

Annual Report 2021/2022

Another year has passed, and with the UK leading the international struggle back to normality from Covid, we find yet another hardship confronting us with the embargos on Russia, sending living costs sky high. Boris must wonder what he did wrong in a past life. After his enormous majority at the last election, completing Brexit, successfully steering us through Covid, brushing off the media's constant criticism and then finally ending up with the possibility of another World War; when will it all settle for him? Has the country gone mad, surely assisting the Ukraine and their extremely brave people, in every possible way, is our priority at the moment, not quibbling about gathering before and after important government meetings!
(More importantly, who is behind the secret filming of these meetings?)

Planning:

Not much to report this year; two extensions, a porch, one garage conversion, a conservatory, a large demolition and a double re-build, old barns to dwelling and a new ground source heat system. All taking far too long to decide with the lack of local planners.

Highways:

Sadly, Tony Leach has retired after longstanding service as our Highways Inspector. He has been linked with the village for many years and looked after us extremely well. We wish him well in his retirement.

Not much to report, the usual blocked drains, potholes and subsidence. Visibility at the top of Hassocks Lane has been an on-going problem and reported repeatedly.

Footpaths:

Eve Wynn, our recently new Footpath's Officer is now part time, even though the workload left by the previous officer is enormous. Priority work will still be the re-opening of the footpath through Swanton Farm (blocked off since 2016) and the repair of the path between Hoofprints and Cook's Farm; other stiles and bridges need attention throughout the parish, as well and any other problems that have been reported to the Clerk.

Village Hall:

The Village Hall has been closed for yet another year, hopefully it will be open for the Elections. It is nearing completion although I understand there will be no wheelchair access at the rear. The defibrillator has been serviced and is on the lower side of the Village Hall.

Church, Churchyard and Burial Ground:

St John the Baptist Church has been open now since September 2020 for two services a month plus festive services; Easter, Christmas and Remembrance Day, as well as Weddings, Christenings and Funerals. All services have been well attended, especially the festive services. Last year, we welcomed our new, young and enthusiastic Priest, Jonathan Evans from Christchurch, who is settling in well.

The Parish Council would like to thank Michael Gardener, who took over from Clive Thorman, for mowing the right-hand side of the churchyard and keeping it neat & tidy. We would like to thank Clive for his many years keeping the Churchyard looking so tidy. Also thanks go to David Nye (and his helpers: Jocelyn & Chas Blacker, Cath & James Coward, Christine Cottrell and

Simon Hicks) who manages 'The 'Living Churchyard Wildlife Habitat' and has again organised sheep to graze the left-hand side of the footpath – the sheep do an excellent job and set a lovely scene while doing so.

The Parish Council supplied, and Chris Saxton erected the new three seater bench in the Old Churchyard. Chris has also done a lot of good work within the Churchyard, clearing overgrowth and general maintenance.

Policing:

PCSO Tim Russell was unable to attend most meetings but instead sent reports which noted that crime is mainly in the Wincanton area and he regularly reminded us that we must be aware of suspicious vehicles roaming the countryside. The team make regular patrols through the villages. Most crimes are opportunists looking for unlocked or poorly secured sheds and are agricultural /garden related. There have been reports of livestock being taken from fields and suspicious people roaming about at night and leaving gates open. Our thanks to Tim for keeping us updated on police issues in the past, Tim is now on long term sick leave. We wish him well.

Below the Tower 2022:

Ric Rogers is very kindly in the process of compiling the latest edition of Below the Tower, which will go to print after May 2022 Election.

Sadly we lost our Post Box outside Gordon's Cottage over a year ago, no news as to its replacement as we have three other boxes in the village. Next to The Old Red Lion, opposite The Baptist Chapel and in the wall opposite the turning to the Barrow Water Lane before the Bull Inn.

Finally, I would like to thank our Clerk, Sue Price, for all her hard work and outstanding assistance to the Parish Council. I would also like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors, Patricia Stainton, Richard Hiscock, Eddie Harper and Robert Jackson.

Many thanks must also go to our County Councillor Anna Groskop, who sadly decided to stand down at this year's elections, after serving our area and supporting us so well for so many years. Our best wishes to her.

Thanks also to our District Councillor Robin Bastable, for his support and help throughout the year. Robin stood as an independent this time, as the new 'SSDC Unitary Council' will have less councillors in our area.

I would also like to thank Charlie Lane for serving as our internal auditor, the members of the Village Hall Restoration Group for their fundraising and the huge amount of work involved in the two phases of restoration, Nick Castle for his help with the common land, the parishioners who have joined our meetings and contributed their comments, as well as those who still give up their time and energy helping with village life.

Sadly, this is my last report, as I am standing down and I wish our new councillor Chris Saxton the very best for the future. There will be no election for Parish Council this time, as only five put-up for the five seats.

Stay safe, keep well.

David Dabinett
Chairman May 2022