

STRATFIELD MORTIMER

Parish Council Newsletter



June 2016



Freda Batten

Freda Batten retired last July after 34 years as the School Crossing Patrol at St John's School. Two presentations were made to Freda at the Annual Parish Meeting on 27th April. For the full story see page 4.



Cllr Julian Earl presents the Parish Council's Certificate of Thanks



Cllr Mike Dennett presents the Community Award for 2016



Freda's first Community Award



Freda's 2016 Community Award

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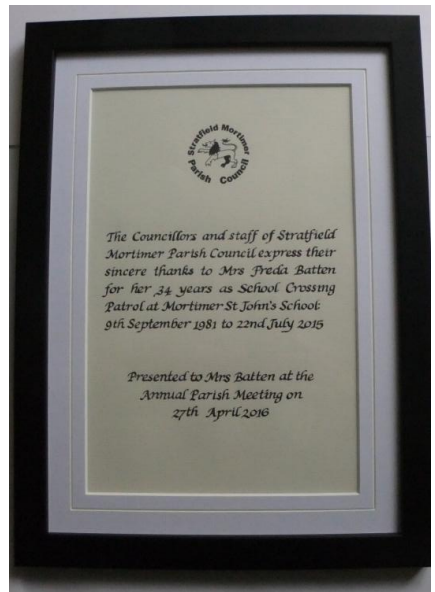
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Thanks to Freda Batten

Freda Batten retired last July after 34 years as the School Crossing Patrol at St John's School. Two presentations were made to Freda at the Annual Parish Meeting on 27th April. The Parish Council unanimously agreed to recognise her outstanding service by presenting a hand written certificate of thanks. This was presented by the Vice Chairman Cllr Julian Earl (who actually wrote the certificate). The certificate was kindly framed by Dara Portraits.

Though obviously best known for her work outside St John's School, Freda also campaigned vigorously in 2005 for a safer footpath and a crossing to St Mary's School, has a Community Award from West Berkshire Council and features prominently in national guidelines on School Crossing Patrols.

Freda was also nominated by several members of the public for the Stratfield Mortimer Community Award which is awarded for outstanding service to the community over a sustained period. Freda was actually a joint recipient of the award in 2003 for 22 years service. The committee considering the award fortunately found nothing in the rules to prevent the award being made twice to the same person. This was the first time this has been done and it may well be the last!



The plate was largely designed by Freda and includes the dates on which she started and finished. The plate was hand made by Andrew Hazelden of Yarnton Pottery. Andrew was formerly at Aldermaston Pottery until it closed and made the first plate in 2003.

Annual Parish Meeting

The annual Parish Meeting was held at St John's Hall on 27th April 2016 and was attended by about 30 people.

The meeting opened with an Update on Local Policing by Thames Valley Police: PCs Stephen Hinds and Ian McDonnell outlined the latest crime figures which showed that crime was relatively low in Mortimer. A lively question and answer session followed. The main topic was the visibility of the PCSOs where it was explained that their role had changed to that originally envisaged but that the village was getting additional support through the part funded PCSO post. It was important that information was passed to the police using the 101 number, or by Twitter or by Neighbourhood schemes.

The meeting continued with the presentations to Freda Batten (see pages 2 and 4), an update on the Neighbourhood Development Plan (Cllr Pat Wingfield - see page 14) and the Annual Report of the Parish Council (see page 6). This was followed by the Annual Report of the Stratfield Mortimer Fairground Charity (Mr Geoff Mayes – see page 15) and by the re-election of Mr Mayes as Secretary to the Charity.

The Open Forum session raised two issues. The first was the safe walking route between Burghfield and Mortimer which is a project in the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The second was the issue of two wheelie bins outside the Fairground car park. Finally Cllr Dennett requested feedback on the agenda for the meeting to improve the meeting for future years. Please send suggestions to the Clerk.

Note: Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting are available on the SMPC website (www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk) or by contacting the Clerk.

Annual Report of Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council 2015/16

This report was presented by the Chairman, Cllr Mike Dennett, at the Annual Parish Meeting on 27th April 2016.

The last Annual Parish Meeting was held on 16th June 2015 and at that meeting I reported that at the election in May 2015 two new councillors had been elected; Cllr Nick Carter and Cllr Chris Lewis and that Cllr Tracy Audsley had resigned. An election was called by the public and three candidates contested the election in August. Cllr Dudley Ives was elected.

With great sadness, I report that Cllr Austin Colaço passed away in November. The Council has very much appreciated all his service and contributions over the years. With regard to the resulting vacancy, no election was called by the public. The Council then advertised for candidates for co-option. Three candidates came forward and Lucy Jones was co-opted after candidates made presentations at the March 2016 Parish Council meeting.

With regret, I also report that Cllr Angie Philips has just resigned. The Council would like to thank to Angie for her valuable contributions to debate and her service over many years. The Council will miss you.

Jayne Kirk, the Parish Clerk since 2000 resigned in August. The Council thanks her for her fifteen years of service and we wish her well in her new post. The services of a qualified Clerk are hard to obtain, at end of November Haydn Selwyn-Jones was appointed as locum clerk on a contract basis. Haydn had previously been Clerk at Burnham Parish Council. The Council advertised and interviewed for the post of Clerk and has appointed Haydn as Clerk for two years. Unfortunately, an operation on his shoulder, preventing him from driving, has delayed start of his contract (this is why he is not here tonight) but he will be fully in post as soon as possible. Members of the public have already

meet him in the PC office and we expect the office to shortly be open to the public on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Our other member of staff, Custodian Frank Stansfield (Custodian) continues to do an excellent job in tidying the Fairground, cemetery, the West End Road car park and he inspects all the play equipment each week.

What has the Parish Council done in the last year? A major activity has been dealing with West Berkshire Council and commenting on their budget proposals. We are only part of the process, but we have tried to respond to every proposal and to support/lead the community. However there has only been limited success over the Willink school transport, the 75 bus and the proposed library closure. The Council has set up a library working group to consider future options for the library and will be seeking input from the community.

The Council will carry on fighting cuts and reductions in services. Recently, it has become apparent that West Berkshire Council would like to devolve various services to the Parish Council. That will be a challenge. For some services, such as the library, it may be possible to steer a way with volunteer help, but for others it may not and these may have considerable impact on the funding and scope of the Parish Council in future.

In deciding on the budget for 2016/17 the Council managed to keep the precept per household constant, we have a slight increase in the total precept as the Council tax base (the number of equivalent Band D properties in the Parish) has slightly increased (from 1619 to 1642).

A statutory duty of the Parish Council is to respond to planning applications. In the last year, the Planning Committee has met thirteen times and dealt with 44- applications. At present we are still awaiting the outcome of two major applications, on the Tower House / Fairwinds and the Monkey Puzzle Field sites.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan is an important activity and Cllr Wingfield has just updated you on progress (full details will be in the minutes of this meeting). Essentially, the plan has been through two periods of consultation and has now been sent by West Berkshire Council to the appointed examiner. It is expected that the referendum on the plan will take place either in July or September. The referendum will determine whether the plan is adopted or whether planning for the village will remain with West Berkshire Council.

In June 2015 the Charity Commission issued a draft scheme which included the clause that if Garth Hall was sold the proceeds would be split 50:50 between the British Legion and the YMCA. The Parish Council strongly objected to this and the draft scheme was been withdrawn. The Royal British Legion and the Parish Council will be entering further discussions on what can and should be done, either to continue the use of the hall or to deal with the proceeds of any sale in line with the original objectives.

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has continued with its routine activities such as the maintenances, grass cutting and hedge planting on the Fairground. In 2015 it also arranged and paid for the grass cutting of the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field (excluding the football pitches). This arrangement will continue in 2016. On the Fair ground, a programme of cutting back the spreading gorse has been started. The annual RoSPA inspection of the play equipment was satisfactory with only few minor items needing attention.

Everyone knows the Fairground but the Parish Council cemetery is a valuable resource that the Council manages and maintains and is a sizeable administrative task. During the last year there were eight burials and six cremations.

Parish Councillors operated a speed indicator device (SID) for two weeks in April at various locations in the Parish and a repeat is planned for later in the year. The Council decided to continue with the part

funded PCSO contract for 2016/17, but any future continuation will require solid evidence of value for money.

Over the last year the Parish Council has tried to improve communication with the community. A six month trial of Facebook was deemed a success and will continue (facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil). This is not an official way of contacting the Council (which are email, telephone and letter) but we try to respond to posts. The newsletter is scheduled for four issues per year and we are trying to improve the content. The first issue with a colour cover seems to have been well received.

A relatively minor part of the Council's activities, but perhaps the most obvious, are public events fully or partly organised by the Council. The Council decided to purchase a Christmas tree for last December, and this along with additional lighting, seemed to be popular. The Council was delighted with the attendance at the Beacon lighting on the Fairground on 21st April for the Queen's 90th birthday. It was suggested by a member of the public that the Council plant a tree to commemorate this birthday. A Malus 'Red Peacock' (flowering crab apple) was quietly planted near pond by the war memorial and it has flowered this year (see picture in later article).

The next event is a free 'Queen's 90th Birthday Party in the Park' on the Fairground on 4th June. I doubt whether we can match the Jubilee event, but we are trying our best!

The Council has many ongoing projects, such as car park refurbishment, better guides to footpaths and implementation of the NDP (assuming a successful examination and referendum). So please support the Parish Council and help us enhance this Parish. As Chairman, I give my sincere thanks to fellow councillors and staff for all their varied contributions during the last year.

Parish Clerk

We are pleased to announce that Mr Haydn Selwyn-Jones has now taken up the position of Clerk to the Council. Since December, Haydn had been operating as a locum. The position was advertised (for 30 hours per week) and interviews were held in March. Haydn, formerly Clerk to Burnham Parish Council, was offered the post and has agreed to take the role. Haydn normally works in the Parish Council Office on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays and works the other hours from home. If you have specific queries for the Parish Council you are welcome to call in to see him on those days. If the library is shut access is via the metal gate to the left of the library.

Changes of Councillors

Following the notice of co-option, published in February, three applications were received and Lucy Jones was co-opted onto the Parish Council at its March meeting. In her application, Lucy stated:

"I have lived in Mortimer or approximately 40 years. My husband is third generation and my daughter goes to the local school. I believe that Mortimer has a wonderful community and my interest is now to be a part of running that community".

Lucy has been appointed to the Communications, NDP Implementation and Planning committees and is also a member of the Library Working Group.

We also announce that Angie Philips has decided to stand down from the Council after many years of service. It is sad to see Angie leave the Council and the Council would like to thank her for all her invaluable service over many years to the Full Council and several committees.

There is therefore a vacancy on the Council, following the resignation of Cllr Angie Philips. The official vacancy notice, which invites the electorate to call an election, was posted on 17th May. If no request for an election has been received by the 6th June, the Council will fill the vacancy by co-option and a call for applications will be issued.

Overgrown hedges,

The Clerk has received a general complaint about overgrown hedges blocking footpaths, especially on those along the road to Mortimer Station. The Clerk reminds landowners in Mortimer that it is their responsibility to keep their roadside hedges trimmed, especially along roadside footpaths as overgrown hedges are causing a hazard forcing people to step out into the road in some cases.

Annual Meeting of the Parish Council

It is a statutory requirement that the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Committee members of the Parish Council are appointed annually at the May meeting of the Parish Council. The meeting, on 12th May 2016, appointed Cllr Mike Dennett as Chairman and Cllr Julian Earl as Vice Chairman for 2016/17. Members of Committees are shown in the table below and below the photographs of Councillors. The Chairman of each Committee is indicated by *. The Chairman and Vice Chairman are *ex officio* members of each committee. The eagle eyed will note that this meeting set up a new committee, the NDP Implementation Committee. This will take the NDP forward, assuming a successful referendum.

Committee	Members
Cemetery	Kiley*, Bull, Challis, Lewis, Wingfield
Communications	Richardson*, Carter, Jones, Lewis
Fairground, Trees and Amenities	Blagden*, Bull, Challis, Kiley, Lock, Richardson
NDP Implementation	Wingfield*, Carter, Jones, Kiley, Richardson,
Planning	Butcher*, Challis, Ives, Jones, Kiley
Roads Footpaths and Commons	Ives*, Bull, Butcher, Lewis, Lock
Finance and General Purposes	Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chairman of other committees, ie: Dennett*, Earl, Blagden, Butcher, Ives, Kiley, Richardson, Wingfield

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council May 2016



Mike Dennett (Chairman)



Haydn Selywn-Jones (Clerk)



**Julian Earl
(Vice Chairman)**



**Pete Blagden
Fairground Trees &
Amenities***



**John Bull
Cemetery; Fairground, Trees &
Amenities; Roads, Footpaths
& Commons;**



**Tony Butcher
Planning*; Roads
Footpaths & Commons**



**Nick Carter
Communications;
NDP Implementation**



**Phil Challis
Cemetery, Fairground, Trees &
Amenities; Planning**



**Dudley Ives
Planning, Roads,
Footpaths & Commons***



Lucy Jones
Communications; NDP
Implementation;
Planning;



Neil Kiley
Cemetery*; Fairground Trees
& Amenities; Planning;



Chris Lewis
Cemetery;
Communications; Roads
Footpaths & Commons;



Mollie Lock
Fairground, Trees &
Amenities; Roads,
Footpaths & Commons



Andrew Richardson
Communications*;
Fairground Trees & Amenities;
NDP Implementation



Pat Wingfield
Cemetery; Fairground
Trees & Amenities
NDP Implementation*



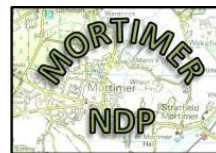
Frank Stansfield
Custodian

Note

*** denotes chair of**
committee

Finance and General
Purposes Committee
comprises the Chairman,
Vice Chairman and the six
committee Chairmen

Neighbourhood Development Plan update



In the last newsletter it was reported that the Neighbourhood Plan had been submitted to West Berkshire Council (WBC). WBC then organised their six week consultation. It was understood there were only 19 responses to that consultation, most of which were from statutory bodies. The documents have now been sent by WBC to the appointed Examiner who is Richard Humphreys QC. The Examiner looks at the NDP and the consultations and may make recommendations for change to ensure the plan meets the requirements of the relevant legislation. Following this WBC must decide if they will accept the plan and, if so, they will organise a parish referendum, which may well not happen till September. It is only if the NDP passes that referendum that it is then enshrined as part of the planning framework for the parish.

The referendum is the ultimate test of the community's opinion on the NDP and all voters in the Parish will be able to take part. It is important that the turnout is as high as possible so that the result truly reflects the views of the parish. We will, of course, keep you informed of progress on this topic and nearer the time will be advertising the time and location of the referendum.

At the Annual Parish meeting, a question was asked about what would happen if the plan failed at the referendum and the answer was given that the planning for the village would revert to West Berkshire Council.

At the May meeting of the Parish Council a new committee was set up to take the NDP forward. The sort of things it is the committee intends to do include:-

- Identify sources of funding for NDP projects.
- Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the Plan as effective as possible including liaison with the developers of The Site.

- Draw up proposed priorities for the projects in the NDP and identify possible groups that could have a significant role in their implementation
- Assist as necessary with the implementation of NDP projects
- Regularly report back to the parish council on progress, issues arising and outcomes from the exercise.
- To consider the appropriate long term terms of reference for the committee and to bring back to the parish council a proposal for such terms of reference

The committee will be made up from parish councillors and volunteers from the community. If anyone would be interested in volunteering for the committee please contact the Clerk.

Street Lighting in Strawberry Fields

The Parish Council consulted with the residents of the Strawberry Fields Estate as to whether they would like the LED street lights dimmed by 40% between the hours of midnight and 05:30 am. Sixteen responses were received, twelve in favour and four against. This change was therefore implemented from 31 March.

Stratfield Mortimer Fairground Charity

This article has been submitted by Mr Geoff Mayes, Secretary of the Fairground Charity.

The 20 acre (8 hectare) Fairground in Mortimer is registered with the Charity Commission under the reference No 1110521 with the original purpose of providing firewood to the deserving poor of the village, especially in winter. Individual Trustees serve for a period of four years and two are nominated by the Parish Council, one by Clarke's Educational Foundation, one by the Englefield Trust, and one elected by the villagers usually at an Annual Parish meeting.

Today the main source of funding is derived from the leasing of the Fairground to the Parish Council which in turn receives an income from hiring to the fairs, circuses and other entertainment events. The insurance and maintenance including drainage, boundary fences and hedging is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

To protect the Village from inappropriate planning applications and development on “The Fairground”, the area now has to be officially Land Registered in that name. The necessary papers and boundary maps have been submitted by our Solicitors to the Land Registry Office and includes the land between Windmill Road, Hammonds Heath, The Street and the eastern boundaries of the properties in King Street. We await the Land Registry’s decision.

In the 21st century the Charity can make grants to parishioners who may need help with their heating fuel bills. For this we need your help in identifying those who are struggling to keep warm in winter. Please let one of the Trustees know the name and address of anyone who might fulfil the needs criteria. The current Trustees are Roger Peters (Treasurer), Geoff Mayes (Secretary), James Strang (Englefield Trust) and Parish Councillors Neil Kiley and Julian Earl.

Save our Buses (SOB)

At its March meeting, SMPC passed a vote of thanks to SOB for all their hard work. Since the cancellation of the bus route to the Willink school for 233 pupils the SOB team have been busy. They have organised a community bus service at a greatly reduced price to the offer from WBC. This is running well with over 45 people using it this term and doubling that figure next term. Other members of the SOB team are looking at long term plans for a sustainable and safe route to Burghfield. This will be a long term project.

Mortimer Library

For the present, Mortimer Library remains open. However West Berkshire Council announced that:

“To comply with the Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 and its public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010, the Council requires a Needs Assessment to inform decisions which might affect the network of library provision. This requires an assessment of the overall and specific needs both of the District’s communities and of various demographic groups, especially those with special needs in regard to service access.”

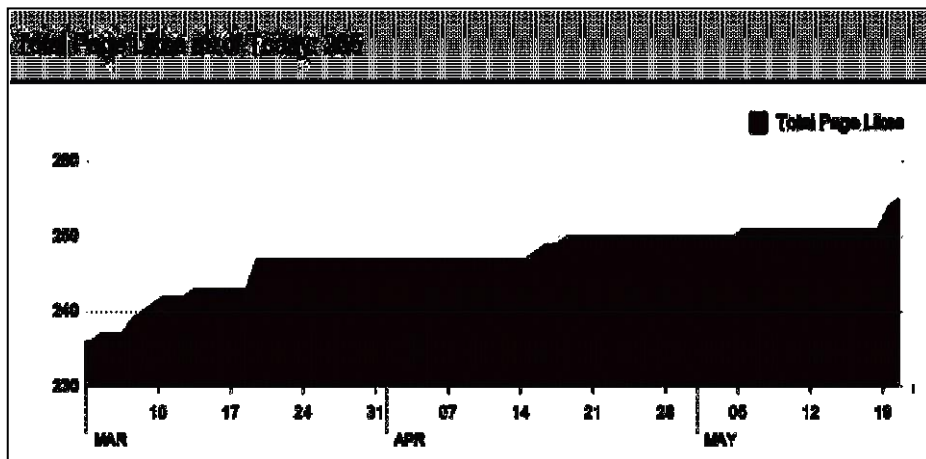
That Needs Assessment has now been commissioned. However, it is clear that there will be considerable need for community involvement in the future library service in West Berkshire. At its April meeting the Parish Council agreed to set up a Mortimer Library Working Group to investigate and report on options. The group comprises Cllrs Dennett, Lewis, Lock, Carter and Jones. In addition, the Council is pleased to report that Marjorie McClure has agreed to join the group. It was also minuted that SMPC should be proactive and identify what was really wanted in a community library. Representatives from the group will be attending a briefing meeting at West Berkshire on 2nd June.

Communications



Update

The Parish Council has now approved the SMPC Facebook page at the end of its six month trial. To date the Council believe that it has improved communication with the number of page likes steadily increasing. The page is: facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil



Website

It is planned to give the SMPC website a makeover in the coming months. The website is an important focal point for all the activities of the Council and we are aiming to improve the look and feel of the website and also advance its functionality. Please give us your views on how the website can be improved. At the front of the Newsletter is a scan image which takes you to the website and you can access a soft copy of the Newsletter by clicking on 'SMPC Newsletters' and downloading 'June 2016'.

Upcoming events

The following events are booked for The Fairground:

Mortimer Fun Day Saturday 2nd July and concert on Sunday 3rd July

Village cricket match for the Alan Thorpe Trophy Sunday 10th July

Mortimer 10k and Fun Walk Sunday 25th September

Parish Council Meetings

Full meetings of the Parish Council are normally held on the second Thursday of each month in the Methodist Church West End Road, Mortimer at 7:30 pm. There is a ten minute slot at the start of each meeting for members of the public to raise concerns and comment on

items on the agenda. SMPC would like to encourage members of the public to attend meetings. The remaining meetings for 2016 are:

14 July	11 August	8 September
13 October	10 November	8 December

News in Brief

Work has started on the clearance work on the Fairground. The brambles and brush has been cut back at either end of the central conservation strip. An area of gorse has been cleared adjacent to Hammonds Heath. This work will continue when the bird nesting season is over.

The need for the Parish Plan Refresh is being reconsidered as much of the activity can be integrated with the NDP. The Council will discuss this again.

The Council will shortly have a meeting with the Royal British Legion concerning Garth Hall.

Parish Councillors carried out a two week programme of checking on traffic speeds using a Speed Indicator Device (SID) last month. In general, speeds were modest but the results will be analysed in detail.

West Berkshire Council have announced that West Berkshire residents will not be able to use the Smallmead Recycling Centre in Reading from 30th June 2016.

West Berkshire Council have announced changes to Concessionary Travel from 1st May 2016. The main changes are that bus passes can now only be used from 09:30 (Monday to Friday) instead of 09:00 and that bus passes cannot be used on voluntary sector services such as Readibus or Handybus. Full details at:

<http://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=41599&p=0>

Useful Contacts

Fairground Emergency

0743 6807543

To report any emergencies and dangerous situations on the Fairground.

For non-emergencies please contact the Parish Council Office

0118 9331955

Police Non-Emergency

101

To report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

NHS non-Emergency

111

If you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

West Berks Council (WBC)

01635 42400

WBC Out of Hours Emergency Contact

01635 42161

To report major incidents out of hours.

West Berkshire Council Streetcare Team

01635 519080

streetcare@westberks.gov.uk

To report problems with streets, roads, highways, pavements, etc.

West Berkshire District Councillors for the Mortimer Ward

Cllr Mollie Lock

0118 9332858

Cllr Graham Bridgman

0118 9331707

Mortimer Village Partnership

www.mortimervillage.org.uk

For village news and information on events, including a directory of local clubs and businesses.

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

The Clerk
Parish Council Office
The Library
27 Victoria Road
Mortimer
RG7 3SH

Tel: 0118 933 1955

Email: the.clerk@stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Website: www.stratfield-mortimer.gov.uk

Facebook: facebook.com/stratfieldmortimerparishcouncil

Minutes and Agendas of Council meetings, as well as other Council information can be viewed on the above website or on the Parish Council notice boards which are located outside the Post Office and the Library.

The Parish Council Office is open:
Tuesdays & Thursdays,
10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Celebration of the Queens 90th Birthday

Part I Beacon Lighting

The Parish Council, helped by Mortimer Music Live volunteers, organised a “Birthday Beacon” lighting on the Fairground to celebrate Her Majesty’s 90th birthday on 21st April. It was one of many lightings taking place that day around the country. First, the bells of St. John’s Church rang out, then local classical guitarists Nigel Griffin and Nick Carter played a range of solos and duets.

Air Vice Marshall Barry Newton made a short speech to the assembled several hundred people, congratulating Her Majesty on her major achievement (top photograph). The flame was lit at 8.30pm, in time with the nation’s other beacons (bottom photograph).

The Hurst Singers led the singing of patriotic music, including Jerusalem, Pomp & Circumstance No. 1 and the National Anthem. The team were pleasantly surprised at the high turnout on a Thursday evening – it must have been about 600.

Thanks to Jason Smith for providing the photographs.

Part II Picnic in the Park

As we go to press, final details of the Queen's 90th birthday celebration on 4th June are being sorted. It is hoped that the considerable interest shown in this event at present, translates into a bumper turnout on the evening. Whilst we can control the activities and schedule, we can't predict the weather. All we can do is hope that it was a success and well attended but if it was wet and cold don't blame us! We tried!





Planting of a tree to celebrate the Queen's 90th

A member of the public suggested that SMPC plant a tree to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday. The Council approved of this suggestion and purchased a *Malus* 'Red Peacock' which in time will have an annual abundance of soft pink flowers. The tree was planted during the winter and is located close to the war memorial junction adjacent to the pond. A ceremonial plaque will be added later.



Feedback on Communications

The Parish Council would be interested in finding out what you think of this Newsletter and any other communications. Please provide feedback by contacting the Clerk using the contact details on page 21 of this newsletter. In this issue we have experimented with the order to maximise colour photographs on the cover pages – what do you think of this?