

# Notes from the 2017 Annual Parish Meeting

11.00 am on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March

## Priston Village Hall

The meeting was well-attended by approximately 50 residents of the parish. Cllr Peter Hopwood sent his apologies. The minutes of the 2016 Annual Parish Meeting were approved and the following presentations given.

### PRISTON PARISH COUNCIL

**Parish Council** - The Council remains the same as last year, but at our AGM in May, Christine Hunt, after a long and most valuable time as our Clerk, was replaced by Louise Callan.

**Village Design Statement (VDS)**- BANES has stated that our VDS now has the status of a 'material consideration' in planning matters.

**Finance** - There has been a slight increase in the Precept this year to allow for inflation.

**Planning** - This has again been a quiet year, but responses have been sent in support of the following applications:

**The Milking Parlour, Church Farm Lane, Priston  
Trout Cottage, 9 High Street, Priston**

A request for prior approval for a change of use agricultural building to a dwelling house at **Village farm** was also supported.

Our proposal to change the Housing Development Boundary to exclude the garden between the apple store at Church Farm and the Village Hall has been included in BANES' draft Placemaking Plan.

**Highways and Footpaths** - BANES has carried out drainage work by the dairy on Farmborough Lane, and have contributed, with the Parish Council, and our District Councillor David Veale, to the purchase of larger pipes to lead flood water away across the fields. It is now planned to install the pipe when the crops have been harvested in late summer.

**Defibrillator** - Thanks to John Wilkinson for his continuing support to this project.

**Priston Website** - A change in the law affecting the transparency of Parish Council business has meant that the ownership of the Priston website has been transferred to the Council. Once again thanks to Richard Bottle for his sterling efforts on our behalf.

**Broadband** - Truespeed's superfast broadband is now in use in the village.

**Thanks** - Finally thank you to our Parish Clerks, Christine Hunt and Louise Callan, and all of our Councillors for their good work and support over the past year.

**Doug Pattison, Chairman, Priston Parish Council**

### PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL REPORT

The Parish Council's financial year runs from April 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup>. We started the year with £5,742 and this amount was topped up with a precept of £6,000, a VAT refund of £523.71 and support grant of £30. The precept is the money the Parish Council receives from the council tax. This amount will rise to £6,120 for the coming year. We currently have a balance of £5,838.33 in the bank.

The council spends money on maintaining the village green, providing a water supply to the trough and fountain and the defibrillators. We also fund grit bins, although those haven't been needed over this winter. In a small financial way, we support costs for the website, The Christmas Procession, the Dial-a-Ride service, Cam Valley Wildlife and The Link.

This financial year a £600 contribution was made towards the purchase of the pipes to prevent the Farmborough Road flooding and we have spent some of our income on producing the Village Design Statement.

The remainder of the precept is spent on administration. As a small parish, we rely on BANES to provide most of the services we require.

A financial report is published on the website prior to each Parish Council Meeting and the full accounts are audited and reported in an Annual Return once a year in June. All this information is publicly available on the website or via the clerk in paper format.

**Louise Callan, Parish Clerk**

## **VILLAGE HALL**

The Hall continues to be well used and has a healthy bank balance of just over £13,000. However, I would like to update everyone on our plans for improving the hall.

Our main issue this year is the leaking roof. As the hall is Grade II listed, we need listed building consent and this has delayed progress. We also will need a grant, and have been advised to include any other desirable works in our application. So we are working on putting together a list of possible works: re-sanding and sealing the floor, improving the ladies toilet, insulating walls and ceiling in the toilet area, replacing flooring in the kitchen and toilets, installing a loft hatch and ladder in the corridor to toilets, providing some sort of cladding on the wall between kitchen and main hall, providing a hearing loop, and installing broadband. This is a big project and we have now decided to employ a professional to manage the work, as the Committee cannot take on the responsibility should anything go wrong as we would be criminally liable. We are about to employ such a person and so hopefully things will start to progress. Obviously, the extent of the work we carry out will depend on whether we are successful in obtaining grants. We also will make sure any work does not interfere with our main events.

**Gail Pattison, Chair, Village Hall Management Committee**

## **LOCAL ORGANISATIONS - REPORTS**

Priston has many active voluntary organisations as well as some commercial sports activities in the village hall. Residents are encouraged to contact the organisers and join in.

### **1. PAGE - Priston Action Group for the Environment**

We are an informal group who aim to do any little thing to help improve our environment locally, and on a bigger scale if we can.

For example:

The oil buying group (now about 40 households) makes bulk purchases of heating oil, to reduce the number of delivery tanker journeys and also save individuals money. If you'd like to join the group (which operates by email), see Peter or me.

We do litter picking in the lanes three or four times a year. (Our most recent foray involved 30 people including quite a lot of children, brilliant.) Of course, we all know that the rubbish shouldn't be there in the first place, but since it is, we all feel better for having done something about it. We now have litter grabbers, Council refuse bags and gloves. If anyone would like to adopt a stretch of road and pick up litter in their own time, do let me know. Otherwise, the litter picks are advertised in the Link, on Priston website and by email.

John Wybrow continues to let people pick his surplus apples every autumn and we have John Marsden's apple crusher and press. More people are making use of these to make their own juice and even cider. I

send out an email in September as a reminder that they are available for anyone in the village to use (they are set up in our garden and not very easy to move).

There are ad hoc activities. Last autumn, following discussion by the parish council, some of us gathered and burned the leaves of the horse chestnut tree in the Manor grounds in order to try to prevent the leaf-mining moth doing its worst. We may extend this to other horse chestnut trees.

We also have an email group, to disseminate information and raise awareness about wildlife etc., such as the big garden bird watch or the summer butterfly count. If you would like to send out a message or question about anything environment related, just email me and I'll pass it on. And Richard puts relevant material on the Priston website.

If you would like to get involved, maybe develop the way we do things or start a new kind of activity such as a lift sharing scheme, do let us know. If you are not yet on the email list but would like to be, please come and see me later.

**Penny Rogers**

## **2. Bellringers**

Priston has 6 church bells. We ring for Sunday service. Practice night is Tuesday at 7.30 pm and currently we have 9 members: Geoff Allen, Simon Barnes, Vicki Pai, Gail Pattinson, Vivienne Perriton, Maggie Rideout, John Whybrow, John Wilkinson, Jill Wilkinson, Captain of Ringers.

We are always happy to teach new ringers. At the moment I'm teaching two learners on Thursday afternoons at 4.0pm. Ringing is a combination of manual dexterity, musical awareness, rhythm, and mathematics, in other words good for mind and body! It is a pastime that can be very sociable, whenever you are away you are welcomed to join other ringers at their practice. We also ring for weddings, which is a lovely thing to do, and we get paid!

**Jill Wilkinson, Captain**

## **3. Cricket Club**

We are preparing for our 34th season which begins on 7th May and continues until 10th Sept. The full list of matches is on the Priston website.

Because we limit our membership essentially to Parish residents we have never had a large pool of players. But the cohesiveness that brings, playing alongside family, friends and neighbours is also one of our strengths.

This year we have lost a number of players at the same time, so we have responded by reducing our fixture list to what we judge to be a manageable 15 games, of which 13 are at home.

So we are looking, as always, to recruit new members. No previous cricket experience or skill is necessary. And unlike the *Archers*, women and girls have always been welcome to join us. It would be particularly pleasing to have some younger players. I am sure George Lippiatt would like to play with someone who shares his taste in music!

Even if villagers just want to play occasionally, or be in a pool of players we can call on if we are short, do please let me or another member know. That would be very useful.

Of course, everyone is most welcome to come up to the field and watch the cricket. The beautiful surroundings may be rather more attractive than the cricket, but it is a good afternoon out and an ideal spot to meet and chat with friends. We offer social membership at the bargain price of £20 per household, which entitles you to a cup of tea and a piece of cake whenever you can attend.

Do please keep 13th August free - we are repeating our family fun afternoon, which was so successful last year. And we hope to have some more Quik cricket sessions for the children, on dates tbc. Thank you, residents of Priston, for your continuing support.

**Paul Barclay**

#### **4. Festival**

The Festival is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> year this year and goes from strength to strength.

**Owain Jones**

#### **5. Garden Club**

This club has been running for the last two years and meets once a month on Tuesday afternoons at 2.30 pm to talk about gardens. Around 10 people attend and after a cup of tea and a good chat there is much discussion about gardens and gardening techniques. The members have varying expertise from complete beginners to seasoned experts. Everyone is welcome and it is a very informative and relaxed event.

**Michele Cameron**

#### **6. History Group**

The history group has continued to be active in the last year with geophysical surveys by the Camerton Society continuing in fields around Priston. The reports are accessible on the website under History.

**Clare Cross**

#### **7. Defibrillators**

We have two defibrillators in the village (in green cupboards, accessible to all). One is at the village hall and the other at the Pai's house, Willow Barn. If they are needed once you have accessed the box it gives automated instructions on how to use the equipment. There are annual training sessions, which everyone is welcome to attend.

**John Wilkinson**

#### **8. Parish Church of St Luke and St Andrew**

The church, of which I am grateful to be Rector, is geographically and emotionally the centre of the village, although that may well be contested by the Ring O Bells. As you are all aware, the church has been at the centre of village life for 800 year or more, and I hope it will continue to be for many years to come.

We continue to celebrate together weekly worship and the great festivals of the Christian Calendar: Christmas, Easter, Harvest & Wassail, and also those significant rites of passage: weddings, christenings and funerals. Villagers will be aware from the ringing of bells on Saturdays that the church is busy with weddings throughout the summer months and we have some 5 couples tying the knot in Priston in 2017. In celebrating marriage, we are privileged to welcome to Priston people from all over the world, all of whom express a delight in our beautiful church and village.

The church is a centre of village life in other respects as well: we are delighted to be a venue for the Priston Festival and have hosted some marvellous concerts and talks in September last year. As a church, we are very open to providing the building for other cultural activities. We were delighted to host a marvellous Flower Festival at the Church last year to celebrate Her Majesty's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday and I want to thank all who contributed to the wonderful display.

We are grateful to the village for continued financial support. As I wrote in my October letter, the Church costs around £26,000 a year to maintain and run and we do not receive any state or regional support to find this sum. I would like to thank the community for their generosity in helping find that sum. I am grateful too to our Church Fundraising Group for organising the Safari Supper last autumn and there will be a return of the Boule Evening this year on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

As a Church, we are committed to help the less advantaged in our own society, and this year we will be making charitable donations to the Genesis Trust in Bath and to our Link Parish in Zambia. We would also like to invite residents of Priston to contribute to our emergency appeal to respond to the Famine in Africa. The Church is making a donation of £1,500 and details of how people can donate are available in the April 'Link'. Through our own trust,

administered by the redoubtable Bill Drake-Brockman we are able to make modest grants to village youngsters to assist with educational expenses. More details from BDB.

In this report, I would like to put on record once again my thanks to Mr Richard Windsor who has so diligently and carefully cut the churchyard grass for many years and Mr Tim Hughes who has lovingly maintained the fabric of the church and clock for many years also.

The village of Priston is a unique place, and I am aware that to a high degree, the village works together to care for each other and make it the place it is. I am very honoured to be called to play a small part as Rector of Priston.

**Rev Martin Blewitt**

## **9. Saturday Café**

The Saturday café goes from the strength to strength. We have a willing team of volunteers who run the café once every eight weeks on average. Our prices are very reasonable but we manage to make a profit of £30-40 each week. Recent charities who have benefited are Toilet Twinning, Save the Children (Syria), Shelter Box, Jamie's Farm, Live Life, Give Life, receiving £250 each. We hope to help fund the Village Hall roof repairs in due course too. We are so pleased that the café is so well supported by Priston Villagers and many others. It really is a community 'hub' and a non-threatening environment for people to meet in.

**Sue Copperman**

## **10. Flood Liaison Contact**

As its name suggests, I'm the link between Priston Parish Council and an august body called The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

The hierarchy is: Jim McEwen of the LFRMS, John Lippiatt, Priston PC (responsible for Roads & Highways) and me! In the world of flooding Priston is a small pebble on a big beach. We don't fall easily into any one flood-risk category, and most of what we can liaise on boils down to common sense.

The one development in the last year which I think can now be developed and improved came about by accident. We had a period of heavy weather, and one or two people texted in when they discovered impassable floodwater in the local lanes. I sent this out on the village loop; more and more people responded and within an hour Pristonians had a good idea of where and how they could safely get to their destinations.

Jim copies me in to relevant communications with Priston Parish Council because of course there's an obvious link between Drainage and Flooding. This would cover things like the investigative work on the drains outside the Ring of Bells, and keeping an eye on the extra water which now appears to be coming into the brook from the new house on Plot 5856. I'd just like to ask people to feed me flood information of any kind as and when they find it.

**Aylet Anderson**

## **11. The Link**

The Link will be 40 this October, and I think the magazine is still performing as its founders intended – that is, as a communicator of local news and views; supported by, but not governed by, organisations in the community it serves; solvent but not designed to be profit-making; and welcoming articles of all sorts, whether serious or humorous, from Priston and, indeed, beyond.

Each year we receive financial support from Priston Church, Priston Parish Council and Priston Village Hall, and for this we're very grateful. It means, in particular, that we don't have to have a welter of random advertisements to support us, but just a few local ones, relevant to the village and its surrounds. Thank you to those organisations.

We'd also like to take this opportunity to thank our very good band of distributors, namely Richard Bottle, Jackie Davies, John Edwards, Christine Hunt, Myrna Ostgaard, Gail Pattison, Henrietta Samler in Inglesbatch, the Watson children in Nailwell, and Louise Callan.

As at March 2017, The Link goes monthly to 92 households as hard copy, with a further dozen or so going electronically to ex-pats and other fans, from British Columbia to Brittany via Argyll & Bute!

One important step this year is that, thanks to the support of our local PCSO, Nigel Penney, The Link is now available to local officers on their police website, and we also work with Nigel and NW to pass on information to the community. Finally, thank you to everyone who takes The Link or contributes to it.

**Aylet Anderson**

## **12. The Website**

The Priston Web is now in its 15th year of operation. It is operated on behalf of the Parish Council by Richard Bottle. The Parish Council owns the priston.org.uk domain, and pay hosting and domain charges, which amount to about 12p per year per resident.

The Priston Web normally has around 150 repeat visitors each month, who on average make about 4 visits per month. This supports the view that it is a helpful means of communication for the village. 43% of visits to the website over the last year were by desktop computer or laptop, 30% via mobile phone, and 27% via tablet.

The web-site is an important means by which the Parish Council communicates with the village – all Council agendas and minutes and significant documents are published on the website.

The Priston Web provides a web-presence for the majority of village organisations. If anyone would like their organisation/initiative represented please get in touch. The website also contains over 3,000 photos of Priston and Priston life, taken over the 15 years that the website has been in existence. There is anecdotal evidence that it has (positively) influenced people's decisions to move into the village.

The Calendar is always kept up to date and so is a helpful reference to organisations when planning events. The Priston Web works closely with The Link. The two channels complement each other well, with the Link well-suited to ephemeral material while the Web can retain lengthy material indefinitely, and present images more easily.

Recently, a web-page has been set up to enable anyone (even those not signed up to Facebook) to access the Facebook site for Priston set up by Louise Callan.

Over the coming months changes are planned to improve the appearance and accessibility of the website.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed items/photos etc to the Priston Web. Please do continue to do so, to keep the website alive and relevant.

**Richard Bottle**

## **13. Sports Activities in the Village Hall**

Pilates takes place once a week on Tuesday evenings (run by an external teacher). Circuit training is also available on Monday evenings to all in the village. This is run by those who take part and is an informal, low cost and fun way to keep fit without having to drive anywhere. Tai Chi is also available in the village hall once a week.

## **14. Village Telescope**

We were also pleased to hear that a telescope has been purchased in memory of William Jones. This is available to anyone who would like to gaze at the stars on a clear night, by prior arrangement with Howard Jones. It is hoped that children in the village will be encouraged to use it and some of the amateur astronomers in the village will share their knowledge with them.