

Crockernwell, Drewsteignton, Sandy Park, Venton, Whiddon Down

Drewsteignton Parish Post

ISSUE NO. 170

JUNE 2020

NEWS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

I hope with all this glorious weather you have been able to get out and enjoy it. With the lifting of some of the “Stay at Home” restrictions there has inevitably been some anxiety regarding visitors to the area. It has to be said that the vast majority of people are continuing to practice social distancing and we should not be put off by the very few who are not spatially aware and may accidentally encroach on the 2 metres “guidance”. Recent instances have been due to a lack of awareness, rather than a deliberate intention to make people uncomfortable. If you feel able, you could politely remind them of the social distancing rules.

We were delighted to welcome Cllr McInnes of West Devon Borough Council. He gave us an outline of the difficulties of keeping the council running in these difficult times. The £35m government grant for Health and Social care during this crisis fell short of the actual spend of £40m. He assured us that they will continue to support those in need. He also wanted to assure parents that schools would only be opened if it is safe to do so and when government recommendations are able to be followed. If you have concerns, you should contact your children’s school in the first instance.

Alice prepared policies to ensure that we can continue meeting and acting as a Parish Council in the current climate and these were duly approved. Alice also updated the asset register which a substantial increase in community assets, due mainly to the new play equipment. While we were discussing this, we have set in motion a proposal to ensure all the pubs in the parish are made “Assets of Community Value”; as currently only the Sandy Park Inn registered.

Due to the current crisis we have been unable to make site visits for planning applications, therefore we were unable to support a recent application and agreed hold a neutral view: Cllr Brennan reported that the planning appeal for the Whiddon Down farm shop, application no. 2701/18 is back with the Inspectorate to the applicants Retail Impact Assessment reports against the comments of local businesses and parishioners. If anyone has any new evidence, they can report this via the Inspectorate portal:

<https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/ViewCase.aspx?caseid=3230781>

Click on the "Make Representation" button if you wish to add your views.

Cllr Brennan provided a summary of the latest Castle Drogo Woodland Management Plan which would see restoration of ancient broadleaved woodland over the next 50 years, providing a more structurally diverse open woodland. The council resolved to write a letter in support of the plan.

Cllr James circulated the Dartmoor National Management Plan consultation document - council commented on the various sections. The clerk will fill out the form, pass to the councillors to amend as appropriate and send it back to Dartmoor National Park.

Alice updated us on the DAAT light works, to let us know that Western Power are unable to proceed at the moment as they are prioritising emergency work only. (cont.)

Likewise, the work on the carpark has been delayed as the contractor who is to do the work have been reassigned by Highways to do road works whilst the traffic is light. Cllr Redman informed us that the edges of the carpark are being cleared, however, this to, has been hampered by a white Micra which has been in the carpark for a considerable time, if anyone knows who this vehicle belongs to, could you ask them to move it so the work can be progressed.

Ysanne James

Drewsteignton Parish Precept Increase

All Council Taxpayers will have recently received their 2020/21 West Devon Borough Council Tax Bill. The breakdown of the amounts to be collected advises that the Parish Council Precept has increased by 7.3% for a Band D property.

Missing from the statement is in 2019/20 the Parish Council received a Tax Support Grant of £537, to increase Parish Council funds from the precept of £13,288 to a total budget of £13,825. With this understanding and after several years of not increasing the precept, the Parish Council approved an increase of 2%. With a budget of £14,102 the Parish Council committed to carry out repairs to the Drewsteignton Car Park and take on the lease of the toilet block.

Post approval of the precept, Councillors have recently been informed that the Tax Support Grant will not be paid in 2020/21 and that the Tax Base has reduced by 4 properties (1%). If this information had been available in advance, the Parish Council would have sought to avoid this level of increase. Frustratingly, there is no mechanism to reduce the precept as the Council Tax Bills have been sent out. The PC would advise parishioners who are facing financial hardship to be aware that the Borough Council has a Council Tax Reduction scheme to help people on a low income. More information is available via the following link; <https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/article/6636/Low-Income-Council-Tax-Reduction>

Drewsteignton Village Shop

Cheryl, Stuart, Judy & Flora would like to thank everyone for the support you have given to us following the burglary on Saturday 23rd May. We know such crimes are rare in this area but the messages and visits we have received have meant so much and are making it much easier to deal with.

We hope that by the time you read this the post office will be back open as usual. We are Determined that this terrible event will not put us off and we want to continue to serve our community as we have in the past.

Now the lockdown is easing please don't forget your local store, we are keeping to the social distancing rules and can still guarantee that the queue for the shop will be shorter than is it in the supermarkets.

Once again, thank you, your love and care has been so touching.

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This burglary was so vile and has struck Cheryl and Stuart very hard. The impact on the victims of a crime such as this are extensive and upsetting.

Our hearts go out to you both and we'll see you in the Village Shop. **Ed**



Drewsteignton Garden Club



The garden club has managed to find ways to sell their plants - from the end of a drive at Clifford Bridge and a drive in Chagford, both with honesty boxes - and we have raised over £640. The committee has decided to divide the money raised between the club for speakers, Devon Air Ambulance and South West Children's Hospice. One of the committee members has a table in the Jubilee Hall every Friday (when possible) and has raised over a thousand pounds in the past.

Bunny Johnstone



Our thanks to the wonderful gardeners - Jill, George, David and Ashley - who take care of the churchyard of **Holy Trinity Church here in Drewsteignton.**

The wildflower bank to the north is a riot of colour and wildly beautiful.

(This photo is rather more impressive if you're receiving the online copy in colour) **Ed**

Out in the Fields with God - Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The little cares that fretted me,
I lost them yesterday
Among the fields above the sea,
Among the winds that play,
Among the lowing of the herd,
The rustling of the trees, Among the
singing of the birds,
The humming of the bees.

The foolish fears of what might pass
I cast them all away Among the
clover-scented grass,
Among the new-mown hay,
Among the hushing of the corn,
Where drowsy poppies nod,
Where ill thoughts die and good are
born -

Out in the fields with God

News from Holy Trinity Church

First the snowdrops, then the daffodils and primroses, now the bluebells, campion, fox gloves and cow parsley...all of these have been absolutely magnificent this year and the wonderful poem above reminds us how incredibly lucky we are in this area to be living in such wondrous surroundings, not only in this terrible, surreal global situation, but in our 'normal' everyday lives. It would almost seem like the beautiful weather that we have been enjoying over the past couple of months has been sent to us deliberately to bring us a little bit of cheerfulness!

Every Thursday evening, without fail, the villagers of Drewsteignton have gathered, each at 3 metres distance, to thank all the NHS staff and other key workers for their dedication, energy and courage at this time. There is usually a competition between the two halves of the village, those to the west of the church and those to the east, as to who can clap, whistle and whoop loudest. Some even muster bells and tambourines in their enthusiasm for a special extra round of applause for our wonderful shop, which is currently providing the lifeline we need for so many of us in the village and beyond.

The church porch has become a crucial supply base for meals by Gary from the pub and also veg boxes from Chagfood. It is now a common sight to see villagers using the churchyard as a really lovely place to have those crucial conversations with the neighbours and friends with whom who we are unable to socialise normally. It makes for a great feeling of unity when several chats are overlapping amidst the beauty of the spring flowers between the gravestones and along the banks. And my goodness, don't we all thank the Lord each day for the signs of new life and hope that this season brings, and our great good fortune to be blessed with such surroundings at such a time.

Jane Hocking

WHIDDON DOWN VILLAGE HALL

Hello Fellow Lockdowners.

My last post was a little downhearted, so I'm glad to bring good tidings this month.

Work has begun on the Village hall and is progressing well. As you will recall, I was concerned about money and the cost of the urgent repairs and necessary maintenance whilst we had no income. I had already managed to reduce the monthly DD 's for utilities, to a minimum, thus keeping us out of debt and out of jail! I contacted the Council to enquire about a rate rebate and was delighted to learn that the Hall was eligible for a Business Grant, which has been duly awarded and banked! I am truly grateful to the Government for making this possible.

With this now easing our money worries, the Committee have decided to use some of the money to employ a local tradesman to freshen up the hall interior in preparation for re-opening. This way we give some of our good fortune back to the community.

We have also decided to postpone pig racing until next year whilst there is still so much uncertainty. It will happen, but not sure when. I will keep you updated.

I am so proud of our achievements to date and for all those to come. We are so fortunate to live in such a wonderful caring part of the country. Long may our communities remain kind, helpful and considerate to each other, keeping everyone safe and well for the future.

Best wishes,

Jenny Turner

Extract of anonymous email from a concerned Parishioner re. continued damage to Whiddon Down roundabout and community flower beds. SENT: 18 May 2020

The Police have asked for assistance to identify the vandal who has been destroying the community shrub and flower gardens and the roundabout garden in Whiddon Down. This individual has been busy for some time, destroying and stealing plants and shrubs, working covertly at night, leaving behind large footprints. The damage has seen sawn down a 7ft. Laburnam and a bushy 8ft. Buddleia in the area just past the vets also 20 young Holly trees, 1 Eucalyptus, 1 Sambucus Nigra, 4 Pittosporum and 2 Weigela have been stolen.

This winter the vandal/thief has progressively removed 95% of the 800 plants at the at roundabout, these include Potentilla, Monarchs Velvet, Ox Eye Daisy, Primroses, (cont.)

Campanula, Perennial Cornflower, Asters, Geraniums, Iberis, Euphorbia Fireglow, Honesty, Anaphalis snow in summer, Campanula, Forget me Knots and Canadian Plants. In March 2020 the roundabout was re-dug, some young plants were put in and it was reseeded with 23 varieties of seeds and kept watered during the dry period in April to encourage the multitude of baby seedlings. Around the nights of April 26th to 29th the vandal/thief struck again, first at the roundabout, where any emerging flower heads was cut off, and the fennel was cut down, more plants were removed and 70 % of the seedlings were stamped on or pulled out in order to kill them. The vandal then attacked the 3 community shrub and flower beds near the The Post Inn.

The Police have opened a case on this matter, damage and theft estimated at over £2,000, and they have asked for the public to be informed and to appeal for any information that might lead to a prosecution or if anybody have seen any suspicious activity in the area, please ring 101. Parishioners are asked to keep their eyes open for suspicious behaviour, particularly as this vandal may be active under cover of darkness. The community gardens are funded by generous donations from the Parish Council and many members of the public, those living locally or from surrounding villages and also from summer visitors, all who have been uplifted and delighted with the flower shows. It is very saddening that one person, can wilfully destroy the happiness of so many. This is a crime against everyone. Your help, **please**.

Great spotted terrorists

One of the joys of living in the countryside is the bird life which surrounds us. At this time of year, the birds seem to be at their happiest, singing their hearts out throughout the day. However, all is not as joyful as it might seem.

Last year we were thrilled to have spotted flycatchers nesting in a hole in our lincay. The eggs hatched successfully, and we kept an eye on the fledglings which seemed to be doing really well. Then, before they were ready to leave the nest, they suddenly disappeared, and the nest had clearly been interfered with. We wondered if squirrels were responsible, but there is no way they could have reached the hole which was halfway down a vertical wall. However, a great spotted woodpecker had been seen at the nest the day before.

Soon after we were consoled by watching a family of blue tits nesting in a box just outside our kitchen. Again, the eggs hatched successfully but the youngsters disappeared when they were very small. We had regularly seen a great spotted woodpecker pecking at the nest box hole, and our suspicions grew.

This year, a pair of pied wagtails to nested in a different hole in our barn wall, right opposite where we sit outside for breakfast in this fine weather. We were careful not to disturb them too much, and once again the babies seemed to be doing very well until exactly the same thing happened, the great spotted woodpecker having been seen investigating.

While we were initially thrilled to have a pair of great spotted woodpeckers regularly visiting our bird feeders, they are no longer welcome. We now have swallows nesting in the lincay for the first time in several years, and I've already seen the woodpecker follow them in on one occasion. Fortunately, they haven't yet laid any eggs, or possibly they've already had one clutch which has been destroyed and are working on a second.

According to our bird book great spotted woodpeckers eat insects, nuts and seeds. Unless ours are freaks of nature, they've clearly got it wrong, and they're just as predatory as magpies. I'll be interested to hear from anybody else who's observed similar behaviour.

Hugh Clench



STONE LANE GARDENS – OPEN



Stone Lane Gardens is open for visitors with social distancing advised. The lovely National Collection of Birch and Alder trees provides welcome shade from the summer sun and our water garden is at its most charming as the streams trickle through the arboretum's glades. Our tree nursery is taking orders as usual and purchases can be made via our web site or by phoning 01647 231 311. Although our annual Music Fest fund-raising event on 21 June is postponed this year, the trustees are delighted to announce that Dartmoor National Park has granted planning permission for a garden visitors' tearoom which will open later on this summer. All details are on our web site. Admission to the gardens is normally £6 for adults currently discounted to £5 for cash, with £2.50 for children and £15 for families of four. Card payment for tickets can be made by going to the web site www.stonelanegardens.com/shop. Summer car parking is at Long Lane, 2 miles from Drewsteignton and 2 miles from Whiddon Down. The Gardens are an RHS Partner Garden and a registered charity. Stone Lane Gardens, TQ13 8JU. For more information go to: www.stonelanegardens.com

Fox Close

I wanted to say a massive thank you to the committee at Fox Close who have given my dear friend Trelawney the tenancy at number 1.

I realised it might be nice to give everyone a little bit of information about Trelawney too. Some of you may have seen us over the past few years walking our dog Bruno or sometimes cycling or playing football in the playing field. Trelawney has a condition called Huntington's Disease (HD) which has changed his life dramatically in the last ten years.

Originally a Cornish lad, he trained as a silver service waiter and worked at some of the most prestigious hotels including the Savoy in London and the Westbury in Dublin. He has lived all over the world including spending time in Saint Luis in America, then later in Italy and Dublin with his Sardinian wife Milena.

Trelawney is a passionate surfer. As a young man he would walk for miles with his surfboard to reach the waves and spend hours in the water. This dedication paid off and he was later able to travel to Hawaii and surf with the likes of Kelly Slater and Laird Hamilton. A surfer's dream!

Sadly, he was diagnosed with HD just two months after watching his mum lose her 20-year battle with the condition.

HD is a brain degenerative disease which affects every part of you. Cognitive, behavioural and physical changes mean you eventually need full time care. It is a cruel disease which develops very slowly. With so few people having the condition there is a terrible lack of understanding within the medical (let alone wider) world. Care facilities are extremely poor for HD and rely on sedative type medications and PEG feeders to resolve the multitude of complications which arise. Trelawney is only 47 years old and does not fit into any of the care homes with his level of energy and need for real interaction and mental stimulation. He is an intelligent man and although the disease continues to progress, he miraculously maintains his awesome sense of humour! This is what captivates people lucky enough to get to know the real Trelawney who is an inspiration to all of us, his carers and friends, every day keeping life in perspective. Trelawney has lived with me in Drewsteignton in my tiny one bedroom flat since

(cont.)

February 2018. This was meant to be a very temporary arrangement for the maximum of one month after he was asked to leave yet another care home. Since this we have tried EVERY home that will accept HD in the South West. Each time I have found the increase in medication and lack of stimulation too much to bear and have collected him again. Many people told me to walk away but this was not a possibility. With the support of his neurologist, we slowly went through the hell of drug withdrawal which saw us walking in Fingle woods at all hours of the day and night! This eventually reduced the hell of hallucinations, and terrible nightmares until we were left with just the terrible reality of HD but without the constant complications of Benzodiazepines and anti-depressants. What a learning curve it has been. I know that Trelawney will continue to struggle each day with the progression of HD but at least he is living as much as he can for now.

He struggles now to speak or express himself, but his comprehension is still mostly good. He may not be able to respond to you if you smile at him or say hello, but he will appreciate it. There are no words to express how grateful we are to Drewsteignton parish for accepting him and offering him a secure home at Fox Close.

Thank you.

Robyn Petrie-Ritchie

Bird Notes

It has been a very dry month with a lot of sun and little rain, but we did have some easterly winds, and three nights of frost in mid-May which did not bode well for some people's vegetables. I have noticed many dead and black leaves on new growth on ash and oak trees in the valley bottoms where the frost hit hardest.

Almost everyone I have spoken with over the past two months has commented on the variety, volume and joy in the bird song, which has been wonderful in the village, the surrounding countryside and especially in the woods by the river Teign. Cuckoos have been recorded in the county since 12 April, but I didn't hear one locally until 2 May. I was taking my dog out at about 7am for a walk, and as I opened the back door, I heard what sounded like the second half of a cuckoo call but as it didn't continue, I thought no more about it. Later that day, I was contacted by a few people who had heard one calling for over an hour from a hedgerow close to houses east of the church. I've not heard one in the parish since but had recent reports of calling from the Hunters path in the Teign valley. The numbers of swallows and house martins in the village has gone up over the last month, which is good news, after very few around when they first arrived back, and I am really pleased we have swallows nesting in our woodshed again this year. I spotted the first two swifts over in the village on 26 April then saw five the following day so opened up my nest boxes, but it all went quiet until about 2 May when the numbers started increasing each day and I had swifts entering the boxes. In recent weeks, it has been wonderful to watch screaming parties of swifts whipping over the rooftops and I have counted about 30 birds over the village. When I see numbers such as these, I take pride in the fact that putting up nest boxes is working to increase the population of these amazing birds that are only with us for three months of the year.

Nightjars are another migratory species that winter in Africa and come here to breed. They are nocturnal and feed on moths and beetles on heathland and in woodland clearings. The males make a 'churring' call at dusk to attract female. Having heard they were back in Devon, I cycled up to the castle on 12 May, to see if they were back in the Teign valley, where I have observed them over the past few years.

(cont.)

On the way, I met some friends on a walk and while talking, we noticed a bird in the distance which looked interesting and slightly familiar. It was a red kite and flying with a further five. They flew towards Piddledown common and settled in a beech tree to roost for the night. Two were still in the area the next morning, one flew off to the north and the other one was just perching in a field near where they had been roosting. We also had two over the village at 8am in the morning of 22 May, which were seen by a few people. I didn't see any nightjars that first evening but heard they were churring on 19 May, so I went up the following evening. One started churring from 9.30 and flew over me whilst wing-clapping. They have a 60cm wingspan and are 30cm from bill to tail but only weigh 83gms. Their flight is quite jerky and almost moth-like, and I have now been up a few times and seen and heard them in a few places on either side of the Hunters path.

The Exeter peregrines have still not hatched their three eggs. Today (26 May) is the 38th day of incubation, and the current female normally lays eggs that hatch after 35 days. Whether this is due to her age, the eggs being infertile or the late arrival of the male, we don't know but it is the first time in 24 years that we will not have young peregrines fledge from St. Michaels church. It will be interesting to see on the webcam as to how long they will carry on incubating them before giving up. **Nick**

LETTERS: Just a follow up to Nick's piece in the May Post. It's fascinating how different the sightings are down here at Clifford Bridge. We don't often see swifts, and this year I haven't seen any swallows or martins. But we have heard a cuckoo. The first one was on Easter Sunday, April 12, when we heard it first at the top of St Thomas Cleeve, and then back here. We've heard it from our garden every few days since, and today heard it at the top of Cod Wood.

The pied flycatchers are back too, four nest boxes in use, about 10 eggs last Wednesday and one lady is already sitting. But of course, far more blue tits, and a couple of great tits using other boxes. **Rosemary Payne**

The Drewsteignton Parish Post

If you have trouble reading this publication please do let me know and a large-format version will be sent to you

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The Parish Post reserves the right to edit contributions and wishes to state that views expressed are not necessarily those of the Parish Post.

Contributions for the next edition by end of 25th March - Thank-you, **Ed**