

ABBOTTS ANN PARISH COUNCIL

Newsletter: November 2008

LEST WE FORGET

There is so much to remember in November, but it must be wise for us to have a kind of annual audit of shared and personal memories. Some of us will never forget the tremendous impact in the 1930s of the whole of London stopping dead at 11 o'clock every November 11th with buses at a standstill, shops falling silent, pedestrians standing hatless on the pavements, and even the cycling errand-boys hushing their whistling. There are interesting signs that after the casual attitudes of recent years a more thoughtful approach to remembrance is emerging, even as those with direct experience of war are dwindling in numbers.

So, while our heads are whirling with the bewildering complications of the Megashed saga, there is a danger that we will forget that the old airfield, which, after all, is only a few yards from our Parish boundary, is a site of major importance in the history of air warfare. Starting off in 1917 as a base for the Royal Flying Corps, built mainly by German prisoners-of-war, the station was first occupied by the No. 2 School of Navigation and Bomb-dropping. This set the pattern for 60 years of vital work, mainly in the fields of training and research, including the first form of electronic navigation (Radio Direction Finding), which, in principle, is still in use. Between the wars it hosted the RAF Staff College (which did not finally move away until 1970) and numerous experimental and training units. In 1929, the idea of starting a welfare organisation for serving and retired personnel arose from a conversation in the Sergeants' Mess; the RAF Association now has a worldwide network of over 500 branches and a membership of around 80,000.

During the Second World War the station was the headquarters of RAF Maintenance Command, whose job included the supply of everything from 'planes to plum jam. But it was also used by several operational units, including one from the USA equipped with *Lockheed Lightnings*, 31 of which failed to return from sorties over France in 1944. Other casualties resulted from German bombs, despite the odd fact that there was a decoy site, complete with fake aircraft, buildings and machine-gun posts, at Hurstbourne Tarrant.

At the end of the war and for many years after until the Army took over in 1977, the station pioneered the use of military helicopters, and continued its association with aviation research, including trials that led to the development of the *Harrier*. And one must not forget the *Andover*, the incredibly versatile workhorse, which has been carting anything from Royalty to rockets around for almost as long as anyone can remember, helped by its ability to "kneel" to allow vehicles to drive in up a rear ramp.

So there is a lot of history in that huge expanse of grass alongside Red Post Lane, and however much concrete may eventually bury it, we should surely not let anyone bury the memory of the many hundreds of people based there, who worked, fought and died for the freedom of our green and pleasant land.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Professorial President of the Friends of the Norfolk Dialect has congratulated the Parish Council of Wiverton on the success of their new road signs which read "Slow You Down". These seem to put drivers into such a good mood that the accident rate in the narrow village lanes has plummeted. The Clerk's memory of his Cotswold childhood would suggest in Gloucestershire something more like "Roads do be narrow down along through here."

At our request Hampshire Highways have promised to move the "Long Vehicle" signs at St. John's Cross, to make them easier for drivers to see before it is too late. They have not, however,

agreed to give them more impact by re-wording them to read something like “ Lorries coming thisaway be bound to get stuck.”

N.B.

While on the subject of language, the papers have been laughing at members of a local council who seem in toto to have gone non compos mentis about Latin words etc.; i.e. they put the onus (sic) on employees to produce a nil return on all bone fide Latin words and abbreviations: e.g. lb., Q.E.D., nem. con., ad hoc et al.; and what about Henry VIII c 1509 A.D., or indeed bonus? They badly need an alibi, as this ex cathedra order was, prima facie, totally ultra vires and not pro bono publico, so let's get back to the status quo.

DAISY ROOTS

The Health and Safety people seem so keen on keeping us in corpore sano that their mens sana has gone completely abs. The Parish Council of South Harting found a rubbish bin in a 4-inch deep stream and asked the Chichester District Council's fly-tipping department to fish it out. Back came the message: “Sorry, but we have no staff qualified to wear Wellington Boots.” So the astounded Councillors voted nem. con. [that's enough: Ed.] to do the job themselves. Is there a course in wellingtonology at Sparsholt?

Meanwhile the Clerk has had to produce a Risk Assessment for anyone who might be paid for picking up litter. Back trouble was covered by the provision of one of those gadgets with a sort of finger and thumb operated by a lever, and hazards from tins or glass by supplying a pair of tough gloves; there should probably also have been a limit on the weight of a bag of litter and the distance to the nearest bin, not to mention provision for sheer boredom.

This leads to a very serious point. Much of the litter around the Village Hall and on the Sports Field arises from cans and bottles. Parents and young people should be aware that under-age drinking is illegal. The Parish Council doesn't, but the Police does, have powers to enforce the law.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Tempus fugit, and the Clerk has a deadline to meet. Unfortunately he was not able to attend the meeting in person, thanks to a particularly hostile virus; incidentally that's Latin for *venom* [I said that's quite enough: Ed.] which rendered him - sorry, only temporarily - speechless. But Mrs. Griffiths gallantly undertook to take the Minutes, so the weighty decisions of the Council are not lost to posterity.

NOT-SO-MEGASHED?

The Megashed story is full of twists and turns, like the lanes from which we are trying to exclude their lorries. It is not at all clear what difference may be made by the latest news that Goodman, the developers, have cancelled their contract with Tesco. Goodman still want to develop the airfield site, and are going ahead with their application, due to come before the Planning Control Committee on 1st December. If anyone replaces Tesco, they will have to conform to pretty strict restrictions on vehicle movements and routes as well as on light pollution and noise. Our Dr. John Moon has been working with huge dedication and expertise on the latter and came along to the meeting to report on this work and other aspects of the opposition campaign, for which the Council expressed its warmest appreciation.

PLANNING

The Council found no reason to object to any of the current applications, but they did spend some time discussing a letter about the proposal from last month for building a substantial house at 20 Cattle Lane. Understandably the applicant was not happy that the Council had

objected to the proposal, though this was not because they disliked the design, but because they considered it inappropriate for the site. As explained in last month's Newsletter, the Council has always supported the principle that Cattle Lane houses should be low-built; the fact that this is not incorporated specifically in the Village Design Statement does not inhibit Councillors from sticking to this view, which is consistent with their general policy that new buildings should fit in historically as well as visually with their surroundings. This policy quite clearly follows such stated Design Guidelines as: *In any future development care should be taken to reflect the original pattern of the village in terms of layout and scale as well as design and character; and Low rooflines should be maintained where possible.*

Salisbury Road would perhaps have difficulty in reaching the top twenty of rural developments, but it does offer an interestingly varied parade of 20th Century domestic architecture which has been able to grow naturally without concerns about "fitting in". So the Council warmly welcomed a proposal to replace the long-time derelict bungalow on Old Salisbury Road (bearing the name, which somebody must have liked, of Dunromin) with two new well-presented dwellings.

PARISH ORGANISATIONS

1. Footpaths. The need for people to be reminded that footpaths are just that - paths for feet - was underlined by the news that a car had been seen being driven along Church Path right up to the "cuckoo-pen" and then in reversing had narrowly missed flooring a pedestrian. Our Footpaths Officer, David Downey, has twisted the County Council's arm hard enough for them to produce some "Walkers Only" signs, two of which at least will duly appear on Church Path..

The Saga of Lamp-post (or Pole-mounted Luminary) No 2 continues (see under "Finance" below. But Mr. John Swann, at the request of the speechless Clerk, has exercised his skill in refusing to take No for an answer and persuaded Test Valley to clean the glass on the lanterns, so that what light there is has more chance of reaching the ground.

2. Neighbourhood Watch. Mr. Downey also reports to the Council for Neighbourhood Watch; in this capacity he promised to keep an eye on any misuse of Church Path.

3. Fete Committee. It was too early to give details of the profit, though it was feared that the weather had been particularly unhelpful this year. It had become clear that it was not possible to set the fete up on the day itself, and the Committee was minded to move the function to a Sunday, with the possibility of letting the marquee on the Saturday evening.

4. Village School. Cllr Paul Stanton, who is now Chairman of Governors, explained that the gap in the hedge was for eventual access of builders' vehicles, but had been made before the winter to avoid disturbing our furry, spiky and scaly hibernating friends. Building was due to start in the New Year, and the school should be ready in early 2010.

5. Sports Field. The Fireworks and Bonfire night had been most enjoyable, and Cllr Penny Wilkins reckoned that a respectable profit had been achieved.

FINANCE

The Council is more than a little tired of the Lamp-post saga, and decided to stamp its collective foot, in effect telling Hampshire County Council's Lighting Department to whistle for its fee until we have all four luminaries doing some illumination.

The Clerk's budget for 2009-10 was considered to be realistic, as was his proposal for a 2.5% increase in the Precept, and these were officially adopted.

The monthly financial statement illustrated the general fitness of the population, as the Burial Ground receipts had been zero for two consecutive months.

It was noted that allowance had to be made for contributions to improvements in and around the War Memorial Hall, attention to the roof of the Church tower and work on trees and gravestones in the old churchyard. In the absence of any communication from BT, the future status, or even continued existence, of the red kiosk in Duck Street remains in suspense.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Telephone Pole. BT had refused in no uncertain terms to consider moving the newly-arrived pole from outside Chapel Cottage, insisting that all relevant regulations had been scrupulously obeyed. This only made Councillors more determined to pursue the matter; after all the pavement was Highway property, so the Clerk was to ask the County to bring up some heavy artillery.

2. Newton Family. A request had been received from M. Tommy Newton, who had lived in Abbotts Ann from 1950 (aged 0) to 1958, asking if anyone had any photographs or news of his family. No-one at the meeting could help. Any offers?

3. Strategic Gaps (green spaces between Andover and us, for instance). The latest report on planning policy from SEERA - remember this is an it, not a she - threatened to delete strategic gaps, presumably to have *carte blanche* to fill the gaps with eco houses.

County Councillor Michael Woodhall, however, assured us that Hampshire will fight tooth and nail to defend the gaps, and it was noted with satisfaction that in Test Valley's new "Core Strategy" document these gaps were specifically safeguarded. Still, it is a bit worrying...

4. Overgrown verges. By the time of the meeting the verge of Red Rice Road between Bulbery and St. John's Cross had been mown, sort of, but the pavement was still restricted; the Council was prepared if necessary to use its own resources next year to keep this approach to the village more passable, less scruffy and more *comme il faut* [French now, is it? Watch it, Ed.].

5. Traffic in Bulbery. The Council debated the suggestion from one or two Bulbery residents that a one-way traffic system be introduced, but in the end were rather underwhelmed by the proposal, feeling that it could cause more problems than it would solve. At the same time it was confirmed by the Chairman that the path between the main part of Bulbery and the sheltered bungalows was a public right of way and therefore should not be obstructed.

TVBC COUNCILLOR

Cllr Graham Stallard managed to drag himself away from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to give a welcome up-date of the Borough's activities and to emphasise the importance of showing interest in the important exhibition which he and Cllr Arthur Peters had arranged in connection with the Core Strategy consultation; see you in Upper Clatford Village Hall on 24th November from 7 to 9 p.m.

Though quite long enough, this is only a *précis*, and quite a lot else was talked about; but time and space are running short, so it's time to say *au revoir*. The Minutes, which are even longer, are available on the Website and in the Village Shop. So is the Planning Summary.

The next meeting is back to the old date of 4th December and will be in the Pavilion (*zut alors!*) which is actually quite cosy.

Adrian Stokes
Clerk