

Spring comes to Westbury

Never will we have been so glad to see the arrival of spring as we have this year. Not only does it bring the prospect of warmth, sunshine, flowers and lambs gambolling in meadows of fresh grass but this year it also brings the hope of meeting up with family and friends, having big hugs, going out for the day, enjoying some game or other and going to the pub. We know that there may still be many things that we cannot safely do, but the vaccine programme has brought us the same feelings of a new beginning as we feel each year with the emergence of these early spring flowers. As we enjoy the warmth of this feeling, I think we can also feel grateful that we live in

such a safe and caring community. A big thank you to all those who have helped Westbury through this long and difficult year.

Parish Council

With ten planning applications on the agenda, we all Zoomed into our March Parish Council meeting in good time to start on the dot of 7pm. There were three applications for extensions of various sizes at Windyridge at Chaxhill, at 6, The Crescent, Northwood Green and at 2, Moys Hill Villas in Strand Lane to which there were no objections. The replacement of a conservatory by a garden room at Beechwood House, Rodley and the erection of a fodder store at Wood Hill Farm were supported and the application to discharge conditions

placed on The Barn at Rock Farm was noted. We supported the application to remove two Lombardy poplars at Lower Ryecroft as this had been demanded by building control as they were likely to come down in a strong wind. Other trees will be planted to replace them.

Rather less straightforward was the notification we had received regarding the upgrade of sections of the track in Ley Park Wood to provide all-weather management access. Mike Townsend, who knows the wood very well, had studied this thoroughly and felt that there were inaccuracies regarding the wildlife that could be affected and so we objected to this. There was also considerable discussion about the application for change of use of what was the Post Office in the village to a dwelling. The application described this as a redundant bookshop, although we felt it would be more accurately described as a previously well-used Post Office and shop. The plan shows parking provided at the rear of the building and we objected on the grounds that this access, in a narrow road used by primary school children, was unsafe. Last on this month's list was an application for the siting of two shepherd huts for tourism use at Long Mynd, Main Road, Minsterworth, to which we had no objections.

Fiona then updated us on applications that had been granted for Brook Farm, Perrick Farm and Joe's Wood and Simon reported that the petition against the Churcham development has now reached 8,500 signatures. We are now awaiting the Planning Department's report on the consultation.

The signage for the footpaths and bridleway in Ley Park Woods was also discussed and Jeff Wheeler, the Public Rights of Way officer, has now been

consulted about this. His reply suggests that walkers and horse riders, who have been able to roam freely while the woods have been under one ownership, will have to come to terms with the fact that the woods are now split into separate plots of private land, and the owners have put up footpath signs as they wish visitors to keep to the Public footpaths. Jeff has checked these signs and says they are all correct.

Finance The accounts due for payment were all approved. A resident had queried the "massive increase" in the Parish Council precept this year. As reported in the February edition of WoSP, the decision to increase this had not been taken lightly as we fully understand that it is a difficult time for many. However, it is needed in order to ensure that the churchyard and play area are well cared for and that we are as prepared as we can be for the high costs involved in bringing the new school playing field up to the standard required by Sport England. The increase varies according to the Band of your property, with the increase on a Band D property being approximately £5.66 per annum, which brings the annual Council Tax for that Band up to £1,905.41. This compares to Blaisdon £1,901.21, Churcham £1,912.71, Huntley £1,916.56, Littledean £1,957.20 and Newnham £1,946.44, so I don't think we are too hard done by in Westbury.

Highways

Chairman Simon had taken the Highways officer around the area's trouble spots including Church Lane and Lower Ley Lane, which was in a state that he found shocking. However, the cost involved would be outside the budget and will have to be referred to the Central Office at Shire Hall. A footpath at Broadoak which has become com-

pletely overgrown is to be cleared, and it appears that a bigger culvert is needed to solve the flooding on the Hunt Hill side of Adsett. The flooding between Jordan Hill and Flaxley has been fixed temporarily but it appears that there is a badly blocked pipe. There are the usual problems with pot holes.

County Councillor's report.

Brian Robinson joined us and talked about the impact of Covid on mental health and the role of the County Council in supporting businesses with the impact of Brexit. Many businesses are, apparently, less well prepared than they thought they were, but the funding for their support finishes at the end of March, whereas their problems will continue for some time.

Burial Ground Extension

Three estimates have now been obtained for the drainage work required for the new school playing field, and these now have to be submitted to the District Council to ensure that they meet the requirements of Sport England, which were a condition of the planning permission. Simon, John Henry and Alan Hyett will be looking at what fencing is required for the playing field as this is another planning requirement. It appears that money will be tight for other projects for quite a while.

Burial Ground

Mike Townsend and Simon have replaced the dead trees and we look forward to seeing them bloom in the future. Stephen Lewis and Mike Matthews joined Simon and Pam Ensor and have cleared all the scrubby growth behind the cremation plots. The intention is to remove the old wire fence and put up a simple, temporary fence until we can afford something more permanent.

Play Area

Since the meeting, several of us have met up for a working party to clean up the play area. The split swing seats have been replaced, the surface jet washed, the paintwork freshened, the dead leaves cleared and the hedge



trimmed. I reckon that was about 20 voluntary man hours by parish councillors and their spouses, which could have cost the council quite a sum, so please note that we do our best to keep costs down!

Footpaths Mike Townsend went through a list of footpaths that will be getting the attention of the Public Rights of Way team – stiles and kissing gates, waymarker signs and footbridge repairs. A footpath between Ampney Lane and Frowens, which was blocked, has now been cleared. A change in footpath legislation is proposed for 2026 and we have been asked whether there are any historic tracks and ways within the parish, perhaps no longer used on a daily basis but considered to be part of the Parish's history, which are not currently shown on the official records of rights of way. These could be permanently closed off by the owner of the land over which they cross unless they are claimed by 1st Jan. 2026.

Litter Our plea for “womblers” on

Facebook has had an amazing response and we are just waiting for the District Council to give us a date for our litter pick. Many people have already been clearing litter during the lockdown, without which the place would be in the most dreadful mess. However, we have had reports of syringes and needles being found and so we urge everyone to be very careful and to inform us straight away if you see any such items.

Dog fouling We have been offered a service which provides and empties dog waste bins at a cost of £200 per bin per year. It was decided that one should be installed near the closed churchyard and enquiries should be made as to whether dog fouling is a serious problem in any other part of the parish.

Correspondence The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has asked the Parish Council for suggestions for the future care of one of their sites in our parish - Poulton Wood – and it was agreed that we should make enquiries as to what would be involved should we take over the care of this wood, and discuss it further at our next meeting.

This will be on Monday 19th April at 7pm on Zoom. *Di Landon*



Owing to the unavoidable absence of Jan D'Ambrogio, the March meeting of the Parish Hall Management Committee was chaired by the very poor substitute, vice Chairman Andrew Landon. I am indebted to our Secretary, Gill Smith, for her record of the meeting, of which this report is a distillation. Gill noted, as an aside, that this had been the longest Zoom meeting since lockdown began.

Treasurer's report Sarah Mitten gave details of the current account and reserves, adding that funds were still available from the grant received from the District Council at the start of the pandemic, which would help ensure our short term survival.

Rubbish The Committee agreed that Biffa should return to the full waste collection service, and Sarah would check whether it would be possible to suspend this without penalty should the need arise in the future. The public have been using the Parish Hall bulk waste bin, despite it being clearly marked for Hall use only. It was considered unfeasible to lock it, so if you, or someone you know, is dumping their domestic rubbish at the Hall, please stop as our funds are severely constrained, and we can't afford to dispose of other people's rubbish.

Painting the exterior Jan has agreed to report back on progress with quotes.

Hearing Loop A quote had been received for the installation of a hearing loop in the Hall, and Mike Edginton

agreed to ask Westbury Players if they would contribute to the cost, adding that further investigation was needed into how straightforward such an installation and its use would be.

Rent Ken Boulton had raised the issue of the sports club paying rent during the period that the Hall was closed. Following a discussion, it emerged that the Football and Cricket clubs were happy to continue payments as the Hall was still incurring running costs, and a unanimous vote concluded that rent would still be levied, based on the continued running costs. In reply to a question, Sarah confirmed that the main outgoings were currently utility bills and insurance. It was agreed to review the position on rents when things returned to normal, as it was felt that some user groups might struggle financially.

Severndipity Club (bar) Gen reported on the Severndipity Club committee meeting, at which Val Morgan-Townsend had confirmed that she had applied for a “Bounce Back” loan to be repaid over ten years. This would be set aside for stock purchases. Furthermore their insurance company was looking into a claim for a business interruption payment and were applying to the local authority for a hospitality grant. The committee had also discussed the cost of replacing the tills, and concluded that this would be too expensive at the present time. Gen said that there were no current plans for re-opening the bar, and based on the experience of the previous year, it would be very difficult under present regulations. Gen asked that user groups requiring a bar discuss with their members how much help, paid or otherwise, could be provided by their members, bearing in mind that Joe Liddington will be returning to his job, and

would not be available on Saturdays.

The new Parish Hall accountants would be prepared, for a fee, to review the covenant between the Hall and the Severndipity Club to check whether it is still fit for purpose. Gen Riley asked that this be put before the Severndipity committee before proceeding, as a matter of courtesy. This was readily agreed.

Fundraising Nothing to discuss

Covid 19 Jan had circulated information on the ‘roadmap’ out of the pandemic. Following a discussion, the committee felt that there was no appetite to open the Hall under the present regulations. Junior Rugby and the Cricket Club will be using the grounds but not the Hall or the showers. The Cricket Club will access the toilets, observing all Covid secure regulations. The committee agreed to reconvene if there was a material change in government guidance.

Odds and Ends Nikki Edginton announced that cricket nets would resume on March 29th, and that it was hoped that competitive cricket would be restarted on May 1st. There was no decision as yet on the future of Junior Cricket. The clubs were looking into the options for dealing with the problem of rabbits on the square. Clive Tempest confirmed that the local Football League had been declared null and void and there would be no further matches. On that melancholy note, screens around the Parish slowly went dark as committee members reached for the wine. *Ed*

Parish Hall update

We will be dusting and de-cobwebbing the hall and the spring clean will, of course, include lots of hand sanitising so that we are ready for when restrictions are lifted – fingers crossed. Please look out for

details of our AGM — it will probably be in July so that we can meet either inside or outside and hopefully face to face. If interested send an e-mail to: info@wosph.co.uk

Northwood Green Gardening Club

Our next Zoom presentation will be on Thursday 8 April at 7.30pm

The subject will be

The Garden Bug:

Cohabit, Control or Conserve

by Ian Bedford.

Visitors £3.

Please contact

karen.f.johnson@btinternet.com or call 01452 760970 for details.

The Northwood Green Gardening Club annual plant sale will take place on the weekend of 15th and 16th May. We are unable to hold the sale in the village hall again this year, due to ongoing Covid restrictions, so it will be a roadside stall at The Glen, Adsett (near the campsite). The stall will be open from 10 to 5 both days.

Road Closure Notice

Church Lane will be closed for 100 metres between Brimstone Cottage and Coldstream on 30th March between 08:00 and 17:00 for surveying works.



We were very sad to hear of Myra D'Ambrogio's death last week and send our condolences to all her family. She had been an important part of our village community for many years and we shall be paying a full tribute to her in next month's WoSP.



Ernie Pemberton

On Wednesday 3rd March, Ernie passed away after a long battle with illness. He was a much loved, tender and funny member of the community. Quietly, yet diligently, he was involved in many areas of the Westbury and Newnham community. He will be dearly missed by his family and his many friends. Many years ago, some of you may remember his table tennis coaching at the local youth group. More recently he has volunteered for the Royal British Legion and the Lions. He helped organise the Wild Boar Chase and raised money at the Speech House fireworks display. He also collected for the poppy appeal. His humour and dedication will be missed amongst the Westbury Players, where he worked with his wife, Sue, and Mike Matthews, mainly having a beer and teasing everyone but working on the scenery. After working hard in Lydney, running his own business, he retired and experimented with gramophone dealing and enjoyed long walks in the Forest of Dean. A member of the Grumpy Club at the Club in Newnham and the skittles team, he also enjoyed sport and would

regularly be seen supporting Cinderford R U F C on a Saturday. Ernie was an unassuming, kind man who had time for everyone and he will be particularly missed for his chats and listening skills. He was a true family man but he will be remembered for his care for everyone and his positive wisdom, enjoying those little moments of joy.

Chris Pemberton

Forest Climate Group

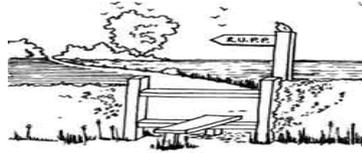
This group has been set up recently with the aim of supporting local projects which could reduce waste and carbon emissions and generally protect the environment. We meet on Zoom each month and it is encouraging to hear what other communities are doing. Some are planting lots of trees and hedges, or encouraging people to grow their own fruit and veg, while others are pointing people in the direction of agencies such as Warm and Well which give advice on insulation and energy efficiency and grants available for this.

This month we heard about a new venture, the Forest Food Growing Fair, to be held on Sat 24th April at Cinderford Medical Centre on Valley Rd, when organisers can advise on growing food organically and will have lots of seeds and seedlings available for people to take away in exchange for donations. We were also joined by Chris North from Ruddle Court Farm in Newnham who talked about how he farms in an eco-friendly way.

So just one recommendation this month—and a timely one for the Spring.

Grow your own fruit and veg to avoid carbon emissions from transporting food across the world and the use of harmful chemicals too. Time to get sowing and planting! *Di Landon*

Walking Group



One good thing that has come out of the pandemic is that many people are now walking a lot more. Walking along our country lanes is pleasurable, but also slightly unnerving at times, as you balance on the edge of a deep ditch waiting for a large vehicle to pass. So, taking to the parish's footpaths is a better alternative and we certainly have plenty of them. Not only are they quieter and safer, but you are also able to enjoy a view of our parish which is completely different from the familiar one we see from the roads.

To explore local footpaths, you may find this link useful. <https://maps.gloucestershire.gov.uk/MapThatPublic/Default.aspx> You don't need to enter name and password, you just tick the box marked "Tick to use the Open Access version". If your internet speed is anything like ours you may have to wait a while, but it will be worth it. You can expand the map and direct it to the area you want. If you click on any of the pink footpath lines, it gives you the footpath number.

Hopefully, footpath walking will continue even after the lockdown is eased, and it has been suggested that a local group be set up so that walkers can recommend different paths, arrange to join other walkers, report any problems and generally share their experiences. So if you are interested in this suggestion, please let me know. *Di Landon Tel 760531 diana.landon12@gmail.com*



An update on our activities will not take too long. With the Parish Hall closed we have been weathering the lockdown restrictions like everyone else. Our regular Zoom meetings have been more of a catch up on general village news and reviewing changes and developments that may be needed at some stage in the future.

However, as the vaccines are rolling out and the evenings begin to lengthen, we are planning a restart. We are under no illusions that getting people back together and out and about again will be a challenge for the whole community but Westbury Players are determined to play their part. Events may be a little different from those of the pre-pandemic past but that is a secondary concern compared with just getting things going.

As such, we plan to hold a social event in the summer once outdoor gatherings are allowed. That would primarily be a get together to re-establish the group and exchange ideas and thoughts for the future. Providing everyone has an enjoyable evening, as they have in the past, then the evening will be deemed a success. More news on that to follow.

We are planning to put on our Whodunnit/Whenwilltheyeverdoit/Murder Mystery "Fete Worse Than Death" in September. As it is set in a tent at a Summer Fete, the ideal time and location for it would be in a tent at the Westbury Summer Show. All Summer Shows should open with a grisly murder and this will be no exception! We envisage this being a 'turn up and watch' event with donations, hopefully, rather than a fully ticketed production. We are also looking for a couple more

cast members, and gender and age requirements are pretty fluid with a few tweaks to the script, so let me know if you are interested. However, the bulk of the original cast are still keen to put the show on which is encouraging.

We are also thinking about the Pantomime now and performance dates are booked for 21st, 22nd and 23rd January and 28th/29th January 2022. Meals will again be provided by Jan D'Ambrogio and her team. The read through will be on Sunday 26th September 2021 at 6.00 pm and rehearsals will be on Thursdays and Sundays.

We are starting to think about scripts, jokes, plots, dance moves, sets and scenery etc. We would love to hear from anyone interested in participating either front or backstage and we will add you to the group. Generally we aim for about 14-18 cast members, 3-4 backstage plus people for costumes, make-up, music and lights, props, curtain pullers. Usually we cater for age 16+ so as to not cross over with Youth Project but that is not written in stone. As most of you know, however, it's a Panto written and performed with an adult (albeit the inner child) audience in mind !!

Lastly, we are always looking for committee members to bring new ideas, expertise, and energy to Westbury Players. We've all had plenty of time for home based contemplation, so now is the time to start planning on getting up and at 'em, as Corporal Jones would have said. Let me know if you would be interested, or you could even dob someone else in who would be keen and I will chase them up. We want to hear from you.

Mark Landon

mark_landon@hotmail.com

*What has four legs, is big green and fuzzy,
and if it fell out of a tree would kill you?*

A pool table

Walmore Hill News

It is a wonderful thing to be back at school with our normal routines back in place! Our children have settled in to school again and seem so happy to be back.

The Cygnets and Swans Classes are continuing to grow...some new families have joined us recently and we have welcomed another child into our Pre-school group. We would love to keep on growing! Please get in touch with Jo in the school office if you would like to find out more about our Pre-school. We would love to hear from you. Our school Facebook page has all the details about our group.

My Cygnets Class are enjoying their topic 'The Scented Garden' and have been busy planting sunflower seeds this week. Some of the children have brought in packets of flower seeds to plant in our outdoor area, so hopefully our garden should look bright and colourful this summer.

We are trying to embrace all the special events that happen at this time of year. Things are a little different, of course, but we are still able to add a little excitement to our days!

We celebrated Red Nose Day last week and raised £104. The children loved to dress in their own clothes for the day and also shared their favourite jokes with their friends!

World Book Day took place during Lockdown this year and Steph, our P.E. teacher was able to exchange the £1 vouchers for a book for every child. These were given to the children last week.

We are looking forward to our Easter egg hunt next week and using face paints and head-dresses to help the children look like Easter bunnies
Mrs. Suzanne Loten, EYFS and Key Stage 1 teacher

The Tree Mystery



These are some of the trees that have mysteriously appeared along the A48 in Westbury and Minsterworth. They are all well-staked and properly mulched but, as yet, we have not been able to find out who has planted them. Clearly some consultation might have resulted in them being planted exactly where we wanted them but, as we all know, consultation can seem to take forever so I suppose we could have ended up with no trees at all.

The Wren

Often the first sign of a Wren in the winter garden is just a slight disturbance of fallen leaves at the base of a hedge or bush. In the cold light of a February morning this tiny bird can easily be mistaken for a mouse as it rummages half hidden amongst the leaf litter searching for food, mostly the smaller insects and spiders.



We've always got a couple of Wrens poking around the garden here at Elton. They seem to have

regular routes around the garden, and follow them quite predictably, even visiting the bird table if there are no bigger birds around. They are usually timid birds. Unlike Robins, who will sometimes follow you around the garden, a Wren will usually make itself scarce when humans appear, though it will give you a good scolding if you happen to be too close to the nest.

In winter we can sometimes go for a week or two without seeing one, so it's always a relief when one is eventually spotted. Winters can be very hard on their numbers, and a harsh one can kill 25%-75% of them despite their habit of clustering together for warmth. Sixty-one were once found crammed into a nest box in Norfolk, which must have been very cosy.

It's one of Britain's commonest residents, and features heavily in folklore here and in countries around the world – woe betide anyone who should harm a Wren! Despite some of the associations, the Wren is one of our most popular birds, coming 4th in a poll to find our favourite bird; a good performance

considering that it weighs in at just 7g-12g, no heavier than a £1 coin. But what the Wren lacks in physical size it more than makes up for with its song, with it being one of the loudest of our native birds.

From around now Wrens will begin to pair up for breeding, and the males are very territorial and protective of their patch. Extremely energetic, the males may build several nests in different locations and allow the female to select the one that takes their fancy. Here at Elton they will often build a nest in the woodshed, though I've never known it to be used, and often it's later destroyed by other birds. A popular spot has proved to be a small gap at the top of the door frame to the old brick 'privy' in the garden. The clue to the presence of this nest site was a tiny scrap of moss hanging down, but a discreet look revealed their typical nest with a neat round entrance hole.

During our first Spring here we had watched the construction of this nest, wondering all the time whether it would be used or whether the female would choose somewhere a bit more upmarket. Eventually the nest was found to have eggs. The weeks passed until eventually the chicks emerged! The door to the privy was often held slightly ajar, we were amazed one morning to see all the chicks lined up along the top of the door on parade with Mum or Dad clearly giving them some early instruction. Oh for a camera!
Tim Humphries

Freedom of the press in Britain means the freedom to print such of the proprietor's prejudices as the advertisers don't object to

Hannen Swaffer

Sports Report

Some progress at last as sports clubs across the village digest new regulations designed to facilitate a return to sports. I shan't bore you all with the details but sadly the opening up process isn't in time to salvage the football and rugby seasons so we must wait until August/September before our brave lads return to action. Cricket looks more hopeful as signs of a cricket square emerging from its winter hibernation bring cheer to the club, although a certain amount of last year's adjustments are sure to remain.

Meanwhile, of course, senior management have to consider not just the physical deterioration of its sports men and women over the last few months but also the mental degradation brought about by sitting around for extended periods of time. Director of Football Tempest is acutely aware of the risks this brings on the football pitch, where quick intelligence and vision is a critical aspect of the game, he says, when startled into wakefulness.

Therefore, as a public service, we have developed the "Get Back to Sport Mental Agility Challenge" and feel sure that once our lads and lasses have worked through this then they will return sharp as a clever pin at the next training session.

So firstly:-

If you have 11 players starting a game, and have three substitutes available, how many players, in total, can you get onto the field in 90 minutes before the referee notices you have got 12 players on the pitch.

Secondly, in Rugby, if a try is worth 5 points, a conversion 2 points and a penalty kick 3 points, how many points do

the opposition need to score before the scoreboard starts to lean over because of the weight imbalance?

Now for a gentle number puzzle, in this case the ubiquitous Sudoku.

4	6	7	9	2	1	3	5	8
8	9	5	4	7	3	2	6	1
2	3	1	8	6	5	7	4	9
5	1	3	6	9	8	4	2	7
9	2	8	7		4	6	1	3
7	4	6	1	3	2	9	8	5
3	5	4	2	8	7	1	9	6
1	8	9	3	4	6	5	7	2
6	7	2	5	1	9	8	3	4

Now a more testing word puzzle.

Change a single letter each time, always making a new word to get from the first to the last word in five steps

1. CLIVE

2. _ _ _ _ _

3. _ _ _ . _ _

4. _ _ _ . _ _

5. RELEGATION

Geometry question. If the wind is blowing at a 90 degree angle and at 20mph and your kick for a conversion is taken from a 45 degree angle and 20 metres out, what degree of curvature and incline of the posts is the optimum for ensuring the kick is impossible to get between the posts.

6. Lastly two multiple choice questions.

Weed killer is best applied to :

a) Weeds, b) Grass or c) Lawnmowers

7. When a rugby pitch is marked out, should it be mentioned

A) Only when asked "Who marked out the rugby pitch?"

B) At church, during the Sunday morning service

C) Every week, on the football pitch touchline apropos nothing at all.

Matty Jones plays for Gloucester



Thanks to Pete Wilson who was able to capture this image from the TV

We have some actual sports news to report !!! And what news it is - big boys sport. Young Matty Jones, son of proud parents Carolyn and Dave Jones of Walmore Hill, made his debut on Saturday for Gloucester RFC against Harlequins in the Gallagher Premiership. I repeat, Gloucester RFC !

Notwithstanding Harlequins winning, (a minor point), this represented an outstanding achievement for young Jones and a deserved reward for hours and hours of training and practice in the brutally competitive world of professional rugby. At the tender age of nineteen, the sky is the limit for Matty, who has come through all the age group teams and the development squad at Gloucester. He has, presumably, already secured a lifetime supply of kedgeriee and kippers from his Uncle Rich from the kitchens of the Severn and

Wye Restaurant. All we can hope is that he doesn't do an Alex Cuthbert and suddenly remember his partial Welsh heritage....!

More sports news, of a more parochial and controversial nature, comes from the world of indoor bowls. We have learned that Alan Hyett has purchased a new wheelchair that both elevates and tips hydraulically. Using this technology he is now able to deliver his indoor bowl shot (if that's what it's called) at considerable gravity driven force if required. How opponents react to this development remains to be seen. Watch this space.

Mark Landon

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