

ABBOTTS ANN PARISH COUNCIL

Newsletter: October 2006

Natural England. This is the title of what looks suspiciously like yet another Quango, bringing together English Nature, the landscape, access and recreation elements of the Countryside Agency and the environmental land management functions of the Rural Development Service in England. It looks as if, in Qaungoland, the old rhyme still applies:

Big fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em,

And little fleas have smaller fleas, and so ad infinitum.

However, this new flea has the support of CPRE, so it must be all right.

Third Sector. The publications of CAH (Community Action Hampshire), apart from a tendency to acronymitis, provide an excellent source of info about local goings-on. It has helpfully clarified, up to a point, a source of worrying confusion by defining the term *Third Sector*, which is used to describe a range of organisations outside the public and private sectors, including community and voluntary groups, charities, co-operative social enterprises and other not-for-profit bodies. Never mind Sectors 1 and 2. The Government has cottoned on to the fact that voluntary organisations can make a huge contribution to the quality of life of the nation, and are often better at this than the Civil Service. So they are setting up "Compacts" under which codes are drawn up to regulate and encourage co-operation between local authorities and voluntary bodies. There is one compact for Hampshire, called One Compact for Hampshire; its declared aim is to allow the expertise, skills, knowledge and professionalism of volunteers and paid employees to be "knitted together", so listen for the sounds of clicking knitting needles emanating from the Kremlin in Winchester. The first Compact Commissioner (sounds more like one of the proposed the mini-mayors than the Fat Controller) has already been appointed. He is on a 3-year contract, paid by you and me for working 2 days a week on a salary of £100,000 a year pro rata. Any questions?

Hampshire Bobby Trust. This is a charitable organisation aiming to provide home security and peace of mind for elderly or vulnerable people targeted by burglars. It works in partnership with Hampshire Constabulary and will receive referrals, which lead to a visit from a trained fitter, who will carry out a survey and advise on safety measures. He will fit devices such as safety chains, spy-holes etc and will spend time with the occupant offering advice and re-assurance. The service is free and all fitters are uniformed and carry ID cards.

Poplar Farm Inn. There should soon be signs of life again behind the grim green hoardings, since the property has been acquired by Mitchells and Butlers, who plan to re-open the Inn in time for Christmas as a "Vintage Inn"; we wait with baited breath to see how different this may be from Whitbread's "Brewer's Fayre." At least the spelling will be beyond criticism.

Hampshire Present and Future. HCC has produced a summary of its responses to the daft, sorry draft, South-East Plan, under which SEERA (South Eastern Eradicator of Rural Areas?) proposes to build from 28,000 to 46,000 houses between here and Dover *per year*, of which from 6,000 to 14,000 would be in Hampshire including the area of PUSH (Partnership for Urban South Hampshire). The main points made by HCC (Hampshire's Caring Custodians) are:

1. The numbers are much too high; it would make more sense to wait and see how the demand for new housing works out.

2. The necessary infrastructure, i.e. provision for roads, drains, schools, hospital, rubbish etc., should be financed by the Government [flying porkers on the radar again?]

3. There is particular concern whether the driest corner of England can take many more inhabitants without running out of water.

4. HCC maintains that the Plan envisages an increase of 20% in the number of properties in the County while the population would increase by only 6%, mainly because of Hampshire folk living longer; migration is forecast to add only around 56,000 people in the next 20 years - a modest increase on the 1.6 million who live here already.

By the way, the population of Abbotts Ann, according to TVBC, has risen from 2,271 last year to 2,357. We all hope that these extra 86 people feel at home.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: 5th October 2006

Clearly the meetings of some Parish Councils are rather less harmonious than ours. A recent case in Truro Crown Court concerned a practising pagan Parish Councillor, whose mistress, a fellow pagan grandmother with a knowledge of magic pills and potions, was accused of chopping him up and dumping him off the Lizard from a fishing boat. Perhaps, too, one would hardly expect life in to be peaceful in a village with a name like Burstall, where a Councillor was disqualified by the Standards Board. In one meeting he had constantly disobeyed the Chairman's orders to keep quiet; in two others he had refused to accept the Chairman's rulings, persistently interrupted proceedings and had to be removed by Police.

It is the Clerk's pleasant duty therefore to record the Council's unanimity on the following:

Jubilee Oak. It was noted with satisfaction that at last Hampshire Highways have fixed an additional Keep Left sign at the junction, so that there should now be no repetition of the recent head-on collision (fortunately minor) resulting from a driver proceeding anti-clockwise around the tree. It was, however, clearly not the fitter's job to ensure that anyone could see the new sign; it took the efforts of one of your Councillors with a pair of loppers to remove the foliage that was hanging down in front of the sign.

Planning. There has been a rush of applications to tidy up trees, all of which have been uncontroversial. Otherwise only one planning application required attention: "White Smocks", Little Ann. Mr. Tony Chang Chao has applied to demolish the bungalow and replace it with a 4-bedroom house with separate garage. The Council resolved to register an objection, considering that the design, particularly in view of the height of the roof-line, was out of keeping with the surrounding area; that its dominant character would have a negative impact on the street scene and on the Conservation Area generally; that it represented over-development of its cramped site, particularly with the addition of a separate double garage to the front; it was also noted that the proposed installation of uPVC windows was inappropriate and contrary to the Village Design Statement. Councillors are not just being awkward, but are anxious to preserve the rural nature of the village and to prevent it from turning into Surbiton.

War Memorial Hall. Good news is that following the Parish Council's undertaking to contribute funds towards the new roof, the Borough has agreed in principle to put up 37.5% of the cost. And there is more to come from other sources.

Budget. Financial forecasts for the financial year 2007-8 indicate that there should be no need for an increase in the Precept, the sum allocated to the Parish Council from the general Council Tax.

Village Map. The pocket-size maps, produced by David Downey to a high standard, are ready for distribution, and it is planned to arrange for a copy to go to every household in the Parish. A large-scale map will soon appear on the Notice Board by the War Memorial Hall.

Footpaths and Trees. A glance at the Village Map will show how well provided this village is with footpaths, and the recent survey indicated that they are appreciated and well used, and not exclusively by village residents. In his capacity as Footpaths Officer Mr. Downey regularly walks the paths, and organises the removal of fallen trees (2 noted this month) or overgrown undergrowth. Also the Parish and Borough Councils recognise the importance of trees to the landscape and environment, and our Tree Warden, Dr. Moon, keeps an eye on them and advises the Council on the many applications for felling or trimming (5 at this meeting, many involving several trees). A surprising number of trees are protected either by the Conservation Area regulations or by Preservation Orders. So permission may be needed before getting that axe or saw out of the shed.

Poplar Farm Inn: Licence. Councillors noted that the new proprietors were asking for changes in the licensing hours. The licence already permits opening until midnight on weekdays; Councillors were not in favour of these hours being applied to Sundays, Good Friday and Christmas Day, when it was considered inappropriate to allow an extension beyond 11 p.m.

Fireworks. With November 5th approaching, it was considered appropriate to remind parishioners of what is legal and/or sensible in connection with fireworks.

The Law states that it is an offence under the Explosives Act 1875, the Protection of Animals Act 1911 or the Fireworks Act 2003:

1. To set off fireworks in any street or public place (Fine up to £5,000).
2. To let off fireworks between 11 pm and 7 am except on New Year's Eve, Diwali or Chinese New Year (extension to 1 am).
3. To sell caps, cracker snaps, party poppers and throwdowns to anyone under 16 or to sell any other fireworks to anyone under 18. That only leaves sparklers.
4. To exceed a limit of 120 decibels on the loudness of bangs and whooshes.
5. To cause any unnecessary suffering to any domestic or captive animals. (Fine up to £5,000 or 6 months behind bars).

In addition the Council urges parishioners to be aware that:

1. Not only animals, but the elderly, children and other vulnerable persons may be excessively alarmed by sudden noises well below the 120 decibel limit.
2. Hot, or even burning, debris can travel some distance from the launching-site and descend on other people's properties, of which over 50 in our village are thatched.
3. Most people would not mind in the least if only they knew in advance. The Clerk would be happy to put warning notices on the four Parish Notice Boards, not to mention the unofficial sites, available to everyone, such as the familiar trees or the Church Path fence.
4. The Sports Field will be hosting the annual Firework Display, raising funds for good causes and promising a spectacular show, on November 5th. So who needs a private display?

Minutes. Full Minutes are available in the Village Shop, on the Website, or from the Clerk.

Adrian Stokes, Clerk