

Church Report

As for all of us, this has been a year unlike any other. The impact of COVID-19, closing for worship and losing our Vicar Chris Davey have impacted on church life dramatically.

The church has continued to play a central role in community life, supporting the community and parishioners alongside other charitable organisations in the local area.

We have continued to be a donation point for the Braintree Area Foodbank, adapting our risk assessments to take in to account COVID-19 and the ever evolving rules and regulations. We have united with our sister churches across the Benefice of Cressing, Bradwell & Coggeshall to make sure donations are collected in a timely fashion.

We have also started a Village Pantry, which seems to be operating very successfully. food, toiletries and pet food are donated by villagers to directly benefit those within our community who are struggling, either financially, with mobility or were 'shopping' for others who needed to self-isolate. We're keeping a close eye on the Village Pantry to assess its long-term viability, based on the needs of the community.

Three of our church family are now qualified Pastoral Care assistants, trained to support those who may require some emotional comfort. This is a service offered free of charge, to anyone who might benefit from this type of support.

Church services were interrupted by lockdowns and self-isolation and shielding – however, the church gamely adapted and provided online worship for the community. Online services reach many more parishioners than we could ever attempt to house in the physical building, and it is likely that online worship will continue in some format after the pandemic's effects are long gone. Our most successful service at Christmas reached an audience of 1.1k – far exceeding the number of villagers.

Despite the church community growing steadily, the lack of physical footfall has drastically affected church finances, and many planned projects have been postponed or outright cancelled due to a lack of funds to support them. The church is solely funded by donations and grants. This could impact on the long term viability of having a functioning church in Stisted; Pattiswick church is a sad example of what the long term future might hold.

Stisted Community Partnership

It's been a year like no other, but we have survived it.

The Community Shop is run on a non-profit making basis and 'manned' by volunteer shop assistants, all of whom were in the 'stay at home' category, but we were saved by student, Sarah Challis stepping in to take over behind the counter and we sincerely thank her for it. Thank you to Jennie, Jane Bailey and Angela Adams for taking over when Sarah was able to re-commence her studies. We felt that in order to minimise the risk to Christine Atwater, the Post Mistress, we would only open once a week (Monday afternoons) and are continuing in this vain for the foreseeable future.

Thank you to our customers for their loyalty and keeping to the guidelines - wearing face coverings and having one person in the shop at a time.

The range of stock has had to decrease slightly as our income has lessened owing to the loss of opening hours but our outgoings have remained the same as normal, we try to accommodate as many requests as possible made by our customers, but would always welcome any suggestions of items to carry and we will look into the feasibility.

Thank you to Sally James for helping to keep the shop stocked whilst Doreen was keeping to 'house arrest'.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the Trustees of the Montefiore Institute for their continued generosity and support, without which we could not operate the shop.

Community Transport

Day trips have had to be suspended for all the year, but as we emerge from the dark tunnel we hope to re-commence sometime in the future.

Footpaths

The pandemic saw a vast increase of walkers enjoying the fifty plus footpaths in our Parish. Stisted families and families from further afield.

Covid restrictions meant difficulties and delays for working parties, carrying out necessary maintenance and repair work.

Tim Noonan and myself were able to replace a marker post along the route of FP7, Tumblers Green, with Tim even supplying the post.

The damaged footbridge at the start of this footpath was replaced later by an official Highway working party when rules allowed.

Winter weather caused as many problems as Covid. Heavy constant rain caused severe flooding to many Byways and Bridleways making them unusable.

The Byway10 opp Brooks Farm was blocked in part for a time due to the illegal dumping and burning of waste. The Byway was cleared by the waste dumping row rumbles on.

The dry spring weather means that the Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways are now dry and passable and the paths crossing farmlands have been cleared and well-marked by the landowners. A big thank you to them.

Three damaged stiles across two Footpaths have been reported and await decisions to be repaired or removed. A reported broken "kissing gate" is still awaiting repair.

There is a trend for people running (sometimes in small groups) along the Footpaths at night with lights strapped to their heads. This has caused problems when the footpath goes through private grounds and gardens. Residents and their neighbours have been alarmed when activities with lights in their gardens have set off intruder alarms, set their dogs off and caused anxiety to people living alone. While not illegal, it seems to me to be anti-social, more consideration should be shown.

Sorry to end on a moan.

Bob Powers – FP Officer

Neighbourhood Plan Report 2020 / 2021

The Neighbourhood Plan process is heavily reliant on input from the public and the Covid restrictions forced any interaction with the parish online. While attempts were made to use social media, the NPSC website and online video conferencing to involve the public and continue progress, ultimately these proved unsuccessful and progressing this aspect of the plan has been difficult. We investigated new technologies in an effort to provide the online equivalent of an open meeting but when considering attendance figures for previous public / open meetings, the cost per head was prohibitive.

Regardless of these hindrances we have continued to meet on a regular basis and work is ongoing. We are hoping that once we are able to hold open meetings again, we will be able to ramp up the interest in the plan and get things moving apace once more.

Stisted Primary Academy

Community, commitment and challenge are three words to sum up the work of the Academy over the last 12 months. The year began with a focus on well-being for staff, children and families. Yoga sessions were made available to all children and practising mindfulness was highlighted through the Personal Social and Health curriculum. In February 2020, the school hosted a very successful well-being workshop for parents focussing on anxiety in children.

On government orders, the school closed its doors on 18th March 2020 for all but vulnerable and keyworker children. It was uncertain how long this forced closure would last. The curriculum was suspended and with it all national assessments and exams. This extended period of home-schooling lasted until June, with children learning at home with the support of their teachers via email, telephone and work being posted online.

The school staff did a fantastic job of quickly adapting to this new way of teaching whilst maintaining provision for the children still in school.

Government restrictions eventually eased and enabled the school to bring back Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children from June 2020 in groups or bubbles of no more than 15. Attendance was non-mandatory and the uptake was mixed, allowing the school to invite children from other year groups and thus increasing the opportunity for all children wanting to return to school being given that opportunity.

From September the school reopened fully, with a class bubble structure in place, social distancing where appropriate, staggered drop off and pick up times (to prevent community transmission) and other measures to keep our school community as safe as possible. This was a big ask of staff as they are with their class throughout the school day, covering the lunch period and breaks to maintain the integrity of the class bubbles.

The staff and children responded magnificently, and all bubbles were able to stay open for the whole of the autumn term. It was agreed that the focus would be on

supporting children through the transition back to school and that looking after the well-being of our community was paramount, followed by assessing where the children were academically and adapting the curriculum accordingly.

The school also welcomed Basil, a school therapy dog to assist children through this difficult time. Basil has since been a huge hit and has brought much joy and happiness to the school community.

Through the commitment and hard work of school staff and making use of all available technology, the school was able to continue its traditions of Harvest Festival, whole school assemblies, Christmas lunch and putting on the nativity play and carol concerts albeit via live video link. This was greatly valued by parents who have been overwhelmingly supportive of the school's response to the challenges the pandemic has brought.

In January 2021, the school closed its doors again for all but keyworker and vulnerable children due to a further national lockdown. This plunged the community into another period of home schooling, though this time with the government expectation that the curriculum is to be delivered in full.

The school rose to the challenge and introduced an online learning platform with daily live teaching sessions via Zoom and a weekly whole school assembly. Again parents responded very positively to the arrangements and children are engaging well with their learning.

The school re-opened on Monday 8th March 2021, with all the relevant infection prevention and control measures remaining in place. It is anticipated these measures will remain in place for much of the summer term with the gradual easing of restrictions as the vaccine roll out continues, the pressures on the NHS decrease and the risk of infection and serious illness declines.

Martin Hawrylak
Headteacher

Tree Warden

Whilst trees and tree preservation has not exactly been at the forefront of people's minds over the past year, there has been a trickle of planning applications for tree maintenance and removal across the parish and in the majority of cases there has been little to comment on and challenge.

As part of our regular lockdown walks I have looked at applications around the village and commented back to the Parish Clerk on my thoughts on the applications. This is then communicated back to the planning authority BDC. To date the communication is one way as far as BDC is concerned and I have received no communication from them.

There has been no issues or concerns when I have had the opportunity to speak to the applicants which is rare.

There are a few things of note that may be worthy of discussion or further investigation by the PC.

- I raised a number of questions and concerns regarding the golf club applications for lopping / removal of trees / TPO's some of which appeared healthy. None of my views were taken into account and the work was carried out days after my submission.
- It appears a TPO order was obtained by BDC for a property in Rectory Lane. As PC tree warden I had no knowledge or involvement in this which I find disappointing.
- A part of the neighbourhood plan should we as a community capture the significant / ancient tree locations as a type of asset register or inventory?
- I would be keen to carry out some more tree planting around the village in a similar way and effect that John Clark began a number of years back on targeted locations. It would be useful to understand if landowners or grants would be available to do this.

The next year will no doubt continue as the previous 12 months and I will ensure I carry out the inspections within the application timescales and highlight any exceptions and contentious issues to the PC.

Village Archives

Despite Covid restrictions it has been a busy year for us as we continue to build the Archive. There have been a number of outcomes from our work.

1. Agreement has been reached with the Village Hall Trustees who kindly offered the Fairhead Room as a base for the archive. We await the end of Covid restrictions to begin work on the space and transfer the archive.
2. At the request of the Village Hall Trustees we have prepared a display of framed images to be placed in the refurbished Village Hall entrance foyer.
3. We have continued to provide material for the monthly Parish Magazine.
4. We provide regular posts on the Stisted Village Facebook pages.
5. We have drawn on the Archive to support the work of the Neighbourhood Planning Group.
6. We were successful in bidding for £350 from the Locality Fund towards setting up the Archive in the Fairhead Room.
7. The Archive was successful in obtaining recognition of Michael Rothenstein with a Blue Plaque outside Columbia House

We have added many new images and items of information to the Archive and these are always shared with the wider public for feedback both through the Parish Council website and Stisted Facebook.

The work of the two archivists has attracted a positive response both in terms of the many conversations with villagers and in written feedback on Facebook. We hope that during the next year when settled into the Fairhead Room, that we will be able to draw new volunteers to help with further development of the Archive.

We also welcome contributions from the community for new material and would like to thank all those who have shared their treasures, in terms of photographs, documents, news cuttings, maps and artefacts, you name it and we will have it!

We work well together with good communications and a light touch! Derek very much looks after the web presence and digitising of material. Howard tends to look after communications and we are both always on the look-out with our cameras for whatever constitutes the visual and written history of Stisted past and present.

Howard Hollands and Derek Pryke

Stisted, Bradwell and Pattiswick Parish Magazine

The magazine has ten issues a year (although last year we printed an extra issue as we were all in lockdown). Approximately three hundred and fifty copies are printed for each issue.

It is printed in glorious colour by John Bedford in Bradwell, which means photographs and advertisements are more interesting.

It is funded by subscription (£5 a year) and advertising, £10 for a full page per issue, £5 for a half page. Some advertisers subscribe as a gesture of good will towards the cost of the magazine and all advertisers have something to offer the readers.

It carries up to date news about our two churches with times of services and news about events. Other events are also advertised, the village hall events, clubs and whole village events. These are included free of charge.

We are fortunate to have regular subscribers, Howard Hollands, who has been an enthusiastic contributor with his archive articles, we have an Arts Society run by Graham Walker and we get regular bell ringing updates from Terry Earle, to name a few. Occasionally, we have a one off contribution, always welcome.

Yvonne Crane keeps us up to date with news of events in Bradwell and our parish clerks send the parish council minutes after meetings.

For those parishioners without an Internet connection, it provides a valuable life line.

We try to deliver the December and January combined issue to every household in the parishes and from this we often get a few new subscribers. We also send an e-version to a few folk who live outside the parishes. We are extremely grateful to the kind people who deliver the magazine, come rain or shine, without them there would be no magazine!

If anyone knows how long the magazine has been going, please let us know, at one time it was typewritten, before the days of word processors and the joys of cut and paste.

Eleanor McMillan