

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting of Melksham Without Parish Council held at Melksham Rugby Club, "Oakfields, Eastern Way, Melksham on Monday, 1st April 2019 at 7.00pm.

1. **Present:** Cllrs. Richard Wood (Chairman), Alan Baines, Paul Carter, David Pafford, Mary Pile, Robert Shea-Simonds, Stuart Wood, Paul Taylor and Terry Chivers.
Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk), Jo Eccleston (Parish Officer) and Marianne Rossi (Assistant Parish Officer).
2. **Apologies:** Cllrs. John Glover (Vice-Chairman) was on holiday, Cllr. Nick Holder was unwell, and Cllr. Gregory Coombes had an approved leave of absence; these reasons for absence were accepted.
3. **Not Present:** Cllrs. Kaylum House.
4. **Welcome & Housekeeping:** The Chairman, Cllr. Wood warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.
5. **a) Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 2017:** The minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 16th April, 2018, were noted as they had been approved by Full Council on Monday 23rd April, 2018.
b) Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.
6. **Chair's Report – Appendix 1:** The Chairman gave his report of the work of the Council during 2018/19. Cllr. Wood welcomed and introduced the two new councillors since the last Annual Parish meeting; Cllr. Robert Shea-Simonds and Cllr. Stuart Wood.
7. **Presentation of Grant Aid Cheques Brought Forward:** The presentation of the grant aid cheques to the 1st Broughton Gifford Scouts and the new Shaw, Whitley & Atworth Beaver & Cub Group were brought forward as young people from the Beavers and Cubs were present to accept them. The cheque to Arts Together was also presented.
8. **Reports from Wiltshire Councillors:**
 - (i) **Wiltshire Councillor Roy While – Melksham Without North – Appendix 2:** Cllr. While gave a verbal overview of his written report of the work that he has carried out as a Wiltshire Councillor during 2018/19.
 - (ii) **Wiltshire Councillor Phil Alford- Melksham Without South – Appendix 3:** Cllr. Alford gave highlights from his written report of his work as a Wiltshire Councillor during 2018/19.
9. **Written Reports from Community Organisations and Groups in the Parish – Appendix 4:** The booklet containing written reports from Groups and Organisations was noted.
10. **Presentation by Mathew Billingham, Local Area Co-ordinator – Melksham, Public Health, Wiltshire Council:** Mr. Billingham explained that his role was a new Wiltshire Council initiative and that his services were available to all people of all ages in his catchment area; there was no qualifying criteria or threshold that had to be met. He advised that he could help anyone who was experiencing difficulties or challenges in their

life, and that he was there to support people and work with other organisations in this respect. He was there to support people to find a better life by either accessing the correct support from other agencies, joining new groups, meeting new people or taking up new activities. He then described a case study. He reported that he was one of 9 co-ordinators across Wiltshire and that his only limitation was that he could only help up to 10,000. He said that he was also looking to make connections with people and organisations who were in a position to help his clients. He advised that he would leave leaflets explaining his catchment area and how people could get in touch with him.

- 11. Presentation by Peter Dunford, Wiltshire Council Community Engagement Manager (CEM) for Melksham Community Area:** Mr. Dunford introduced himself and stated that some people may already know him as he had previously been the CEM for Bradford-on-Avon, but now had “drawn the long straw” and was the CEM for Melksham. He showed a power point presentation and explained that there was a team at Wiltshire Council who carried out lots of number crunching exercises on thematic issues under the Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) process. He reported that there would be a Melksham JSA this Autumn where the priorities for the Community Area would be defined. There are 11 parishes in the Melksham Area Board catchment, with 6 Wiltshire Councillors. He explained that his role was to work closely with the elected representatives to help deliver on their commitments to the parishes and advised that in 2019/20 there was a budget of £90,000. There is a community grant scheme where groups and organisations in the Melksham Area Board area can apply for small grants up to £5,000. He stated that there was also £13,000 of capital funding for CATG (Community Area Transport Group), £20,000 for Youth Grants and a small pot for Health & Wellbeing. He explained how to report issues and problems via the MyWiltshire App. He also advised that people signed up to the Wiltshire Council “Our Community Matters” website as this advertised events in the community, volunteering opportunities and a project bank, where you can look at other projects and good practice in Wiltshire.

- 12. Comment & Question Time:** None

- 13. Presentation of Grant Aid Cheques:** The Chairman presented the 2019/20 Grant Aid cheques to groups and organisations who had been awarded a grant as they provided a service which benefitted the residents of the Parish. The Chairman invited groups and organisations to say a few words when they received their grant cheques, and the representatives from some groups explained the service that they gave and what they would be spending their grant funding on.

Meeting closed at 8.43pm

Chairman, 15th April, 2019

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

1st April 2019

This is my sixth Chairman's report for the Annual Meeting. Once again, we have been kept very busy. Our new councillors have all settled in very well, and since last year we have added two new members, Robert Shea-Simmonds for Bowerhill Ward and Stuart Wood for Berryfield Ward. Robert replaced Joanne Pattison, and Stuart replaced Daniel Barber, both who resigned because of the pressure of work commitments. I would also like to pay tribute to Steve Petty from Berryfield, who left us last Spring. He had a long history of service both on the parish and for Wiltshire Council.

PRECEPT

The Precept set for 2018/19 is £201,108.10, an increase of £11,016.36 (0.966%) on last year's precept. An average Band D household will contribute £75.69 for the year, an additional £0.72 on last year, which is a rise of 1%. CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) payments from new developments will help us to keep the increase to modest levels this year but as Parish and Town councils begin to take on some of the commitments caused by the underfunding of County Councils this may not always be the case.

PLANNING

Reviewing and commenting on plans submitted to Wiltshire Council are an important part of MWPC's responsibilities, one we take very seriously. This year we received 96 planning applications, including 3 large developments.

Since last year's Annual meeting we have seen a start made on two large developments, the 150 houses in Semington Road, Berryfield now making rapid progress and the Pathfinder Way development, Bowerhill. The Semington Road development will provide Berryfield with a much-needed new village hall, the cost of which is provided by the developers and which we were relieved to hear is index linked. The Parish hopes to agree plans for the hall this year. They will of course be put out to consultation. The roads on the development will be named after canal engineers to mark the fact that the Wilts & Berks canal ran right through the site.

Last year I wrote that the development of 450 houses to the east of Melksham would begin in 2018. It didn't, but should begin this year. Another new hall will be provided, sited next to the Spa Surgery. It will be within the boundary of the Town Council.

As a Council we have resolved to be very proactive on new proposals. Whether we approve of them or not, it is our responsibility to get the best deal for our parishioners in term of community gains. For instance, the developers of the Pathfinder Way development have resited a play area and listened to residents about the

siting of houses backing on to existing homes. Another issue raised was the desirability of providing a walking route around the estate, ideal for dog walkers and joggers. We note that both the new Semington Road and Pathfinder Way developments will have such a path, following the positive negotiations with the parish council.

We have provided a path at the Hornchurch Road green space on Bowerhill which provides a missing link to a perimeter path. This path was well used from day one.

The Dick Lovett car dealership has applied for planning permission to develop a similar showroom and servicing area opposite its existing premises on the other side of the A350.

The Wilts and Berks Canal

Plans for the Wilts & Berks canal to Melksham from the Kennet & Avon are still just plans. No new plans have come forward, though, as in every recent year, they are expected soon. The first phase seems likely to be a marina adjacent to the Kennet & Avon, and a short stretch of new canal to the line of the old railway. Even this modest proposal will need some associated enabling development. We await new developments, as always, with great interest.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Neighbourhood planning is potentially a way to shape future development to the needs of Melksham rather than the needs of developers. Melksham Without Parish Council and Melksham Town Council continue with their work on our own Neighbourhood Plan. The Steering Group is at the moment finalising its policies on Design, Development and Housing; Employment, Economy and Education; Transport; Health, Leisure & Wellbeing and the Environment.

The next steps are for the plan to go out to consultation in the Spring. At the same time there will be a Strategic Environmental Assessment which checks how the plan provides a high level of protection of the environment. If all goes well, the plan can go out to a local referendum later in the year.

Melksham already has its housing quota for the period until 2026, and the County has a 5-year land supply in place, so only exception sites would be allowed. One part of the work this year has been to meet would-be developers with a view to assessing possible significant community benefit. The completed plan will need to have some sites which would be acceptable for the benefits they would confer. We now have a company called Lemon Gazelle on board to help us write the plan.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Community Emergency group in Shaw and Whitley continue their excellent work monitoring the flood risks in their area. They have regular work parties and are always on hand in times of heavy rain. Last year they put in 150 volunteer hours in this way, and we are very grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm.

SHURNHOLD FIELDS

This joint project between Melksham Without and the Town Council made great progress this year. The first meeting of councillors took place in May 2018 and from subsequent meetings a group of residents came together, to form the friends of Shurnhold Fields, chaired by Roy Dobson. One of the first tasks of the new group was to organise the planting of the memorial wood to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first World War. About 20 volunteers came together on November 10th, to plant the new wood, often in driving

rain. Thanks are due to the Friends, and particularly Roy and Paul Carter for their organisational skills. Four months on, the trees have survived the winter and are coming into leaf.

The parish continues its successful partnership with the Town to fund the Market Place toilet and the deployment of the SIDs (Speed Indicator) device to monitor speeds on our roads. The Councils jointly contributed to the Station platform extension, and helped with the set-up costs for the immensely successful Park Run.

AT THE COUNCIL

The Parish Council moved out of our Crown Chambers offices last Summer. After about six months holding meetings at St Barnabas Church in Beanacre we have recently been holding meetings in premises in Swift Way, Bowerhill, which is conveniently close to our temporary offices in Bowerhill sports pavilion

We restructured our office staff in 2018. Our finance officer, Justina Barber left us and Marianne Rossi successfully completed her apprenticeship with us. She has proved to be indispensable and so was immediately offered a job with us. She has now taken on part of Jo Eccleston's workload, making possible a reallocation of responsibilities between her and our clerk Teresa Strange; with Teresa taking responsibility for most of the Financial role we have not appointed another Financial officer. This arrangement is working well so far.

We continue with our conversations with Wiltshire Council about our new offices in the Campus. Those of you who attended the exhibition of the Campus plans at the library recently will have seen that we will be upstairs with an office and meeting room. Being involved from the design stage has meant that we have been able to customise the space exactly to our requirements. Contrary to the general opinion, we believe in the Campus!

And now for a mention of the B word.....boundaries! There will be a redrawing of ward boundaries for 2021 Wiltshire Council elections. The initial response from the Electoral Commission to proposals from Wiltshire Council created some very odd results, including one ward which covered the town centre, Shaw, Whitley and Beanacre. Wiltshire Council, Melksham Without and the Town Council have replied with our own far more sensible suggestions. For details have a look at the map posted on the wall!

A PERSONAL NOTE

Finally, I'd like to thank all the hard-working staff who keep the show on the road in such a friendly and efficient way.

The work of Teresa, Jo and Marianne have been exemplary as always, but 2018/19 has presented some real challenges for them. Losing our much-loved offices in Crown Chambers was a blow, but the Bowerhill Pavilion has fortunately provided a good replacement and saved the rent for Crown Chambers.

Beanacre Church rooms were a good replacement for meetings but presented logistical problems setting up and, worse, clearing away, at 10pm all through the winter. The staff remained cheerful and efficient as always, but the Swift Way premises has eased their burden. We thank them for all the extra work involved.

Terry Cole has been just as cheerful as always, though his workload has increased over the past few years with extra play areas and the pavilion added to his responsibilities. He is in many ways our other face of the council, meeting the public all the time that he's out and about.

David Cole checks and monitors our allotments and does a sterling job.

It is a great honour to serve on this Council, and a privilege to be the Chair. This has been a very busy year, and I expect it will become more and more busy in the future as the very nature of local government changes. I'd like to pay tribute to all my fellow councillors. They give up a huge amount to their time to serve on the council. I once thought to tot up all the meetings we attend in a year, but decided not to; too depressing! In all of this they remain cheerful, positive and actually jolly good company. Thanks to all of you.

Cllr Richard Wood
Chairman

Councillor Roy While, Melksham Without South

Wiltshire Council's budget for 2019- a continuous squeeze on resources with increased call on children's and older people care services. Reduced Government grant aid. Over £25 million savings required. Overall revenue budget set at £332 million, with a 2.99 per cent increase in the Council Tax. The pill sugared a little with much needed highways grant.

The Local Government Boundary Commission are currently carrying out an Electoral Review in the County. They have agreed the number of councillors to remain at 98. Population growth changes through housing development will result in the average number of councillors per division increasing significantly above the overall average in a number of divisions. The Council have put forward their recommendation on the future pattern of divisions. For our Melksham Area Board area this results in Atworth and Seend Parish councils moving to Bradford and Devizes area boards. There are consequential changes in the six divisions. Locally Berryfield moves in with Semington. Bowerhill with some rural hinterland becomes a stand-alone division. The Commission have responded putting forward alternatives for some of the divisions including Melksham. Most were strongly contested at the Council Meeting at County Hall on March 25th and we now await the outcome.

Housing development at Pathfinder Way, Bowerhill and Berryfield is in progress. At Pathfinder Way it is pleasing to see the developer having regular update sessions through BRAG meetings at Bowerhill Village Hall.

The Campus saga continues but we received positive news at the last Area Board Meeting which was followed by well attended drop in days at the Library. The planning application will be submitted at the end of March with decision by the end of August followed by a start of construction in early 2020.

Councillor Phil Alford, Melksham Without North

It has been an ongoing privilege to represent the residents of Melksham Without North and the residents of Whitley, Shaw, Beanacre, Melksham Woodrow and Sandridge. In that time, I have been continually learning and working relentlessly to deliver improvements for our community. In the past six months I have proposed, gained support for and allocated £9,300 to fund a young person's intervention project to work specifically with teenagers whose lives are at risk of spiralling out of control. We have also now awarded the contract to Community Family Care to provide this service. They have 7 youth workers and years of experience and will be working with targeted young people to help them restructure their lives around their values and goals. This project is intended to massively improve their life chances, improve quality of life and help prevent further social problems developing. I am seeking to take the best bits of what the old Youth Service did and make sure that we can still provide that crucial support where we can without the massive expense of costly overheads.

This past year I have Chaired a Task Group for the Children's Select Committee looking at how the Children's and Adolescence Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is being delivered across the county. As a Council, we have worked with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to recommission a new model for the delivery of Children's Mental Health Service. CAMHS workers are now embedded in schools and in Children's Services at Wiltshire Council. My Task Group has looked at this new model and made several recommendations to improve the quality of this care.

Building on my work chairing the Task Group I very pleased to now also be taking on the role of the Wiltshire Council Mental Health Champion. In addition to what I do as a local councillor I will be working across the county to improve the delivery of mental health services. Wiltshire council, along with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) fund Adult Mental Health and Children's and Adolescence Mental Health Services; they also commission a number of other counselling and mental health services. I am going to use this opportunity to look at changing the way these organisations work together, I want them to work seamlessly with the charity providers and ensure that people are able to get the correct support and move between the different providers in the most humane and efficient way possible. I am also looking into how we can integrate wellbeing into other areas of the council too. I want to see new developments making more space for trees, green spaces and animals as well as more wildlife corridors to support wellbeing as well as better access to recreational facilities and projects to reduce loneliness.

At a very local level I have continually campaigned for many issues that are specific to our area.

- I have been in contact with the local MP Michelle Donelan to lobby the Department for Transport to ask for a change to the new GWR contract to provide more trains stopping at Melksham Train station and an increase in direct trains to Southampton airport.
- I have been pressing the Highways department to repair our potted road network. Large sections are being rebuilt and resurfaced. I will continually be vigilant regarding our roads and always work to see them repaired. I was also extremely pleased to see that the government and council were prioritising our shared concerns and investing £7.5 Million to repair Wiltshire roads.
- I have been sitting on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to help shape future development in the Parish and Melksham Town with the intention of making sure any additional construction is more directly beneficial.

- On the Area Board, I have ensured that as much money as possible is being directed into the Parish securing support for the local community groups as well as providing finance for Parish Council projects such as new benches, improved traffic signage and repairing pavements, and roads.
- At full Council, I have questioned the leadership and challenged them to provide support to those affected by the recent redundancy notice at Cooper Tires. They have been forthcoming and a package of support is in place to help upskill workers and get them into high quality new jobs.

This list is not exhaustive and I am always happy to discuss issues further and suffice to say I will be spending the next year driving forward our local agenda with actions for progress.

Cllr Phil Alford
Melksham Without North

**Neighbourhood Police Annual report for the period 01/03/2018 to 28/02/2019 for
MWPC**

The past year has seen some changes in the Melksham area, there has been two new PCSO's assigned to the Town Centre ED11 beat code. They are PCSO 8209 James PARTON and PCSO 9452 Steph HOLMAN.

The Inspector is now James Williams who used to be the NPT Sergeant for Melksham, so he knows this area well. Inspector Andy FEE has temporarily taken over another position within the Wiltshire area.

As you are aware there are some crimes allocated to MWPC that as far as you are concerned are no longer under your jurisdiction but Melksham Town Centre. These crimes are being listed to MWPC so I have done my best to manually check and amend the figures accordingly. Below are the incidents noted for the dates as at the top of this report.

| CRIME | Occurrences |
|---|-------------|
| Fraud | 9 |
| ASB Nuisance | 9 |
| ASB Personal | 14 |
| Dwelling Burglaries | 2 |
| Business/Company Burglaries | 7 |
| Non-dwelling Burglaries | 2 |
| Drug Offences | 15 |
| Sexual Offences (Malicious Communications etc.) | 7 |
| Theft/Shoplifting | 42 |
| Violence against a person | 84 |
| Criminal damage | 39 |

Malicious Communications are on the increase as more and more incidents are involving this technology. It is an offence to distribute any message with contents that could cause distress and alarm to another. This is a growing complaint given that most people now have a mobile phone and that in most cases it is the only way that some communicate. Some incidents involve youths who film occurrences of assault and then post them on other sites to be viewed by the public.

There was an increase in Hare Coursing over the past year and most of these incidents caused damage to Farmers Crops as well as Criminal Damage to Fences etc. Patrols have been stepped up in the Target Areas which has led to a fall in reported incidents recently.

I would also ask that you be aware of your neighbours especially those that live alone and are vulnerable either because of age or other circumstances. Rogue Traders will target those in our communities that appear to be open to being befriended. Some of our elderly and vulnerable residents are very lonely as well and this can also be a factor. Please report any suspicious tradesmen that you see about that are working on such an individual's home, be it the building or the garden. If the tradesmen are genuine then they will not mind being checked out. You might have seen on the television that there has been an increase in dog thefts. Please do not leave your dog unattended in a front garden. Always have your dog in sight and under your control when out and about. Remember all dogs must be chipped by law and wear a collar and tag when out in public.

If there is anything that I can help you with then please do not hesitate to contact me via any of the details below.

PCSO Maggie Ledbury 6089

Mobile 0747 1028 939

Maggie.ledbury@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

In the event of an emergency please ring 999



MELKSHAM COMMUNITY AREA PARTNERSHIP

Report for 2019

Below are just some of the highlights of Melksham Community Area Partnership in the previous twelve months.

Community Apple Pressing Day was held on 15th September 2018. events have become very popular since we started them in 2012. Area grants enabled the Environmental Group to purchase a powerful machine and a much larger apple press. The 2019 event takes place Sunday 29th September.



These Board pulping on

Community Seed Swap This took place on 2nd March 2019 and is free event which the Environment Group has established as a regular in the Melksham area calendar of events. This year we relocated to the new cricket pavilion to save money hiring the Town Hall, and were very impressed with the facilities on offer.

another attraction

Health Information Evenings



Working closely with the Spa Medical Centre's Patient Participation Group, MCAP volunteers have successfully launched a series of public health information evenings which have been extremely well attended. Since 2015 these have tackled issues such as men's health, women's health, obesity, mental health, and diabetes. A Carer's Information Evening was held which prompted a professional from Carer's Support Wiltshire to write: "It was great to see such a good age range and I was pleased to be able to answer so many questions both in the group and individually afterwards. This event was extremely well organised and it was very clear that Carers feel looked after."

MCAP has also been helping the Fullers Close Community Group with tree planting and building and filling planters to improve and maintain the green space outside of their homes.

Last but not least, the **Community Safety Group** meets on the last Thursday of every month and has been successful in introducing a volunteer-run state-of-the-art digital CCTV system to Melksham and a highly commended Safe Places scheme across the community area, as well as serving as a focal point for the PCC and the Neighbourhood Policing teams to ensure that community safety priorities are identified and tackled. MCAP also hosts Melksham's award-winning Neighbourhood Watch, a scheme which is being held up as an example to the County. A new area coordinator, Chris Holden (formerly the Chair of MCAP), has been appointed in 2019.

The group continues to work to introduce SmartWater across the whole community area in 2018-19 to make it a safer place to live and work in. Community Speedwatch in and around Melksham has also been a major success, most notably in Atworth, Beanacre, Snowberry Lane, and Semington Road.

For further information about Melksham Community Area Partnership please contact:

Phil McMullen, Partnership Coordinator – melkshamcap@gmail.com
or Colin Goodhind, Chair of the Partnership colingoodhindofmcap@gmail.com

Community Area Transport Group (CATG)

The Melksham CATG addresses transport related matters raised as 'Issues' with the Area Board and is attended by Councillor Baines on behalf of MWPC. Meetings are held at roughly quarterly intervals, chaired by a Melksham Area Wiltshire Councillor, currently Cllr. While. The Group has no formal decision-making authority on operational matters or budget expenditure, but acts as an informal discussion forum making recommendations to the Area Board.

All Community Transport issues must be first discussed with the Divisional Member and, where funding is required, subsequently recommended for progression to the CATG by the relevant Town or Parish Council.

Funds available 2018/2019 for Melksham CATG proposals again = £13225, plus any monies carried over from the previous year. Contributions are expected from Town/Parish Councils for projects that they put forward and this now seems to be 1/3 with the other 1/3 coming from the Area Board. Further 'CATG Substantive Scheme Funding' for whole county is £250K, for which each CATG can make application, before July, for schemes which would be beyond their budget.

During the 2018/19 year the following schemes in the Parish were addressed:

MWPC were successful in promoting the resurfacing of the footway in Corsham Road between First & Middle Lanes as one of the two priority schemes for the pavement & footway improvement funding allocated for the Melksham Area.

Improvements to the hardstanding at the bus stop in Top Lane, opposite Eden Grove Whitley, for which the MWPC contribution was £1209.

A 'Bowerhill' village sign at The Spa, at a cost of £320.

A replacement 'No Through Road' sign for Wellington Drive.

An additional "Single Track Road - No Passing Places" sign at the entrance to Sandridge Lane to encourage better driver behaviour in this narrow road.

White line markings across private driveway accesses in The Spa to deter inconsiderate parking.

Unfortunately, a request for a new footway on the southern side of A365 Shaw Hill could not be progressed due to insufficient funds and justification. However, there will be, during 2019/2020, a £1M countywide budget for resurfacing/maintenance of existing footways and sites are being submitted by MWPC for consideration.

There is still abuse of the bus gate at Outmarsh and increased police observation has been suggested along with the possibility of CCTV monitoring.

It was agreed to explore finding a suitable location for a pole-socket in the footway

at Beanacre for the siting of the Speed Indicator Device facing northbound A350 traffic, as a priority. A revised deployment procedure has been issued which will need to be brought to the attention of the Town caretakers who deal with the device deployment for us within the parish. The shared device is now serviceable again after the failed battery of one set has been replaced.

DoNM: Thurs 9th May, at Melksham Fire Station at 16.00.

Cllr. Alan Baines

Melksham Rail User's Group

The Melksham Rail User's Group provides support to users of Melksham railway station now that a practical rail facility has been created for all who wish to travel to/from Melksham and the surrounding villages. From a minimal service prior to December 2013 (and for many years previously), a service of 9 trains per day in each direction has been laid on, funded by local and government subsidies. The service is reduced on Sunday but still constitutes a useable service.

The rail services benefit those who cannot drive, including the elderly and infirm. They also encourage young people to think of alternatives to car travel, with the consequential reduction in CO2 emission. Such benefits accrue to us all, whatever age and whatever the reason for travel.

There are significant/increasing numbers of commuters who now rely on the train on weekday morning and evenings. It has made Melksham a town that business people can travel to without resorting to car use. Passenger volumes at Melksham station have grown to over 75,000. The demand is demonstrated by the implementation of longer trains from January 2018, to minimise standing, coupled with a platform extension to support 3 car trains.

The service through Melksham has been 'designated' by the Minister for Transport, which provides a firm basis for a permanent service. Service issues are monitored and supported by the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership. As the user base increases, more facilities and adaptation is needed at Melksham station itself, partly for safety in an area where other businesses operate..

More immediately Melksham needs the 'user group' to act as a conduit between passengers and the various authorities (such as Network Rail, Great Western Railway, Wiltshire Council, bus companies etc) and also promoting the station and its services. To press for such enhancements and to provide a supporting infrastructure. Melksham Railway User Group has evolved from Melksham Railway Development Group. Melksham Rail User Group has operated on a minimal cost basis in previous years, due to the use of volunteer manpower, but as the service improves additional promotional costs are needed.

BOWERHILL RESIDENTS ACTION GROUP (BRAG) REPORT TO MELKSHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL 2019

BRAG continues to work to represent Bowerhill residents in any issues they may have and to organise volunteers to make and maintain Bowerhill to be a great place to live. BRAG have only a small number of active members and they are looking for more and a permanent chairman.

BRAG have represented residents at meetings with and corresponded to the Parish Council about various issues including work the Parish Steward can do, dog fouling, where Age Friendly seats can be installed, a Public Art installation and whether part of the sports field should be sold off.

BRAG is very grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for its annual grant that goes to paying for our Public Liability Insurance without which we could not operate, and towards the Village Hall charges for our meetings. Our treasurer also seeks for grants from other organisations and the Area Board to pay for other things such as litter pickers, and tools, plants and consumables for the picnic area. The Bowerhill community support our work and they are very grateful to BRAG for the work it does around Bowerhill.

The BRAG litter pickers have continued to keep Bowerhill tidy throughout the year and BRAG organised a litter picking event to coincide with the Great British Spring Clean, a Keep Britain Tidy initiative. Another similar event is being held again this year.

With help from the Parish Council, BRAG entered the CPRE Best Kept Village competition and came joint 2nd in the Best Kept Large Village in West Wiltshire category of the competition. Winsley came first and went on to come 4th overall in Wiltshire. BRAG is entering the competition again and will hopefully get a good result.

Marilyn Mills, Jenny Butcher and Pauline Helps attended the South West in Bloom presentation day in Yeovil where they as BRAG representatives collected a fourth consecutive Level 5 Outstanding award for the BRAG picnic area, a fitting tribute to all the hard work by BRAG volunteers especially Jenny and Graham Butcher. The BRAG volunteers continue to maintain the picnic area and the bridle / cycle path that leads to it for most of the year. The volunteers get many positive comments from passing residents and boaters. BRAG has entered the picnic area again in South West In Bloom, It's Your Neighbourhood section to hopefully build on their successes.

With the new Pathfinder Way development starting, BRAG has been hosting Public Meetings between the developers Taylor Wimpey and local residents to explain what is happening and how it will impact on those residents closest to the site. Taylor Wimpey have taken on board some concerns and made amendments to their plans.

BRAG wishes to thank all the volunteers who give their time freely to improve the environment in Bowerhill.

Pauline Helps (Secretary)

Bowerhill Resident Action Group

BRAG Bowerhill Resident Action Group are a very active group of village volunteers who try to make Bowerhill a great place to live. Litter picks are regularly organised and as I write we are doing our annual Spring Clean this afternoon Saturday 2pm 23rd March 2019 plus we have many resident litter pickers in place over the vast area to try to keep problem areas free of litter as possible through out the year.

This year BRAG has been involved with meetings with the new building site contractors Taylor Wimpey at Pathfinder Way to help iron out any problems that may arise with local residents next to this area.

BRAG Picnic Area entered the RHS South West in Bloom "Its Your Neighbourhood Award" and was awarded "Outstanding level 5" Certificate which makes a fifth win since BRAG started entering this competition in 2014.

In 2018 BRAG started to record the number of voluntary hours spent tending this much loved space by our volunteers and was amazed to find that over 698 hours was spent last year from March to October which was amazing so I think this year we may surpass that number as work has started earlier this year January 2019 where we have already fitted metal BBQ grills made from recycled oven racks and metal office trays which will stop the burning of the picnic table tops by the use of foil BBQs used by residents and visitors in the summer.

Work has already started on replacing the Bog Pond with a leak proof container pond which again was recycled from a unwanted sand pit container with lid which has now been installed with wildlife already moving in as last time we checked we saw two large frogs who were getting very friendly plus lots of frog spawn. BRAG has already planted up these two ponds with plants so if no vandilism takes place it should start to look good.

A new Rose Garden has already been dug and roses planted plus this weekend a memorial crab apple tree will be planted in memory of BRAG Chairman Mike Mills.

Also new wood chippings has been sourced and laid down by five volunteers working over two back breaking days so the site is now looking at it best ready for the summer months. Melksham Without Parish Council had given us three tractor loads of mature chippings but unfortunately was more soil than wood chip but all was not lost as BRAG recycled some to the allotment holders/ Picnic flower beds and also two new wildflower patches was made from this soil and BRAG has asked local residents to buy a packet of wildflower seed and sprinkle in this area as they walk down to the canal.

Plans are now in hand to start our normal Tuesday morning volunteer days this Tuesday 26th March weather permitting so our regular five volunteers will soon be seen strimming/weeding and planting over the next 9 months.

Jenny Butcher Treasurer.

Melksham Without Parish Council Annual General Meeting.

Report of Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group & Berryfield Village Hall. 2018

1.0 Aims

Berryfield and Semington Road Action Group (BASRAG), was established over 15 years ago and was instrumental in the foundation of the Play Park and Berryfield Village Hall. Its main aim is to encourage community cohesion by promoting social events and community activities in the village. BASRAG also produces a regular newsletter, the "Berryfield Buzz", reaching out to residents to keep them informed of local events and initiatives.

2.00 Report on Events

Litter Pick – Volunteers turned out in March to clear Berryfield and Semington Road of litter. There was rather less litter along the Semington Road but fly tipping is still a problem at the north end of Semington Lane where there is access from the main road. Unfortunately there appears to be more rubbish in private gardens around the village.

Easter Fun

The annual event was held on Easter Saturday, March 31st. Despite the poor weather the event was well supported with many children, and parents, enjoying the craft activities organised by Marion Plumley.

Summer Fun Day

Another regular event, held during the August school holidays, attracted local children who enjoyed the Bouncy Castle, Big Red Fun Bus and craft activities.

Pumpkin Hunt.

This was held at the Autumn half term. The bitter weather rather curtailed the pumpkin hunt in the play park but all enjoyed the Spooky Craft activities.

We are very grateful to Marion Plumley who works with the children on the crafts and to all those who give their time at these events.

Santa Run.

The Santa Run had to be postponed for a couple of evenings due to bad weather but then several groups of children came out to meet Santa and tell him what they were hoping to get for Christmas. Many thanks go to Melksham Lion's for the loan of Santa's Sleigh.

3.00 Committee

Richard Wood was re-elected as chair at the annual meeting in May

Gill Arbery continues as secretary and as Acting Treasurer.

Sue and Jim Whyborn continue to play an active part on the committee. We are also pleased to have Sue's sister, Jane Burgess on the committee and Simon Bull.

Liz Callaway has stood down from the Committee as she has moved to Bowerhill

4.00 Hall User Groups

The Art Group continues to meet every Tuesday morning 10am to 12 noon and has attracted two new members but there is still room for more

The Berryfield Crafters meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, 1.30 to 3.30pm. New members are welcome.

The hall is also available for private hire for meetings, parties, etc.

5.00 Berryfield Village Hall Maintenance

BASRAG continues to support the Village Hall and to ensure that it remains a focus for community events until we have a new building. New flooring in the lobby and WC area, together with a new worktop in the kitchen area are welcome improvements. Unfortunately there has been some damage to the panels at the rear of the hall.

Melksham Without Parish Council generously donated some surplus furniture to the Hall when they moved offices for which we are grateful.

6.00 New Hall Working Group

Work is well underway on the development of 150 houses, named Bowood View, off Semington Road. The developers have entered into a legal agreement to assign £500,000 towards the cost of a new village hall but they do not want to be involved in its construction. This will mean that an independent architect, contractor and project manager will need to be appointed which could delay the building of the new hall. Meanwhile we need to keep the present hall in good repair.

7.00 Other Developments

Canal Link –The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust have completed restoration works north of Melksham but there is little progress on the Melksham Link which will run through Berryfield.

Two new detached houses are built and occupied on the Old Chapel site.

Planning permission granted has been granted for three dwellings fronting the east side of Semington Road.

Summary

BASRAG continues to support the present village hall as a focus for the community and encourages local residents to participate in events promoting community spirit.
BASRAG is a member of Wiltshire Community Land Trust and the Village Hall Association.

The Parish Council continues to assist BASRAG and the Berryfield Village Hall with practical help and encouragement and we appreciate their involvement.

Gillian Arbery
Secretary
March 2019

Community Action: Whitley & Shaw (CAWS) - Chair report 2018/19

February 2018 sees the end of another successful year for CAWS. Having been involved with CAWS since its inception in 2015 it was an honour and privilege to be voted in as Chair at last year's AGM. A one-horse race but a pleasure to win all the same!

During CAWS' fourth year, activities were scaled back to reflect the number of available active committee members and volunteers. But together we achieved a great deal and for that we should be rightly proud. I would like to take this opportunity to particularly thank the CAWS A-Team of: Brian, Lesley, Richard, Elizabeth, Maureen, Sue, Sarah Jane and Mary (and Amy). For their attendance at meetings, events and general support throughout the year...

CAWS elected not to enter the best Kept Villages competition in 2018 and to instead focus on the areas where we had lost points in the past. This included commencing work on one of the decommissioned BT Phone Boxes. The Box on Top Lane has been gutted and repainted and is awaiting the return of the door window frame from being shotblasted before the conversion to a lending library is completed in the next few weeks. Plans for the second box opposite the school to be converted into a historical archive will be reviewed and actioned by the CAWS committee in 2019 dependent on the level of funding available.

In June CAWS again joined forces with the village Hall committee to stage our 4th free community summer event, this year we reverted to a traditional Summer Fair format with dog show, traditional games, traders, live music, dancing, bar, BBQ and classic cars. The sun shone and the people came in their hundreds to enjoy a family day in a safe environment. CAWS were particularly pleased to see that many residents from the new George Ward development joined us for the day and were welcomed into our community. Also, very pleasing was the funds generated for CAWS initiatives, this being our most financially successful event yet.

Whilst the day went without a hitch, thanks mainly to months of planning it was evident that again the one thing we were sorely lacking was volunteers. Whilst some did help-out and swell the CAWS committee team there was still not enough and without the help of Melksham Air Cadets we would have struggled to deliver the planned event safely.

Lessons have been learnt for the future and it is hoped that this successful template can be repeated this year and on into the future.

Litter pick days continue to be a successful feature of the CAWS calendar – thankfully the weather was kind in October and a team of 20+ volunteers collected a healthy pile of discarded waste. CAWS will look to continue these in 2019/20.

The Community Emergency Group continue to do fantastic work and this year have been on hand to help those in need when the villages were hit with flash flooding and carry out remedial and preventative work on the watercourses in our villages. Thank you on behalf of the village for the work you do with so much going on behind the scenes.

We extend our thanks to Melksham without Parish Council who have again been there to support us, not only through funding, also through the advice they give and so readily, and the welcome to their meetings. Of course, the BT phone box project would not be taking off if they hadn't decided to adopt the booths on our behalf.

BOWERHILL VILLAGE HALL TRUST

Registered Charity No. 297945



A new chair was appointed at the 2018 AGM held on the 1st May, Pamela Hartley who was welcomed to the Committee along with David Pafford who will represent the Melksham Without Parish Council.

The Hall is running at a profit which is important to enable us to pay for ongoing maintenance throughout the year. The Hall has a maintenance diary on display which assures users that equipment in the Hall is regularly and thoroughly maintained. The Committee is very grateful to Melksham Without Parish Council for their annual grant which enables the Management Committee to keep the booking fees as low as we can. The hall has been busy with bookings and parties through the week and weekends for the whole year. We had a wedding reception held at the hall in August 2018 and another one taking place in 2019. We also had a Christening party which served an afternoon tea.

Our web and Facebook pages have proved to be a great success over the past year with more people looking online for a suitable venue, this has led to an increase in bookings. The Bowerhill Village Hall continues to go from strength to strength. Coffee on the Way which is run by The Core Church have a regular clientele and meet on the 1st, 3rd & 5th Wednesdays of the month. The premises is used for slimming classes, yoga, health related classes, dance classes, Scouting, fitness, martial arts, Church meetings, Toddler groups, craft groups, the school and the meeting rooms are being used on a regular basis. The role of Treasurer and Booking Secretary has been amalgamated and is working well.

Other hall benefits throughout the year are:

- A quantity of new chairs has been purchased.
- The outside windows and guttering has been cleaned,
- PAT testing has been completed
- No smoking on the premises signs have been put up
- Gas boiler service
- Hot water boiler service
- Fire Extinguisher check

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday 7th May 2019 7.30pm at the Bowerhill Village Hall.

Christine Broom
Secretary

A Summary of Shaw Village Hall and Playing Fields Committee Activities 2018

Under Clive Briggs Chairmanship the Hall and Playing Field has continued to operate successfully. The keynote of this has been co-operation – with the local community, the Melksham Without Parish Council and the Community Action: Whitley & Shaw (CAWS).

The Committee gave its full support to CAWS hosting their highly successful and enjoyable Summer Fair in June. This raised funds for the jointly planned improvements to the recreational facilities at The Beeches. Co-operation with both CAWS and the Parish Council continues as we consider just what enhancements can be made to the children's play area and the playing field.

The care and attention given to the maintenance of the football pitch and the improved appearance of the playing field has drawn much approval. This, largely due to the efforts of the local maintenance team and the dedication of the committee member overseeing their work, has only been made possible with generous grant aid assistance from the Parish Council.

Visitors to the playing field have noted a large area on the eastern edge of the playing field has been cleared and levelled; as a first step in restoring it to a useful and manageable mown area. They will also have seen the decaying stump of the once magnificent chestnut tree has been removed. Sadly, it was deteriorating rapidly and was seen to be a risk to the general public. On the plus side, it's removal will allow extension of the children's play area if in the future this is deemed necessary.

This year facilities within the hall have been improved in that three internal doors have been replaced. These, matching the fire-proof standard and colour of the hall and disability toilet access doors, are an assistance to the visually impaired.

Both playing field and the village hall have again been made available, free of charge for the Wiltshire council's sports development initiative "Fun in the Sun" in August. And for Community Speed Watch training in September.

The hall also continues to provide a venue for Friendship club day-care on Wednesdays and Preschool four days a week as well as evening Whist, Pilates and Yoga bookings.

Richard Bean.
Secretary.
Shaw Village Hall.

Whitley Reading Rooms
Charity No 305595

Annual Report to Melksham Without Parish Council

Yet again I am able to report another very good year for the Reading Rooms.

The hall and fittings are now in very good condition and we get many positive comments from every one who uses this local facility. These include a children's yoga class which is very popular, a toddler group that is so popular since the George Ward Gardens development they are near to saturation. We now have so many regular users that the hall is used every day Monday to Saturday and some Sunday's for parties. We have had to turn down many prospective bookings including Melksham Without Parish Council and the Peacock art trail.

Income is steadily increasing putting us in a strong position.

The Reading Rooms Committee hosted an event to mark the 100 years since the end of WW1, much work was done to trace the addresses of men named on the Roll of Honour that is entrusted to the Reading Rooms, this was very well attended.

We now have a policy of upgrading items to further enhance this venue, for example we will shortly be replacing all the remaining china in the kitchen.

Also, much maintenance has been done in the last 12 months including painting, guttering and some soil clearance.

Ian Uffindell

Chairman Whitley Reading Rooms

March 2019



Message from the Commanding Officer:



It gives me immense pride to be able to write in our newsletter to all our supporters after a particularly busy year. This current edition demonstrates the wide variety of activities cadets of all ages can take part in as they move through their Air Cadet career.

2018 has held particular significance for the Squadron and Royal Air Force; as this year marked the 100th Anniversary of the formation of the RAF. The Squadron has been busy attending various events surrounding this particular milestone. In a quirk of history, we also marked the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War.

I was proud to again have the privilege of leading the Town, as Parade Commander, for the Remembrance Sunday Parade; especially on such a poignant occasion. The Squadron demonstrated the best of the Corps values along with a huge attendance, so much so that the Squadron had to be formed into a Banner party and two flights. With cadet recruitment continuing, perhaps in 2019 we will require 3 flights at the annual Remembrance Parade.

As part of the Squadron history project we have been fortunate to receive a new Squadron Badge. In fact, you will notice our new badge adorning the corner of this very newsletter. There is a section further into this newsletter with more details about our new Squadron Badge and the significance of this. It is important to note the Squadron's staff commitment this year. As of writing, there are 11 staff who support the Squadron. I am grateful to lead such a varied and committed team who give up their personal time to support the Squadron and the Youth of Melksham. Like all voluntary organisations, we can always use the support of more volunteers and if you are interested in lending a hand, for a few hours (5-10) per month then please do get in touch. I am pleased however, to note that the Squadron Training Office is now staffed and is working hard to administrate all the cadet activities, certificates, badges and qualifications. No small job. Thanks CI Sears!

The Squadron Civilian Committee has grown in numbers and I am pleased to say has started to take on areas of responsibility such as the minibus, fundraising, Dining in Night and social events. This not only frees myself and staff up to focus on delivering the cadet experience, but further brings in their expertise towards these areas. I know any parent or community member would be most welcome to join the Committee and you can get in touch with Andy Gale, the Committee Chair, on chair_2385@aircadets.org.

Many new cadets have joined the Squadron in the past 12 months and the total cadet strength is now 41. This is up on the previous year, continuing to demonstrate the value of the Squadron as part of the Town.

Several cadets have had their first experiences of flight as an Air Cadet this year. Some, their first experience full stop. Cadets from 2385 have taken to the skies in the Viking Glider and Grob Tutor across the UK; either on a weekend flying sortie or whilst on Annual Camps. A few cadets have even had a helicopter flight whilst on camp also. Annual Camp has always featured heavily in the program of events for many of the cadets. This year over 20 cadets went on different weekend and week-long camps at RAF Stations across the UK. I cannot recommend attending a camp highly enough to any cadet and hope many more take up the opportunity in the coming year.

Early in the year the Squadron achieved a first for many years, attending the local swimming pool and putting the cadets through their paces or rather their 'lengths' for their swimming certificates. Whist a great achievement in itself, once a cadet holds their swimming certificate this enables them to attend further and more advanced water-based adventure training opportunities. Look out for these in the coming year.

In 2019 the Squadron History Project, Aeromodelling, Indoor Air Rifle Range, Flight Sim, Drone Flying, and Banner Drill projects will continue. Our newest Civilian Instructor Mr Hubbard will be starting a Motor Mechanics project (Go-Cart) in the New Year. The risk assessment alone has taken 4 hours! Finally, the Squadron will continue to deliver the Syllabus, BTECS, Leadership and Cadet Development over the course of 2019.

We are close to achieving our goal of raising enough money for the new Squadron Vehicle. I tentatively say Vehicle as the Committee will be deciding whether to replace our current minibus, buy an additional bus and run two or buy a different vehicle to run alongside the current minibus.

It is a great honour to Command a Squadron as vibrant and varied as 2385 and I look forward to working with all of the Cadets, Staff and Supporters in 2019. It leaves me therefore, to wish you all a most Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

BROUGHTON GIFFORD & HOLT SCOUT GROUP

REPORT FOR MELKSHAM WITHOUT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

MARCH 2019

We currently have a membership of 90 youngsters on our register. The members (boys and girls) vary from 6 years – 18 years of age.

We have 4 sections – Beavers 6-8 yrs. Cubs 8 – 11 yrs. Scouts 11 – 14yrs and Explores 14 – 16 yrs.

As you can imagine each section has different levels of activities. These range from Hikes, Cooking, Shooting, Community Based activities, Personal Challenges and Group Challenges. The sections also take on District Challenges (across West Wiltshire). The Beavers have taken part in their District Challenge Day and finished 2nd. The Scouts have taken part in Shooting, Cooking and Archery Competitions in the last year. All sections have good programmes to follow thanks to our dedicated Leaders. Our Leader team this year have also given up extra time to do training for activity skills to bring a more varied programme for the young members.

The Group enjoys taking all sections for an annual camp locally. We accommodate all the members under canvas and take part in outdoor activities. An exciting weekend is had by all. Some Beaver scouts experience camping for the first time. The Scout & Explorers sections camp frequently throughout the year, with frequent weekend expeditions planned.

This year we have two Explores selected to go to the World Jamboree in America. We also have three Explore Scouts and one Leader accepted to join with Hampshire Scouts for a working trip to Tanzania in 2020. All this means a lot of fundraising, and as a group we do our best to help with this.

We are grateful for the monies we received through local grants and donations. All our sections use our Scout Hut for most of their weekly meetings, sleepovers etc. so we need to work towards the upkeep of our hut and it is now being used on occasions by other groups from the village.

We have nearly completed work on our refurbishing of the kitchen and work has already started on the outside of the Scout Hut.

Our Executive committee undertake fundraising where possible. All this helps towards the upkeep of our Scout Hut, which we are lucky to have and gives a stable base to all our members. All this takes planning and without the dedication of our team of Leaders we couldn't maintain this standard of Scouting in the Villages. We are always on the lookout for new members to join our Leader Team so we are able to continue to provide our local youngsters with an experience for life.

Anne Cranham (Chairman)

The Happy Circle Day Centre for Older People

The “Happy Circle” is a thriving Day Centre for older people living independently and meets on a Monday at Rowley Place in Melksham from 10:30 until 3:00. It is a small not-for-profit charity whose aim is to increase, benefit and enhance their quality of life by addressing the issue of social isolation and loneliness.

Many of our members travel to the club on the community bus, particularly those who live in the Melksham Without Parish area. They highly value this facility and for some this is the only time they are able to get out of the house in the week.

The day centre provides a tailor made day of activities, fun, laughter, friendship and support. A hot nutritious meal is also available that they haven't had to cook for themselves and can share in company. Amongst regular activities such as quizzes, crafts, games, sing-a-longs and reminiscence, the members also enjoy entertainment from groups such as the Concordia Singers who provided entertainment at our Christmas lunch.

More recently the Melksham Ukulele Club came to play for us. We have been able to offer chair based fitness sessions with a qualified fitness trainer for our members this year. We also went out for lunch for our annual trip and we were able to use the community bus to get there.

Fund-raising events such as our weekly raffle and Autumn Fayre help towards the cost of trips, resources and entertainment.

We are very grateful to our dedicated team of volunteers who support our members so well and we are always looking for more willing volunteers to join us. The members frequently tell us how much they love coming and what a life line that the Happy Circle Day Centre is for them.

Melksham Phab

We have filled our fortnightly meetings with various activities like bingo, crafts, hoy, beetle, quizzes and painting. We have been entertained with sing and smile, bell ringers, Trevor Heeks the Town Crier.

We have had a trip to Weymouth, a meal at Weatherspoons, Christmas meal at the Somerset Arms and a visit to the pantomime in Swindon.

Wiltshire Mind Annual Parish Report

Wiltshire Mind is a very local mental health charity based in Melksham which provides support to anyone experiencing mental health issues. We are totally self-funding.

In Melksham we provide a day time Peer Support Group which runs on a Wednesday. The group provides a safe place for anyone experiencing mental health issues. They can drop into the group at any time and gain support from our Support Group Facilitator who can give information and signpost to other help. The sessions are predominantly 'tea and chat' where people give each other support and share coping mechanisms. In addition, we periodically provide talks or activities.

Recently the group have had a talk on 'online scamming', a mindfulness session and some arts and crafts sessions. We try to provide activities/information which members may not access under normal circumstances. The group provides support each week for up to 16 -20 people and is a real lifeline for those who are affected by poor mental health and are often isolated. We work to improve confidence, mental health and to encourage friendship.

Many have built friendships which support them outside of the group. Most recently one lady was bereaved and members took it in turns to call her throughout the week to give support – this made a real difference to her mental health and recovery. Some have progressed and have taken up volunteering roles in our shop and elsewhere. The group provides a real lifeline to many in the community area.

REPORT ON THE 2018 MELKSHAM FOOD AND RIVER FESTIVAL

Excellent weather on both days attracted a huge turnout to the very successful Food and River Festival held in the King George V Playing Field over the first weekend in September 2018.

It is estimated that over the two days of the Festival around 10,000 Melksham residents enjoyed a wide range of field and river activities, cookery demonstrations, and musical entertainment together with the offerings from almost 70 stalls offering a vast range of food and other products.

It was organised by a dedicated team of local volunteers supported by grants from both the Melksham Town and Melksham Without Parish Councils and several local sponsors. We are very grateful for this funding as it enabled the Festival to again be free to the public.

On the river many local children enjoyed the opportunity to try canoeing. There was great bank-side support for the annual raft race. A disabled-friendly boat meant that people of all ages and abilities were able to see their local area from a new perspective - either on a trip towards Lacock and back or by taking a zip-wire ride across the Avon.

The lovely weather allowed family picnicking to enjoy the greatly appreciated musical entertainment provided throughout the Festival by Burbank, the Sweet Swing Trio, the Decibelles, and the Military Wives Choir.

The fairground, Frankie the Horse, a Climbing Wall, face painting, and several artisan stalls kept children entertained whilst for adults there was the cookery demonstrations and the products from a wide range of food and beverage stalls to explore.

A large audience supported participants in the Chilli Cooking Contest, and several families in the locality at the time were treated to the spectacle of Melksham's Fire and Rescue firefighters hastily pack up in order to respond to an unplanned operational incident.

Feedback from the 2018 Festival has been very positive from both the public and from activity provider and stallholders.

This feedback has enabled early planning for the next Festival to take place, to take account of the planned enhancements to the King George V Playing Field. A number of new attractions are being explored for the 2019 Festival, which will be held over the weekend of 31st August to 1st September this year.

We are grateful for the continuing funding support from the Town and Parish Councils and local sponsors, which will enable the 2019 Festival to again be free to the public.