

Chairman's report to the Annual Parish Meeting, 2009

Hadley & Leegomery Parish Council has come to the end of another very busy, eventful and productive year.

In order to keep people informed about us and our work with the community, we are in the process of building our own website. As well as letting everyone know who we are, its completion will bring us a step closer to Quality Status for which we already qualify in most respects but have just a couple more boxes to tick.

We have adopted through Wrekin Area Committee, the new Parish Charter which commits all Parish and Town Councils to a working partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council. The first one failed through lack of commitment and communication by Telford & Wrekin but we hope for a better outcome for this new charter.

An example of this failure was the debacle over the proposed Horton Lane experimental closure. First we were told that it would not take place only to learn later from the local paper that it would. Let's hope that this type of error is now a thing of the past. This issue was, however, an example of how this Parish Council proves itself to be necessary to its electorate, and even to those outside the parish boundary, when difficult situations arise.

The rebuilding of Leegomery Centre is now a reality and I believe that it has finally come about through the persistence of people-pressure which has been largely orchestrated and led by Cllr. Plenderleith. He has been remorseless in pursuing this and I just want it on record that we are all grateful to him for the immense effort he has made to keep this issue at the forefront of the Borough's attention.

There are plans for the regeneration of Hadley although we have yet to learn the precise nature of the Borough's intentions, especially in respect of the shopping centre. Although nothing specific has been detailed to us, we are told by both the Leader and the Chief Executive that we shall be consulted at every stage. Members will agree that this involvement is crucial to the success of any redevelopment as we are closest to the local people's needs and aspirations.

I received over 60 letters from the Year 6 children at HLC, expressing their wishes for improvements in the Hadley area. I couldn't promise them the multiplex cinema that some asked for but did agree that we would help with their request for more nesting sites for the birds. The trees we have planted won't be ready for that for many years but we have utilised the mature trees that already exist. We did this by providing funding for Hadley Junior Youth Club, who happen to be all HLC pupils, to spend a session at the Greenwood Trust learning to make nest boxes, which they made and brought back to be fastened to trees that they have identified themselves. We are grateful to Youth Worker Steph Hughes for helping us with these arrangements.

The area most popular with the children is the Green which is the land identified in our application for Village Green Status. The children expressed their concern at the lack of open space and this adds justification to our application. We await the decision of Telford & Wrekin Council which is likely to take another 6 months.

It is a good news story at Apley Woods where agencies and many hard-working volunteers continue to transform the woodland into a beautiful amenity. This council has donated £2,000 to date towards the planting of trees and bulbs to help to achieve this, and a further £1,500 is ear-marked. Thanks are largely due to Adrian Corney who has been pivotal to the work. This effort has been recognised with an award at the CSG Network Awards in Brighton and all those involved should be very proud of themselves for achieving this recognition.

We continue to give financial support to many local groups. The Severn Hospice received £1,000 and Hope House £500. Both Telford Sea Cadets and the 83 St. George's Squadron of the Air Training Corps have received generous grants to further the excellent work that they do for the young in the area. St. George's Squadron was so named because they were formed on St. George's Day. Along with the sea cadets they have become very much part of our events, especially our annual Remembrance Sunday parade and service.

The War Memorial has been well maintained and new shrubs and bulbs planted in the beds. The new crocuses named Remembrance, have flowered for the first time. A former resident of Hadley, Mrs. Kath Parton was so moved by last year's service that she set about

researching the circumstances of each name on the Memorial, the resulting CD now having been presented to the Parish Council.

We continue to observe Remembrance Sunday with a large parade and service. The community always join us to pay their respects to the fallen and to their families and I cannot stress enough the gratitude that is felt for what they gave in the pursuit of our freedom. We must do all we can to safeguard these privileges that have been won by centuries of sacrifice but which are now constantly threatened by political correctness and the spurious policies that undermine this country's proud traditions and culture. The constant erosion of our country's identity is nothing short of an insult to their memory.

We also express this community's national pride by marking St. George's Day and will no doubt continue to observe other special days as they are announced, as we have done in the past. No-one could have been more enthusiastic about these events than Neil Durling whose loss to this Council and community is still keenly felt. His death last August was a tragedy for his family and for all who knew him but he would have been proud that his son, Steven, has now taken his place on the Parish Council along with Cllr. Grindrod.

Neil used to enjoy his part in the community activities of this Council such as our Parish fêtes which have been highly successful in spite of the Borough's ban on all our posters! The Christmas parties and concert proved to be extremely popular once more and are scheduled to take place again this year. Thanks to all who helped last time, especially Santa Plenderleith.

We have lost the services of an extremely popular police officer in Tracey Tonks who has been transferred to Newport. Our new officer is Jenny Nally who has made a good start in getting to know the community, along with CSO Rachel Hughes. Another officer is designated to join the team and CSO Rob Hughes will remain here until he takes his place in the police force in the near future. We thank them all for their commitment to a very large and very busy area.

Changes occur in this Parish which many find unsettling but we shall continue to endeavour to influence decisions, especially in planning, to minimise the impact on local people.

Haybridge Hall remains without adequate maintenance and concern continues to grow about its future. Our heritage has been eroded over the years and we must do all we can to prevent the unnecessary loss of what we cherish. These things matter very much to our people and we exist to represent them and their wishes wherever possible.

Our Administrator is to leave us soon but I'm proud that her stay here has whetted her appetite for parish council work and we wish Lisa every success. Helen and Vera have looked after Castle Farm in spite of their trials and tribulations and we look forward to their speedy return to the best of health. The cemetery has been kept in immaculate order and we thank Cliff for his efforts to keep it so. Visitors often compliment us on its condition.

Our Parish Clerk has proved to be invaluable again this year and his advice and support to all Members is a matter of note and gratitude.

Finally, I'd like to thank my Vice-Chairman for representing me at various functions and for his unstinting support, Cllr. John Smart for keeping the Finance & General Purposes business safe in his very capable hands and Cllr. Hazel Durling, who has continued to oversee our events and to represent us at Wrekin Area Committee, in spite of very difficult circumstances.

May this Council continue to serve our community and so to be held in the highest respect by those who have trusted us to look after them.

Written by Councillor Pat Smart,
Chairman
April 2009