

# ANNUAL BERGH APTON PARISH MEETING – Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022

---

## 1. Chairman's Welcome

David Skedje warmly welcomed everybody to the meeting.

## 2. Apologies for Absence

Parish Councillors Hugh Porter, Sheri Winn and Steve Mitchell, District Councillor John Fuller, Pat Mlejnecky (BACAT), Rob Bates (Village Fete Committee) and Paul Blazer (Bergh Apton Parish Charities)

## 3. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

## 4. Reports from Parish Organisations

### BERGH APTON PARISH CHAIRMAN – David Skedje

I would like to begin by thanking Angela Tregear for being such an incredibly supportive Clerk. This is Angela's first Annual Parish Meeting, as we were not able to hold these in 2020 and 2021 due to Covid.

All the Councillors have been very involved, and there has been a very high attendance at meetings. Also, it is our practice to spread tasks around Councillors where possible.

The Parish Council was able to continue to function successfully during the pandemic, as we were authorised by Government to conduct our meetings by Zoom.

Our first virtual meeting was held on 9th June 2020, and it was not until a year later on 22nd June 2021 that we were able to resume meeting in public in the Village Hall. During that year, Angela visited Janet and myself so that cheques and minutes could be signed, and of course we could all communicate by email.

In a rural village like Bergh Apton, speeding is an issue. We have few 30mph limits. Sheri will talk about the Community Speedwatch team, which she oversees. As ever, we are indebted to Mike Rimmer and Richard Philips for maintaining our SAM2 speed monitor.

We are very pleased that the Village Hall Committee agreed to the installation of the adult exercise equipment and we were delighted, following advice from Action Play and Leisure, to obtain a grant of £6725, which is 100% of the cost of the equipment minus the VAT, which we can reclaim. We were told that the outdoor gym was built in Gdansk, Poland!

I would love to see some form of group set up to organise sessions to use the equipment and also the table tennis table, which is adjacent. Any volunteers?

Some of you may have noticed that we have been able to reduce our precept from £21 to £20, a reduction of 5%. We hope that this small token is welcome in the current inflationary climate.

Lastly, I will end on a sad note; most of you will have known Mick Hardesty, the builder, who was often seen working in the village. His sudden death came as a great shock to us all.

## **BERGH APTON PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS – Angela Tregear – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer - Accounts Commentary 2021-22**

During the year the Parish Council recorded Actual Income of £11,533 and Expenditure of £19,434. Year-end cash balance is £16,293 which includes a CIL earmarked reserve of £8,250, leaving £8,274 in the general fund. (All figures rounded to the nearest £)

Income consisted of Precept payment of £4200, a VAT refund of £607, and a grant from the Lottery Heritage Fund of £6,725 for the new outdoor gym. (This was the total cost of the outdoor gym, minus the VAT, which I have claimed back.)

The main expenditure this year has been the outdoor gym (£8,070 including VAT), a grant of £3,480 to BACT for bridges across the Chet to allow access to the new part of the nature reserve, and the purchase of a new Parish noticeboard (£2452 including VAT of £408 - claimed back, should be paid into bank account next month).

Other expenditure includes £639 towards the cost of churchyard maintenance, £342 for playpark repairs and inspection and £300 for the grinding out of a tree stump behind the village hall.

Regular on-going costs of note are the Clerk's salary £2,458, insurance £523, dog bin emptying £178, payroll and pension services £266, village website £143, village hall hire £54 and a newsletter contribution of £48.

### **COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH TEAM – Sheri Winn**

Speed kills. It is a fact. Many drivers like to feel they own the road, but there is a reason why there are 30mph limits through villages – and that's safety. A child hit by a car going more than 30mph is far more likely to be killed than one going at less than 30mph. There are good reasons why the police, courts and insurance companies take a dim view of speeding drivers.

The Bergh Apton Community Speedwatch came about at the request of the Parish Council after concern with the increasing amount of fast traffic passing through the village. As co-ordinator I went through a lengthy set-up process in the summer of 2021. Initially six volunteers came forward and we each had to complete several forms and be vetted by the police. Once accepted, we watched a one-hour online training film and signed forms to say so.

Once these were signed off, two retired volunteer policemen visited and did risk assessments. After deliberation, they selected two sites: one at Tinkers on Mill Road, and the other at Cranleigh on Threadneedle Street. Both are homes of our volunteers. We were unable to get a speed watch site on Church Meadow Lane as there wasn't enough length between the 30mph sign at one end and Threadneedle Street at the other. I did try – was aware a Church Meadow Lane parent was concerned about speeding on this road.

Following selection of sites, the group received on-site training from the police in October. They told us that the intention of Community Speed watch is *education*: to make drivers more aware of their speed as they pass through a 30mph area and to slow down if they are going too fast.

We were supplied with a radar gun, neon orange Community Speed Watch jackets and two signs which are placed on the verge at either end of the watch when we are active. We were shown

where to stand, how to use the radar gun and what to note. The radar gun has a range of 450 metres – further than many drivers are aware. We tend to catch drivers as they come towards us from a distance or moving away – such as speeding to or from Alington. The radar gun tracks the top speed of each car;

the fastest we tracked was 56mph on Mill Road. Any drivers tracked at 35mph or over are noted on the return form. Almost all drivers pass by our team slowly – some going at 20mph.

As well as noting the speed of a vehicle, we record its registration, colour, make and model. We note the team members present and the time of the watch. We also make observations such as the driver's direction, the weather, and the occasional rude gesture.

We were finally ready to set up our first speedwatch in mid-November, with two one-hour sessions a week, alternating between Mill Road and Threadneedle Street. Each team has a minimum of three volunteers – one on the gun and two pairs of eyes. In the first three weeks we had five speedwatch sessions and returned 16 speeding drivers.

Once each watch is complete, I send in the 'return' form to the community police team. They follow up and send letters to drivers and the process is out of our hands. The speed of the driver determines whether they receive a warning letter, a second letter with a caution or an immediate fine.

I receive monthly reports from the community police. These show that, on average 20 letters are sent to speeding drivers each month from the Bergh Apton watch. That would be around 240 a year. It is difficult to quantify the total effect we are having. 20 speeders caught in a month are 20 speeders who are breaking the law as they pass through our village. Hopefully, they will drive with more care and respect – especially for the pedestrians. Our very presence helps to remind drivers to take more care.

In March, PC James King joined our early morning speedwatch session. He praised the keenness of our team and said he wished there were more villages with our community spirit.

We know we are doing well and helping to make drivers aware of their speed. There is one particular driver who we caught who is no longer driving like a lunatic – who is now taking much more care. So we must be having some effect!

We now have a team of nine volunteers and are keen to recruit more people. If you would like to support the community, help to make the roads safer and have fun, please join us!

## **BERGH APTON WEBSITE – Steve Whitby**

Since the last Parish Meeting the Bergh Apton Parish website has undergone an amount of maintenance and update. In particular, the components that make up the site (behind the scenes) have been very significantly slimmed down. The ability to buy online has been removed. By removing many unused components, the site has been made more secure and easier to maintain.

The site has been brought up to date with the latest requirements for access by people with visual impairment or other challenges with accessing a website. The look and feel of the website has been simplified.

As well as hosting all the Parish Council documents, the website also supports any of the Bergh Apton groups who wish to make use of it -for those who already do so then please do check regularly that content is correct and up-to-date; for any group who wish to add content (including information or contact forms for example) then please get in touch, I will be happy to add or amend content.

## **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR FOR BROOKE WARD – John Fuller**

Your local District Council was responsive and flexible enough to ensure that every resident and business was looked after during the Pandemic. Every bin was collected. The fridges of the needy were filled. But with the difficulties of lockdown receding behind us, we now have a detailed plan for the recovery that ensures that South Norfolk is a great place to build a business or raise a family.

Our plan is focused in every Parish In South Norfolk with opportunities for towns and villages to invest in infrastructure whilst protecting and enhancing our environment with low-carbon opportunities and projects that help everyone enjoy our open spaces, public realms and lead healthy and active lifestyles.

My report below explains how we will be doing that as part of a whole plan to make South Norfolk one of the best places to live in the Country.

### **Moving on from Covid**

When the chips were down, the District Council stood up in each of our 120 parishes and the residents and businesses in each of them.

For many the weeks spent in lockdown have become a distant memory. Whilst Covid may have become less dangerous as a result of the vaccination program, the hangover remains and, as the Country gets back on its feet, the District Council is playing a leading role in supporting local businesses, families and individuals.

During lockdown, we distributed over £1m per week to thousands of local businesses to sustain and keep them alive to the point of recovery. Retail and hospitality businesses had special attention including some businesses which fell through the gaps of the national schemes, for example beauticians and dentists. As a result, our local economy is best placed to recover.

A third of our staff were redeployed to support families and individuals – whether it was Gym instructors helping our refuse crews ensuring that no bins were missed or other staff seconded to the Norfolk & Norwich working as orderlies in the Hospital.

Our Help Hub went much further than elsewhere to ensure those in most need were supported, especially coordinating volunteers to ensure the vulnerable with families in other part of the country were looked after.

As Covid recedes, the cost of living is becoming harder so we have set-aside hundreds of thousands of pounds for families who find themselves in an unexpected crisis over-and-above our normal financial support via Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. This includes one-off help with rental deposits, fuel payments and other expenses for those in severe financial distress. If you become aware of someone really struggling, we can help.

## Ukrainian Evacuee Crisis

Big Hearted South Norfolk families represent about a third of all the offers of help in Norfolk in the Homes for Ukraine scheme. As Ukrainian men fight to defend our way of life thousands of miles away, we have a responsibility to provide security for their women, children and the elderly. South Norfolk Council was the first in East Anglia to make arrangements to use Council Offices as a reception centre for displaced families. Whilst the national bureaucracy has been frustrating, it's our local job to ensure that the Ukrainians land on their feet whilst also making sure that host families are supported with a network that is focused on maintaining the matches until our guests are ready to return home.

It isn't all about Ukrainians though. Local families can find themselves in need so we have just embarked on a £100k refurbishment of our short-term temporary accommodation aimed at families who find themselves in a muddle or for the victims of domestic violence. This short term accommodation provides a breathing space whilst our officials work to sort out the problems and get a long-term roof the heads of the vulnerable.

## Business as Usual

Both Covid and the Ukrainian crisis have shown how a flexible and responsive Council can respond to unexpected events to keep local families safe and secure. But we must not forget the importance of supporting the economy and enhancing our environment

We know that many voluntary, sporting and community support groups suspended action for 18 months. But now they need help to get started once more and breathe life into worthwhile community projects that were paused.

So we have a four prong plan to support community and parish groups reinvigorate the social infrastructure in our towns and villages.

## Tripling the CAF Fund

Our Community Action Fund provides one-off capital grants to community groups to enhance community facilities or projects. Up to £15,000 can be awarded to any one scheme but grants of £5,000 are the most usual size. This year we have tripled the total budget to £150,000 and will be shortly inviting bids from Parishes and local Groups. We will be focusing this money on smaller parishes who are less likely to have large Community Infrastructure Levy receipts held by the Parish Council. We expect to be able to award funds in July so if you're aware of capital proposals from parish organisations, environmental, sports or social clubs please ask them to call me.

## CIL Loan Fund

Larger settlements have received tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds from developers paying an infrastructure levy for homes built in their area. Oftentimes this money is paid over several years so it's difficult to know when a Parish or Town can make a start on mitigating the cumulative impacts of local growth. We know that infrastructure improvements should be made up-front so we have started a process where we will lend nearly all the expected amount of CIL received by a parish up front so improvements can be started immediately rather than waiting for years. Details will be announced in June.

## Carried forward member grants

Finally, our popular scheme of ward member grants provides £46,000 to be spent on micro projects across the district. Each Councillor has £1000 to award to schemes with minimal paperwork and instant payment to support play groups, community cafes and other small scale activities that make a big impact.

### **Support for our Environment**

With energy prices being what they are, reducing energy consumption and planning for a post-carbon world is not just good for our environment but it's also good business. So we are ensuring that our local economic recovery is a green one. And we're making sure the Council is playing its part in moving to a post-carbon world.

### **Every Parish Invited to have solar chargers**

We will shortly be inviting every single parish or town that wants to install electric charging points to have one, called off from a bulk contract that we are currently negotiating. At the moment, only residents with off-street parking in their gardens can benefit from an electric charging point. That's not fair on people who live in terraces, flats or apartments where they can never guarantee to park right outside their home.

So we will be seeking to work with Parishes or Village Hall committees to host charging points. The details around insurance, billing and maintenance will be explained in the next few months. Whilst we work up the details, take a moment to think where you'd put a charging point in your village or town.

Elsewhere we are increasing the number of points in our own public car parks and at our leisure centres so there is robust coverage for everyone, not just those with long gravel drives.

### **Improving and enhancing the Wherrymans Way**

The environment isn't just about being low-carbon. We are spending some of the CIL money raised from developers to improve the Wherrymans' Way footpath along the River Yare between Norwich and Reedham Ferry. Making access to the Countryside easier is a good thing and especially if it encourages healthy and active lifestyles.

We hope that people will want to walk between Norwich and Loddon, enjoying the open air and supporting some of our riverside pubs along the way and then get the bus home. The banks along Chet River will be repaired and the footbridge replaced to make this happen.

Separately, we will be improving land at Pyes Mill in Loddon for paddleboard and picnic use as well as introducing a number of other circular walks in a Green project that will be dedicated to Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee.

Elsewhere, last month we opened a new 16km trail in the Wymondham area.

### **Decarbonising the Broads**

Elsewhere on the Broads we will be installing electric hook-ups in popular mooring spots to support our riverside pubs but also to remove the need for boaters to run engines to charge their batteries, which causes so much noise and smoke pollution. Supporting pubs and decarbonizing the broads is

just one way in which we are helping the Southern Rivers move with the times to boost environmental tourism, which supports so many local jobs.

### **The Low Carbon Council**

We will be investing in solar panels in all our Council Buildings including our leisure centres. And we are entering into a ground-breaking contract to monitor air quality across the district with a network of linked sensors. Our refuse vehicles are now trialing new lower carbon fuels based on recycled oils to minimize emissions. Our recycling rates have never been higher and well over one third of residents have a brown bin, which diverts garden waste from landfill or incineration.

### **We're moving**

You may have heard that we are in our fifth year of a close co-operation with Broadland Council. The joint working already saves South Norfolk taxpayers £1.2m per year – the equivalent of 15% of our share of Council Tax.

Our staff work seamlessly for the two organisations and bringing them together under one roof will not just save a further £700,000 per year, but it will reduce our energy consumption by 84%. The move is likely to take place in September. The office at Broadland Business Park is closer, quicker, better served by public transport and more convenient for two thirds of South Norfolk residents. For those who will be further away, we are opening an outreach office in Diss and also equipping a mobile office with computer links and printers so that our officer will go where they are needed, rather than expect everyone to come to the office.

### **The New Local Plan**

The majority of the new local plan will be received from the Inspectors in a few months. But in the 100 or so smaller settlements in South Norfolk we expect to publish detailed small-scale development proposals in August/September for final consultation. When we asked for views in the Autumn, we received over 1000 responses so that's what's taking the time on finalising the detailed plan.

Development proposals will be focused in our 47 village clusters and, in total, about 75 development sites will contain about 1200 homes – an average of 16 homes each. Clusters are groupings of villages loosely based on primary school catchment sustaining not only the schools themselves but also the social connections that drive local village life and community halls, bus services, leisure facilities etc, as well as supporting the local economies of the clusters. Small scale development in smaller villages keeps settlements alive and provides choice for those who have no wish to live in the larger towns or the City. That it helps the economic network of local plumbers, electricians and brickies is a bonus.

### **Hedgerow in Cooke's Road**

I have been engaged in ensuring that the hedgerow that was removed to provide an access has been replaced. Whilst it took longer than hoped to get the owner to undertake the work, the threat of enforcement ensured that the new planting took place at the right time of year and the new planting should be becoming established this spring. *(The chairperson commented that the hedge was not reinstated exactly as it was prior to its' illegal removal, as a new fence and access gate have also been installed – without planning permission.)*

Our work continues and I am proud that our Council combines all this with amongst the lowest Council Tax for a District Council in the country.

*(Our County Councillor, Kay Mason-Billig, very kindly took questions on John Fuller's report, as he was unable to attend the meeting. There was interest in the prospect of an electrical charging point at the village hall.)*

## **COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR LODDON DIVISION – Kay Mason-Billig**

The last year (my first year) as your County Councillor has been a very busy one. I have been pleased to get out to many villages in the division and meet councillors and residents and have often brought along my Highways Engineer to look at some of the issues we face.

To date I have had walk arounds with Bergh Apton, Alington with Yelverton, Chedgrave, Loddon, Woodton and Claxton. Brooke is in the pipeline to be done soon. If any other villages would like a walk around to highlight local problems, please let me know.

Some of the issues I have tackled so far have included: Pot holes, flooding, blocked gullies, pedestrian safety issues, clearing detritus from roadways, cutting back trees and hedges to increase safety and streetlights improvements. I have also been reporting speeding issues to the Police and have requested extra visits from them where we have particular problems.

Other things that I have been involved in with residents include: helping with school transport, assisting a blue badge holder with their renewal and solving flooding issues from highways water runoff with individual householders. I was also able to represent the wishes of the residents of Seething in the recent planning application for the lagoons, to make sure it got refused.

Some of the major schemes that I have seen completed in and around the A146 include: the new Loddon Roundabout, flooding relief at Yelverton, the overhanging trees at Thurton, not forgetting new signage and gully clearance in many areas.

Items which I am working on and hope will come to fruition next year include: improvements to the Chedgrave A146 junction, new village gateways, improved signage and an extension to the 50mph speed limit at the Hellington Bends. I am also involved in the ongoing flooding issues that many villages face.

I expect the next 12 months will also be exciting ones and I look forward to meeting with you and helping where I can with local issues.

If I can help in any way, you can contact me at [kay.masonbillig.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:kay.masonbillig.cllr@norfolk.gov.uk)

## **BERGH APTON COMMUNITY ARTS TRUST – Pat Mlejnesky**

### **ONE FOR THE ROOK**

‘The out of the ordinary is right under your nose’

‘One for the Rook’ took place last summer. It was an acknowledgement and celebration of the wild world around us, the creatures, plants and insects which are our ‘neighbours’. We followed in the footsteps of those beautiful and influential books, ‘Lost Words’ and ‘Lost Spells’ written by Robert Macfarlane and illustrated by Jackie Morris, but it was very much our own pathway we created. ‘One for the Rook’ was a trail of about 1 ½ miles in the countryside around Bergh Apton’s church. There were twelve ‘stop, look and listen’ sites, some with music and words to enjoy. The trail opened in the church porch which became a tiny theatre and then the intrepid ‘travellers’ went off to be interested, intrigued and inspired. To sharpen wits there was a puzzle full of trickery to solve. The trail finished in the church with music and readings and lanterns to admire and videos to watch.

The trail was quiet and contemplative and could have been walked as a meditation.

About 600 people walked the trail and among the hundreds of comments this one summed them all up:

‘You have once again managed to lift people out of the ordinary and into some magic.’

Very recently we have held Writing Workshops with Hugh Lupton and Dry Point Printing with Di Byford. All much enjoyed and well worthwhile.

## **BERGH APTON CONSERVATION TRUST – Tony Davy**

The years since my last report, dominated as they have been by Covid-19 and lockdowns, have been an era of mixed fortunes. On the one hand, our programme of activities for members and community engagement generally have had to be severely curtailed, but on the other hand we have made tremendous progress with our conservation activities.

First and foremost, we have more than doubled the size of our nature reserve to 22 acres, with the acquisition of Welbeck Marsh in October 2020. We are grateful to Robert Waters for the generous terms of this purchase and to the donor organisations who made it possible to raise a large sum so quickly: Bergh Apton Parish Council, South Norfolk District Council, Bergh Apton Village Hall Committee and the Geoffrey Watling Charitable Trust. Only this month, we have been able to consolidate access to Welbeck Marsh with two new footbridges. These have been constructed using substantial green oak timbers and will provide a circular route around the new land from Valley Marsh. We are again grateful to Bergh Apton Parish Council for a munificent grant for materials, and to Steve Whitby who designed and fabricated the structures. Many members and volunteers (including 6 on a volunteering day from Aviva) have been involved in the construction. With this improved access, we will be planning a public opening event for Welbeck Marsh.

This has also been the time when our *Chet Valley B-Line* really took off, seeking to provide a corridor with stepping-stones of pollinator-friendly habitat from the source of the river Chet in Poringland to its confluence with the Yare at Hardley. The breakthrough came when, after the assistance of Norfolk Wildlife Trust, we were awarded a grant by the *Water, Mills and Marshes* project under the

auspices of the Broads Authority and the Lottery Heritage Fund. With this, we have deployed interpretation boards, and mapped almost 100 locations along the valley that mark enthusiastic collaborators, who have been awarded our 'roundel' to display. Several local landowners have adapted their management practices. We have planted two pollinator-friendly hedges (so far) and distributed quantities of wildflower seed. Local primary schools are receiving promotional visits to recruit pupils to the pollinator cause - and we have advised like-minded local groups. Perhaps the most significant accolade came in September 2021, when the Norfolk Branch of CPRE declared the *Chet Valley B-Line* winner in its '*Biodiversity Champions*' category.

Before the plague, 2019 had seen our Silver Jubilee year. Celebrations included the first public viewing of our 18-minute promotional video, with its visually stunning aerial views. This was made for us by Graeme Taplin of Drone Photography Ltd and can be still viewed from our website.

I cannot conclude without recording, once again, that we mourn the tragic loss of our long-standing Secretary, Trustee, member and friend, Stephanie Crome.

## **BERGH APTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP – Linda Davy**

Bergh Apton Local History Group has been fortunate to be able to recommence our activities following the easing of Covid restrictions. In the last year we have enjoyed a guided walk around the village, the reopening of The Hare, a visit to the Caistor archaeological dig site, a guided tour of the church and a number of meetings in the village hall. We have a full programme arranged for this year which we hope will be attractive to our membership.

Our major new activity is our participation in the community archive project. We were selected to join this project, overseen by the Norfolk Record Office, where we have been given support, guidance, training and advice on how best to store, record and improve accessibility on the archive material we hold. We have been allocated a sum of money to buy archiving material, a dedicated laptop and oral recording equipment. Online training sessions and remote access training have been undertaken by members and we have a good archiving group who are meeting regularly to sort and classify the materials. Our aim is to have everything classified and accessible online for everyone to use. We meet monthly in the village hall and we welcome anyone who would like to join us. Lorie Lain-Rogers and Mike Rimmer, following specialised advice, have upgraded our storage unit at the village hall by insulating the walls and installing shelving. We have named this storage unit 'Hut 4' in memory of Phyllis Ride who worked at Bletchley Park and we very much appreciate being allowed the use of this facility.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we do not seem to be reaching the many newcomers who have moved into the village. We have deliberately designed many events to be outdoors and designed to cover areas of local interest. We are also now critically short of members for our management committee. If more members cannot be recruited I'm afraid that the future of the group is uncertain. The archiving project can and must continue but organising the social events that we all so enjoy needs more active participation and this is proving to be a challenge.

## **TREE WARDEN'S REPORT – Linda Davy**

This is my final Tree Warden report as I have tendered my resignation to the Parish Council. Although the post is an interesting and educational one, the original aims and objectives have changed so much that I no longer feel that it is a position I wish to hold. Despite doing my best to liaise with housing developers and individual land owners it has become apparent that, with no real authority, my views and advice are largely ignored.

Originally the Tree Warden was a link between the parish and the District council identifying potential problems concerning trees, hedgerows and other natural areas. I was sent all the planning applications and could easily identify areas of concern. In addition, I was approached both formally and informally by individuals for advice. I had direct contact with Council officials and this was a two-way dialogue. Citing Data Protection, I was no longer sent planning applications but had to search online. Amendments and re submissions proved very difficult to keep track of. In 2015 South Norfolk Council withdrew their support and a new organisation called The South Norfolk Tree Wardens Network was formed. The emphasis changed, at first gradually, and then entirely, to the wider picture of tree conservation in all its forms which is, of course, a

very worthwhile and interesting venture. However, talks on tree identification, tree diseases and practical field projects such as tree planting and conservation work throughout the county overlaps with my commitment to our own splendid nature reserve here in Bergh Apton.

I think the need for vigilance and safe guarding of our natural landscape is of ever increasing importance and I'm sorry that the role has changed.

## **BERGH APTON VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – Sue Bewick**

Since the Covid pandemic our hall continues to be well maintained by the management committee and cleaning staff. and events have occurred in line with Covid restrictions. When the pandemic struck in March 2020 our management committee put in place the government guidance and we sadly had to close for business until the restrictions lifted. Now thankfully our hall is gradually getting back to normal. Prior to the closure, our hall was used by regular groups such as the weekly dog training classes, yoga, parish council, painting group, Icen Microscopy group, the Bergh Apton society and the singers, as well as regular bookings for parties and other events. These events are taking place once more.

We have been able to maintain the village hall and complete repairs as necessary and we have also had to replace the plate covering the septic tank as an unfortunate accident with a heavy truck cracked the top plate and John Ling who voluntarily helps the trustees with maintenance managed this project for us. John has been instrumental in maintaining the hall throughout this time, so on behalf of all the trustees, we say a very big thank you to him!

The Parish council have very generously helped our committee with various projects over the last two years or so with the CIL Monetary funds and Heritage Lottery funding. We now have a fully functional outdoor tennis table and some brand-new outdoor gym equipment.

As chairman I would like to extend thanks on behalf of the village hall management committee to the Parish council and we look forward to continuing our relationship with yourselves.

Let us hope that life will continue to return to some semblance of normal post Covid 19.

## **BERGH APTON NEWSLETTER – John Ling**

The newsletter has been published six times in the last year - every two months from February to December.

It has continued to receive the financial support of nine local organisations of which seven are Bergh Apton's institutions; the Community Arts Trust, Conservation Trust, Local History Group, Parish Council, PCC, Village Hall and Bergh Apton Society. Two private organisations – The Bertram Charitable Trust and Country Holiday Cottages Norfolk (*that has letting properties on Sunnyside and at Bussey Bridge*) are also greatly valued and appreciated supporters.

In money terms, the cost of producing each two-monthly edition in its 12-page full-colour format has cost £126 and represents a unit cost of under 50p. That has provided enough copies to deliver to every house in the village plus a 20-strong mail-out list that includes Norwich library (that keeps a copy of each edition in its archive of local publications), and a small number of copies to keep back for future requests.

My decision taken late last year to give up editing the newsletter has - so far – failed to bring forward a successor. In the meantime, and to keep the seat warm as it were, I will continue to bring out a slimmed-down four-page version until a new editor comes along.

Contributions from others, as items within the newsletter, are necessary (but hopefully short-lived) victims of the current situation. This limitation is a consequence of having to juggle and judge the length of each and every story so that the newsletter achieves a reasonable balance.

In closing, my thanks to Steve Whitby who publishes an online version of the newsletter on the village website, and my indebtedness to that noble band of volunteers who, come rain, come shine and come Covid, tramp roads and lanes of the village to deliver a copy of the newsletter to every house in Bergh Apton.

## **BERGH APTON VILLAGE FETE COMMITTEE – Rob Bates**

Rob was unable to attend the meeting, but sent word that the village fete is going ahead this year on the 9<sup>th</sup> July, with a planning meeting due to take place on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April.

## **JUBILEE COMMITTEE**

The Jubilee celebration is due to take place on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June in the grounds of Bergh Apton Manor from 4.30pm-10pm. Flyers have been sent to all the residents of the village inviting them to book a place and the Parish Clerk has obtained a £200 grant from SNC to go towards costs. There will be local entertainment, music, lots of fun and a 'red, white and blue' theme.

## **BERGH APTON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL - Patricia Waters**

Another unusual year for the church in Bergh Apton as we continued to cope with Covid restrictions.

The Annual Meeting of Parishioners (formerly known as the Annual Vestry Meeting) was held by Zoom and telephone in what our Rector described as strange times. The appropriate nomination forms have been tendered for Mrs. Shirley Rimmer and Miss Lorie Lain-Rogers and there being no other nominations, they were unanimously elected to serve as Churchwardens for a further year.

The PCC met three times during 2021, in June, August and October.

Morning Prayer by Zoom continued throughout the week from Tuesday to Saturday and Revd. Chris Ellis retained his practice (started in 2020) of emailing a weekly 'Sunday Circular' to a large number of people, some from outside the Benefice. The circular featured the readings, and image and a reflection for the day and created the framework for the Zoom Communion Service conducted that week. The final one was circulated on 20<sup>th</sup> June.

In December 2020, InTouch Systems (formerly WiSpire) provided our church with an internet connection, enabling live streaming of a weekly celebration of Holy Communion. Revd. Chris, supported by Melanie, conducted the service from the chancel and Revd. Cate and Iain, from their computer at home, dealt with the slides, readings and hymns. Ten services were delivered in this way and attendance ranged from 31 to 42.

Services slowly increased in number. At first, from Easter Day (held at Bergh Apton church and attended by 47 with 12 joining via Zoom), to the end of June, one service was held on a Sunday in one of the five churches in the Thurton Benefice. Everyone was masked and sanitized and the seating arrangements suitably spaced although no singing by the congregation, of course, but the choir on the recorded music was a great help in making services a bit more normal. Some annual services were able to be held again: Harvest Festival, Remembrance Day, Shoebox, the Carol Service (prepared and led by the Parish Team) and Christmas Day Holy Communion, albeit with much smaller congregations. However, it was decided to cancel the Crib Service. By the end of the year, the number of services had increased and the monthly parish team services (those led by Authorised Worship Assistants) resumed in July.

Although there was no Mothering Sunday service, forty posies were made and delivered with a note of greeting from the church to regular members of the congregation and the usual village recipients. Likewise, as in previous years, posies and produce were taken to people in our community after the Harvest service and produce was also delivered to St Martin's Housing Trust and the Norwich Food Bank.

The Lent Course, four talks prepared and delivered by the Bramerton Group Ministry Team, was held via Zoom. A piece of artwork was presented each week to introduce the theme for discussion.

The annual Good Friday pilgrimage through the five villages of the Benefice took place with the Litany held in our church.

A special service following Prince Philip's death was held in Yelverton church in March on the evening prior to his funeral, and was attended by some Bergh Apton parishioners.

There were two weddings and four funerals at Bergh Apton church during the year.

Following her Ordination as a priest the previous day, our Curate Revd. Cate Turner, presided at her first Holy Communion service in Bergh Apton church on 27<sup>th</sup> June, after which refreshments were served from a marquee in the churchyard.

The Bramerton Group All Soul's Day evening service in Bergh Apton church, was attended by 65 people.

Two of our annual fundraising events were able to be held: The Horse Show and Fun Dog Show in July and the Norfolk Churches Trust Sponsored Bike Ride in September, and in addition, there was an ongoing sale of plants jointly run with Thurton Church. In September the church was used for part of the BACAT event 'One for the Rook' and the PCC was able to benefit from the sale of refreshments provided and served by Hilary Ling, Evy Sayer and their team. The Quiz and Chilli planned for October was cancelled by the PCC because the number of Covid cases in South Norfolk was increasing at that time. It is hoped it can be rescheduled for early in 2022.

The Community Service Team is unable to help us at present, so the churchyard was kept tidy by Shirley and Mike Rimmer, who spent many hours cutting the grass. Perhaps as testimony to their hard work, the mower finally gave up, despite being nursed along and repaired by Mike, and after searching for a suitable, reasonably priced (and available) machine, the PCC bought a replacement – its' handlers report it is heavy but robust. We are grateful to the Parish Council for providing a grant that enabled a new mower to be purchased without depleting PCC funds. We are also appreciative of Kevin Parfitt, who without charge to the PCC, keeps the grass topped on the church field.

Maintenance work is ongoing. Lorie Lain-Rogers and Mike Rimmer attended to the roof leak, refixing ridge tiles and carrying out re-leading work.

The posts supporting the double gate between the churchyard and the church field had rotted at the base and were replaced by Mike Rimmer. Since then, he has started the long task of replacing the fence posts around the church field. In preparation for their 'One for the Rook' trail, BACAT installed a lockable gate in the gap in the west wall of the church-yard at no cost to the PCC.

The five-yearly electrical check was carried out, following which the junction boxes by the field gate were replaced.

Over the past few years cracks have appeared in the east wall of the chancel. Lorie contacted our architect, Matthew Thomas, and she carried out his instructions, firstly to fill them and then to monitor the situation. They are getting worse...

Lorie and Shirley went through the 2016 Quinquennial Report again to check for any outstanding items in preparation for this year's inspection. The architect visited the church at the end of the year and we await his findings.

Time does not stand still in our village because Richard Cushing continues to wind the church clock every week. Richard has written a book 'A Brief History of Time – the Bergh Apton Church Clock'. We need an apprentice clock winder for Richard to train to take over when he retires.

It was with regret that the PCC was unable to maintain its usual level of charitable giving. In view of the severe reduction in our income during the year and the prospect of a similar situation in 2021, no announcement was made at the 2020 Carol Service regarding the customary January donation to children's charities from the surplus after expenses from the collection. However, a special collection was taken at the Shoebox Service in November and £62.50 was sent to Operation Christmas Child. The donation from the Remembrance Day service to the Royal British Legion does not show up in this year's accounts because the RBL mislaid our cheque and the problem was not realised until the new year and so it will appear in the accounts for 2022. The PCC account continues to be a conduit for donations to the Sanyu Babies' Home in Uganda.

An appeal was made by email for contributions to offset the reduction in our income because of the few services being held and the resulting loss of collections. Initially the response was slow but eventually generous donations, together with proceeds from the sale of artworks by Liz Meynell, made up the shortfall of income and we were able to pay our Parish Share in full, as usual.

We never really know what the future holds, but life now is even more uncertain and people are worried. Covid variants are likely, households are facing enormous utility bills, the Church of England is intending to reduce the number of parish priests and there is a war in Ukraine. Will it all come right eventually? We cannot rely on ourselves but must put our trust in God.

## **BERGH APTON PARISH CHARITIES – Paul Blazer**

The Bergh Apton Parish Charities is financially sound and continues to receive a good return on the investments currently held despite recent events over the last couple of years.

The charity distributed £2,210 to 26 recipients during the year end 31 December 2018.

The charity distributed £2,250 to 25 recipients during the year end 31 December 2019.

The charity distributed £2,400 to 24 recipients during the year end 31 December 2020.

The charity distributed £2,400 to 24 recipients during the year end 31 December 2021.

The next AGM is due to be held in November 2022.

## **5. General Parish Issues raised by members of the public – none**

