

**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT 7.30 PM ON THURSDAY 25 APRIL 2024
HELD AT ROWINGTON VILLAGE HALL**

Present

Councillor A Coleman - Chairman
Councillor J Coles
Councillor A Marsden
Councillor D Weir
Parish Clerk – Nicola Overall
District Councillor – D Armstrong
3 members of the public

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

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Parish Councillors T Parker & T Remment, District Councillors R Hales & K Aizlewood and County Councillor J Cooke.

2. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27 April 2023

It was proposed by Councillor J Coles and seconded by Councillor A Marsden that the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 27 April 2023 having been previously circulated, were signed as a true record by the Chairman.

3. Councillor J Cooke - Warwickshire County Council

In June, firefighters were urging people to #BeWaterAware and understand the dangers that swimming in lakes and quarries can bring. Even on a warm day the temperature in open water can remain very cold, causing cold water shock. It's also essential that people know what to do should they see someone in trouble in the water.

There were three simple things to remember - **Call, Tell, Throw**:

Call 999 – ask for Fire & Rescue if inland or the Coastguard if by the sea

Tell the struggling person to try to float on their back

Throw them something that floats

Warwick Library reopened with a fresh look that provides an improved experience for users

The library reopened on May 30th. The improvements included:

A new sensory area to encourage library use by children and adults with additional needs

Relocating the children's area to provide additional space and create a focal point to the library

Creating a lighter, more welcoming space with an improved customer flow

Bus travel to stay cheaper for longer in Warwickshire

The government announced that adult single bus fares would continue to be capped at £2 until the end of October 2023, making it cheaper for residents to travel by bus. In addition to this extension to the popular scheme, the government also announced that, from November 2023, single adult fares would be capped at £2.50 for another 12 months. The scheme means that bus passengers in Warwickshire will only pay a maximum of £2 for a single bus journey, regardless of the distance travelled. Further investment has also been confirmed to protect vital bus services people rely on for work, education, medical appointments and shopping. <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/public-transport>

Leamington Farmer Given Suspended Prison Sentence and Banned from Keeping Animals

A Leamington Spa farmer who committed a number of animal health offences including causing unnecessary suffering to a ewe that had to be euthanized has been handed a 16 week prison sentence, suspended for 12 months and banned from keeping animals. The prosecution was brought by Warwickshire County Council Trading Standards.

Barnardo's to lead SENDIASS in Warwickshire Empowering Families and Supporting Children

WCC announced that from July 1, 2023, Barnardo's, the UK's largest children's charity, had been appointed as the new service provider for the Warwickshire SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice, and Support Service). For more information on the new Barnardo's SENDIASS service www.warwickshiresendiass.co.uk

Warwickshire County Council launched a Social Fabric Fund

An innovative new fund that will invest in the power of communities has been given the green light by Warwickshire County Council. The £2.5m Warwickshire Social Fabric Fund will provide a route to explore the development of local projects and initiatives that will have a positive impact on communities.

The Social Fabric Fund supports the Council's commitment to harness the power of communities to create opportunities and tackle inequalities, building on the strengths and assets that already exist.

Making cycling more accessible for people of all abilities

People with disabilities looking to take up cycling can benefit from a series of fully accessible cycling sessions as Heart of England Mencap receive new funding. Heart of England Mencap was awarded £14,213 in funding as part of the scheme to create the new Cyc-Ability sessions. This money will enable them to offer fully accredited cycling sessions for people within the community who have either a disability or health issues. The funding will be used to purchase four fully adapted trikes, meaning Heart of England Mencap can increase their capacity at the Stratford Cyc-Ability centre and to also explore the possibility of introducing Cyc-Ability sessions at Warwick's St Nicholas Park. <https://www.heartofenglandmencap.org.uk/blog-4/category/Cyc-ability>

The Withdrawal of the Green Bus service

WCC Officers worked with a number of transport providers been in discussions to find alternative transport options for all the young people affected. Following discussions, the council announced that alternative travel provision has been secured for the 52 pupils eligible for school transport for whom the council has a statutory duty.

Dementia support in the community

Through World Alzheimer's Month during September 2023 WCC has been raised awareness about dementia and how people can support others in their community affected by the disease.

Creating dementia friendly communities supports Warwickshire residents with dementia to live well with a little help from other people. By understanding more about dementia friends and families of people living with dementia can help them to be more involved with their community and continue to do the things they enjoy and maintain independence. A Dementia Friend is somebody that learns about dementia so they can offer practical and emotional support to those with the condition. More information about Dementia Friend is at <https://www.dementiafriends.org.uk/>

Can you help with the roll out of electric vehicle charging?

The Council was recently allocated £3.3m from the government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Capital Fund. This funding will allow for the delivery of up to 2,000 charging sockets at both on-street and in car park locations. In order to deliver on this, it is now looking for residents help to nominate possible locations.

Anyone can make a location suggestion by using the following

form: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=BqqwiCdZu0uok4nMJxOsggWAQybZILFLvvdY6xvOGDIUM0hHTUFPNVpBQkg3UII2VU1LR1JDWkNBuYQIQCN0PWcu>

Reporting Vehicle Speed Concerns - Warwickshire Road Safety Partnership

The joint approach from Warwickshire Police and Warwickshire County Council is for members of the public (including councillors and key community representatives) to submit their concerns via the Warwickshire Road Safety Partnership website [Enforcement and Community \(warksroadsafety.org\)](https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/enforcement-and-community) This is the central reporting method for speed concerns within Warwickshire, which enables a consistent and data-led approach.

West Midlands measles cases prompt MMR vaccination call

People in the West Midlands are being urged to check that they, and all family members are up to date with their MMR vaccine. Measles has been confirmed in this region. Since 1 October 2023, there have been a number of cases diagnosed in the West Midlands, with an increasing number of likely cases. Although rare, measles can prove fatal so you should all check that you are up to date on your jabs.

Final marriage ceremony after 50 years of "I do" at Pageant House

Leamington based couple Hannah and Alexander were the final couple to be married at Pageant House, at 11am on Tuesday 21 November, with the ceremony overseen by the longest-serving registrar Sue Lloyd, who joined the service in 1984.

Earlier this year the Registration Service licenced and launched newly refurbished ceremony rooms at St John's House in Warwick.

Almost 20,000 Illegal Vapes Seized by Trading Standards

In the past 18 months, WCC Trading Standards has seized 19,600 illegal vapes from retailers. Illegal disposable vapes, which are often sold under the counter, are usually advertised as containing more than 600 puffs, an indication that the vapes contains more nicotine e-liquid than the 2ml limit. The 2ml limit is designed to help prevent nicotine poisoning, the results of which include nausea, vomiting, and headaches.

4. Warwick District Councillors Annual Report

In May 2023 the District Council held elections, with Kyn Aizlewood, David Armstrong and Richard Hales elected as your councillors for Abbey and Arden. We welcome any issues or questions you want to raise with us, with contacts at the end of this report.

This year saw the introduction of No Mow May for the first time at WDC. This allowed over 2 million m² of grass to grow in May, increasing wildflower coverage, supporting biodiversity, and even helping reduce flooding. Our survey of residents found the majority were positive about the impact, with photos of nature and biodiversity springing up in our competition later in the year. Despite the positives everything didn't go perfectly and lessons were learned for 2024. New equipment has been purchased by our contractors to avoid issues cutting the long grass, and additional areas will be mowed throughout where appropriate. We have also included Abbey and Arden in a trial to reduce weedkiller use across the District, which along with a new Biodiversity Action Plan should continue to improve the area's wildlife and environment.

The Council has also nearly completed moving out of its Head Office in Leamington, saving significant amounts each year. We are creating a £500k Energy Generation fund to enable more renewable energy to be developed, for example via rooftop solar installation, and ringfencing money for retrofitting of Council owned houses, decreasing energy bills and improving efficiency for residents.

The new budget was approved in February. This includes an increase in the WDC part of Council Tax of 2.99% (approx. £5 per year for a band D dwelling) which given the below inflation increase in the government settlement was seen as key to keeping the Council finances in a stable state.

Castle Leisure Centre had its official opening on the 24th February, providing a modern new gym and leisure centre for residents. Alongside is a new Scout and Guide Centre, one of the biggest such facilities in the country. The swimming pool facilities at Abbey Fields have started to move again, with a contract signed and construction due to kick off in March.

Numerous planning applications have been dealt with in the Ward, with councillors getting involved where requested by residents. The most notable is the Honiley Road solar farm, where an inquiry met in February with the result still to be published.

Development of the South Warwickshire Local Plan continues, with discussions ongoing about the number of houses required and potential sites. Progress on the plan has been delayed, with the next formal consultation expected late in 2024. No sites have been selected or numbers approved as yet. All Abbey and Arden councillors are working to minimise the impact of the plan on greenfield sites in the ward. We welcome your views on this even outside of the formal consultations, to help feed into the ongoing discussions.

5. Warwickshire Police

PC Mark Young of Warwick Safer Neighbourhood Team attended the meeting and provided details of the officers on the team and how to make contact if required. The Teams main focus is targeting burglaries, crime initiatives, victim support, community engagement and antisocial behaviour. Various operations were in place to reduce shoplifting, drugs and knife crimes. The Clerk explained that the main focus in Rowington is to reduce the speed of vehicles using the Old Warwick Road and asked if the SNT could consider speed checks or at the very least, a greater Police presence in the area.

6. Chairman's Report

I start with a reminder that the PC is keen to encourage new members to join the PC. Being a Parish Councillor does not involve a lot of time (probably an hour each month) and it always useful to have the views of as many residents as possible.

The Playing Field has been dramatically improved with the installation of new equipment, including a zip wire, a fenced off safe area for toddlers, and a new gravel pathway laid to provide improved access to the equipment.

On a very wet and cold December morning 420 saplings were planted by parish councillors together with a brilliant turnout of volunteers from the community. Hopefully these saplings will grow into a boundary hedge which will not only improve visual amenity, but also benefit wildlife. On this latter point, the parish council has recently purchased 8 bird boxes which will be installed shortly.

An aboricultural survey is also to be carried out on the playing field trees to ensure that all are healthy and safe. Finally on this topic, a huge vote of thanks must go to Sue Beard for her continued help with emptying the bins on the playing field— thank you Sue.

It is hoped that village gateway signs will soon be erected, similar to those in Shrewley and Lapworth. A survey by Warwickshire County Council is currently underway regarding approval of potential sites. These gateway signs will not only provide clear identification of residential areas but maybe remind drivers of speed limits – we can only hope.

A new hardstanding and bus stop on the Old Warwick Road is proposed, to provide a safer site for school children waiting for their school bus. Thanks to Cllr. John Cooke (WCC) for his financial assistance with this project.

Grants have been provided to many community organisations and we have also provided dog bins on the cricket pitch and purchased a new notice board at Rowington Village Hall.

As always, the PC continues to work closely with WCC and WDC to resolve matters, particularly relating to highway issues, street lighting and pot holes, as quickly as possible. And we thank our District and County Councillors for their continued help. Finally, many thanks to our Clerk, Nicola, who works extremely hard for the community and keeps us all on the straight and narrow.

7. Reports from Organisations

Allotments Association – John Greenaway

I am happy to report that the allotment membership continues to be active and keen to cultivate their plots and to look after the ground in general. We had a full compliment of members last year although Mark Watkins was unable to do much to his plot due to illness. I regret to say that Mark died in March. Mark was a big strong gentle man who was always ready to help anyone in need. He will be sorely missed by all the allotment members and of course his family and other many friends.

Our finances are as precarious as ever and once our normal expenses are paid we will have a shortfall of approximately £38. I thought about a bet on the Grand National or a Bitcoin investment but decided on a further collection from members of maybe £10 each which we will collect half way through the year if needed.

Our “Autumn Clear up Day” at the end of October was a huge success with nearly all our members turning up ready for a morning’s hard work with some of them coming equipped with their own tools. When all the necessary jobs were carried out including clearing and digging out our ditches and cutting back the hedges we were treated to a barbeque provided by Keith and Jo with Nicola ensuring that we all had plenty of tea and coffee. Without the cooperation and hard work of the members this essential work could not be done, so many thanks from me to all who carry out the work on clear up day and throughout the year to look after and maintain the allotment land.

We have a meeting planned for 24th May where we will hopefully discuss ways of improving what we do and ways that we may raise some funds. We are all aware that the allotment ground is not owned by us and we continue to look after and improve it to the best of our ability. We are grateful for the continuing support of the community and the Parish Council in ensuring that the allotments continue to be a valued community asset. For any further information or to be added to the waiting list please contact either John or Sue on 01564 784352.

St Laurence Church – Jude Palmer

With Rev Ann on board, we are settling into a steady routine at St. Laurence for services: 1st Sunday - 6.00pm, Holy Communion led by Rev Ann 4th Sunday - 11.00am, Morning Praise led by Churchwarden Jude 1st, 2nd, 3rd Thursdays - 7.30pm Compline led by Churchwarden Jude and others. Where there is a 5th Sunday, we now work together as a Benefice with Hatton, Haseley and Honiley and take it in turns to host this service. 5th Thursdays are Benefice prayer evenings. The Churchwardens are very much working as a team to support Ann and our collective work as a Benefice.

2023/24 Highlights

May - The 7th saw a congregation of nearly 50 attend our service to mark the Coronation of King Charles III followed by our Coronation lunch - comments from FaceBook and emails included: ‘A really beautiful day! Thank You’ ‘I just want to say a very big thank you for all your hard work to make Sunday’s service and lunch such a success.’

June

Festival Week Our festival week ran Sunday 4th to Sunday 11th June, including a concert of Summer inspired music by The Circle Singers, the highlight of the programme being a piece of work that evoked the Northern Lights.

October

Visiting Geologist group led by Stuart Birley We hosted the Hertfordshire Geological Society as they visited St. Laurence as part of their walking tour as the vicar here in 1855-97 was the famous Geologist Rev Peter Bellringers Brodie.

November

All Souls Benefice Service It was an honour to host the All Souls service for our Benefice at the start of November. Creating space for anyone from across our Benefice to join us for a service where we remember those who have died was a privilege and many commented on how they found this Service nourishing and moving.

Advent

Advent Carol Service, Carols in the Tom O The Wood, Christmas Parish Quiz, Baby Basics, Christmas Day A slightly different Advent and Christmas season this year saw our big Carol service and festive drinks and nibbles open the start of the season with an Advent Carol service at the beginning of December where we were joined by The Circle Singers.

We also held a more informal Carols evening in the Tom O The Wood (a rendition of the 12 Days of Christmas we shall never forget) and were delighted to have so many people join us Christmas Day morning at St. Laurence for the Benefice Christmas Day service.

Baby Basics were also hugely thankful for our Baby Basics Christmas Appeal once again - and we extend that thanks to all the amazing donors - supporting new Mums feels so faithful a cause at Christmas time.

January

A big thank you to Warwick District Council for fixing our street lamp so swiftly - it makes such a huge difference in lighting the crossing from the car park on the dark winter nights.

Easter Maundy Thursday Service, Good Friday Services

This Easter we worked together as a Benefice, which meant that St. Laurence hosted the Maundy Thursday Service and the Good Friday Service for our group of Churches. To symbolise the final meal, our Maundy Thursday service saw us seated at a dining table running the length of the nave.

Beautiful cello and a cappella music from Clare Langston and her son accompanied the service, and as we left the church in silence, the St. Laurence altar was stripped bare - a sight very seldom seen, but so poignant.

Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday brought us all to Holy Trinity Hatton for Easter Day Service, which also saw the commissioning of several Lay worship leader by Rev Ann, including Churchwarden Jude.

Easter Monday Primrose Cafe The primrose bank was looking splendid - so we opened the Primrose Cafe on Easter Monday and raised £320 which we have split between St. Laurence and RDA UK.

A huge thanks to all the team who helped make the cafe come to life - bakers, servers and washer uppers! And thanks for everyone who came and supported us - whether by car, foot or bike!

Benefice Prayer Evenings - September '23, February '24

This year has also seen us move into a new groove with 5th Thursdays becoming a time for us to come together as a Benefice to pray. Four simple focus areas: Our World Our Community Our Churches Ourselves It has been extremely uplifting after these evenings to receive emails of thanks as people have found St. Laurence and the space and structure we provide for these evenings to be peaceful, contemplative and accessible. Quizzes and Book Sales Our quizzes continued during the year, kindly hosted by Chris and Charlie at the Tom O The Wood, with our Christmas Parish Quiz setting a new record of 22 teams taking part! We also continue to hold quarterly Bring & Buy book sales at the Tom O The Wood - with the March '24 one trialling our new contactless payment system for the first-time.

Once again a huge thank you to Di and David Dillon who have led on the organisation of those hugely important services - Baptisms, weddings and funerals. St. Laurence continues to be central to our community, providing God's blessing at those key life stages - new life, families coming together, and giving thanks for great lives, well lived.

An enormous thank you to our PCC members, flower arrangers, bellringers, organists, music maestros, safeguarding leads, baptism/wedding/funeral coordinators, AV sorters, Parish Mag editors, contributors, readers, deliverers and general wrangling and negotiating to make it all happen, churchyard angels, wheelie bin movers, wine donators for Christmas Do, Raffle Prize givers, bring & share cookers of nibbles, 300 Club administrators and supporters, Quiz supporters and hosts, book sale supporters and hosts (including lift and shift and storage), Facebook supporters (@stlcrw), Instagram scrollers@st.laurence_rowington) regular givers, Icon Centre worshippers, Baby Basics and Foodbank donators and everyone who has contributed to ensuring St. Laurence continues to be an active hub for community ministry and love across our Parish and in our Benefice.

All this - and we start our first Alpha course for many a year on Wednesday 1 May and this June sees us opening as a Warwickshire Open Studios venue for the first time too God Speed!

Horticultural Society – Lucy Marsden

Annual Summary of AGM - February 2024

There have been changes to the committee in the last year. Hazel Pulley joined in February 2023 and Lou Simpson has left due to relocating out of the area.

The Spring Flower Show 2023 in Lowsonford Village Hall was very successful with more entries and attendees at this venue than in previous years.

The Village Show was held at the Fleur de Lys in Lowsonford, however the weather was not the best. Given the circumstances it was reasonably well attended.

Treasurers Report – AGM February 2024

The Spring Flower Show 2023 was successful and generated a surplus of £327.

Due to the poor weather conditions the Village Show 2023 made a loss of £1,678, which was the first loss in several years. The entrance was £900 down on the prior year along with £200 down on raffle and £500 down on the teas.

During the year a PA System, additional fencing and a Sum Up machine were all purchased totalling £516.

Wren Hall Teas - Mindful of the loss of £1,678 in 2023 it was agreed that it is sensible to look at ways of raising additional amounts to ensure the Village Show can continue. Every week in the summer Wren Hall have afternoon teas on a Sunday. Local organisations can apply to run one of the afternoons and funds raised are kept by the organisation. We have a slot and this will be on 30th June 2024.

The funds at the end of the year were £4,820. This is sufficient to cover the costs of one year's show.

The signatories on the Scottish Widows account, which was still only Peter Dolan, have all be updated to current members of the committee.

Election of Committee – AGM February 2024

The position of Exhibit Co-ordinator was discussed, and it was concluded that the responsibilities of the role would be split as follows:

Online and pre-show entries	Amy Simpson
Set up for exhibits	Pippa Green & Lynda Williams assisted by committee members
Booking of Judges	Nicky Maritz
Gifts for judges	Lucy Marsden
Collating results on show day	Amy Simpson

A big welcome to Barabara Tegg who joined the committee at the AGM. A big thank to Graham Bull for all his years of hard work as a judge and support on show days with the plant stall plus the many other tasks he has helped with.

Village Show - 2023

This year was the 77th year anniversary of the Lowsonford and Rowington & District Horticultural Association and was held at The Fleur de Lys in Lowsonford. Despite the inclement weather, it was still fabulous to see everyone who attended in their wellies and waterproofs. This did not detract from the wonderful displays and exhibits shown by all.

As reported, due to the poor weather conditions the Village Show 2023 made a loss of £1,678, which was the first loss in several years. The entrance was £900 down on the prior year along with £200 down on raffle and £500 down on the teas.

Thank you to all those who braved the weather to still enjoy the show.

Spring Flower Show - 2024

The popular Spring Flower show in March, this year was held in Rowington, a relatively small but popular event and enjoyed by all. The exhibits and flowers entered were fabulous and everyone enjoyed a display of colour and creativity from the entrants. A truly lovely evening of Daffodils and Spring flowers. Spring Flower Show 2024 – surplus of £460.

Upcoming Events

Wren Hall Teas

Sunday 30th June 2024 – 2-5pm – A chance to catch up and discuss your Village Show entries.

Village Show 2024

As a committee we look forward to seeing you all at the next The Village Show – 3rd August 2024 at 2pm and we are delighted to announce that this year's venue will Shakespeare Hall in Rowington.

Once again, there will be magnificent marquees filled with of displays and exhibits - flowers, vegetables, cooking, home crafts, floral art, paintings, and photography. In the main showground we continue to have numerous side shows, stalls and stands for you to enjoy along with many events in the arena including a dog show and egg throwing! Plus, an amazing band for all to enjoy!!

A big thank you to the Committee and the many volunteers that support the association's events and show days. As always, with every organisation, we are heavily reliant on the generosity and support of our local communities. There is always room for more volunteers, and we welcome new people to join in any way they feel they can help.

WI – Councillor D Weir

Rowington WI has 36 members and its meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month in Rowington Village Hall. Prospective members are always welcome to attend. During the past twelve months we have had seven speakers on topics as diverse as putting on stage productions at the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, to visiting Chilean Patagonia and its penguins. Members have undertaken an historical walk around Warwick, manned a stall at the annual Flower Show and competed against each other with quizzes and at crazy golf. We have a full programme planned and would welcome visitors to any of these meetings - the times and dates of which are shown in the Ferncumbe News..

Lowsonford Village Hall – Ben Attwood

Background

Lowsonford Village Hall ("the Charity") holds on trust a premises within the village of Lowsonford ("the Village Hall") for the benefit of the inhabitants of Lowsonford and its immediate vicinity.

To that end, the main activity of the Charity is making available the Village Hall for hire to inhabitants of Lowsonford and its immediate vicinity on preferential terms. It is also made available for hire more generally to generate funds to maintain and operate the facilities.

The Charity is run by volunteer Trustees all of whom need to reside in Lowsonford. There are currently eight Trustees.

Achievements and performance 2023

There were two principal areas of focus for the Charity in 2023. First, building the level of bookings, ideally including regular hires, and secondly raising the profile of the Village Hall through holding a Coronation event in May 2023.

The level of ad-hoc bookings grew well, supported by the online booking system introduced in 2022. However, the position regarding regular hires was more mixed. Both of the two regular hires in place at the start of 2023 remained for that year, but one decided to move to what is for them a more geographically convenient hall in early 2024. And although a regular exercise-based class was secured in late 2023, that has now returned to its previous location following a refurbishment.

The Coronation event held in May 2023 was a resounding success. Around a hundred paying guests attended the event, and feedback was positive not only in relation to the event itself but also the facilities and environs of the Village Hall. And as well as turning a small financial surplus, the event was also supported through grants from Warwick District Council and Rowington Parish Council, for which the Trustees were very grateful.

The Charity recorded a surplus of just over £2,000 for 2023, thanks entirely to the grants received and small operational surplus on the Coronation Event. At the end of the year the Charity held funds in excess of its targeted minimum, although this was intentional in light of the need to rebuild the order book for hire of the Village Hall following the enforced COVID 19 closure and to absorb elevated electricity costs.

Focus for 2024

The Trustees remain focused on securing regular hires, and progress has been made in early 2024 with bookings secured to partially replace income lost from the departing regular hirers.

As detailed above, the main responsibility of the Trustees is to make the Village Hall available for hire to inhabitants of Lowsonford and its immediate vicinity on preferential terms. The majority of current Trustees have very limited bandwidth to go beyond this key responsibility by arranging and running events in the Village Hall. However, the Trustees will seek to arrange one social event per annum in order to further raise the profile of the Hall and its facilities amongst local people. The next event, a BBQ, is scheduled for 23 June 2024.

The Village Hall is generally in a good state thanks to the recent partial refurbishment and the hard work of the Trustees in identifying priority maintenance tasks and often completing them *pro bono*. However, the floor to the main room does need some remedial attention in the short-term and is likely to need over-boarding in the medium term. The Trustees will seek grant support for the medium-term work. The Trustees encourage all residents of Lowsonford and its environs to use the Village Hall for events, with a particular focus on repeat events. We are ready to show the facilities to anyone who may have an interest.

Tennis Club – Joan Shepherd

This year the tennis club celebrates its 100th anniversary. They originally played on two grass courts next to the Men's Club. In the minutes 1947, Mrs Wilson of Shakespeare Hall informed the committee that she was purchasing the land opposite the Men's Club and giving it to the village in memory of her late husband, for recreational purposes, tennis courts and a bowling green. Later in 1948 she said the purchase had gone through and the club could start constructing the new courts. Today we still have two very good, well maintained courts, obviously having been resurfaced several times over the years.

Membership has fluctuated considerably over the years, at present we are going through a lean time. However, with the upcoming Centenary celebrations on Sunday 9 June, and renewed enthusiasm the club will grow again. It is a beautiful, peaceful spot to play a game of tennis.

Old Folks Party Fund – Anne Pitt

We enjoyed inviting guests in June, organising a Summer afternoon tea with our neighbours enjoying each other's company, with homemade sandwiches, scones with jam and cream, copious cups of tea, and a local singer performing an array of songs. Once again our village hall looked enchanting dressed up in pretty table settings with garden flowers and gingham table cloths. Our annual fund raising events were once again very well supported resulting in £760 from the Wren Hall cake and tea event and £683 at our All Sorts Sale. We welcomed a heartwarming 89 guests who enjoyed Christmas luncheon, with the company of friends and neighbours. Our funds were boosted by the generous donations from Rowington Parish Council and Jane Ryland Trust and many private donations from villagers. This year's dates were discussed at our first meeting on 31st January, our chairman Heather Cole confirmed as follows, Wednesday 19th June Summer afternoon tea event Sunday 1st September Wren Hall tea and cake sale Saturday 5th October All Sorts sale Wednesday 4th December Christmas luncheon.

Ferncumbe Benefice – Revd. Ann Peachey

Blessing - some of the highlights:

We have had many occasions during 2023 to enjoy God's creation, to give and receive hospitality, to foster creativity and fun. The 300th Celebration of Honiley church, the Rowington Festival, the Pet Service at Haseley, Drop Off and Drop In and the new 3rd Sunday informal service, Breakfast Church, at Hatton.

We give thanks to God for new opportunities to bless our parishes.

We had new people at all the churches at Easter, Harvest and Remembrance, Christmas and other events such as the Pancake Party and Good Friday Activities morning at Hatton Park Village Hall. It was wonderful to welcome well over 250 people in our churches just in our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

We are growing in confidence and expectation of what God is doing and leading us into.

Ferncumbe school enjoyed the Alive Praise Party at Stoneleigh and a team from Hatton church have been able to follow up by running enrichment sessions in school on Thursday afternoons: we and the children are really enjoying the Alive songs, Bible stories and craft activities. This is building good relationships with the school and growing faith.

Our Wednesday morning prayer meetings, Thursday morning Bible Study, and Thursday evening Compline services, and extended prayer evenings (5th Thursdays) are continuing to be a great source of encouragement: we are experiencing God's presence and power through the Holy Spirit, and our faith is growing.

Breakthrough

We are working on our Benefice vision as a whole, looking to grow spiritually and numerically.

Different groups are working together which include those from the 3 parishes such as the treasurers, the 'Drop Off and Drop In' team, and the group working on Benefice wide services.

During 2023 we have been planning and preparing for a Benefice wide Alpha course run by a leadership team from all our churches. Alpha starts on Wednesday 1st May at St Laurence's Rowington, and the 'Away Day' will be with other churches from the diocese June 24.

We are seeing God at work at our services both traditional and new: Breakfast Church at Hatton continues to grow and attract younger people, including wedding couples.

We have been able to book the Alive team (from the Diocesan Education Board) to come to school and Hatton church in May 2024 to lead a follow up event. We are also in school again Summer term 2024 to lead enrichment for Year 3.

We believe there is a desire for more at Hatton Park and would love to start a worshipping community there in response to the Vision survey.

The Hatton PCC has drawn up a Vision paper (attached). We have succeeded in obtaining our first DMF grant, to help fund growing faith with younger adults and children. We're now going for a bigger grant.

The Worship for Everyone conference in Birmingham June 2023, attended by Clare Langstone, Andrea Hammond, Will and Ann Peachey, was inspiring and useful for ideas.

Battles

We have many opportunities to be at events within our Benefice - we need to discern where to focus.

We need to think of how and where we can reach working adults and families, living on Hatton Park and in the villages, as we seek to draw all to God's table.

We give thanks for the new contactless payment at Hatton and Rowington but still need to improve on our stewardship and communication, especially reaching the younger generations. At all the churches we need to work on the noticeboards and social media updates too.

There's a lot to do and few people to do it with time and energy. Please pray for focus and a shared vision, and for more ways of working together to grow strong and healthy for the future.

Thank you

I thank God every day for the congregations and team who serve with me in this Benefice of churches.

My thanks go especially to Kemble Everitt for his faithful service as we look back over 2023. We thank him and God for his long ministry as a Reader here at Ferncumbe. He retired in December 2023, and is now Reader Emeritus.

Thank you to all leaders who are regularly taking services in our churches: Jude Palmer, Anita White, Andrea Hammond, Karen Walker and Sheila Cole, and to Nicola Everall as she follows the call to train for funeral ministry.

Thank you to all our church wardens: Andrea Hammond, Anita White, Jude Palmer, and especially Cathryn Thompson at Honiley church as she steps down this APCM, having moved away. A big thank you to Liz McSporran-Bates who is stepping down from Hatton PCC after many years of service, she moves to be closer to family. Cathryn and Kevin, and Liz go with our love and prayers.

Thank you to all our PCC members, our safeguarding officers, our organists, choir members and musicians, and everyone who plays a part in our worshipping communities here: cleaning, flower arranging, tea and cake making, reading, praying, welcoming, gardening, and many more. We are all part of the body of Christ and are all vital to its health and growth. I give thanks to God for you as you bless us in the tasks you do, often unseen and unnoticed, except by God.

As we look forward to 2024 let us continue to love God and one another. We look forward to welcoming all to our churches and events, new and old, and being part of God's mission to grow the kingdom of God.

Thank you for your prayers and support as we share the love and good news of Jesus in this place.

Cricket Club – Steve Turrell

Apart from the ground conditions, the Cricket Club is in good order. This year we will put out 2 teams in the Cotswolds Hills League being in the 1st and 4th divisions. We will also be playing a few games on Sundays. We will also be coaching about 70 primary school age youngsters on a Friday night for an 8 week period and we have entered an under 10 side in a softball league, with games being played on a Monday.

As I hinted at, the ground is very wet and it is unlikely that our early games will be played as we are about 4 weeks behind with preparations.

We were grateful to the Parish Council for help with supplying the dog poo bins last year. This has helped persuade people to pick up after their dogs although sadly we still find the odd offending mess.

We encourage local people, particularly those that walk their dogs on the ground, to become Friends of Rowington Cricket Club, our supporters association, costing £10. Many then make Gift Aid donations to the Club itself. Friends day is Sunday 14th July when a Rowington side take on an Old Boys side. We encourage villagers to join us.

Our annual dinner is on Friday 20th September and this is a very convivial occasion and we will be holding a musical evening with a very good local band on Saturday 19th October.

We are always looking for new players and helpers. Our contact details are steve.turrell@btinternet.com or brian@briantaylor54.plus.com.

Rowington Village Hall – Councillor A Marsden

I am pleased to report that 2023/24 has been another busy year for the hall.

Once again, it has been an excellent year for bookings with income in excess of £12,000. Thank you to Nicola Everall for her excellent work during the year as Bookings Secretary. We continued to benefit from regular repeat bookings for various classes and meetings as well as private events.

The Social Committee has again been active in the year and we have enjoyed a number of events including the "Simple Supper" in October, the "Christmas Dinner Dance" in December, the "All Sorts Sale" in March and a particularly successful "Simple Supper" with Drama Group also in March. All of which raised vital funds for the Village Hall in excess of £2,600. Our grateful thanks go to the Social Committee for all their hard work.

This has enabled us to pursue an active schedule of maintenance once again in 2023/24 and continued investment in the facilities at the Hall. One large investment was replacing the commercial cooker in the kitchen which was 20+ years old to the value of £3,790 and we were very grateful to successfully obtain a 50% contribution as a grant from Rowington Parish Council. Other maintenance items have included replacement of the post for the kitchen in/out doors following the cooker installation, repointing of the edging to the roof tiles above the ladies toilet, clear out of the gutters and replacement of faulty valve to the hot water system. There were also various electrical works carried out during the year including a replacement wall light in the main hall, replacement stage light bulb, replacement external security light, replacement hall heater switch and new LED spotlights installed in the bar area with a number of the old spotlights starting to fail. As a result, we are proud to continue to offer a fantastic facility for the benefit of the residents of the Parish.

During the year, we were very sorry to see Anne Pitt, who was an active and long-standing member of the Committee, resign due to moving out of the area and is sorely missed. Shirley Lowe also stood down from Chair of the Social Committee although thankfully remains an active member of both the main and social committees. As a result, like other local organisations, we are looking to welcome new committee members. I am pleased to report that we have had some interest and hoping to appoint some new members at the forthcoming AGM in June.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all current members of the committee, namely Ian Wilson (Treasurer), Joan Shepherd (Secretary), Stephen Williams (Maintenance), Linda Williams, Shirley Lowe and Diane Weir (and also Heather Cole and Pat Brown on the Social Committee), for the hugely valued contribution and support during the year.

Rowington Almshouse Charity – Roger Shepherd

All our properties are now fully occupied following the arrival in December of our newest resident, we have celebrated the 90th birthday of a lady, who was born and raised in Rowington, we believe she must be one of the oldest living resident of the village.

The Charity has continued the upgrading of its portfolio, having installed some bathrooms and kitchens in a number of the properties and a further 2 more will be completed in the next few weeks. New windows and doors have been fitted to 9 of the bungalows in Beech Close and to comply with the new regulations, electrical circuit breakers have been installed in all the properties. Following the Quinquennial Inspection, a programme of works has been drawn up for the next eighteen months.

Jane Ryland Charity – Stephen Williams

During the past 12 months the Charity has provided substantial financial assistance to many individuals and bodies, including:- Lowsonford Village Hall for its Coronation event, The Old Folks Party Fund for the Christmas lunch, Chiropody for a number of elderly residents, Christmas cheques and additional grants to help with living expenses, Grants for travelling expenses on sporting and school activities.

The Charity has funds available to assist residents of Rowington Parish with recreation and leisure-time activities, educational costs, health support and general expenses. Further information can be found on Parish notice boards.

Rowington & Lapworth Royal British Legion – Robert Blyth

Last year the branch was saved from closure by Nicola Overall volunteering to be the Honorary Secretary and Peter Fish offering to take the responsibility of Branch Treasurer. This enabled me to take on the Chairmanship.

We found a new vitality within the committee and I am grateful that Tony Holdback and Ernest and Pat Petrie have all contributed to this even though they do not reside in either the parish of Rowington nor Lapworth. Our main objective is to support the Poppy Appeal and to remember the fallen and last November the Standard was on parade at Lapworth with representation at Rowington. This was successful despite the appalling weather. This year the Standard will be at St Laurence. Since last year we have implemented quarterly social gatherings for members and friends at local hostelrys.

Our main event for the year will be a Pig Roast on 18 August at Glebe Farm. We need as much support as possible for this. Profits will be donated to the Poppy Appeal.

8. Public Forum

No matters were raised.

The meeting closed at 8.32pm.

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