

Chairman's Report, APM 2016

Much of the Council's work is to do with Planning, whether it's the Placemaking Plan, the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan, enforcement matters or planning applications.

The Parish's Placemaking Plan completed two years ago and part of the B&NES Placemaking initiative for the whole authority area is now reaching its final stages. It has been through two consultations and has just been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. Only one of the six sites we originally put forward as being potentially suitable for development was accepted. However, B&NES Plan does support three Hinton Blewett sites identified as Locally Important Green Spaces and it is hoped that the designation will be approved by the Examiner. The sites are at South of Lower Road, the Glebe and the Playing Field on Hook Lane.

Hinton Blewett is one of seven parishes participating in the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan. During the last 12 months there has been a public consultation on the various planning policy options being proposed. With the feedback the policies have been updated and a draft Plan is currently being finalised and will commence another round of public consultation at the end of the month. The Plan will then be updated with any feedback and submitted to B&NES around mid-June. B&NES will then undertake another round of consultation and the Plan will hopefully go forward for examination in October. If all goes according to plan, there will be a referendum in early 2017. We hope that the B&NES Placemaking Plan and the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan will in due course be adopted into B&NES Local Plan which will provide Hinton Blewett, as well as other parishes, with much greater security and protection from inappropriate development.

As a planning consultee, the Council has considered 11 planning applications during the year; and some progress has been made with Enforcement in ensuring that conditions are agreed before allowing planning permission at Prospect Stile Farm and officers are working with Home Farm to get the land cleared. With the help of residents the Council is also working with the Police in reporting stray farm livestock, which on a number of occasions has been a danger to residents.

There is on-going concern that Highways are not repairing our roads to a satisfactory standard and it was recently proposed that there should be a site meeting with the head of Highways. Issues include delayed and inappropriate highway repairs, overgrown hedges and blocked gullies.

The Parish Council again held a very successful litter picking day back in in March in a clean-up prior to the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations.

On a lighter note, we were all very pleased that last December at long last BT was able to install faster broadband to the village.

Finally, I would like to thank Emily, our Clerk who has been in post for nearly two years now and is very pro-active in ensuring that the Council operates 'best practice' and I would like to thank her for her hard work particularly on the Council website during the year. And I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their support during the year.

April 2016

Ward Councillor's Report, Hinton Blewett APM 2016

- **Council Budget -**

- £40+ million of savings needed over next four years.

- £11.7 million identified so far, including £2.2 million in management savings and £3 million of new income.

- 1.25% Council Tax rise – lowest in West of England and among lowest in the country. Also 2% new Social Care precept – funding ring-fenced for Adult Social Care.

- **Transport Strategy -**

- Consultation to begin on Somer Valley and Chew Valley Transport Strategy in May, which will provide an opportunity to look at local public transport. Parish Councils will be asked to give feedback on proposals.

- **Highway maintenance -**

- Additional £500k allocated to Highway Maintenance this year, on top of the £3.6 million grant from Government.

- Realigning capital programme to ensure rural areas get fair allocation.

- **A37 safety programme -**

- £200,000 programme of safety improvements for the A37 identified by the Council. Details to be released in May. Not all schemes will be undertaken at once, they will be introduced over time, and each scheme will be consulted on individually.

- **Devolution -**

- Government devolution proposals published for the West of England. This is about handing money and decision-making powers from Government to the region. It would mean £30 million a year of additional infrastructure funding for the region. Would not mean a merger of the Councils – each Council would remain separate and autonomous – but the Government has been insistent on the creation of a 'regional Mayor' to oversee the arrangements, which may cause difficulties.

- **Broadband -**

- Council continuing to support Connecting Devon and Somerset, to enable roll-out of superfast broadband (faster than 24mbps) to 90+% of rural areas. Second phase – aiming for 95% coverage – will see the tender process open up to more providers.

- £500 voucher scheme now available through Connecting Devon and Somerset for properties which cannot access superfast broadband to help towards connection costs.

- **Core Strategy -**

- We are meeting our housing requirement under the need for a 'five year land supply' and are set to deliver a record number of new homes this year. This helps give protection to our Core Strategy and areas not designated for new development.

- In order to meet our legal 'duty to co-operate' under the NPPF, the Council is currently undertaking a Joint Spatial Plan with North Somerset, Bristol and South Glos. This will also help the area better plan for future infrastructure needs. As part of this, B&NES has been arguing for a brownfield-first and 'urban intensification' approach to maximum land within the Bristol border and other urban parts of the region – though it is yet to be seen what the final housing requirements will be.

St Margaret's Church, Hinton Blewett Report for 2015

During the past year we have had 4 marriages, no christenings, 3 funerals with internment in the churchyard and 1 internment of ashes.

In the absence of a volunteer to run the annual fete we instead held a bazaar in November that featured a silent auction and a number of stalls which was well supported by the village and contributed just short of £1,100 to church funds.

Due to the challenges of securing commitment from our chosen builder work on the repair of the remainder of the churchyard wall and the construction of the new path from the road to the porch (for which a faculty now exists) were put on hold. These will take place in April 2016.

Our efforts to encourage villagers back into church and feel comfortable with being there has continued and the Village Carol Service, followed by mulled wine and mince pies, was again well supported, whilst the normal Crib & Candle on Christmas Eve was as popular as ever.

It was a great pleasure and privilege to be able to host the service to celebrate Tony Marks' 60th anniversary of being ordained.

The flower ladies and grass cutting teams have continued to keep the Church and Churchyard look cared for with new villagers joining both teams, and we are grateful to them for all that they do to keep St Margaret's looking so loved.

Graham Sage and Robbie Drewett
Churchwardens

Hinton Blewett Village Hall Management Committee Report – 2016

The hall continues to benefit from being used by the Montessori Kindergarten and such events as the Rustic supper, village sharing supper and Christmas Bazaar which were all successful social village events. Rental charges for Montessori continue to reflect reduced school intake. Other community use is by the Parish Council, the History Group and during this last year the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

In the last few months considerable maintenance has been undertaken with the replacement of the heating system, reroofing of the store together with insulation to create office space for Montessori as well as storage space. The Committee meets regularly throughout the year and ensures that health & safety and fire safety are maintained. Rental income has ensured that there are sufficient finances to provide for necessary maintenance of the Hall, which this year has not been inconsiderable.

Liz Brimmell
Chairman, Village Hall Committee
26th April 2016

Hinton Blewett History Group Report for 2015

The annual account/balance sheet shows that the group ended 2015 financially healthy and our thanks are again due to John Tansley for being our treasurer.

Members enjoyed a varied programme of six talks, one of which was held in St Margaret's Church instead of the usual venue, the Village Hall.

Two of the speakers were from the village; Graham Sage whose topic was the history of St. Margaret's Church and Gill Hogarth who talked about the Catholics in Hinton Blewett in the days of persecution. The other topics that both informed and entertained members and guests included 'The experience of early passengers sailing to Australia on SS Great Britain' by Cyril Routley, 'Trenches to Trams – the life of a Bristol Tommy' by Clive Burleton, 'A History of Knowle and Totterdown' by Mike Hooper and 'Local Place Names' by Professor Richard Coates.

The year started with the Rustic Supper which was enjoyed by all despite the problems with the cooker and ended with the members enjoying an evening of mulled wine and mince pies while sharing ideas, research updates and programme suggestions for 2016.

As always, we are indebted to all those who organise speakers, help with refreshments and the preparation and clearing of the hall.

Rosemary Walker

Litton and Hinton Blewett Women's Institute Report April 2016

Our thriving WI now has some 47 members. At our AGM, in May 2015, Chris Arnold was voted in once more as president and Hilary Howells as secretary, both of whom live in Hinton Blewett. We now have 10 members from our village, the most for several years.

Last year was very special for the WI, being its Centenary Celebration, and many events took place throughout the country. Perhaps the most special of these occurred in June and were a Garden Party in Buckingham Palace and the Annual General Meeting at the Albert Hall in London. Both events were attended by royalty and were very exceptional indeed. Our President was selected, through a ballot of our members, to attend the Garden Party and I can confirm I felt very honoured to have been chosen. The day was an awesome experience and during the afternoon the sun shone and the brisk wind teased the hats from unwary heads. I was extremely blessed to have been privileged to attend such a memorable affair, it was the opportunity of a lifetime!

In June, we visited the Bishop's Palace gardens in Wells. It was a pleasant summer evening and about 25 members and some partners and friends enjoyed a tour of the gardens with a very knowledgeable guide to tell us about the history and point out things of interest. Many of the flowerbeds had been newly planted, often with a theme, and they looked magnificent. Our guide was able to explain to us the intricacies of the water system that flows through the garden. At the end of the tour we spent some time in the ancient Bishop's Chapel and then most of the party ended the evening with a lovely supper in Wells.

This was followed, in July, by a garden meeting at a member's house, this was to celebrate the 100 years of WI (our institute has clocked up 96 years this year). The evening was chilly but the atmosphere was warm, no doubt helped by the bubbly wine! Background music was provided by singer and harpist, Vicki Burke. Delicious summer party food was provided by the sub-committee members with cupcakes for everyone by Amy Jefferies, thank you! There were lots of photographs taken and some informal speeches given and the evening was rounded off by the singing of Jerusalem.

Later that month, 23 members and friends enjoyed a visit to Wraxall Vineyard on a pleasant summer evening. We were met by our host, the owner and shown around the growing area. He recounted the story of the vines from when he bought the derelict, overgrown vineyard in 2007. Some 300 vines were pruned back into productive life but much of the area was too overgrown and had to be cleared and replanted, involving much hard work. Now a huge area is planted and yields 25,000 bottles annually! Many wines have gained prestigious prizes. We were able to endorse the quality when we tasted the samples! The evening finished with supper at the Mendip Inn.

In August, more of us gathered for a game of croquet in a member's garden, sitting in the sunshine together to have lunch.

Our speaker for our September meeting was Rachel Davis who demonstrated her skill in paper making from recycled paper.

The October talk was “The Spirit of the Japanese Garden -1500 years of development”, David Burgess was our speaker and he had a wide knowledge of the culture of Japan and its relationship to their gardens.

The November meeting was a Members’ Evening with no speaker and plenty of time to chat and catch up with news. Photos from the decades were shown on the screen and lots of fun was had seeing how we had changed and happy memories shared of events from the past years with old friends. Our scrapbooks over the years were also available for perusal.

We finished the year in December when 21 of our members attended the WI Festival of Carols in Wells Cathedral where two of our members sang with the choir. That evening, we were delighted to welcome the husband of one of our members, Christopher Lewis, who came to tell us about “Life Behind the Scenes at The Antiques Road Show”. He was the producer for many years and had some fascinating stories to tell.

2016 dawned and at our January meeting it was New Year party night for our WI! Every member had brought a dish of food and a magnificent spread was laid out. We feasted on this, washed down with bubbly wine, much laughter and chatter ensued. We formed teams and took part in a quiz, with modern technology it was projected on a screen for all to see and listen to clips of films.

Our February speaker was Judy Smith who arrived with her daughter and partner and came to introduce us to Line Dancing. After a brief introduction, we were up on the floor and learning the moves, with a small number sitting on the side enjoying our antics. For almost an hour we stepped, hopped and grape-vined our way to the beat of the Country and Western music. It was very energetic and great fun. Supper and coffee were very welcome after all that exercise!

At our March meeting, we had a very special speaker when Michael Eavis, founder of the Glastonbury Festival, came to tell us all about it. We welcomed guests from neighbouring WIs and some of our friends too. He began by giving us the brief story of his life before Glastonbury. Then, in 1969, he and his wife went to The Bath Festival of Blues at the Bath and West Show Ground and thought that they might like to put on something similar on their farm. So, in September 1970, he staged the Pilton Pop Festival, a one day event costing £1! He had booked The Kinks (via the Booking Clerk at The Colston Hall!) but when he called it a “mini festival “ they pulled out. T Rex, Al Stewart and Stackridge were among those who played at that first event - and the rest, as they say, is history! As we know, the festival continued to develop over the years, sometimes controversially, with massive growth and fabulous ticket sales from the eighties onwards. Several Charities have benefited over the years. The festival is run in the main by a huge number of volunteers who are provided with good food and accommodation (a bit like the Hilton!) and the chance to be part of the best festival in the world! Much of the evening was spent with questions and answers and lots of discussion with audience members. It was a pleasure to meet such an unassuming man who really is an icon of our times. We encouraged him to write his autobiography – he said he doesn’t have time!

Our Wine Club and Diners’ Club, which visits local restaurants on a monthly basis, continue to be well supported. We also have a sewing group making heart shaped cushions for the oncology department at the RUH and to date have made over 250 plus driver bags for portable drains.

We have many lovely events to look forward to; a Lasagne Supper, a visit to Acton Court, a visit to the theatre, a Yoga taster day and a friendly skittles match plus another croquet day.

A poster is displayed advertising the WI meetings on the noticeboard outside the pub. Our village events are promoted at our meetings e.g. the History Society. Through continued close communication, we hope many more residents of Hinton Blewett will be enticed to join our ranks in the future!

Chris Arnold
President
Litton and Hinton Blewett WI