intense in all the parishes, and not just because of Covid. The limit on guests, not being able to sing and other factors, make arranging and conducting funerals hard work. I wouldn't have managed without all the vergers and wardens who have put so much time and effort into making sure these run smoothly, both for me and the families.

I am pleased to say that we have begun to set up a bereavement team who have started to receive some professional training in dealing with bereavement with adults and children. This is something I am keen to extend and support.

Buildings and Finance – although we haven't been able to use our building very much over the past year, they still stand as beacons in our communities – a reminder that as the world changes around us, God never changes. He remains steadfast. However, steadfast is not a word I would associate with our listed buildings!! Over the past year, PCCs and Wardens have been actively working to ensure they are clean and water tight, as well as managing major projects to see our buildings fit for use for years to come. These include:

- New sound and visual system
- New heating systems
- New carpets
- Fixing of roofs and leadwork
- Investigative work on cracks
- Organ tuning
- Discovery of dry rot
- Oiling of the bells
- General maintenance
- Removal of mice!

Financially, despite the growing pressure on churches like ours and without our usual fundraising efforts, we have been able to meet our parish share in full. I am moved by the generosity that has been shown by so many, whose giving has increased over the past year. This has kept the benefice afloat. I am also grateful to those who have gone about fundraising in whatever ways have been possible. Our benefice treasurers deserve a medal, too, and I look forward to working with them over the coming year as we plan ahead. Each church has explored different ways of giving and in each case has been a success. Giving online, by BACs, using a QR code or with contactless giving must be something we embrace as we move forward.

If you haven't joined your local parish giving scheme, please do. This scheme helps our income dramatically. If you do not give by Standing Order or DD, maybe this is something you could explore this year. This sort of giving gives your church an income even if you are not able to attend church or be there in person for whatever reason.

For centuries, the church has relied on legacies to support their work and mission. Over the coming year, we will explore giving and legacies and about how this might become part of our stewardship.

Ministry Team and Wardens meet regularly to share news and stay in touch and to ensure the smooth running of the benefice. The Ministry Team have met to discuss the pastoral needs of the benefice. This has proved invaluable to me as I settle in without being able to meet people around the benefice. Our Elders, Readers and Wardens give up so much of their time, and, on your behalf, have been the face of our benefice within the communities we serve.

Peter Paine - Elder

Carole Jones - Elder

Jean Willoughby - Elder

Helen Matter - Reader

Elaine Miller – Reader

Sheila Wright - Reader

Revd Stephen Snelling - PTO

Revd Barbara Bilston - PTO

Thank You - There are so many people to thank for keeping the benefice running. Cleaners, flower arrangers, event planners, bell ringers, musicians... just to name a few!

Steadfastness - Our call over the past year has simply been 'to be a church'. We have done that in various ways. We have been given time to reflect, listen, reconnect and challenge ourselves as a church family. What can we let go of? What is it we need to develop or take on?

"Being Church" in 2020/2021 is surely learning what it means to be steadfast. Steadfast and sure no matter what comes our way.

Steadfast in our communities, so that people see that they can rely on us.

Steadfast in God, so that people see that they can rely on God.

The 2020 Fabric Report (St. Andrew's, WS)

Heating Installation

During the 2019 re-ordering the heaters and their electrical supply were found to be unsafe and disconnected. More fund-raising during the 2019/20 winter meant that the John Welton partnership could begin installing new under-pew heating in March 2020. A week later the country went into lock-down because of Covid 19 so all work ceased until it was safe to resume in June. It was completed on 16th June and used for the first time for the Harvest service on 27th September. The walls are now clear of speakers and heaters. Cost £13,978

Carpet

Thanks to a kind donation a new carpet was fitted on 2nd September to replace the one paid for by the Merriam family in 1967 as part of their memorial to their young son.

Roof repair

In September Allum roofing replaced the concrete fillet between the nave roof and the side of the tower. Cost £1,150

Roof survey

An aerial drone survey of the roofs and gutters was carried out on 23rd December by ARCO and provided a detailed list of work required.

M. Jones-Evans 25th March 2021