

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7.30 PM ON THURSDAY 18 APRIL 2019
AT ROWINGTON VILLAGE HALL**

Present

Councillor I Henderson, Chairman (in the Chair)
Councillor D Lane
Councillor Mrs J Coles
Councillor M North
Councillor Mrs D Weir
Parish Clerk – Nicola Overall

District Councillor - Councillor S Gallagher
County Councillor – Councillor J Cooke
24 members of the public

The Chairman, Councillor Ian Henderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked those present for taking the time to attend the meeting.

1. Apologies

None.

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19 April 2018

It was proposed by Councillor J Coles and seconded by Councillor M North that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 19 April 2018 having been previously circulated, be signed as a true record.

3. Councillor J Cooke - Warwickshire County Council

Having reviewed my reports to you over the last twelve months I have selected some items that I feel are worth noting.

Kenilworth Children's Centre

I have reported a number of times on the future of Kenilworth Children's Centre. We were successful in keeping the service open and the Centre is now classed as an "enhanced hub. Being clear though, the list of services being provided will not match those previously available. In the last few weeks Barnardo's has been appointed to run the centre from September.

Potholes, Drains & Highway Matters

The County Council has been given extra funds to help towards repairing potholes in the County. I am continuously reporting them to Peter Hallam. Likewise, each week I report instances of either signage damage, drain covers sinking and road marking deterioration.

Warwickshire has been named joint top-performing County Council for highway maintenance and, within that, the top-performing County Council for condition of roads and quality of repairs to roads.

Warwickshire was also in the top five for speed of repair to roads and pavements, dealing with potholes/damaged roads and the condition of road markings.

The National Highways and Transport network (NHT) survey, is carried out independently by Ipsos MORI.

County Fire Services

The County Fire & Rescue Service received a full inspection from HMICFRS. The report, which was published at the end of December, acknowledged that Warwickshire's overall efficiency and effectiveness is good. Kieron Amos has been appointed the new County Fire Officer.

Policing Budget

The police & Crime Commissioner Philip Seccombe increased the Police Precept (the portion of local Council Tax which pays for policing) by 11.77% from April, which equates to around £2 per month for an average Band 'D' property. Quite clearly Policing is a major issue with the public particularly in this area.

Tree Maintenance

The WCC budget agreed an extra £75k pa for investment to maintain the tree stock on streets across Warwickshire including addressing maintenance backlogs, accelerating cyclical maintenance and where necessary, tree replanting.

Health improvements noted in Warwickshire since 2014

Since 2014, when Warwickshire County Council's [Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) was launched, significant improvements have been recorded in a number of areas.

Generally health in Warwickshire is good compared with the England average and has improved over the lifetime of the 2014-18 strategy.

Warwickshire stage of Tour of Britain 2018 hailed great success

Thousands of spectators lined the streets of Warwickshire to see top cyclists battle it out in the UK's most prestigious road race. The County's debut as stage-host for the OVO Energy Tour of Britain proved to be a huge success, with people flocking to see cycling's biggest names tackle the 183.5km route. Reigning Tour de France and Giro d'Italia champions Geraint Thomas and Chris Froome were among more than 100 riders who burst into action. The event will return here in 2019

New Specialist Benefits Advice Service

A new specialist benefits advice service for vulnerable residents funded by Warwickshire County Council has been delivered by Citizens Advice Warwickshire from last April. The service provides high quality advice, support, advocacy and representation to Warwickshire residents in a number of areas.

Warwickshire Car Dealers Discovered Selling Dangerous and Unroadworthy Vehicles

An operation to target the sellers of dangerous and unroadworthy vehicles and protect road users, carried out by Warwickshire County Council's Trading Standards Service, found that almost 19% of the garages visited had unroadworthy cars for sale on their forecourt. Warwickshire Trading Standards receives more consumer complaints about cars than about anything else.

4. Councillor Mrs S Gallagher - Warwick District Council

For the past twelve years I have had the honour and privilege to represent where I live together with several nearby communities by being an elected member of Warwick District Council (WDC). Over the period since 2007 I have come to meet and know many people who live in Leek Wootton, Shrewley, Rowington, Haseley, Beausale, Lapworth, Baddesley Clinton, Chadwick End and Wroxall. These rural communities are what in many ways makes Warwickshire one of England's finest counties.

Being able to help individuals with issues or problems they face is one of the most satisfying aspects of being a Councillor and as far as I am concerned it is this ability that has always been my central focus in all that I have done. Of course one has to make decisions at times that are not going to be universally popular but nevertheless are decisions that one knows are the right actions to take.

I'd like to think that on most occasions whether it be with individuals or with the respective Parish Councils within the area I represent I have always been available, prepared to step in but crucially act to do the things which needed to be done wherever and whenever possible. It is, of course, for others to judge but I feel I could not have given more time or commitment to my role than that I have demonstrated across the communities that make up my District Council ward.

For the large part of my twelve years as a District Councillor I have been a member of the Conservative group. I have always, and continue to hold the view that Councillors who spend people's money raised through Council Tax should welcome challenge, questions and accept accountability as part of their role.

However, in my view events over the past twelve months show the Conservative group running WDC taking a tawdry approach in administering the affairs of our district local authority. The shabby and inexplicable treatment of two vibrant charities that each make a significant contribution to Leamington Spa and the wider district was the start for me. The use of a political whip by the Conservative leadership to stop elected members by coercion what had been a non-political cross party intention to allow these charities to thrive into the future, allow them to invest in the Council's estate and in return provide longer term security of tenure was as disgraceful as the reasons given were disingenuous. I for one refused to go along with being dragooned into thwarting the efforts of so many ordinary well-intentioned people involved in the charities concerned. Consequently, I supported the charities and defied the political whip.

My judgement and action immediately initiated disciplinary action by the Conservative Group leadership against me. How dare I seek to represent people and not do as I was told by those who considered themselves as my 'political masters'. This was compounded when it became apparent that prior meetings had taken place by those who had set themselves up as judge and jury at a proposed disciplinary hearing of me. Such a process is a world away from natural justice and against Conservative Party rules but despite raising this still nothing changed which confirmed I needed to resign from the Conservative Group.

Since becoming independent I have been appalled at the continued arrogance of the so-called leadership of the Conservative group.

The dreadful handling of the WDC HQ relocation and its affects upon Leamington Spa being a prime example. The duplicitous approach when it comes to planning policy and affordable housing, the needless vandalism of cutting down scores of mature hardwood trees and the potential disruption to town centre businesses badly if at all managed have been elements of dismay to many people and when combined demonstrate a breathtaking lack of political intelligence. Yes, there may now be a delay to the scheme but it's too little too late and politically expedient with the election of a new district council shortly upon us.

The people of Kenilworth have been treated just as badly demonstrating that those running the Conservative leadership have learnt nothing from the WDC HQ debacle. In response to a public consultation that showed that there was overwhelming support for the retention of outdoor swimming at Abbey Fields the Council chose to back the least publicly supported option. Consequently, a tradition in Kenilworth that stretches back for nearly a hundred years will come to an end despite imaginative plans put forward by a Kenilworth resident for an exciting 25 metre outdoor pool within the current Abbey Fields pool site. The cost of such a great facility was estimated to be just £2.5 million. WDC's leadership response, despite continued vociferous opposition from townspeople, has been to ignore the resident's proposal and press ahead with the least supported option of an indoor training pool as part of spending an eye watering £9 million.

I believe this summary demonstrates why I could no longer be part of the Conservative political group running the District Council especially when combined with a culture, certainly for some elected female members that have been prepared to speak up, that has ranged from indifference and ignorance through to the removal of portfolios and bullying. A fact evidenced from the number of resignations by female Councillors from the Conservative group through its period in office.

Transparency and openness when combined with listening and humility is true leadership. The behaviour of the Conservative leadership on Warwick District Council informs me that their idea of public service is very different, arrogance is considered to demonstrate leadership with listening all but not existent and humility not a concept even recognised.

I earnestly hope that those that know me and my approach will agree I have never been a person to quit or walk away from any issue or need. With District Council elections approaching I have had to consider long and hard as to whether, if re-elected, I would wish to serve a further four years as District Councillor. I have decided that having served three terms of office which have been very enjoyable, bar the recent political aspects I mentioned earlier, I will not be standing for re-election as District Councillor for Arden Ward.

This has not been an easy decision but nevertheless it is a considered and final decision. I have done all I can and remained true to my principles throughout my time as District Councillor. I am twelve years older since becoming a District Councillor and there are other things I wish to do. I do not wish to give up more time undertaking a further four years as a Councillor on an elected authority that I do not see as reflecting the 21st century or changing and operating to meet expectations in 2019 and beyond.

May I take this opportunity to thank everyone that has helped, supported and voted for me over the 12 years that I have been proud to be District Councillor. I do hope that people will come forward from the villages to represent their communities at the District Council rather than the Arden Ward ending up with three Councillors all who are from Kenilworth.

It is now for others, if they are so minded, to step forward and play their part.

5. Chairman's Report – Councillor I Henderson

I am sure that many of us have been shocked by the graphic images this week of the damage to one of the world's great cathedrals. However, it's at times like this that I'm reminded of the rich history of Rowington Parish which also includes the villages of Lawsonford and Pinley Green.

The earliest written record I've been able to find about our Parish is in the Domesday Book of 1086 which shows Rowington was home to 1 priest and 51 male peasants. Rowington was then part of the Forest of Arden and has links back to the late 6th century. The Church of St Laurence dates from the early 11th century and parts of it are almost 1,000 years old. Two of the wives of Henry VIII lived for a time in a manor house on the site of Rowington Hall. Many of Shakespeare's relatives lived in the Parish and at least one of his plays is believed to have been written at Shakespeare Hall, just a short distance from where we are tonight.

As your Parish Council we must remember this rich history when making decisions about the future of the Parish.

We have had a busy and challenging year. We've welcomed 1 new Councillor – James Moore from Pinley and we will shortly be saying goodbye to Michael North who has been a Parish Councillor for many years and has added a great depth of knowledge and wisdom which we have all benefited from. Michael was also a member of the team that prepared the magnificent Parish Design Statement that not only reflects the recent history of the Parish but provides practical guidance for the future. We've also benefited greatly from the continuing service of Diane Weir, Jane Coles and David Lane. Both Jane and Diane serve on the respective committees of our two village halls and we have found this to be most useful. Sadly, we will shortly be losing the services of Sue Gallagher our Arden Ward District Councillor who has made a great contribution to the Parish over many years.

I am delighted to welcome Maurice Daw as a new Parish Councillor from next month and we are hoping to persuade David Lane to continue as a co-opted Councillor so that we can continue to benefit from his extensive experience on a number of issues.

We still have 2 Parish Councillor vacancies to fill on a co-opted basis, so if you can spare a few hours a month, please get in touch with one of us, or Nicola our Parish Clerk who has made an invaluable contribution to our work over the past year.

The Parish Council has met 11 times in the last year, including an unplanned meeting in January to deal with some urgent planning issues. We publish meeting agendas and minutes on our website <http://rowingtonpc.org.uk/> and all meetings are open to the public – except for the occasional confidential session.

Rather than repeat information that is already on our website, I just want to highlight a few matters from the past year:

We have considered 24 planning applications. We've been able to support most of them, but we do raise concerns if the proposed development is at variance with our Parish Design Statement. This is a community document prepared from responses from over 100 households within the Parish. It describes in some detail the collective views of residents as to the design principles for future development.

We remain concerned about the risks of overdevelopment and inappropriate design. Where we object to a planning application we usually attend the relevant meeting of the WDC Planning Committee. We do not have a right of veto and unfortunately some of the recent decisions of the Planning Committee have not supported the views of your Parish Council. This is of concern and something we will actively pursue once the forthcoming district council elections are completed.

Other regular features of our work include:

The bi-weekly inspection of the playing field behind St Laurence Close as part of our public liability insurance obligation. Planned maintenance is regularly undertaken, and reactive works are carried out when required. We have recently decided to allow dogs on leads and this seems to be welcomed by nearby residents. We have also replaced the goal nets on the football pitch.

The Parish Council often acts as a focal point for the reporting of local issues which are then re-directed to those at the District or County Councils. Typical issues are: potholes, damaged verges, blocked gullies and damaged signage. We do not control the budgets for these repairs, so cannot influence response times unfortunately. We also take an overview of footpaths and bridleways throughout the Parish.

Rural crime and in particular burglaries and the theft of high value motor vehicles is of concern to many of us. Nextdoor Rowington is a great way to share information about suspicious activity quickly and combined with reporting to the Police on either 101 or 999 really does make a difference. All of us need to be good neighbours and to act as the eyes and ears of the community. We have a very good relationship with the Police and with the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner. We now have a dedicated civilian crime investigator funded by the Police & Crime Commissioner who is also making a big difference to clear up rates for rural crime. We have regular meetings with the Safer Neighbourhood Team for Warwickshire Rural West.

District Councillor Sue Gallagher recently organised a 2nd public meeting to discuss Policing and Crime issues which was attended by over 120 local residents and where we heard from the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner and also our local MP, Jeremy Wright, who lives in the Parish. Rowington was identified as the Parish generating the greatest number of high-quality suspicious activity reports which greatly assists pro-active policing activity.

We continue to support our two local churches – St Luke's in Lawsonford and St Laurence in Rowington and the village halls in both Rowington and Lawsonford. Specific payments during the year have included:

Cleaning of the War Memorial at St Laurence Church - £420

Financial support to Rowington Village Hall - £1,161.39

Financial support to Lawsonford Village Hall - £1,500.00

Financial support to St Laurence Parochial Church Council £900

New goal nets for the playing field

We have also funded repairs to the parish signs and the adopted red telephone boxes.

We also undertake weekly inspections of the two defibrillators located in the Rowington and Lowsonford Village Halls and replace the pads and batteries on a regular basis.

The Parish Council's website, www.rowingtonpc.org.uk is an important source of information and we encourage everyone to visit the site regularly. We are only slowly getting to grips with social media and have found the Nextdoor App particularly useful as it provides quick and easy access to almost 60% of households in Rowington Parish. That's a very substantial increase on the 34% who had signed up just 12 months ago. If you're not already a member, please consider joining at www.nextdoor.com as I'm sure you will find it very useful.

One of our objectives from last year was to improve engagement with the local community. I'm delighted to report that we regularly have between 10 and 20 residents attending meetings of the Parish Council, which of course are always open to all members of the public. We find this most useful in making sure we are making decisions and delivering the services that reflect the views and wishes of the community. We have also found that Nextdoor Rowington greatly facilitates communication, whilst at the same time recognising that not all residents chose to use the internet or mobile phone apps.

In closing, I must mention that the future is looking most promising. We will shortly receive approximately £90,000 in funding which can only be spent on long-term infrastructure type projects. We want to make sure that this is spent in ways that reflect the wishes and needs of the community and we welcome your views and suggestions about suitable projects.

6. Reports from Organisations

Lowsonford Woman's Club – Ann White

Lowsonford Women's Club is held every two weeks in Lowsonford Village Hall - apart from a break in August and December.

The Hall was built in approx. In 1936, and provided by the Darby Family, to provide a place for the local people and their families of the village to meet, and the start of Lowsonford Woman's Club.

It was thought at one time, to update the name to Lowsonford Ladies, but it was decided that this was a wrong move, as it was thought we might be a Ladies Luncheon Club, which we are certainly NOT.

We are a small Group of local enthusiastic ladies, 14 in all. At this point we cannot thank the new Trustees enough, for taking on the refurbishment of the Hall as we were under threat of the Group coming to an end.

Our whole aim is to raise money for local Charities. Over the years, the List is too long to mention, but include Myton Hospice, Guide Dogs for the Blind and Air Ambulance. Last year we devoted ourselves to helping Lowsonford Village Halls refurbishment, and were able at the end of the year, to present them with a cheque for £1,500. This year we are supporting Parkinson's and we will hope; with support we will be able to present them with a similar Cheque. This will be raised but two Coffee Mornings and our large Christmas Fayre. We are a happy Group and are always look for more Members, joining us to continue our aim.

Safer Neighbourhood Team – Read by the Clerk

The crime figures for Rowington, Turners Green, Lowsonford, Pinley Green, Holywell and Mousley End during the period 14/4/2018 - 15/4/2019.

For noting, it might be queried that the number of 'Theft of Motor vehicles' doesn't tally with the amount taken, the explanation for this is that some of those will come under the burglary dwelling category, particularly where a house has been entered for the car keys prior to the car being stolen.

Burglary Dwelling – 10, Burglary Other – 3, Theft of Motor Vehicle – 1, Theft from Motor Vehicle 5 and Criminal Damage - 2

Lowsonford Village Hall – Maurice Daw

As reported at the last Village Meeting in 2018, the plan to turn around Lowsonford Village Hall has progressed well over the last 12 months and has gained momentum:

7 New Trustees are on board, [with 2 who stayed on]. We have met monthly and introduced new, good governance in keeping with the 1936 Trust Deeds.

Bookings have increased over the last 12 months and we now have 4 regular clubs meeting each week.

The 2018 Financial Report has been submitted to the Charities Commission and, pleasingly, shows a small surplus, an improvement of the loss in 2017.

The refurbishment programme has commenced:

We have installed a new roof over the Helen Darby room, repaired the main roof, installed new deep flow guttering, replaced the front doors, carried out tree surgery in the grounds, carried out a full electrical safety check with minor works and the largest item, we have installed a full new drainage system

Plans for 2019 include all new toilets, a new kitchen, a new projector and sound system and a refurbished floor, new chairs and tables and full redecoration.

The Trustees are grateful for the support of Rowington Parish Council, Warwick District Council, Lowsonford Women's Club, The Jane Ryland Trust, The Edward Cadbury Trust and The William A Cadbury Trust. Further charitable bodies and other public funds are being sought to complete the works, along with utilisation of capital reserves and fundraising events at the Hall to supplement matched funding.

The Trustees are confident that with the Hall fully refurbished and with the continued rise in bookings, the Hall will create a financial surplus for reinvestment and the future of Lowsonford Village Hall can be secured.

Rowington Village Hall – Stephen Williams (read by the Clerk)

The financial situation at the hall remains a matter of concern, because we are faced with ever increasing costs and it is likely that the year-end figures will record a deficit.

The revenue from lettings has been running at an encouraging level and the various social events put on by the committee have made a very useful contribution to funds. As ever, my thanks go to Ian Wilson for his excellent work on the hall's financial affairs.

On the maintenance front, the major item was the reduction of the 12 conifers on the western boundary of the carpark, which had grown to over 20 metres in height. The committee are very grateful to the Jane Ryland Charity and the Parish Council which both made generous grants towards the cost of this work. As usual there were a number of other maintenance items of a more routine nature to be dealt with.

The hall has been well used over the past year by regular hirers such as the Women's Institute, the Bridge Club, Inland Waterways, Brownie packs, caravanners and also private individuals and societies organising parties and other events. We now have weekly Pilates and Zumba classes which are much appreciated by the participants. Nicola Everall is looking after the enquiries and bookings and is dealing with them in a most efficient way.

The Social Committee have put on several successful events, including some Simple Supper evenings and the Winter Ball. There have been large attendances at these events, which have attracted several of the newer residents of the village as well as the usual supporters. Shirley Lowe and her committee have put a lot of time and effort into these events and are to be congratulated on their success.

There have been no changes in the membership of the committee, but we could certainly do with some new recruits. In conclusion I would like to thank all of the members of the Management Committee for their support and unflinching enthusiasm over the past year; the village is fortunate to have such a good team looking after the hall.

Allotments Association – John Greenaway

We currently have 12 members with 10 of them cultivating half plots and 2 with a full allotment. This number of people helps to ensure the allotments are viable fanatically and that there are enough of us to maintain the grass, hedges, ditches and general ground upkeep. Anyone visiting the grounds could have no doubt how much the plots are used and what an important facility, allotments are to the Rowington and surrounding communities. We do have a waiting list but when people enquire about an allotment, they are told that as there are only 12 plots so it could be some time before one becomes available.

We meet formerly at least twice a year to discuss any matters of concern and to decide on current issues and ways that we may continue to improve our facilities. We also continue to hold two working days each year, one in spring and one in autumn. This allows us to ensure the upkeep and continual improvement of the allotment grounds. Our spring working day tends to be general maintenance, shed painting etc whilst in the autumn we need as many of us as possible to cut hedges, clear out ditches, dispose of brambles and all the other work required to put the allotments to bed for the winter.

We have a grass cutting rota that helps to ensure that the communal grass is cut each week. We continue to impress upon our members to keep their paths cut and tidy to ensure a pleasing aspect to the allotment plots.

A great deal of time was taken up this year trying to ensure that the allotments were not lost to a potential building scheme by the Almshouse Charity who own the land. We believe that very many people who live in and around Rowington were very upset by the threat to the allotments and regard them as an important community asset.

As things stand the immediate threat to their existence has been withdrawn, but it should be noted that since the Almshouse Charity are under pressure to build more homes, the allotment ground will always be an obvious choice for them. We only have a 12-month lease agreement with the Parish Council, and so can be given, via the Charity, a year's notice at any time. This is something that we would like to see changed and will be exploring ways in which a better more secure situation could be achieved.

The continued maintenance and improvement of the allotment grounds remains one of our chief goals. Without our constant attention the hedges ditches and communal areas would very soon become overgrown and unsightly. We are very aware that the allotment grounds are an extremely important part of our village life and are grateful for the continuing support of the community and the Parish Council in ensuring their growth and continuation.

Our current subscription of £20 a year for a half plot covers our ground rent but little else and so we are currently having a further collection from our members half way through the year. We decide the amount of this at our spring meeting based on our current bank balance. It may be that in future we will have to consider increasing our main subscription to ensure the viability of the association.

Thanks to all our members who have gone out of their way to carry out necessary jobs throughout the year, special thanks to Freda who continues to maintain our wild flower garden and to Sue who keeps the muck heaps topped up each year bringing bags of horse manure most days in her own car.

As already stated, we are very keen to ensure that the allotments, that we have all worked so hard to improve over the last 12 years, continue to be well maintained and that they remain an important asset for Rowington and the surrounding area.

We will of course be encouraging all our members to ensure they have plenty of produce to enter in the annual village Flower and Vegetable Show in August.

For any further information or to be added to the waiting list please contact either John or Sue on 01564 784352.

Jane Ryland Charity – Stephen Williams (read by the Clerk)

During the course of the past 12 months the Charity has made grants to Rowington Cricket Club, Rowington Village Hall, Lowsonford Village Hall, the Rowington Old Folks Party Fund, St. Laurence Church, St. Luke's Church, the British Legion, Lapworth School, Lowsonford, Rowington & District Horticultural Association and Rowington Allotments Association to assist with various projects. In addition, many residents of the parish have been assisted with grants for essential home improvements, chiropody, travelling expenses, heating costs etc.

As usual, the Charity sent Christmas payments to those residents considered to be in need of some financial help. We maintain adverts on notice boards and hope that these will bring those in need of help to our attention.

Churches of St Luke & St Laurence PCC – Mr R Shepherd

2018-19

It's been a busy year for the Rowington team. We have delivered a large number of services, our annual Parish Summer Festival and hosted key events in the community such as the 100 years Remembrance Day Service and celebrated the wedding of our Churchwardens, Di and David Dillon!

This report provides an update on not only our regular activities, but also on what is going on behind the scenes to ensure that your churches continue to be a support to the Parish community.

Services

Details of regular services are widely publicised in the Ferncumbe News, Church Notice Boards and on our Facebook page. As a result of feedback received, we have changed the start time of the monthly Parish Communion service to 9.00am. As a result, attendance numbers have considerably improved. This is now also a spoken Communion Service which lasts for no more than 40 minutes. Support and feedback to these changes has been very positive.

St Luke's Icon Centre

The St. Luke's Icon Centre continues to meet every Thursday at St. Laurence to worship, pray and produce their icons. The door is always open and they are always happy to put the kettle on for visitors.

They will host an open day during the Festival this year. Do come along and see them at work.

Maintaining our churches

There is always work to be done to ensure that our churches are well maintained and ready to provide a warm welcome to our Parishioners. In 2018 the organ at St Laurence was renovated at considerable cost to ensure it is fit for purpose for the next 50 years! St Luke was redecorated. This year, two new boilers have been installed at St. Laurence. Regular attendees are certainly noticing the difference ... they are WARM! However, there is still much to be done. St Laurence needs to be re-wired in 2019 and the lighting upgraded to make it more effective and energy efficient. We also have a leak in the roof which needs urgent work.

We very much appreciate the contributions received from Parishioners last year towards these works.

Baptisms, Wedding and Funerals

We are delighted that the church continues to be at the centre of the community where people come together to celebrate births, weddings and the passing of their loved ones. In 2018 five weddings took place at St Laurence. Five more are already booked for 2019 and two for 2020! It is always a joy to welcome new couples and families to the church and to see them return for services and the Baptism of their children! Should you require any of these services please contact Di Dillon at di.hibbs@btinternet.com or on 07979915983.

Rowington Parish Summer Festival

Our summer festival is now in its 7th year. Last year's week of services and events also included Di's ever popular café in the Lady Chapel at St. Laurence and a Poetry Mass led by Rev Dr Paul Edmondson from Stratford. This is a communion service, where all the wording during the services is a selection of prayers, readings and prose on a theme. It's a beautiful service where many can be involved by helping to read the various poems. It attracts people from outside the Benefice and from further afield.

Rowington bell ringing band

The band has struggled in the past few years to make up the numbers required for a band. They are an essential part of the church team especially for weddings and church festivals. The good news is that we have some new recruits but more would be welcome! If anyone is interested in joining the bell ringing team (or indeed just having a go!) please contact our Churchwarden, David Dillon.

School Visits

Each year we host visits of pupils from Ferncumbe School. In 2018 they came to explore the church and the grounds and to learn how to pray. They enjoyed leading prayers for their school, their families and their friends.

Out-reach activities

Toilet Twinning

We're delighted that the Rowington Club and The Tom o The Wood have joined us in twinning their toilets via the charity <https://www.toilettwinning.org/>. By donating £60 to twin your toilet, you help fund a project in a poor community that will enable families to build a basic toilet, have access to clean water and learn about hygiene – a vital combination that saves lives. Your smallest room becomes the proud owner of a certificate, complete with a colour photo of its twin and GPS coordinates so you can look up your twin's location on Google Maps.

Coventry Food Bank

Regular collections at Parish Quiz nights

Cathedral School Project – Uganda

Donations from fund raising events

Ferncumbe News

Ferncumbe News is edited in our Parish but serves the whole North Ferncumbe Benefice with news, events and interesting articles about what's going on across our villages. The print run is well over 600 copies and it continues to be delivered to your door by our fantastic network of volunteers. If you would like to sell copies in any locations, would like to advertise in the magazine or would like to submit articles, please contact the editor via ferncumbenews@btinternet.com

Facebook

St. Laurence's Facebook page continues to attract more 'Likes' and carries information on all our services and events, plus information on what's happening at Coventry Cathedral and even had an Advent Calendar running during December. If you'd like to keep in touch, please find us at @stlcrw

Fundraising

We are very fortunate to have such a beautiful and historic building at the heart of our village.

As a Grade 1 listed building, St. Laurence is an expensive building to maintain, keep safe and open. We have many regular fundraising activities which help towards the funding of works and maintenance:

- 300 Club

The original Rowington & Lowsonford Churches 300 Club team stood down at the end of 2018 after an excellent number of years at the helm. A huge thank you to Ernest and Pat Petrie, Jane Groves, Shirley Lowe and others for starting the club and running it. This has now been taken on by Amy Simpson and Jude Palmer – and we hope to continue to grow our membership as this is a key fundraiser for the church accounts – and you might win £25 yourself per month!

- Bring & Buy Parish Book Sales

Charlie and Chris continue to support us by hosting our Bring & Buy Book Sales four times a year (first Saturday in January, Saturday the clocks change in Spring, 1/2nd Saturday in July (avoiding Wimbledon Ladies finals), Saturday clocks change in Autumn) at The Tom O The Wood. It's great to see what a community event this has come to be and even has some international groupies (well – regulars from Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Bristol who attend most sales!). A huge thanks to everyone who donates books and their time and help with stacking/sorting/sales and shifting! It really is a team effort. In the past year we have used two of the sales to help raise money for two projects close to our hearts at St. Laurence – locally to help raise funds for books for Northleigh House School, and raising money for the book project at the Cathedral School out in Uganda which Jayne the organist is heavily involved with. Jon Child is also travelling to Uganda to support the project this summer.

Parish quizzes

We are forever grateful to The Rowington Club who continue to host our Parish Quizzes – which are at least two in a year – in June as part of our Rowington Summer Festival and at Christmas. Not only does this enable us as a parish to come together for a fun evening, it also gives us an opportunity to help others as we collect donations for the Coventry Food Bank during these events. A huge thanks to everyone who donates food and toiletries – they are much appreciated.

- Special events

In October 2018 St Laurence once again hosted the Rock Choir. It was a fabulous evening and very well attended. They generously gave all the donations to the St Laurence fabric fund.

If you would like to hold a fundraising event at the church, please contact the Church Wardens.

Dates for your diary:

BCDM in May – we are hosting one of Coventry Diocese's Bishops Certificate of Discipleship and Mission course on the 5 Wednesdays in May – further details in Ferncumbe News.

Rowington Parish Summer Festival 16-23 June, including Parish Quiz – details in The Ferncumbe News and our Facebook page Village Show – we'll be having our own stand at The Village Show this year!

Old Folks Party Fund – Mrs K Chambers – (read by the Clerk)

Rowington Old Folks Party Fund was opened in 1950 to provide a Christmas Party for all aged 65 and over in Rowington Parish. Over the years other events have been added. December is always the Christmas Lunch and last year, we had 85 guests enjoy a meal cooked by Sue Dolby with the Committee acting as Waitresses. An extensive raffle is always provided and for guests who cannot attend, they are taken a party bag.

For the last few years we have fund raised by hosting Sunday afternoon teas at Wren Hall, usually in April, the Committee and villagers provide the cakes and we have lots of visitors and a good profit is made for our future events.

In July, every other year, we have a coach outing. In 2018 on a hot summer's day, 30 of us went to Morton in the Marsh and later back to Rowington Village Hall for afternoon tea, where 30 more guests joined us.

Previous years, coach trips have been to Western Super Mare, Llandudno, and Oxford.

This year in July we will host a lunch at Henley in Arden Golf Club for around 65 guests.

Late September, we have our All Sorts Sale at Rowington Village Hall, which is always a fantastic event, then preparations are in hand for the Christmas Lunch.

We have over the years, had support from the Ryland Trust, which is very much appreciated and other donations.

There are 10 Committee Members and our Chairperson is Mrs O'Toole.

Rowington WI – Mrs S Lowe

Consistently pleasing 50 plus ladies with diverse interests, I hope they don't mind my saying so, is challenging, so diversity is the objective for Rowingtons' yearly programme.

For the keenly game and energetic, kurling, Keep Active demos, belly dancing, pub skittles & the more gentle Thai Chi preceded by Chinese themed soup lunch are things we try

A one off Centenary lunch, member prepared and shared food platters, Shrove Tuesday pancakes, a golf club tea... satisfied all appetites.

We absorbed an excellent talk on the background and intense suffering of the courageous Suffragettes, and from our more recent history, revelled in memories of all our 'fashion' yesterdays during a Quaint in Quant evening.

Puppy Dog walker's tales and hot dogs at the cricket pavilion in June sunshine was joyful but though enjoyable, our Walk to the Watering Hole, the cafe on the canal, on a wet August day beside wet dogs, was initially daunting.

Bernstein & Gershwin transported some of us musically to the USA with the WSO via Stratford.

Group Leader Julia has been in evidence & encouraged a little Scottish country dancing led musically by a fine accordion accompanist.

We hosted our Group Meeting, ran a Village Show Stall to benefit our funds for a coach to Christmas Dinner in Mickleton, to gauge if the puddings were of W.I. standard, foregoing waistlines just to be sure!

But it's not all local in W.I. Our resolutions have reflected worldwide issues and been 21st. century relevant, genital mutilation, awareness of modern-day slavery, mental concerns and full body health matters for both men & women.

We self-fund for special events, look toward members welfare and glean a proportion of finance from the subs we pay, sometimes a little reluctantly, but as a group, a National group, we gain as much as we as individuals wish to gain but the opportunities are there to be involved to benefit ourselves and our friends of W.I.

Tennis Club – Mrs J Shepherd

Rowington Tennis Club, situated behind the Village Hall, has two asphalt courts resurfaced three years ago. It is a very peaceful and beautiful place to play. The club is affiliated to the Lawn Tennis Association.

We have a Ladies morning every Wednesday throughout the year and social tennis on Tuesday evenings during the summer months. Coaching is available with Coolsportz.

Membership has declined over the last few years, along with many sports clubs. We keep costs as low as possible: Adults - £50, Juniors Under 10 - £10, Students in full time education £15. We aim to put aside a sum each year towards the cost of resurfacing in the future.

Royal British Legion – John Hale

Since the last report in 2018 the Branch has enjoyed some successes, and these should enable us to move forward in the future. Possibly the greatest success has been the integration of members of the old Women's Section, this, together the addition of some new members, has brought our membership to over thirty. We shall continue with our proven annual programme, concentrating on Remembrance each November and giving support to the Poppy Appeal.

We aim to have one or two social events for members during the year and later this year we are planning a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum. Guests will be welcome on all these occasions.

Looking back over the past months there were three outstanding events.

In 2018, when the Country was commemorating the end of the First World War, we were invited by the Legion to send two representatives to a tour of The Somme and the Ypres Salient. The tour was to be a modern recreation of the 1928 pilgrimage when hundreds of people from across the land marched to the Menin Gate in Ypres to mark the 10th anniversary of the start of the "Last 100 days Offensive", which later that year led to the signing of the Armistice. Our two representatives, Robert Blyth, carrying the Branch Standard and John Hale bearing a wreath, took part in this modern Pilgrimage and joined with others from over 1000 communities. The parade and the wreath laying ceremony in Ypres was most impressive and poignant.

Also, in August we held a Pig Roast at the home of two of our members, Tony and Pauline Holdback. The event was a great success with over 100 people attending. A great deal of work had to be done, both before and after the event but fortunately our host, who themselves worked so hard, had good support from members.

Just over £3000 was raised for the Poppy Appeal, a really wonderful result.

For the pilgrimage to Ypres we arranged to have a new Standard, the cost of which was covered by generous donations from the Jane Ryland Charity and Warwick District Council.

Earlier this month we dedicated the new Branch Standard and Laid-up the old one (first dedicated in the Twenties) in Rowington parish church, another poignant moment in the life of the branch. The service was well attended, and we are grateful to Kemble Everitt and other church officials for making the occasion so memorable.

We shall continue to seek new members. Membership is open to all adults. It is not necessary to have served in HM Forces but simply to be in sympathy with the aims of the Legion.

Almshouse Charity – Mike Wade (read by the Clerk)

During the past year the Charity's Trustees have progressed plans to build additional almshouses to meet the perceived need for more affordable rented accommodation in the Parish, and encouragement has been received from both WDC Planning Dept and District Councillors. An initial scheme was developed for 6 new almshouses, comprising both single-bedroom and two-bedroom units, to be built on land adjacent to the allotments which had been offered to the Charity at an extremely advantageous price. Planning guidelines allow consideration for planning consent of limited developments on Green Belt land, provided that these are non-commercial and consist exclusively of affordable accommodation.

At a public meeting, convened to present the scheme and solicit views from local residents, a few of those present made comments which were extremely negative and to a degree both insulting and hurtful to individual Trustees. As a result, the landowner feels unable to proceed with the proposal, and plans for additional almshouses have had to be abandoned for the foreseeable future. This is particularly distressing in view of the number of new £1m+ houses which are being built in the immediate vicinity, thus further unbalancing the profile of available housing within the Parish.

7. Public Forum

Discussions took place regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding which was due to be received from the District Council in the forthcoming financial Year, which would be in the region of £90k from the Kingswood Development. Suggestions for spending from residents included entrance signage to the villages, entrance gates, dog foul bins and dog foul bags and a footpath on Old Warwick Road in the interests of safety.

Reference was also made to the poor broadband speed and poor mobile signal in Lawsonford.

The formal meeting closed at 8.50pm. and was followed by light refreshments

Signed.....Designation Date.....