

MERTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Public Annual Parish Meeting was held in the Clinton Hall on Monday 14th April 2014 at 7.30pm

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown, Collins and PCSO Sandra Brown.

Present were Councillors Horner (chair), Papworth, Down, Malcolm, Scantlebury and two parishioners.

Councillor Horner welcomed everyone to the meeting which then began with the Chairman's report: This year has been a very successful one for us in that we have seen 6 affordable homes finished. They are by all accounts very comfortable and well appointed. I was pleased that they have all been let to people who fulfilled the criteria of local needs. This was done without having to go further afield for applicants.

Our proposal to Torridge District Council for development of the village over the next 20 years has been submitted to TDC. This has been informally accepted as a good viable plan. With our help Clinton Devon Estates are ready to submit the first stage, to develop the field behind The Malt Scoop. It is hoped that this application will be put forward in the next few weeks.

Special thanks should be given to our clerk for all her work and help throughout the year. It is greatly appreciated.

Thanks to Cedric and Wendy Askew, John Luxton, and Mike and Mary Madders for looking after the flower beds around the Village. I hope that John Luxton recovers from his illness in the near future.

I would also like to thank the Clinton Hall Committee for running and maintaining our wonderful village hall, which continues to be a great asset to the village.

Graham Heaman then gave his report of the Wildlife Group. The idea of a Merton and Huish Wildlife Group was formed in April 2013 by Graham Heaman. Since then it has gone from strength to strength, with current membership at 20+. The inaugural year has been a great success with a number of activities and talks enjoyed by members and non-members alike.

Various walks have included two visits to the Jubilee Copse in Merton, Blinsham Marsh, Bagbeer Holt, Ashmoor, Halsdon Wood, Cookbury Forest, and Greatwood to Golden Pool. During the walks the group has been looking out for butterflies, birds, otters, and deer (successfully) and learning about flora and tree identification. Future walks will continue with similar purposes. The group is very grateful to Lord Clinton who has granted permission to access to parts of the estate not normally available to the public.

Informative talks have been given by a number of speakers/organisations – DWT about the history and purchase of Meeth Clay Pits, Jan Whittington and a talk on bats and dormice, Matt Edworthy from the North Devon Biosphere. More talks are planned including fungi identification and deer management.

The group has been in contact with the Clinton School and plans are underway to help and advise the school with their wildlife area and pond, and liaise with Devon Wildlife Trust, The North Devon Nature Improvement Area and the North Devon Biosphere. The school is planning projects on “The Great Outdoors” as part of the national curriculum with which the group and other aforementioned organisations will assist. We have also pledged to supply more bird/bat/dormouse/hedgehog boxes for the school.

The Group also enjoyed a competition night trying to identify samples of local trees, and a Christmas Buffet at the Malt Scoop.

Last year the group successfully applied to the Merton Moncks for funds towards the purchase of materials for bird/bat/dormouse nest boxes and for the installation of a nest box camera. Over 30 bird nesting boxes have been manufactured and erected in sites around the village. The Group believes this is of benefit to the local community and wildlife and that it also raises awareness and interest in local wildlife issues. As an adjunct to this the Group has purchased in bulk several kinds of bird food and is offering this for sale at very competitive prices. A stall at Merton Vintage Rally has been booked where the group plans to raise awareness of the group, showcase our activities and offer various wildlife related products for sale.

A full programme of activities is planned through to March 2015, walks always weather permitting.

Janette Newell then gave a brief report on the Merton Moncks. The Merton Moncks is a Charitable Trust set up to run and manage the Merton Vintage Rally which was previously run by the Friends of the Clinton School. The aim is to raise funds for the community which includes Merton, Petrockstowe, Peters Marland and Huish. Organisations are requested to help at the Vintage Rally and in return are able to apply for funds from the profits. Each organisation applies with a reason and amount required for their project. Last year a profit of over £5300 was raised and most of this was distributed amongst local organisations from the parishes already named. The accounts are on view at the Clinton Hall. The next date for the Vintage Rally is Sunday 4th May 11am – 5pm.

Jill Malcolm then gave a report of the Clinton Hall. The last year has been an interesting one for the hall. Louise Rollason took over the chairmanship of the committee, and the hall has continued to throw up problems to be solved. We lost the playgroup due to lack of numbers, they moved to the school. We do, however, have a thriving toddler group in the hall on Friday mornings. The playgroup room has been turned into a dedicated gym with some new equipment, the numbers are encouraging and classes are planned for the under 16s who cannot use the gym on their own.

Once again the bars have been providing a good source of income, we have held a cider and pasty walk, a jumble sale, Christmas Fair and last but not least the Panto returned after a ten year absence, and was enjoyed by all.

As always it is not easy to balance the books. We have had major problems with the hot water system, which have now been resolved. Work is to be done on the underfloor heating pipes in the summer to attempt to clear any blockages.

The hall is being well used with Pilates, the Craft Group, Friendship Group, SMB, toddler Group and some groups of keen Badminton players. Paul Hipkin held some gardening sessions in the summer to clear the front beds.

We have a full programme of events coming up including a sweet 16 dance to celebrate the 16th anniversary of the hall with Cover'd. A hypnotist has been booked for November and a soul band in October. A jumble sale and Sports Day are being organised. The Panto will be back and also the Christmas fair. Finally the hall has joined the 21st century with the installation of CCTV.

Wendy Askew gave a report for The Friends of All Saints Church who had a good fundraising year. As a result of helping at the Vintage Rally we received a substantial amount of funds for which we were very grateful. We will be helping again this year. We also had a successful cream tea, the barn dance was great fun but could have benefitted from a higher turnout of people. The Craft group made a further amount for the funds. The Harvest supper was very successful and the Friends received half of the money raised. This year we have purchased a new under pew heating system, and purchased units for the "kitchen area" of the church. Thanks are given to Alison and Barry for sourcing and fitting the units. Thanks are also given to all those who work so hard raising money for the church and those who support the events. Thanks go to Des, Cedric and Royce for their help with odd jobs and transporting rubbish to the tip. The school are making use of the sound system which was purchased with the Friends fundraising.

The church path is the next major expense. No news as to what can be done to make it safer as yet. Installation of water has been put on hold due to cost. A quote of over £3000 has been received to refurbish the Lych Gate with new roof etc. but this will be deferred for the time being as the path will take precedence. A programme of events is in the pipeline, watch out for more details. The Friends are an open committee and anyone can come along to help.

Tim Horner gave a report of the Play Ground Committee. The playground committee is still in its infancy. We currently have £2218.00 in the bank, towards a target of £35000. We will be applying for grants and are also planning a range of fund raising events such as a quiz night, sponsored walk, beer festival, coffee mornings, barbecue and cinema nights. Some initial drawings have been submitted, but we have also contacted a local supplier, based at Frithelstock, as we would like to support local businesses wherever possible.

The meeting continued with a discussion on the purchase of the defibrillator and training. It was agreed to put an article in the Merton Monthly asking for volunteers to train to use the defibrillator. A Wednesday night seemed a good time at 7pm. The clerk will contact the SW Ambulance Service to arrange this.

Graham Heaman asked if the Parish Council could help with the problem of dog fouling at Jubilee Wood. The CDE asked for the problem to be raised with the Councillors. The Clinton School children use this area but have decided not to visit it in future due to the dog fouling. This will be discussed at the Council meeting following this meeting

The Annual Parish meeting closed at 8.10pm. The two parishioners left the meeting.