

Hanley Castle Parish Council - June 2007

SUMMER 2007 NEWSLETTER

AN UPDATE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF
HANLEY CASTLE AND HANLEY SWAN

Chairman's Report 2007

DURING THE PAST YEAR THE PARISH COUNCIL HAS:

- Achieved Quality Parish Status
- Built willow revetments around the pond to stabilise the banks
- Continued with the process of looking at affordable housing
- Decided on a repair plan for the War Memorial & instructed a stonemason
- Elected representatives to the Village Hall Committee and CALC
- Found a new Lengthsman following Bob's retirement
- Granted money to the Citizens Advice Bureau and to Upton Community Care
- Held 7 meetings of the Planning Committee and commented on 47 applications
- Instigated a more formal approach to Public Question Time at meetings
- Joined the new litter picking scheme in association with MHDC
- Kept up the regular meetings with Nick Vincent of TCAS
- Listened to PC Mark Taylor's regular reports
- Met with several contractors regarding the play area
- Noted the intention of Elgar Housing to provide allotments at Winnington Gardens
- Outlined all the Parish Council's work in a quarterly newsletter
- Published a list of the clubs and societies in the parish
- Questioned the need to fell the oak tree at Hanley Castle High School
- Received regular reports from the District and County Councillors
- Sent representatives to a number of special meetings
- Tried to further investigate the installation of speed readers
- Uplifted litter around the parish on Litter Collection Day
- Valued the continuing good work of the Tree Warden, the new Parish Path Wardens and the Environmental Pollution Monitor
- Worked with Highways on various matters
- (E)Xpanded the website & looked at a joint venture with the Hanleys' Village Society
- Yearned for a practical solution to the car parking problems in Church End
- Zeroed in on the things that make this such a great place to live and entered the Village of the Year competition on the strength of it

ACHIEVED QUALITY PARISH STATUS

The Parish Council finally dotted all the i's and crossed all the t's and QPS was confirmed at the start of 2007. The Certificate will be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on 17 May and a small celebration held to mark the event.

One of the first "benefits" of QPS was the invitation to bid for money from a "Pathfinder Bursary" towards the cost of IT equipment designed to facilitate e-enabled planning consultation from the District Council. Ian Thompson kindly considered the proposal, put together a bid for funds and a grant of £1060.00 has been received for this purpose. It remains to be seen exactly how the system will work but the purchase of a new laptop for the Clerk suitable for both this scheme and more day to day PC needs will be the first purchase.

BUILT WILLOW REVETMENTS AROUND THE POND TO STABILISE THE BANKS

The state of the pond at Hanley Swan caused some concern over the summer of 2006 and a discussion took place at the July meeting as to the best course of action. It was agreed to consult Wade Muggleton, of the County Council's Countryside Service, and several Councillors met with him at the pond to further the discussion. Subsequently a willow weaving weekend was arranged for the beginning of December at which Wade instructed local volunteers in the art of constructing willow revetments. This has been followed up by further mornings of weaving at which a band of volunteers have waded through the mud

and woven to their hearts content. The weaving was finally completed in April and much of it is growing well. It just remains for the gap behind the willow to be backfilled with subsoil (to be provided by the Highways) and the banks should be knitted together and made good for many years to come.

The pond was also suffering from an overlarge population of wildfowl and steps have been taken to reduce their numbers. The geese have been relocated to a local farm, where they have settled in well, and residents have been encouraged to stop feeding the ducks, particularly with white sliced bread, as this was contributing to the poor water quality and state of the pond.

Additionally, the wildfowl had eaten much of the plant life in and around the pond but with the measures outlined above hopefully having a positive effect the pond has now been replanted with water lilies. This, together with the willow, should help to restore the pond's ecosystem and return it to its former glory. The work on the pond has been a great community effort and I must thank Wade for his help and advice, our Tree Warden and his initial band of weavers, who then carried on during his absence in the Antipodes, Carol Smith and all at Nature's Own Ltd at Hanley Workshops for their sponsorship of the willow, and Roger Kings for replanting the lilies. Thank you all.

CONTINUED THE PROCESS OF LOOKING AT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Following the housing need survey, which demonstrated a need for affordable housing in the parish, a notice was placed

in the “Parish Link” magazine requesting offers from landowners of possible sites where such a scheme might be built.

These were to be sent to Nigel Potter, Rural Housing Enabler, and after some time he reported that three sites had been offered although only two appeared to have the likely approval of the District Council’s planning department. Mr Potter did not release the locations of the sites into the public domain and nothing more was heard from him during the winter months.

At the March meeting, Keith Parry (Head of Housing, Revenues and Technical Services at MHDC) attended together with Ann Harris (West Mercia Housing Group) and Liz Staveley (Nexus Housing) and outlined the next stage of the process. He said that West Mercia were the District Council’s preferred partners for a development in Hanley Swan and that Nexus Housing (part of the West Mercia Group) would then run the housing once it had been built. It was decided to form a small project group made up of Parish Councillors and representatives of West Mercia Housing Group to find a suitable site and obtain an informal view from MHDC’s Planners as to its suitability. There would then be a public consultation meeting at which members of the public/local residents could comment on the proposals, and subsequently a planning application would be made. Mr Parry emphasised that a scheme built on a rural exception site (i.e. outside the settlement boundary) would be for local people and that a representative of the PC would be invited to sit in on the lettings meeting.

DECIDED ON A REPAIR PLAN FOR THE WAR MEMORIAL & INSTRUCTED A STONEMASON

It was decided that the most important task of a war memorial was to preserve the names of those who died and it was therefore agreed to accept a revised quotation from Steve Allard of Callow End and instruct him to complete the work at his convenience but to finish before the Remembrance Service on 11 November 2007.

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES TO THE VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE AND CALC

Tony Atkinson has once again served as the PC’s representative on the Village Hall Committee and provided regular reports of the excellent work undertaken at the Village Hall on behalf of the village. The hall remains a focal point for many clubs and societies and the fact that it is almost fully booked is a testament to its success. The Chairman & Clerk attended the AGM of Worcestershire CALC and the Chairman has also attended meetings of the Malvern Hills Area Committee of CALC when they have been called.

FOUND A NEW LENGTHSMAN FOLLOWING BOB’S RETIREMENT

Bob Kendrick, who had been the PC’s lengthsmen from the start of the pilot scheme and who had helped to shape the concept not only in our Parish but outside as well, unfortunately had to tender his resignation due to ongoing problems with his back. The PC were sorry to see him go but delighted to be able to appoint a local man, Peter Sauntson, as his replacement.

ment. Pete came with the experience of having been a lengthsman in other parishes and he has quickly made up the hours lost due to Bob's ill-health. The full grant of £2000.00 has been spent for the year 2006/2007 and Pete's hard work is evident throughout the parish but particularly on footways in The Holloway, outside Hanley Castle High School, by the Primary School, by St Gabriel's Church and on verges and grips in the Worcester road, Gilberts End, Roberts End, the B4211 of Hanley Castle etc. etc. etc.

**GRANTED MONEY TO THE CITIZENS
ADVICE BUREAU and UPTON COM-
MUNITY CARE**

As usual the Parish Council made a Section 142 grant of £150.00 to Malvern Hills District CAB and a Section 137 grant of £50.00 to Upton Community Care, as help from both organisations is available to residents in Hanley Castle Parish. I should like to thank both of them for agreeing to stage a display at the Parish Celebration on 17 May and hope that their attendance is of mutual benefit to their organisations and to local residents.

**HELD SEVEN MEETINGS OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE AND COM-
MENTED ON 47 APPLICATIONS**

The majority of applications were for house extensions but did include an application for housing on land behind Jubilee Cottage, Hanley Swan, where the appeal was granted on the outline application but a subsequent application for full planning for the erection of four houses was refused with objections from the PC and local residents. The result of

the appeal on this refusal is still awaited. The appeal against refusal for permission to build a detached two storey house with garage and new access at Cross Hands, Hanley Castle was subsequently allowed.

**INSTIGATED A MORE FORMAL AP-
PROACH TO PUBLIC QUESTION TIME
AT PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

As part of the QPS application the PC has firmed up the arrangements for Public Question Time which had always been a feature of PC meetings but had been poorly used and attended. An opportunity for members of the public to ask questions will be advertised at the start of all meetings of the PC with a start time of 7.30.pm and a finish not later than 8.00.pm.

**JOINED THE NEW LITTER PICKING
SCHEME IN ASSOCIATION WITH
MHDC**

The PC has signed up to the pilot scheme available to Quality Parishes allowing them to pick up litter within their parish and receive funding from MHDC to pay the wages of the person employed to do so. The PC has to match fund the scheme and money was put in the budget for this purpose and the PC's Lengthsman has expressed his willingness to undertake this work on their behalf.

**KEPT UP WITH THE REGULAR MEET-
INGS WITH NICK VINCENT OF THE
THREE COUNTIES AGRICULTURAL
SOCIETY**

Nick Vincent (Chief Executive of the TCAS) has visited the PC and reported on his efforts to ensure that the Show-

ground's effect on the surrounding area is minimised. It was generally agreed that the traffic problems associated with the events at the Showground were improving although one or two particular events did still cause a disproportionate amount of nuisance. The splitting of traffic into different approach routes for some shows seemed to be working and Mr Vincent was thanked for his efforts.

LISTENED TO PC MARK TAYLOR'S REGULAR REPORTS

Thanks are due to Mark Taylor for his regular attendance at PC meetings and reports on the crime figures for the parish. Luckily the figures remain fairly low even though they include incidents on the industrial estates at Blackmore and at Hanley Castle High School. Unfortunately, acts of petty vandalism around Hanley Swan seem to be a problem and Mark has been kept informed of the details which have affected the Village Hall, Primary School, the area around the pond and the Ewe & Lamb Green.

MET WITH SEVERAL CONTRACTORS REGARDING THE PLAY AREA

Four quotes have been received for improvements to the play area; specifically the replacement of the climbing frame with a similar though updated unit, the provision of a new swing unit for older children, safety surfacing around both of these and general improvements to the fencing etc. The PC in association with members of the Youth Club made an ultimately unsuccessful application to DABID for funding for the project and is now looking to other grant sources to enable it to go ahead.

The PC continues to pay for the mowing of the playing field, used mainly by the football club, and to commission the annual RoSPA inspection of the play area site. The Playing Field Committee have met infrequently and a more focused approach to the improvement of the play area must be a priority for the coming year.

NOTED THE INTENTION OF ELGAR HOUSING TO PROVIDE ALLOTMENTS

The PC has followed closely the process, from the identification of a small piece of land off Winnington Gardens, through discussions of its possible use as a children's play area to the current plan to make it into allotments available to the local community. As a small section of the land is already under cultivation as an allotment it seems the natural course to expand its use for this purpose. The PC are pleased to support this initiative and are delighted to learn that the Primary School hopes to cultivate one of the plots.

OUTLINED ALL THE PARISH COUNCIL'S WORK IN A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Once again the newsletter has been published and distributed in conjunction with the Parish Link magazine. This arrangement, which keeps down the costs to the PC, seeks to complement rather than compete with the parish's long-established and excellent magazine and the PC are grateful to the magazine committee for their help and co-operation. Thanks are also due to Ian Thompson for his editorship of the newsletter and for his work on the next item.....

PUBLISHED A LIST OF ALL CLUBS AND SOCIETIES IN THE PARISH

The list, first published last year, was revised and updated and published as a supplement to the February edition of the newsletter. Extra copies have been made available to members of the public who must, like me, be heartened and impressed by the number and diversity of organisations within the parish.

QUESTIONED THE NEED TO FELL THE OAK AT HANLEY CASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

The PC received a letter from the school informing it of their decision to fell the oak tree at the entrance to the school car park. Tree surgeons had been consulted and had suggested either the complete removal of the tree or a reduction of the crown to reduce the risk to the users of the school and the highway. Following a letter from a local resident and discussions with the County Ecologist the PC decided to ask the school to reconsider their decision to fell the tree and try the less drastic course of action involving the crown reduction

RECEIVED REGULAR REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND FROM THE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

The PC is once again grateful to Tom, Sue and Mary for their attendance at meetings and informative reports. Additionally their help in liaising with the County and District Councils is appreciated as is their willingness to take up issues and concerns expressed by local residents. It is particularly sad therefore to lose Sue and Mary, both of whom

stood down at the recent elections, and I should like to take this opportunity to thank them most sincerely for their last four years of service to the parish. It is to be hoped that the good working relationships established over the last four years can continue as the PC welcomes the newly-elected District Councillors to their new roles.

SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO SPECIAL MEETINGS INCLUDING

- Malvern Hills Area CALC
- CALC Annual General Meeting
- Highway Maintenance Scrutiny Workshop
- Worcestershire CC discussion event on Information Sharing with PCs
- West Midland Regional Spatial Strategy meeting

- Malvern Hills Local Strategic Partnership Conference
- “Blue Sky Thinking” – a celebration of Parish Planning
- Clerks Gatherings
- Lengthsman Steering Group

TRIED FURTHER TO INVESTIGATE THE INSTALLATION OF SPEED READERS

Sue Adeney prepared a paper for the March meeting detailing the types of speed reader available and the possible costs involved. The PC had put the sum of £500.00 in its budget for 2007/2008 as possible partnership funding and it was thought that other money may come from Highways and the Three Counties Agricultural Society. The number of sites within the villages at which a reader may be of benefit made the decision more

complex and some doubt was expressed as to the long-term effectiveness of the devices once the initial “novelty” period had elapsed. It was agreed to consult further with the Highways and/or the Safety Camera Partnership to ensure the £5K to £8K would be money well spent.

UPLIFTED LITTER AROUND THE PARISH ON PARISH LITTER COLLECTION DAY

This took place on Saturday 31 March and attracted a reasonable turnout of volunteers both in Hanley Castle and in Hanley Swan. The problems of litter around Hanley Castle High School had been discussed during the year and some local residents had kept up the pressure on the school to keep the village and particularly the alley and route to the Post Office tidy. The Sixth Form had made an extra effort prior to Litter Collection Day and the benefits were obvious when the volunteers went out on the day. Grant Matthews, Head of Sixth Form, who has acquired the post of “Litter Supremo”, has tried to keep the problems to a minimum and school has also agreed to provide litter bins in the alley for which they will be responsible, though as yet these have not appeared.

VALUED THE CONTINUING GOOD WORK OF THE TREE WARDEN, THE NEW PARISH PATH WARDENS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION MONITOR

The Parish is blessed with volunteers willing to serve as Wardens and assist the PC in keeping the area at its attractive best. David Cheale continues to care for the trees and was also a great help at the

start of the willow weaving days at the pond.

John & Margaret Quibell-Smith have finally gone through all the legal and training hoops with the County Council and have started their work as PPWs, and we wish them well with their new responsibilities.

Finally, Hanley Castle is perhaps the only Parish to have an EPM but Margaret Norris has filled the role beautifully and as she retires from the PC we thank her for all her work at the sharp end (or should that be the grimy end?) of PC affairs and hope that her replacement is up to the task of litter, dog waste, fly tipping and abandoned cars!!

WORKED WITH THE HIGHWAYS DEPT. ON VARIOUS MATTERS

The excellent working relationship enjoyed with the HPU at Malvern and particularly with Nils Wilkes has suffered slightly with the reorganisation by the County Council of the Highways Department and the loss of the local office. The PC continues to keep them informed of problems within their areas of responsibility, however, and is looking forward to receiving the subsoil necessary to backfill around the pond as soon as possible.

(E)XPANDED THE WEBSITE AND LOOKED AT A JOINT VENTURE WITH THE HANLEYS' VILLAGE SOCIETY

Ian Thompson is to be thanked once again for his work on keeping the website up to date with PC news. The idea

of incorporating the PC site and a village site initiated by the Hanleys Village Society has been discussed and a team of volunteers is needed to input the necessary information and keep everything updated. It seems like an excellent idea but is only any good if enough people are willing to help with the running of the site as it would indeed be an onerous task for only one or two enthusiasts.

YEARNED FOR A PRACTICAL SOLUTION TO THE CAR PARKING IN CHURCH END

The ongoing problems of school cars parking in Church End throughout the school day has been discussed once again and pressure from the PC and local residents has resulted in a meeting with the school organised by Tom Wells. The proposed building work at the school to provide 8 new classroom units at the top of Bowling Green offered an opportunity to request extra onsite car parking spaces as part of the build and this was agreed and reinforced as part of the PC's response to the planning application. The school also undertook to find extra space outside the Sixth Form block for additional car parking and to write to parents to request they stagger their pick-up times to reduce the congestion at the end of the school day.

ZEROED IN ON THE THINGS THAT MAKE THIS SUCH A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND ENTERED THE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION ON THE STRENGTH OF IT

This competition, sponsored by Calor Gas, is much more about the village as a community than the old Tidy Village

competition and has categories such as environment, business, communications and facilities, in all of which Hanley Swan scores highly. The Judges hope to visit as many of the entrants as possible and the results will be known later in the year.

CONCLUSION:

I cannot end this Annual Report without making reference to the retirement of three Parish Councillors, two of whom are former Chairmen.

Anne Ballinger joined the PC in 1983 and was until the elections our longest serving Councillor bringing her wealth of knowledge and experience to our deliberations. She served as Chairman from 1989 to 1993 and has remained as a hard working Councillor ever since. I am sure that we would all like to thank her for her many years of service and wish her well in her retirement.

Margaret Norris was elected to the PC in 1991 and served as Chairman in 1993/94. She was also brave enough to take on the role of EPM when Martin Holmes retired and has been devoted to her task ever since. She was also kind enough to volunteer for the Parish Plan Working Party where her dedication saw the project through to its conclusion, with the publication of one of the first Parish Plans in Worcestershire. She has spent a lot of time in the service of our Parish and we thank her and wish her all the best as devotes a little more time to her family.

Ann Davies joined our ranks in 1995 and served not only on the PC but on many other local organisations until she left the

village for a new job in Bretforton. She has undoubtedly been missed in many aspects of village life and we hope that our loss is Bretforton's gain!

And finally,

I should like to thank Ann for her sterling work throughout the year; after all without her skills and expertise we would not be a Quality Parish Council; and all my fellow Councillors for their help and support. I should like to welcome our three new recruits and hope they get as much out of their membership of the PC as I do.

Thank you, welcome and good luck.

IT HAS BEEN CUSTOMARY TO SET TARGETS FOR WHAT THE PC WOULD LIKE TO ACHIEVE IN THE COMING YEAR AND FOR 2007/2008 THESE ARE:

- *TO FINISH THE WORK ON THE POND*
- *TO CONTINUE THE WORK ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING*
- *TO LOOK FOR GRANT AID FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAY AREA*
- *TO FURTHER THE QUEST FOR SPEED READERS*

Sue Roberts (Chairman) 10 May 2007

The Parish Council Website

Our website presents far more information than can ever be printed in a newsletter. On it, you will find all the minutes of committee meetings, planning decisions, information regarding businesses resident in the parish, news, links to other sites, information about recycling facilities and much, much more.

We are very keen to expand this site and to make it a valuable source of data for our residents. However, it is run by volunteers at no cost to the Parish and consequently would benefit from additional effort. If you would be prepared to lend a hand in providing content and timely updates, we would be glad to hear from you. Experience is not necessary (we'll help you with the technical stuff!), but a PC, an internet connection and boundless enthusiasm are all essential! We have plenty of ideas — we need help in getting them put onto the site. If you can help, please contact the editor: irt@cygnetlodge.co.uk or phone 310716.

FINANCIAL REPORT

A copy of the Receipts and Payments for year ended 31 March 2007 shows receipts **£13890.12** and payments of **£12554.23** giving a credit balance of **£1335.88..**

The Precept raised was **£10250.00** an increase of £250.00 over the previous year

We are grateful to Worcestershire County Council for providing £2000.00 to fund the Lengthsman scheme (although only £1449.50 was received in the financial year) and the sum of £870.00 to fund the work of the Parish Paths Wardens.

Other items of expenditure were £1835.25 on grass cutting; £189.89 on the play area; £200.00 for rent of the playing field.

The insurance premium paid to Zurich Insurance amounted to £543.38 and showed a sharp increase on the previous year. The audit fee remained at £120.00.

Printing of the issues of the quarterly newsletter, distributed with the Parish Link, came to £172.04.

A Section 137 payment of £50.00 was made to Upton Community Care and a Section 142 payment of £150.00 was made to Malvern Hills District Citizens Advice Bureau.

We are grateful for sponsorship from Nature's Own Ltd to cover the cost of the Willow bundles for use on the pond and this amounted to £200.00 this year with a further £200.00 promised for the next financial year. Waders were purchased at a cost of £29.78.

The balance in the War Memorial Fund at the end of the financial year amounted to £2336.88.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 require that the Accounts are subject to an annual internal audit report covering the financial regulations, budget monitoring, etc. and we are very grateful to Chris Price for acting as the Internal Auditor for the Parish Council.

Ann L Canham
Responsible Financial Officer

10 May 2007

HANLEY CASTLE PARISH COUNCIL

Receipts and Payments for year ended 31 March 2007

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(unaudited)

RECEIPTS

Precept	10250.00
Interest	13.61
Dividends	8.76
Worcs.CC - Parish Paths Grant	870.00
Worcs.CC - Lengthsman scheme (contra)	1449.50
V.A.T. refund 2005/2006	774.50
Nature's Own Ltd - donation towards Willow for Pond	200.00
Donation	30.00
Transfer from War Memorial Fund	<u>293.75</u>

13890.12

PAYMENTS

Staff Costs	4001.16
Members allowances & expenses	75.00
Other administrative costs	342.48
Printing quarterly newsletter	172.04
Insurance	543.38
Section 137 Payment	50.00
Section 142 Payment	150.00
Subscriptions	313.18
Audit Fee 2005/2006	120.00
Training	40.00
Internet Service, Web Hosting & Domain name regn.	273.99
Grass cutting	1835.25
Playing Field rent	200.00
Paths maintenance	700.55
Playing Field & Play Area	189.89
Lengthsman scheme (contra)	2105.50
Thigh Waders	29.78
Pestkill Contract	250.00
Litter Bins	112.10
War Memorial Survey	250.00
Willow bundles for pond	225.00
V.A.T. paid 2006/2007	<u>574.94</u>

12554.24

EXCESS OF RECEIPTS OVER PAYMENTS

1335.88

BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD 1 APRIL 2006

Current Account	183.25
Instant Gold Savings Account	179.12
Consolidated Stock 2.5%	<u>351.44</u>

713.81

BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD 31 MARCH 2007

Current Account	255.52
Instant Gold Savings Account	1442.73
Consolidated Stock 2.5%	<u>351.44</u>

2049.69

WAR MEMORIAL FUND BALANCE AS AT 31 MARCH 2007

2336.88

PARISH COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Hanley Castle Parish Council meets on the third Thursday of January, March, May (AGM), July, September and November at Hanley Swan Village Hall: meetings start (usually) at 7:30 pm. All members of the public are welcome at these meetings, though they will be allowed to address the council only before and after the meeting unless otherwise invited by the Chairman.

Our Council comprises:	Telephone
Sue Roberts (Chairman)	592686
Sue Adeney	310440
Tony Atkinson	310408
Val Fare	311994
Francis Harcombe	310740
John Taverner	310460
Ian Thompson (Vice Chairman)	310716
Dennis Wade	310410

Associated officers:

Ann Canham (Clerk & RFO)	310366
John & Margaret Quibell Smith (footpaths)	310578
David Cheale (Tree Warden)	310233

Comments and contributions from parish residents are welcomed on any subject to do with our community. The Parish Council is very conscious of the cost of producing and distributing this newsletter and the methods of so doing will be under constant review.

If you would be prepared to receive it in electronic form either by email or by downloading it from our website, please let us know — this will help us to keep production costs to a minimum.

The information contained in this newsletter is edited by Ian Thompson
Telephone: 01684 310716, email irt@cygnetlodge.co.uk or by post to
Cygnet Lodge, Worcester Rd., Hanley Swan, Worcs. WR8 0EA.