

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 8.00 PM ON THURSDAY 23rd APRIL 2009
AT ROWINGTON VILLAGE HALL

Present: P.Cllr.G Bull (in the Chair)
P.Cllr. Wade
P.Cllr. Mrs N Clarke
P.Cllr. Browett
P.Cllr. Cooper
P.Cllr. Ms Oldfield
P.Cllr. Mrs Swain
C.Cllr. Mrs J Compton
D. Cllr. Caborn
18 members of the public
The Clerk

Apologies:

Apologies were received from; D.Cllr. Caborn, P.Cllrs. Lickorish and Bevins, Mr W Harrison, Mrs G Carlyle, Mr Brian Taylor, Mrs L Bowen, Mr M Trigg, Mr E Petrie, Warwickshire Police.

The Chairman Cllr.Graham Bull welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Chairman asked if the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 April 2008 could be signed as a true record, copies of the minutes being available to everyone at the meeting. Mr J Hale proposed that the minutes be accepted. Mrs M Bull seconded the proposal and it was resolved accordingly.

Cllr. Bull informed those present that a new approach would be tried this year in that rather than reports from the organisations being read out, a copy of all the reports were available for people to read at the back of the room. Of course, if any organisation wished to provide information during the meeting that would be welcome, but it was to be hoped that the time could perhaps be spent on useful and productive discussion with a question and answer opportunity for all those present.

Jacky Lawrence from WCC Environment and Economy – Climate Change Team gave a short presentation and distributed leaflets and information sheets on the work of Warwickshire Climate Change Partnership. Information available at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/climatechangepartnership.

1. Rowington Parish Plan

Report presented by Mr Nick Holmes

The Parish Plan Steering Group has continued to meet monthly throughout the year and I am pleased to report that we are reaching the final stages of writing our report for formal submission to the Parish Council before the end of the summer.

Our application for lottery funding to support the project was successful which means that the Parish Plan will be entirely self-funding with no requirement to spend any ratepayer money.

Our main activity last year was a consultation process involving the whole Parish to ensure that our final report represents the views of as many residents of the Parish as possible.

The Parish Plan survey was distributed by hand to every household in the Parish in September 2008 and we were pleased to gain a response rate of 20%. The responses included a wide range of helpful input that also demonstrated how much people love living in the Parish of Rowington.

There was a substantial measure of agreement on the issues that affect the Parish with only the housing issue showing a significant degree of difference of opinion.

A summary of the survey responses was distributed back to each household in January along with an invitation to attend a public meeting to discuss the findings. This meeting on 17th January, kindly hosted by the manager of the Tom O' the Wood, was extremely well attended with more than sixty residents popping in for bacon sandwiches and coffee. More useful input was gained from face to face discussions with the whole steering

group and we have now moved into the final stage of actually writing our report and producing a consolidated action plan.

We hope to complete this in time to present to the Parish Council for formal adoption in the summer after which we intend to distribute printed copies of the plan to every household.

We will continue to publish articles in the Parish Magazine to keep residents involved in what we are doing, as well as publishing regular content on the Rowington Website.

2. Rowington Parochial Church Council

Mr Jack Reedy provided the following report.

The year has seen a great deal of activity – physical as well as spiritual. New carpeting, generously donated by a member of the congregation in memory of his late wife, has now been laid from one end of the church to the other, and Heather Cole donated a hostess trolley for hot refreshments. This is also available for use at St Luke's, Lowsonford.

Lesley Roberts of Holywell, has taken the post of verger, and also organises lectures and meditative meetings. She leads services from time to time too.

The St Laurence list of weddings continues to bear witness to the church's popularity and attractiveness. We received generous donations of television sets for the closed circuit system used to allow guests seated in out-of-the-way corners of the church to see the ceremonies.

The church has been grateful to the Solihull St Alphege Guild of Bellringers for conducting formal lessons for our team in their tower. We are keen to welcome new pupils for the ringing classes - and the accompanying social sequels that are developing. Their first formal ring was on Remembrance Sunday when the bells were rung half muffled.

Special services at St Laurence's are benefiting from the chorus drawn from the congregation and the community by John Williams and rehearsed by organist Mervyn Compton. At Christmas Flautist Lisa Foxwell and trumpeter Simon Brown augmented the music for the carol service and Rachel Compton and Rosalind orchard provided solos. Our own bell ringing band rang for the carol service. This was the fulfilment of the late Chris Pickering's long-held wish to have the tower in action again.

On Easter Day the communion service had the Rt Rev. John Stroyan as celebrant and the bells were rung after the service. The Women's World Day of Prayer service in March was attended by more than 50 people and the Lent series of meetings at Rowington was opened by the Rev. Keith Mobberley.

The series of Advent talks on Wednesdays was on *Great Thinkers*, and opened with a visit from the Bishop of Warwick, the Rt Rev. John Stroyan who also launched the Lent series of meetings and lectures. A further series continued into the new year.

Lesley Roberts was grateful to the large number of people who helped to organise and run the Quiet Afternoon attended by a congregation of 50 at the home of Don Hanson and his late wife Margaret at Holywell on June 14th.

The year has had its sad moments with the passing of such parishioners as Bill Everitt, Betty Whitehead, Bill Sly, Jenny Hale, Shirley Insley and Val Jay. They will be long remembered for their contributions to the life of the village.

Contractors have finally refurbished part of the church's ceiling paintings, damaged some years ago by rain getting in. However, rain came straight through the roof at the end of May and again damaged the ceiling paintings - just in the middle of restoration work. After the leak was repaired the scaffolding had to come down and the job was delayed for three months while the plaster dried out. Other work will begin shortly to replace some of the medieval stonework at a cost of about £6,000.

St Laurence's representations to the District Council resulted in grey and green bins and we are grateful to those tending graves for using the green one that came with it. An indication of the scale of these homely matters was our having to take 24 black bags to the Leamington tip after the spring clean. In an even more homely connection we have restored the vandalised lavatory door. And as much for the comfort of the body as well as the soul 26 pew cushions have been fitted at a cost of almost £2,200. We received several donations towards them, one of £500, plus the proceeds of a coffee morning. Parishioners have also been invited to sponsor cushions at between £32 and £128 each,

Mostly unseen is the work of the brass polishers and the flower arrangers at both churches, although the elegant results are anything but, and the churches owe them a sincere debt of gratitude.

St Luke's, Lowsonford

Easter Day had an extra significance for St Luke's, because it marked a resurrection of an earthly nature – that of the church itself. It was ten years almost to the day since it reopened through the dedicated efforts of the community, whose enthusiasm has kept it in being ever since.

A generous £1,500 donation from the Jane Ryland Trust is going to meet a large part of the considerable expense of rewiring and replacing its outdated electrical equipment. Some of the circuits go back to the original installation, donated to mark the coronation of King George VI in 1937.

Carol singers toured the village before Christmas, and the carol service was followed by a sausage-and-mash supper at the Fleur de Lys.

The Summer Celebration at St Luke's, Lowsonford in June had appropriate readings of scripture, poetry and prose - and appropriately summery refreshments afterwards.

The church also made a profit of more than £700 from the Brunch and Auction £235 from the Harvest Supper. A further donation of £100, proceeds of an auction of produce, has been sent to Farm Africa. The church has also received a legacy of £1,000 from the estate of Betty Whitehead, but this has not yet been allocated for a specific purpose.

3. Rowington Village Hall

Mr Stephen Williams provided the following report.

The past year has seen the carrying out of a number of improvements to the hall following the completion of the major building project in 2007. These included the following:-

1. External decoration of the buildings.
2. Protective dado rails in the main rooms together with a coat of paint on the walls.
3. Some storage cupboards in the old changing room, one of which was funded by Rowington Parish Records and houses part of their archives.
4. New chairs for the main hall.
5. New stage lighting together with the completion of the replacement of all the old electrical circuits.
6. Metal racks for storage of the tables.
7. The extension of the car park with the assistance of a local farmer.

In addition we had to arrange for a substantial part of the main hall floor to be taken up and re-laid because the remedial work carried out in August 2007 proved to be inadequate and a large number of the floor tiles had worked loose. We were able to recover the bulk of the cost of this work from the builders who accepted responsibility for the damage caused to the floor by flooding in the summer of 2007.

The Management Committee have put in a great deal of time and effort in organising and supervising the carrying out of the various works but are heartened by the many compliments received from villagers and hirers. The Committee are very grateful for all the financial support received from local people, charities and businesses. An acknowledgements board has been placed on the wall of the main hall listing those who have contributed to the cost of the alterations and improvements.

The cost of running the hall continues to rise but we have increased our hire charges to more realistic rates and we have a large number of bookings for the rest of this calendar year and extending into 2010. The revenue from lettings has been very satisfactory and I am therefore confident of a satisfactory out-turn for the current financial year.

The social sub-committee have worked hard to provide a varied programme of events at the hall, which have been well attended and have raised substantial sums for hall funds. We again held a concert under the "Live and Local" scheme - music of the Andes provided by a group called Caratinga, and as usual there was the ever popular Winter Ball. New events included a Festive Fayre and a musical supper evening. The recent All Sorts Sale was very successful.

The Committee would like to see a greater use of the hall by younger residents of our village; it would be nice if we could attract a couple of younger people onto the Management Committee to bring fresh ideas. If anyone present here this evening is interested in joining the Committee or knows someone who might want to help, please let me know.

In conclusion I would like to thank all of the members of the Management Committee for their hard work and unflinching enthusiasm without which this important local amenity could not function.

4. Lowsonford Village Hall

Mr Wilf Harrison sent his apologies but provided the following report.

This has been a good year. Our accounts show a healthy surplus of income over expenditure and we have had no problems with hall maintenance. We have retained the regular bookings of local clubs and the art class but have also seen an increase in the use of the hall for parties etc. This is thought to be due to the excellent condition of the hall which makes it an attractive venue.

Our Entertainments Committee has once again done a superb job and I would like to thank them all for their efforts which have gone beyond the call of duty. The one disappointment in our social calendar has been the continued lack of local attendance in what have been the most enjoyable gatherings. We rely too much on friends from outside the village and must find a way of improving this position.

It is our belief that the condition of the hall is of prime importance and with this in mind we have recently decided that regular maintenance is the key. Where slight damage or wear and tear has occurred this has been dealt with. This constant vigilance is to be continued.

At the end of the year examination of the windows showed that almost all had had defective seals. The decision was taken to change all of the windows and to specify the use of the latest glass which improves insulation. This work has now been completed and we believe that the improvement is noticeable. We are grateful for the support of the District Council in this project.

We now look forward to a successful 2009.

5. WRVS Meals on Wheels

Mrs Gill Carlyle sent apologies and provided the following report.

I am sorry to report that the number of meals on wheels we deliver has fallen dramatically. If anyone knows of anyone that requires meals on wheels, please contact me on 01926 842231 and I can put them on straight away – there is no need to go through the Doctor.

Once again I would like to thank all the volunteers for their time and commitment.

6. Allotments Association

Mr John Greenaway provided the following report.

The first task of the newly formed Allotment Association was to negotiate with the landowner (Rowington Almshouse Charity) via Rowington Parish Council to set a new rent for the allotment land and to agree hedge and ditch responsibilities. I am pleased to say that a new agreement is now in place. The rent for the land is set at £185 a year. Rent reviews will be held every three years starting in December 2009 but any increases will be no higher than the index of retail prices (so with any luck we could get a reduction next year!)

We now have in place a timetable of meetings which are held at Rowington Club and I am pleased to say that the meetings held to date have been very well attended. At our first meeting we agreed a constitution and a new set of rules and voted to open our own bank account. An all inclusive allotment rent of £25 for a full plot and £15 for a half plot was set which will cover the ground rent and leave a little over which will be used for any agreed expenditure. We have also taken a voluntary contribution from each member to increase our funds.

We arranged a working party of members on Saturday 21st March and between us strimmed and cut the entrance grass and tidied up the area around the old compost heaps. We will continue to work on the compost area to bring it back to a tidy and useful allotment facility. I am pleased to report that we now have a happy and very active membership of 8 people who have half plots and 4 with a full allotment.

It is with much regret that I have to report that Ivor Johnson, who was the founding member and actually prepared the ground for the allotments, has decided to give up his plot. Ivor successfully administered the allotments for over 30 years so we all owe him a great deal and his presence on the allotment ground will be greatly missed. He has however promised to come and visit the allotments and will be available to us and other gardeners to pass on invaluable advice from his wealth of knowledge. On behalf of all the allotment holders both

past and present, I would like to thank him for the fantastic job he did for many years. I think it is fair to say that without Ivor, there would have been no allotments

7. Rowington W.I.

Mrs Carol Regan provided the following report.

Rowington WI continues to flourish with 48 members. We have had an active year with varied speakers.

Members bought along their valuables for their 'antique speaker' to comment on and hopefully give a valuation.

We had a demonstration of CPR and the use of an Automatic Defibrillator with members taking part.

Two brave husbands joined us on our day out to Highgrove, the home of Prince Charles.

Some of our members attended the Autumn and Spring Council Meeting in Leamington Spa.

We had instruction from our President and had a very good wreath making day, with everyone going home with a respectable wreath.

Again a croquet day was held in the summer.

Also in August we provided the cakes and teas for the Flower Show.

We met at a member's house and Christmas boxes were filled with gifts for children and women at the Women's Aid Centres.

December was our Christmas Dinner time, and very good it was too!

January we had a Masquerade Evening, with some beautiful masks, and also to entertain us Dorridge Music School.

Our ladies acted as models for Pam Goddard and her 'Fun with Hats'.

One of the founders of Troop Aid, Pam Sutton, came to tell us about its start and what Troop Aid involves.

New members are always welcome at Rowington.

8. Rowington Cricket Club

Mr Brian Taylor sent his apologies and provided the following report

Rowington CC is in fairly good shape going into 2009.

The Ground

A dry week end on 4th and 5th April allowed our "NatWest Cricketforce 2009" weekend to be fairly successful. About a dozen people turned up to put together the nets, sight screens, covers and generally tidy the ground and pavilion. The square looks good at the time of writing if a little dry.

Finances

We are lucky to be supported financially by about 60 Vice presidents as well as having 3 substantial sponsors and many smaller advertisers. As a club that does not run a bar we are reliant on these donations and we are really grateful to them.

Playing

Our 1st XI was promoted to division 1 for this year and this should present an added challenge playing at a higher level. Our 2nd XI was relegated to the bottom division of the Cotswolds Hills League for this year. We are hopeful that after a steady decline in fortunes for this team over the last 3 to 4 years that we are now well placed to make some progress.

Our friendly matches start on Saturday 18th April and our league matches start on 2nd May 2009.

Our juniors, where about 60 young people practice on a Monday night will be starting shortly and we are generally oversubscribed. The success of the junior section over the last few years is now being demonstrated with some of them, now at under 15 level, playing in our 2nd XI and our Sunday team. This year the under 15 children will compete in an under 16 league and our 10 to 11 year olds are also entering a league.

Social

Our annual Vice Presidents Day, where we thank our Vice Presidents for their support will be held on Sunday 7th June culminating in a pig roast at between 5.30pm and 6pm. Whilst this is aimed at our Vice Presidents we hope that anyone interested in village life will want to join us. Our Sunday side play an Old Boys side for the Bill Sly Memorial Cup. Later in the year our cricket dinner will be held on Friday 23rd October at the Ardencote. This has become a very popular event.

If anyone wants to know more about our activities or would like to help in any way please contact Brian Taylor on 01564782961.

9. Rowington Tennis Club

No report received

10. Lawsonford and Rowington Horticultural Association

Report provided by Ann Cotterill

The Lawsonford, Rowington and District Horticultural Association holds two public events each year: a Spring Flower Show and Social Evening in March and the Village Show in August.

The main attraction of the Village Show is the annual flower show. Over 100 people enter a wide range of classes in the flower show exhibiting fruit, vegetables, flowers, arts, crafts and culinary delights. Other attractions include children's activities: a bouncy castle and face painting, live band, coconut shy, bowling, raffles, tombola and cake stall.

As usual, the site preparation and the running of the show is due to the hard work and enthusiasm of many local residents alongside the committee.

The cost of holding the Village Show outweighs the revenue it produces, so the Committee also hold a barn dance in the flower show marquee on the evening of the Village Show to enable the year's events to 'break even'. In 2008 the barn dance attracted a good size gathering (approximately 80 guests).

The Lawsonford, Rowington & District Horticultural Association is affiliated with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). Association members are eligible to enjoy a range of benefits from the RHS but the Committee does not have the capacity to take advantage of some of these benefits, e.g. group visits to RHS gardens at reduced prices. Additional committee members and non-committee helpers are always welcomed.

The 2009 committee is unchanged from 2008; however, three committee members have indicated their intention to stand down from their roles and/or the committee in 2010. Therefore, the need for new members is essential if the community is to continue to enjoy a successful Village Show.

Flower Show: Saturday 1st August 2009 Bushwood Farm, Lawsonford

11. Rowington Club

Mr Tony Miles provided the following report

Apologies for not attending the 2008 meeting!

Rowington Club is a private members club that works hard to be part of the community in Rowington.

In 2001 the club was technically insolvent but with the efforts of the then Chairman, Gordon Hadfield, and the officers he recruited, the fortunes of the club have changed dramatically.

Turnover in 2002 was very low with the club looking in a very sorry state but last years accounts showed a record in turnover and profit all of which goes back into the club.

The club has spent in excess of £130,000 over this period in improving the decoration and fabric of the building which in turn has seen the membership grow with many more family members which is a principal objective of the committee.

A lot of expenditure went into making the garden and external seating area a pleasant environment in which to relax and has proven very popular in the summer, especially when cricket matches are taking place.

The club is fully supportive of the Monday Kids Cricket Night by providing a trophies and an end of season barbeque.

The Beer festival on August Bank Holiday has become an annual event which continues to grow in stature. The club supports events held at the village hall by supplying beverages at reasonable prices.

Bingo Nights are fully attended keeping the older members of our community together on a regular basis.

Early Friday evenings have turned into a family night and are proving to be very popular with all those who attend.

Membership is open to all - £10.00 to OAP's for life membership, all others £20.00 per year allowing partners and family for free.

Guests of members are welcome as long as they are signed in and pay a £1.00 per day membership.

12. The Jane Ryland Charity

Mr John Hale provided the following report.

As in previous years, the Trustees have been pleased to make a number of grants to organisations in the parish and to individuals, where financial support would bring the kind of benefits outlined in our trust deed.

Mention has been made before of the aims of the charity but as these can be seen to widely embrace the needs of all members of our community, this is a good opportunity to, once again, explain how we might be able to help.

In brief the aims of the Charity can be seen as providing:

Support for those of advanced years to help provide a better quality of life.

Assistance for those with financial or health problems beyond the scope of local or state agencies e.g. electricity vouchers or fees for additional necessary chiropody.

Financial assistance, where appropriate, to individuals or groups for educational, recreational and leisure time occupations.

We are here to help anyone who falls within our remit and we always wonder whether there are people who are missing out on grants to which they are entitled. The difficulty we face is not only in making people aware of our existence but also in having people discuss possible applications. This is a problem shared by a large number of similar charitable bodies.

Over the years we have tried a number of initiatives to overcome the problems and very shortly we will be having another campaign. We have prepared a leaflet, which goes into some detail about us and intend to have this made available to all households in the parish. The leaflet can be used by recipients to give brief details of possible ways where we might be able to help. Any information will then be considered, in total confidence, by the Trustees. Distribution of the leaflets may take some time – if anyone can offer us any help with this it would be greatly appreciated.

It can only be hoped that this approach will make more people aware of the Jane Ryland Charity and what it stands for. Needless to say, in addition to this idea, the Trustees will continue to consider applications from organisations and individuals already known to us and the Trustees do themselves consider ways in which we might be able to offer help.

This is a very worthy charity and more use needs to be made of the funds available.

13. Rowington Combined Charities

Report provided by Mr Ernest Petrie.

The Rowington Almshouse Charity is established for the provision of affordable housing accommodation for persons in need who are resident in the civic parish of Rowington and the surrounding district.

The Charity owns and operates 19 bungalows for alms persons on a site in the angle between The Avenue and Queens Drive Rowington

The Trustees were greatly saddened by the death of Janet Shuttleworth who in addition to being a resident had done tremendous work as the Warden over 25 years.

Work continued during the year to bring properties up to Decent Homes Standard, including a major refurbishment of a void property.

In the Autumn of 2008, 14 properties were converted from the old inefficient oil based communal heating system to a modern electric based system. The total expenditure on this was £55,000. The Trustees were most grateful for a donation from the Jane Ryland Trust towards the cost of this work.

A phased programme continued during the year to increase monthly maintenance contributions towards "Fair Rent" figures.

During the year Dee Swain, who had been a Trustee for a number of years, resigned and the Trustees thank her for her considerable contribution to the Charity's activities.

Following the building of 2 additional dwellings in 2007, the Charity is working towards building up reserves so that it is adequately funded for future requirements.

With regard to the Rowington Estate Charity this is established for the management of certain assets and the division of the surplus income is to: three quarters to the Rowington Almshouse Charity and one quarter to the Rowington Church Charity. Despite uncertain economic times the Estates Charity was able to match its income year-on-year at the higher level following the sale of land in Preston Bagot and Rowington Green.

14. Rowington Action Group (RAG)

Apologies from Mrs Lindsey Bowen.

Nothing to report this year

15. Rowington Parish Old Folk's Party Fund

Report provided by Mrs Val Morton.

This time last year we were all looking forward to our 2008 Summer events – a coach outing to Minehead and a Luncheon at Henley Golf Club, and both activities were very successful and well supported. 37 people enjoyed a fine sunny day at Minehead and 41 had an excellent lunch at the Golf Club. Our Annual All Sorts Sale in September went off well. We had tremendous local support from everyone and made a handsome profit of £950, with a generous donation of £50 bringing the total up to £1,000. We also ran a cake stall at the Village Hall Festive Fayre later in the Autumn and added a further £160 to our funds. As usual, the highlight of the year was the Christmas Luncheon, when some 86 people sat down in Rowington Village Hall, beautifully decorated for us by the Village Hall Committee, to another delicious seasonal meal prepared by Sue Dalby and her helpers.

However, the year was also a very sad one due to the loss of two key members of our committee – Jenny Hale and Janet Shuttleworth. Both had served on the committee for many years – Janet, who was also the former warden of Beech Close bungalows, joined in 1992 to take over as Treasurer, but she was a tireless worker in many other ways and inspired us all with her energy and enthusiasm. Jenny was a tower of strength and commonsense and a great organiser. She could always be relied upon to fill whatever role was needed with a minimum of fuss and maximum thoroughness. They are both greatly missed by us all.

Currently the Committee have decided to cut down on expenditure by putting on one Summer event only, which will be a Luncheon for everyone, once again at Henley Golf Club, on Wednesday, June 10th. We know this is disappointing for those who look forward to a Coach Outing – preferably to the “seaside”, but our hope is that by being prudent this year we will be able to reinstate it next summer. We do need financial help to operate, and currently we are indebted to the Jane Ryland Trust and to Lowsonford Women’s Club for their support, and to a number of individuals who give us donations. However, none of these can be taken for granted, and that is why we are cutting back. Our Autumn All Sorts Sale is booked for Saturday, 26th September at Rowington Village Hall, and the date for our Christmas Luncheon is Wednesday, December 9th.

16. British Legion - Men

Mr John Hale provided the following report.

We are part of a massive National organisation, which exists to serve the needs of those who have served in HM Forces. A great deal of the Legion’s work is to do with welfare and over £25M is spent each year on this very important aspect. Our members are drawn from both Rowington and Lapworth and it has to be said that, sadly, many of us are not in the first flush of youth. However, there is still the wish to maintain the friendship which binds all those who have served in HM Forces and especially, help with the Poppy Appeal and keep alive the spirit of November Remembrance.

In so far as the Poppy Appeal is concerned this small branch of the Legion punches above its weight. We are able to do this because of the wonderful support we get from our local communities and this appears to reflect the growing appreciation within the country as a whole of the very good and very dangerous work being done on our behalf by the Armed Forces. The 2008 Poppy Appeal raised the record sum of nearly £5,500. We thank everyone who helped to achieve this result, those who very kindly contributed, Mrs. Carol Regan for her work as Poppy Appeal Organiser, our house to house collectors and the Women’ Section of the Legion.

In November the Legion paraded at St. Laurence, Rowington for the Remembrance Sunday service. There was a very good turnout and a large congregation. Wreaths were laid at the Memorial – a very moving morning for everyone. It is nice to know that the Remembrance service at St. Mary’s Lapworth was also very well attended.

Our usual sporting and social activities were somewhat curtailed last year but following our recent AGM and the welcome appointment of two new committee members, plans are in hand to revive and perhaps increase these as the months go on.

It is perhaps appropriate to mention here that membership of the Legion is open to all men over the age of eighteen. You do not need to have served in the Forces but simply be in sympathy with our ideals. Please contact our Secretary, Wilf Harrison (01926 842641) if you would like to know more about possible membership.

17. British Legion - Women

Report provided by Mrs Carole Knight

We are pleased to report a good year; as usual we gained a few new members and lost a few,

We held several meetings during the year, including a coffee morning at a members home in April, a very successful Strawberry tea in Lawsonford Village Hall in July which we will be repeating on Saturday July 4th this year, all are welcome, In September we organised a coach trip to The Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas and invited the men's section to join us, that was very successful and much enjoyed by all who attended and also in September held our usual Annual Bingo which was quite well supported and enjoyed. And in February just past we had a lunch at The New Inn, Norton Lindsey, and will be holding another Coffee Morning in a members house in April this year. We attended the County Conference. in Knowle

We were pleased to have given a donation of £350 to headquarters benevolent fund, plus £50 to general fund and £153.00. towards our local poppy appeal.

In September we will hold our annual Bingo in Rowington Village Hall, and hope you will all come along.

We are pleased to welcome non members to any of these events, and hope to encourage a few more ladies to become members.

18. WRVS Emergency Service

Linda Wesbury provided the following report.

A crash box is still held in Lawsonford at the Village Hall in case of emergency and I can report that the WRVS Emergency Services Team has not been called out during the past year.

19. Rowington Bridge Club

No Report

20. Neighbourhood Watch - Rowington

No report.

21. Neighbourhood Watch – Lawsonford

Report provided by Mr Michael Trigg

There is nothing to report from the Lawsonford Neighbourhood Watch this year as its function as a communication channel between the police and the community has now been largely superseded by email and the Safer Neighbourhood and Community Forum initiatives.

22. Lawsonford Badminton Club

No report

23. Rowington Ex Service Supper Fund

Report provided by Mr Ray Morton

November - The Season of Remembrance was marked again this year by yet again our unique Supper. A time when traditions are annually maintained. The coming together of all who live within the Parish and who served in Her Majesties Forces. We remember the conditions and experiences of past service, and we share the comradeship, and the humour of those times.

We remember The Fallen, at the same time thinking of those experiencing the emotions of war service today.

All of this we did in November of 2008, all of this we shall set ourselves to do again in the coming year.

24. Lawsonford Women's Club

Mrs Gill Carlyle sent apologies but provided the following report.

In 2008 we had a successful and enjoyable year.

In April we held an All Sorts Sale making £233.00. It was decided to hold a Coffee Morning in June and we raised £287.40 which we made up to £300.00 for Riding for the Disabled. We had a very enjoyable outing in July to the Jinny Ring, in spite of the weather. We entertained Castel Froma to tea in August and the weather was good to us and everyone went home happy with presents and posies.

After returning from our summer break it was all go to start organising the Christmas Fayre. On the 4th December we made Christmas decorations and door hangings for the sale. The sale was well supported and we made £944.61 of which £900 went to the Air Ambulance and £200 to the Old Folks Party Fund. Beside working hard and raising all that money we have also been busy knitting squares to make into blankets for Oxfam, hats for premature babies and hats for sailors, so I think I can say that we have all had a very enjoyable year.

25. Rowington Parish Archives and Records

Report provided by Mr Ray Morton.

The last twelve months has seen a real consolidation of our Records of Parish matters, with the kind facilitation of the Village Hall we have been able to move the collection into purpose built cup boarding and cabinets, and the Display equipment is now ensconced under the stage. This has made our monthly Working Parties all more convenient, and has enabled us to complete the indexing and referencing and grouping up of all the display boards.

A few weeks ago the existence of the Collection was recognised by the Warwick District Council by the presentation of one of its Civic Awards. This brought a Certificate for a Cultural contribution to the Community, a very elegant Trophy,

and a cheque for £250. This is very rewarding for our whole Parish from where contributions have come at every level to make it the success that it has been. Thanks are extended to all for this support.

We shall be exhibiting the whole collection up to date again on September 19th and 20th later this year, and we hope you will be able to visit it again.

26 Computer Class and Family History Group

Ms Fay Ogden provided the following report.

The Computer classes are still going well with a steady trickle of new people joining. Having access to the internet has been an incentive for members of the class to continue to improve their IT skills, and we now have complete beginners working along side more experienced students.

We are a very friendly, industrious group where the more experienced students are only too willing to help the new students settle in.

The Family History class has really taken off and it is amazing how many skeletons have been found in cupboards, and what a lot of local knowledge has been discovered by some members.

We had a corner in the committee room during the Parish Records weekend which enabled members of the public to look up their local ancestors. We thought that only one or two people would be interested but it was so popular that we hardly had time to drink a cup of coffee, let alone have some lunch!

Any one coming into the village hall on either a Monday or Tuesday morning will find the committee room a hive of activity and we have been known to have had more than one printer going flat out. Needless to say putting the kettle on is a priority!

We would like to thank the Parish Council for their help by funding the internet connection as without this the computer classes would not have been so well supported and the family History class would never have started. Our one concern however is that because we have to disconnect and pack away the Home Hub at the end of each day's use it will suffer damage and so put an end to the classes.

27. Rowington Website

Mrs Rose Barker provided the following report.

The Rowington Website is now two years old. Visitor numbers are increasing steadily and the site recorded around 750 unique visitors and 1,100 visits in March 2009, the latest month for which statistics are available. The website's content has been fairly static over the winter but I have some planned improvements in the pipeline over the next few months, time permitting.

In order to keep visitors returning to the site it is important for new content to be added on a regular basis. For this I rely mainly on the various Rowington organisations to provide me with news, announcements and other information for the site. Many thanks to everyone who has provided content over the past 12 months and please keep it coming.

28. District Councillor's Report

D.Cllr. Caborn sent apologies as he was attending the Localities Forum Meeting, but provided the following report and arrived later in the evening.

Budget and its implications: Having set a budget of 3.8% for the next year we know that if we do not take action in the years 2011 – 2012 we will have a "black hole" in our finances of £1.6m caused by low government grants and factors such as diminishing interest returns. We have achieved savings of 2.3 – 5.0% every year for the past 8 years but more action is needed. Salaries and pensions are our biggest expense but these are led by central government and the unions and there s no sign of this being addressed. For example, the government's free travel pass scheme costs Warwick District tax payers £160,000 per year – equivalent to 2.3% of council tax

as it is under funded by central government. The free swimming scheme for over 60's is not fully funded either. We have also out of our social housing rents had to send £7.8m to central government this year. Nevertheless, we have put £100,000 into the Rural Initiatives Fund and instigated a review of the Concurrent Services Scheme to help parishes deliver and maintain facilities in their communities which would be provided as a matter of course in the towns.

Council Structure: As part of our plans to streamline the administration system we have reduced the number of Directors from 3 to 2 and are in the process of reducing the Heads of Service from 17 to 9 by 1st May. Alongside this we are aligning the Executive Portfolio Holders to match the Heads of Service to deliver accountability. To deliver the savings required I have promoted system thinking processes as part of a business improvement process. This means we are over two years subjecting the whole of the council processes to a review and reorganising, starting from the customer's standpoint rather than that of the Council. This process has started and must deliver. We will be investing £1m in this action with a payback of £3m.

Waste: Following the introduction of our new waste collection system we are, after one year, achieving 54% recycling with nothing going to landfill and all recycling material remaining in the UK. Well done everyone.

Travel Tokens: We will be reintroducing a Travel Token Scheme this year for the elderly and disabled which will be backdated to 1st April, but this cannot happen at the moment as Labour and Liberal members are challenging our decision to do so.

Localities Working: Warwick District Council is committed to joined up working with Parish Councils, Warwickshire County Council, Police and NHS to ensure everyone gets seamless services, irrespective of who delivers them – at times it is not easy but we will make it work. WDC has put £40,000 into the Localities Panels and asked WCC to match this funding.

Projects: WDC is an ambitious council and we have on the go at the moment the following projects: - Spencer's Yard - £4.5m of Advantage West Midlands funding to turn the old United Reform Church in Spencer Street into a new Loft Theatre and then build a Riverside Complex of offices to replace the Loft. A Warwick Town centre project with the Town Council and WCC to reform the centre of Warwick as between us we own a great deal of it, property wise. A new administrative centre for Kenilworth. Reinstatement of the Mere around Kenilworth Castle.

Finally, congratulations to Ray Morton and the Parish Records Group for their well deserved WDC Civic Awards. Thanks to you Graham and Allyson with the Parish Council for their support and co-operation to deliver the best for Rowington.

29. County Councillor's Report

C.Cllr. Mrs Jose Compton gave the following report.

Overall Warwickshire County Council has kept its' Three Star Status awarded by the Comprehensive Performance Inspectors and has been judged as 'improving well' Improved outcomes have been noted in raising educational attainment, caring for older people, pursuing a sustainable environment and economy and making Warwickshire a safer place to live. The services provided for Children have been subjected to a separate inspection and have also been judged as providing a good service, which is especially heartening in view of the public concern recently with several high profile cases.

Difficult decisions had to be made with regard to the Budget and setting of the Council Tax for 2009/10 - services have experienced pressure to keep costs down while still providing high quality care. Recruitment of staff has been put on hold and some redundancies may occur, but in the main WCC is trying to manage without this and re-locate staff if possible. Loss of income on fees and charges and interest rates, coupled with increase in energy costs have all had to be taken into consideration - the Council increase came out at 3.89%. Roads and drainage are of much concern to the parish and plans for next year will, I hope, see some improvement in the road surface/pothole service although after the recent winter weather potholes are appearing where water has attacked the surface tarmac. The Warwick Area Committee has committed an extra £75,000 from its' delegated budget to provide services of the Drainage Team to concentrate on several sites where severe flooding occurs.

The Safer Neighbourhood Panel has now been constituted into the Locality/Community Forum. This will broaden the remit of matters which can be taken forward for action as all partners are committed to work together. This includes the Police, Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council and the PCT. The Police report will always be taken first on the Agenda but other items of general concern will also be highlighted

with invited speakers if necessary. Parish Councillors from Warwick Rural West will always attend and measures are being examined to ensure that members of the community can come along to express their views.

I was happy to allocate £300 from my Members Fund to Rowington towards the provision of a Kissing Gate at the Playing Field and I hope that this fund will be operational next year.

Another busy year - I have attended Parish Council meetings regularly and thank all councillors, chairman and clerk for their help and co-operation.

30. Responsible Financial Officers' Report

Provided by the Clerk and RFO – Allyson Coleman

Expenditure over the last year has increased by just over £2600 due primarily to increased administration costs and playing field maintenance and repairs. On the subject of the playing field we have improved the West of St Laurence access considerably with the aid of funding from WCC and C.Cllr. Mrs Compton and with further grant aid obtained by Rowington Action Group.

During the year we have continued to support local facilities with donations to our village halls, churches, parish records group, and a telephone and internet connection for Rowington village hall. Another new notice board has been purchased for Lowsonford and we purchased the red telephone kiosk at Pinley for the princely sum of £1.00. Last but not least, two new grit bins have been purchased following requests by residents.

The Parish Council will commence the new financial year with a reserves balance of £5698.64.

As always, the accounts are available for inspection at any time

31. Chairman's Report

Introduction

Who would have thought this time last year that we would now be in the worst recession since World War Two? It has affected members of our community in different ways; some worse than others and no one has really escaped. It has put both the County and District Councils under severe pressure and has resulted in job cuts and the restriction of some services but they, like us, carry on.

One thing is certain, that, whatever happens, organisations and activities in the Parish continue to be strong. I am ably informed that the WI membership continues to grow and they now have some 51 members; and I am sure it is the same with other organisations. The community spirit in the Parish always comes through no matter what obstacles appear. Long may it continue.

Negatives

However, it would be wrong for me to state that we have not had some problems within the Parish in the last 12 months but, realistically, they have been few: major ones such as the flooding and sensitive planning issues; and minor ones like overgrown hedgerows.

Positives

The Parish Council has addressed the various issues and this has resulted in some very positive results in several areas and I thought that when words such as credit crunch and recession are on everyone's lips, it would be good to remind ourselves of the achievements

a. Flooding

Yes, this has caused major problems for some of our residents over the past couple of years, last summer being particularly bad, but, whereas in the past, the only action achieved was for drains and gullies to be cleaned out, now, as a result of pressure from the Parish Council and residents and of a great deal of effort from our County Councillor, a further £ 75,000 of funding has been obtained to deal with the major problem areas within the Parish, that is, Mill Lane, Rowington, Old Warwick Road outside Eastfield Manor and Narrow Lane, Lowsonford. Some of these works are being dealt with by sub-contractors to the County Council as the works are too great for the "in house" drains team.

b. Highways

Several sections of the road surfacing in the Parish have been replaced, ditches cleaned out and new grips dug, along with tree roots being cut out of blocked drains by the Manor House on the Old Warwick Road and all these activities will make for far fewer problems in the future. Everywhere is by no means perfect and the Parish Council and our County Council will continue to press for further improvements.

This winter was somewhat harder than we had become used to resulting in a shortage of salt for gritting – a national problem about which the Parish Council could do little. However, as a result of requests from residents

who highlighted dangerous areas in freezing conditions, a further two grit bins have been purchased by the Parish Council and will be in place and filled with salt before next winter.

c. Playing Field

Warwick District Council now has a policy to make green space more accessible to all and to this end, the Parish Council has carried out improvements to the West of St Laurence access by removing the two stiles, concreting the old gravel path and installing a kissing gate at the playing field end. This allows access for all including pushchairs and wheelchairs but keeping out anyone mindful to attempt entry with a motorbike. The Parish Council has also installed new safety surfacing underneath the infant and junior swings.

d. Concurrent Services

In the past I have mentioned concurrent services, a method by which parish councils can recover the cost of maintenance operations which, in urban areas, are dealt with by the District. The playing field is an area of major expense to the Parish Council and one where concurrent services should re-imburse us.

Sadly in recent years, this has not been the case, as, several years ago, the District Council decided to take an average of a parish council's spends over a previous three year period and pay the parish an average – fine if you had spent a lot of money in that period but not too good if you hadn't. Rowington fell into the latter category and subsequently had to use reserves to pay for some of the maintenance services.

Over the past 12 months, the Parish Council with the assistance of our District Councillor, has lobbied the District and the result has been a small amount of extra funding this year with a full review to follow.

e. Police

Policing within the Parish has always been a topic for debate, yet, our police team is often on the patch and, although there is a police post in Lapworth, the Lapworth Post Office/Off License is where the officers can usually be found – I think it's the latter venue which is the bigger draw.

Our Councillors, Jan Oldfield and Clive Bevins, have attended police forums and Paul Lickorish has now taken over from Jan. These meetings are now known as Localities Meetings and will discuss not only police matters but also other issues affecting rural communities.

f. Allotments

The outstanding issues with the Almshouse Charity have been resolved and the allotments are growing from strength to strength, if you'll excuse the pun, with John Greenaway having formed a new Allotment Association.

g. Parish Plan

At this point, I would just like to express my thanks on behalf of all the Councillors to Nick Holmes and his steering committee for the tremendous efforts they have put into the Rowington Parish Plan project. I am sure we are all looking forward to seeing the completed document, possible around August time, I understand.

Finally, my thanks go to our County and District Councillors for all they do to help the Parish; to my fellow Councillors for the support they have given me and for the duties they undertake; and to Allyson Coleman, our Parish Clerk, without whose continued endeavours, all would grind to a halt

And last but not least, to you all for all that you do to make Rowington Parish the place it is and where we all want to be.

The formal meeting closed at 9.10 p.m. and was followed by an informal discussions session over light refreshments.

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Signed

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Date