

Thurlaston Chronicle



THANK YOU!



**Keeping busy during lockdown
2020**

About this Edition

By any standards 2020 is a surreal year; the coronavirus pandemic has changed our life styles in so many ways, some may eventually revert back to normality whilst others may have changed for good. Whilst separate to the pandemic, it's a time to look afresh at the purpose and format of the Chronicle publication.

In recent years it has become customary to publish our village Chronicle during Spring time. This year that time has clearly slipped and like so many things most of us probably just assumed it would be cancelled and perhaps resumed in 2021. However there is a wider dimension to the Chronicle and that is simply to assess whether it should continue in its present form; in part triggered by Brian Coleman's decision to step down as overall editor and compositor. It was expected we would have a Chronicle discussion at our May Annual Village Meeting, alas this event was cancelled.

The postponement of the AVM was discussed at a recent Parish Council meeting, especially the fact that our usual community debates would not occur this year. As a Parish Council there were plans to provide updates on strategic planning developments, most notably the Rugby Local Plan, the new Emergency Plan, and Neighbourhood Planning. Of course the AVM is also a useful forum to debate more general issues, and no doubt a rant or two about traffic – speeding, parking etc. To some degree this edition of the Chronicle attempts to fill the vacuum left by the AVM.

We are very indebted to Brian for his many years' service in overseeing the Chronicle supported by a small team of residents who undertook much of the legwork. However Brian feels it time to step down and let somebody else take the mantle. We have a leadership vacuum. On behalf of us all we offer a big thank you to him for all his endeavours over many years.

Pro tem I'm at the helm wondering what I have let myself in for. Thankfully our core team remains as vibrant as ever, and so I've given it a shot, at least for 2020. As a relative newcomer to the village I've asked a few folk what they think about the Chronicle - is it well read, should we continue as now, is its content

relevant, should it continue to be published in both paper and electronic forms, is a 2020 edition appropriate? Whilst all households receive a copy it does not seem to be particularly widely read, and in answer to why, it's largely because it's about old news. It's interesting but not vital as a community resource. After all it is a chronicle of village life, and therefore retrospective, perhaps a format more appropriate 40 years ago.

Villagers, we would very much welcome your thoughts on the Chronicle, particularly whether it should change. Main feedback from a recent straw poll suggest:

- ✦ Make the publication more contemporary – cover past activities but also focus on the future;
- ✦ Provide an event planner; publish future event dates wherever possible;
- ✦ Make it a reference document – to some degree augment what is on our website - noting not everybody has or uses the Internet;
- ✦ Publish 'in year' – possibly before Christmas, which used to occur in times past;
- ✦ Continue to publish in both paper and electronic forms – in our homes paper has more visibility and permanency than electronic versions which tend to be transient and transparent.

Nothing is set in stone and we seek opinions. The publication is owned by the community for the community. It is not owned by the Parish Council; it simply contributes to printing costs. So please do let your views be known; indeed if anybody has time or an ambition to assist then please get in touch with any of the people listed below, or via Sylvia our Parish Clerk.

The Chronicle Team:

Keith Boardman (acting Editor 2020)

Gill Dakin

Sue Winton

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PARISH COUNCIL/TRUSTEES/COMMUNITY

Thurlaston Parish Council

These are the Thurlaston Parish Council (TPC) Chairman reports for 2019/20, when Keith Boardman was in the Chair, and the current session that commenced in May 2020, for which John Bretherton is Chairman.

From Keith Boardman (Chairman 2019/20):

From a TPC membership perspective 2019/20 became a year of change. During 2019 we witnessed three new 'boys' joining the Council, John Bretherton, Steve Lewington and myself, and we have a lot to learn. That's 60 percent of the team. On the TPC, my roles cover Information & Communications Technology including governance. I also have Complaints Management (hopefully this will never be invoked!) and village defibrillator support. I assist with technical aspects of strategic planning assessments as and when required.

Steve's TPC roles are concerned with public spaces especially highways, and protecting all the positive aspects of our village. More recently he has been leading a review of Thurlaston's Emergency Plan. We are pleased to report this has been finalised and an overview is provided in this journal.

Our complement of five Councillors also includes Helen Creery and Norman Lines who have served on the TPC for more years than they would probably wish to remember! We are indebted to Helen, as the Chair of our Planning Subcommittee, with her team (Councillors Norman and John) for diligently reviewing and commenting on planning applications that we receive from Rugby Borough Council - typically about a dozen each year. Since 2018 we have been publishing our appraisals on our website.

Norman has another important role of appraising County and Borough strategic planning proposals. We are forever grateful for the time and foresight he brings to the appraisal of often complex and verbose planning tomes. His efforts have been invaluable in taking every opportunity to ensure our voice is heard, especially where RBC proposals are deemed detrimental to our village and/or its surrounding environment.

During my tenure, and in part prompted by the building of the website, I have been reviewing TPC's policies and procedures, and creating additional documents where there were gaps. The Parish website was launched in April 2019 following the foundation work undertaken by Norman. In line with our website developments, your TPC has largely moved to paperless working - more details can be found in our Publication Scheme. We do encourage you to use the website frequently - much of what we do and reports we publish are being loaded onto this platform. All website downloads are free of charge.

In January TPC was successful in having an audience with Ms Chettle-Gibrat (Rugby Borough Council's Head of Growth & Investment). The background to the meeting was with regard to the numerous comments the TPC had made on the Local Plan 'South West Rugby Supplementary Planning Document'. We covered a raft of topics which included DB Symmetry's design and standards, schools and healthcare provision, Rugby's economic strategy, transport and infrastructure, Thurlaston village access (junction of Main Street with Coventry Road), Warwickshire County Council's Minerals Plan (the proposed excavation site opposite Dobbies shopping complex and along the Straight Mile).

Throughout our discussions we focussed on how we should engage, collaborate and bring influence to numerous parties involved in these schemes. We expressed the need for an holistic approach to assess the bigger picture of all such developments on the environment, infrastructure and economy. As things stand, proposed road designs are indicative both at a local level (such as between the Thurlaston M45 roundabout and Dunchurch) and at a county level. On the latter point we have particular concerns about potential constrictions on the Strategic Road Network

(classed as M and A roads) and the impact that HGV traffic movements will have between the north and east of the county and our locality.

In summary our meeting with Ms Chettle-Gibrat was wide-ranging and constructive. She encouraged further dialogue, however, key questions remain unanswered, particularly those relating to topics which are largely work in progress.

In February, the TPC also received revised proposals from Tritax Symmetry, and Highways England's critique of their indicative road layouts. In March the TPC made a further submission on the revised road design and traffic analysis, visual assessments, fire station,

and the proposed Energy Centre. Whilst there are still major concerns, there is evidence that our feedback is having an impact - for example, there have been limited concessions made with regard to building design improvements and road layouts. Within the Chronicle we provide more detail about the Local Plan, with specific focus on the impact to our immediate area.

In March we entered lockdown – all best laid plans were shelved, Parish Council meetings became video sessions, the Annual Village Meeting was cancelled, a lot of gaps suddenly appeared in the village calendar. A surreal year. Thankfully rural Thurlaston continues to provide a perfect setting for isolation.

From John Bretherton (Chairman from May 2020):

It's July, the skies are grey and if you had slept through the last three months, you could be forgiven for thinking this is just a normal English summer, but as we all know, 2020 is a far-from-normal year. I have been working from home since 20th March; most of our shopping is now online; my haircut is three months overdue! Some of these changes may return to 'normal', but others will remain permanent. I thank my lucky stars that Thurlaston is where I have had to spend lockdown, as I know many have been far less fortunate.

I joined TPC in May 2019, motivated by the prospect of losing our Council and its influence on future plans in and around the village. The danger was that TPC would fold, because we had too few Councillors, which is an ongoing issue - **and I would still be very interested in talking to anyone who might consider playing a part.** We want to avoid the troubles and loss of voice that are current in our neighbouring Dunchurch Parish.

I have always worked in the private sector and never been involved in local politics or council matters previously, so the TPC has been a bit of a learning curve. There are plenty of mundane responsibilities, including literally keeping the lights on, but planning takes up more time than anything else, so no surprise that planning of one sort or another sapped most of my focus last year. I joined the Planning Subcommittee, which deals with local planning applications in

and around the village, and learned a lot from Helen and Norman, who have a great deal of experience and were very supportive and patient, as well as doing most of the work!

I also led our review to determine if a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) could help control broader developments in our locale. Picking up on Keith's points, a primary driver was the Rugby Local Plan that governs developments across the Borough through to 2031, and that includes plans to change the whole of South-West Rugby radically. TPC has consistently pushed back on proposals that we regarded as incompatible with, or damaging to, our environment, but RBC voted to adopt their Local Plan in June 2019, and it contains aspects that will be of concern to us all, such as building on the green space bounded by Thurlaston, Cawston, Bilton and Dunchurch (effectively joining us to Rugby) and establishing a warehouse estate within Thurlaston Parish.

While TPC still has serious concerns with what is planned, we concluded that an NDP was not the best means of presenting our case or applying controls. The purpose of an NDP is to define new developments that local people want and we don't think Thurlaston has sufficient need for new developments to warrant an NDP. We also confirmed that an NDP must be aligned with the Local Plan and approved by RBC – in other words, it would become a vindication of RBC's housing and

warehouse plans by the people of Thurlaston, which does not reflect local views. In addition, key services, such as the Strategic Road Network, Healthcare and Education provision, are outside of NDP scope and cannot be included within formal NDP policies.

For these reasons we rejected NDP as the way forward and propose to update the Village Design Statement (VDS) instead. We quoted VDS policy in a recent planning response and the RBC Planning Department confirmed that they would take its policies into account, but they also suggested our VDS would carry more weight if we updated it. The VDS offers a means of documenting planning policies, and could contain guidelines for visual aspects, such as the outward appearance of industrial buildings, and might be protective against development creep - and we have already seen an example of plans creeping beyond the Local Plan in the form of a recent green-belt proposal (R20/0134) at Long Lawford.

In updating the VDS, we would use what we already have as an extensive basis, but there would be a significant amount of work involved (albeit far less work than for an NDP) and it would still need to be ratified by RBC. I am looking for volunteers to join a VDS working party to progress this asap, **so please contact me if you could help with this.**

Regarding the ongoing evolution of RBC's Local Plan, there is no suggestion whatsoever that we will back down from responding robustly to detailed implementation plans and specific

planning applications, particularly those for the warehouses (R16/02569, Tritax Symmetry). This work will continue as necessary, regardless of progress on the VDS.

For the coming year . . . the future looks set to remain pretty uncertain until an effective COVID-19 vaccine is available. It seems likely that we will all need to continue to modify the way we interact socially and that meetings, including those of TPC, will be in gardens or via Zoom for the foreseeable future. It's ironic that we all face the same crisis, which would normally pull us together, but Coronavirus forces us further apart. We will not know the full impacts anytime soon, but some aspects of how we live our lives will change significantly and permanently. From recent discussions with local borough councillors, it was encouraging to learn that RBC has recognised this and is considering what changes might be needed for the recovery of industry and jobs, and to local planning, so perhaps some good will come out of all of this.

I had hoped Thurlaston would be a great place to live, and I haven't been disappointed. I had no prior intention of becoming involved in the Parish Council, but have found it interesting and informative, it has introduced me to some very kind and helpful people and it has felt good to contribute to the community. I have been very fortunate so far; both my elder daughters work in health, treating patients directly, and my mother is in her eighties, so I am not taking anything for granted. I am sure many of us have similar worries.

In Conclusion:

Finally we wish to thank all those people that continue to support numerous village activities - albeit in 2020 most have been scuppered by the Coronavirus pandemic. As is our custom, wherever possible, there are write-ups of 2019 activities. However the lockdown has also raised opportunities and it's good to see that so many have used their 'spare' time to commence new ventures. We are indebted to Gill Dakin and Sue Winton for producing a chronicle here of these activities.

We also wish to thank Sylvia, our Parish Clerk, who keeps us up to date on issues and ensuring we attend to numerous missives which the TPC receives between our formal meetings. Our Parish Clerk also looks after day to day financial matters, such as contracts for the maintenance of street lighting, grass cutting, insurance etc. For all those things that that help to make village life flow seamlessly, thank you.

Cllrs Keith Boardman & John Bretherton

The Rugby Local Plan & WCC Minerals Plan

Developments on our Doorstep - the Journey so far.

It's a long road with few signposts, twists and turns, and cul-de-sacs.

Not really, it's an analogy that springs to mind following the trials and tribulations we have subjected ourselves to over the past four years. It was in 2016 when we saw the detail of the Rugby Local Plan. In this brief article we catalogue a few of the milestones in relation to the proposed Symmetry Park warehouse development in our parish, and other schemes in close proximity.

At each stage your Parish Council has made representations to Rugby Borough Council (RBC) and/or Framptons who act on behalf of the Symmetry. We have also lobbied Borough Councillors. All our representations are documented and available, most are already in the public domain.

2016 Outline plans presented for a logistics park, known as Symmetry Park, close to the Thurlaston roundabout. RBC registered this as planning proposal R16/2569.

2017 Framptons provided an exhibition of proposals at Draycote Hotel. RBC submitted its Local Plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. An Inspector was appointed; this triggered a lengthy period of consultation.

2019 The assessment of the Local Plan resulted in a requirement for 183 Main Modifications before the Inspector would be prepared to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State for approval. To some of us so many shortcomings just demonstrated RBC's naivety and the contempt they have for its citizens. Highways England raised objections to road design in relation to access to Symmetry Park to and from the A45 dual carriageway.

2019 In order to address shortcomings in the Local Plan, RBC published a Supplementary Planning Document for South West Rugby (SPD).

2020 In January Parish Councillors had a meeting with Ms Chettle-Gibrat (RBC

Head of Growth & Investment). The focus of the session was the SPD and covered items such as Symmetry Park design & standards, schools and healthcare provision, Rugby's economic strategy, transport and infrastructure, Warwickshire County Council's Minerals Plan and the proposed quarry near to Dobbies shopping complex, erosion of green land between Rugby and satellite locations such as Dunchurch, Cawston, and Thurlaston.

2020 Tritax Symmetry made further revisions to their proposed road layout in the Symmetry Park locality.

Revisions to the actual Symmetry Park scheme include:

- Reduction in the height of warehouses by 5m;
- Inclusion of a 5MW Energy Centre;
- Redesigned B4429 north-south access road (possibly with signalling);
- Fire Station positioned on the south side of the Coventry Road.

RBC made indicative HGV road infrastructure proposals (eg Homestead link, a northern link via Potford Dam to the A4071). HGVs will not be allowed to use the main Dunchurch intersection.

Consultation is ongoing, possibly delayed because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

What we do know is that there are currently four likely developments close to Thurlaston village. These are:

- (a) Symmetry Park as described above.
- (b) Development of the old Dunsmore Garage site to have in total 5 dwellings served by an access road onto the B4429.
- (c) On vacant land at the rear of Dunsmore Garage and towards the Garden Nursery (now trading as Solstice) a further 4 dwellings with an access road onto the B4429.
- (d) Changes to Thurlaston Main Street-B4429 junction by the incorporation of

improved lighting and possibly traffic lights, with a reduced speed limit. This has been instigated by your Parish Council and being promoted by Howard Roberts (Dunsmore Councillor and sits on RBC).

Quite separate to the Rugby Local Plan, Warwickshire County Council Minerals Plan has entered a consultation phase – hearings were due to commence in April but now deferred to October. This is another scheme which could have a significant impact with regard to HGV traffic volumes and associated pollution, not to mention the visual impact of quarrying.

Throughout the past four years the Parish Council and many residents have made representations to RBC about the Local Plan. Symmetry Park has resulted in enormous public anxiety.

As a Parish Council we have repeatedly argued that a holistic assessment is required of the Local Plan. Too many aspects of RBC and WCC plans exist as a number of individual projects; they must be assessed in totality which embraces their overall impact on and around the Rugby conurbation.

And the Future Journey?

It really falls on us all to keep an eye on developments at RBC.

The long term impact of the Coronavirus pandemic are far from clear. This year has witnessed a rapid change to the world; arguably the RBC Local Plan, originally conceived in 2011, may be based on assumptions that are no longer valid.

In whatever manner RBC decides to progress the Local Plan we need to challenge the legitimacy and quality of their processes, and

their a priori assumptions. We need to analyse and ensure development processes are sound.

RBC will assess proposed refinements to Symmetry Park and the proposed remodelling of roads in the locality. Tacit with this is for us to assess proposals for the Fire Station; remember this is not part of the Symmetry Park project.

We have been reassured by RBC that before Symmetry Park and further Cawston housing developments proceed it will ensure that current locality traffic movements will not be compromised and that the Fire Station will be brought on stream. Fundamental to this is that RBC needs to declare its strategic road infrastructure and implementation timescales in and around Rugby to cater for increased HGV and Non-HGV traffic volumes.

Your PC will continue to lobby our Borough Councillors and make representation to RBC. You have demonstrated your strength of feeling regarding the Tritax proposals on many occasions. We believe that it is important to continue to do so. The planning portal is host to ongoing correspondence with RBC planners under application reference R16/2569.

Residents please remember the Symmetry Park scheme is still fluid and live. We urge you as individuals to continue to register your views as the planning process continues. Imminent decisions will have far reaching consequences well beyond 2031 and for generations to come.

Cllrs Keith Boardman & Norman Lines

**For more information please also see the Parish Council website:
www.thurlaston-pc.gov.uk**

Community Emergency Plan

The Thurlaston *Community Emergency Plan* was last updated and published in 2017. The plan was written to deal with those situations that could arise where the normal external agencies were unable to handle an emergency situation within required timeframes. It details areas of responsibility for nominated individuals, and local resources that could be called upon in an emergency. It relied on a village *Emergency Resource Team* to invoke and manage emergency situations.

A standard part of PC business is to review all its policies and procedures to ensure they are still appropriate and revise those where deemed necessary. In reviewing the current emergency plan the PC took advice from various bodies, at both County and Borough levels, which have emergency roles as part of their normal modus operandi. Given the small size of our Parish and very limited number of physical and human resources, it was decided that the PC should develop its plan in collaboration with the *Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Councils Resilience Team* – CSWRT for short. The main raison d'être for their existence is to provide backup in the event of major incidents. It does not replace traditional '999' emergency services, it does work with them especially where there is a need to bring in external resources from outside the immediate Rugby area.

Full details of the Thurlaston Emergency Plan will shortly be published on the Parish Council's website.

Our new village emergency plan operates in a different manner. In working with CSWRT we have developed an Emergency Manual which identifies the nature and size of the village, how we are organised, and relevant resources that may be available in the event of an emergency. From a residents perspective we should raise emergency calls in the normal manner, as summarised below:

In the event of any serious incident which imposes a risk to life dial 999.

Advise emergency services of the help that is urgently required.

**In addition, and when it is safe to do so, you should also contact
any of the Parish Council representatives.**

Details at www.thurlaston-pc.gov.uk

Council representatives know specific telephone numbers to call to invoke CSWRT support, or perhaps to put them on standby.

An emergency/major incident is any event or circumstance (happening with or without warning) that causes or threatens death or injury, disruption to the community, or damage to property or to the environment on such a scale that the effect cannot wholly be dealt with by the emergency services, local authorities and other organisations as part of their normal day-to-day activities.

Although there is no statutory responsibility for communities to plan for, respond to, or recover from emergencies, it is good practice to identify potential hazards and make simple plans on how they could respond to them. This plan fulfils that requirement. The Community Emergency Plan has been developed to provide resilience for the Thurlaston community in the pre-event phase or early stages of an emergency.

The purpose of the Plan is therefore to cater for extreme circumstances within the community (for example a disruption which prevents Main Street access to and from Coventry Road) that might prevent the emergency services from reaching the scene immediately. In such cases the initial response may rely entirely on Thurlaston residents; the plan describes how such an initial response will be coordinated. All Parish Council representatives form an Emergency Team which will be able to assist in mobilising resources both within the village and through external agencies.

Cllrs Keith Boardman & Stephen Lewington

A Refresher on the Village Defibrillator

In 2017 the Thurlaston community purchased an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) which has been installed in the old telephone kiosk on Main Street not far from the bus shelter. It is available 24/7 for use by anyone that requires it, including the wider community.

Shirley (email: shirleyhall66@icloud.com) normally provides training on the use of the AED as both villager refresher training and to introduce new residents to the equipment. She also routinely checks the equipment to ensure it is always in working order. The 2020 Coronavirus pandemic has prevented formal AED training courses from being undertaken. The brief information below provides AED deployment guidance. Further information is also available on the Parish website, and/or the web link below:



Thurlaston Parish: thurlaston-pc.gov.uk

British Heart Foundation: bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/how-to-save-a-life

What is an AED?

An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is a portable, self-powered device that guides the user through the stages of analysing a patient's heart rhythm and administers electrical shocks to the patient's chest if needed. This action is called defibrillation.

If you come across someone who is unconscious, unresponsive, not breathing or not breathing normally, they're in cardiac arrest. Cardiac arrests can happen to anyone, at any time.

The AED is kept in a secure yellow cabinet in the telephone kiosk. To obtain the equipment release code dial 999.

Four steps to take if someone is having a cardiac arrest:

1. Call 999.
2. Start CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation).
3. Ask someone to bring the AED from the Main Street telephone kiosk.
In the kiosk dial 999 and wait for the access code to release the AED.
4. Turn on the defibrillator and follow its instructions.

Who can use a defibrillator?

You don't need to be trained to use a defibrillator – anyone can use it.

The AED talks to the user and guides them clearly, step by step.

There are clear instructions on how to attach the defibrillator pads to the patient's chest. It then assesses the heart rhythm and will only instruct you to deliver a shock if it's needed.

You cannot deliver a shock accidentally; the defibrillator will only allow you to shock if it is needed.

Cllr Keith Boardman on behalf of Shirley Hall

Village Hall Committee Report

We have an enthusiastic and energetic team of people who help to run the village hall. However we always welcome new committee members. We have welcomed Shirley Hall as a new member.

Our AGM is in May, the existing members are required to stand again for re-election. If there is anyone who would like to join us please let me know using email to thurlastonvhc@gmail.com.

We are very grateful to those organisations and individuals who raise money and who help us to keep the hall going. We could not manage without your efforts, so a big thank you. Our purchase last year of a wall mounted tea urn seems to have been a success as do the small tables for the hall.

This year our major expense has been a new front door which in total has cost £1,500. We have also renewed the cladding on the south wall of the kitchen. We have widened the toilet doors for wheel chair access. We are planning to refit the toilet to make it more attractive and suitable for people with disabilities. We anticipate that the total cost will be in the region of £2,700. We hope to be awarded a grant for the work from Thurlaston Poor's Plot and Dunchurch and Thurlaston Community Fund.

We have been assured that the structure of the hall is sound for at least another twenty years if we maintain the building correctly. Is this the time to consider starting a fund to rebuild the hall at some future date? We have found that while there are grants available most require us to provide half the cost ourselves.

If anyone is interested in seeing our accounts, we do publish them on the PC website. If you would like a copy, please let me or Simon, our Treasurer, know by email:

thurlastonvht@gmail.com (Treasurer) or thurlastonvhc@gmail.com (VH chair)

Our garden takes some maintenance. The front garden has been maintained voluntarily by a small group of people and they would welcome more volunteers.

Our fund raising Tea Party in August 2019 was well attended and raised £350. This year we plan another tea party in August. I hope we have good weather again. We had wonderful support from volunteers to help and also to make cakes. We will be asking again this year.

Village Christmas lights

It has been a tradition in this village to place lights in the oak at the Stocks. A lighting ceremony takes place in early December. This is becoming a costly affair which in 2018 was jointly funded by the PC and the VH Committee. This last Christmas the tree lights were put up and paid for by a group of villagers. They looked great.

In the past the VH Committee has organised the Christmas festivities. We feel that it would be more appropriate if villagers took over this function. Perhaps a committee formed of the group who so kindly organised the lights on the oak by the Stocks.

The Village Hall along with the church is the hub of our small community we are grateful for your ongoing support.

Please find full details on our website at thurlaston-pc.gov.uk.

Mary Cook (Chair)

St Edmund's Church Report

I originally wrote this report in March and since then the world has become a very different place!

2019 was a good year for St Edmund's. Thirty regular Sunday services were held with an average attendance of 14. The little reflective prayer group held at 9.00am for 30 minutes on Wednesday mornings grew from 3-4 members to a pretty regular 6 or 7 and sometimes even going into double figures. Until lockdown, it happened whatever the weather, whatever the season, and was a reminder in this village of God's presence and love. At this point I wish to pay tribute to David Charles-Edwards who was one of the founding members of the group. We will miss his gently presence.

Since lockdown, St Edmund's and St Peter's have been closed, but Zoom based services have been run each Sunday at 10.30am, and have been well attended by Thurlaston and Dunchurch villagers,

including the Thurlaston Meadows Care Home. I hope that when things return to whatever the new normal will be, that we will be able to reconvene and that villagers will come and take time out of their busy schedules to connect with God, in whatever form we understand him.

For such a tiny church, we have had a very busy year with 6 special services or functions during the year, as well as hosting a PCC quiet morning, Mothers' Union service, the Art and Craft show and the Garden Produce Sale as well as our monthly Village Hall coffee mornings. That's quite an undertaking for such a small group of people and I applaud them.

However, it is not all good news. The church's finances are not promising. Overall collections for this year dropped by around £300 and then the long-term tenant in Church House died last year and without the income from his rent payments, the church cannot meet their obligations to the diocese and keep the church functional. The parish costs around £1,400 a month just to break even, not allowing for unforeseen expenditure on what is an ageing building. Church House cannot be let out in its present state and while it is being refurbished the church is also liable for council tax. All this is eating into the reserves of the church and causing the future to look bleak.

There are a few questions I would like to pose. Firstly, does the village want the church to continue and, more importantly, if so, what are people prepared to do to ensure it does continue, for I am certain that it won't happen without their commitment. What does the village expect from St Edmund's? What would people like to see happening in the future and, if anything, what are they willing to do to ensure the church continues, bearing in mind that at present it is completely managed by a small band of ageing people?

But having said all this, I want to thank the village for all they do in fact do for the church. I know some contribute financially even though they are not churchgoers. The village has always been very generous in giving us some of the Fete profits and there are always people ready to come forward to help when needed. Thank you all.

Pat Townshend, Vicar of the Parish of Dunchurch with Thurlaston

Newcombe and Spier Almshouse Charity Report 2020

For those who are not aware, the local almshouses are a terrace of six small houses in Dunchurch between the Dun Cow and the Church, opposite the Scott statue and Mops. The charity was founded in 1690 and has run continuously since then. It is for the benefit of Dunchurch and Thurlaston residents and Thurlaston Parish Council appoints one trustee.

As with all old buildings last rebuilt in Victorian times there is a constant requirement to repair and refurbish

The major expenditure in 2019 was for the fitting of secondary double glazing to all six almshouses. The almshouses are listed buildings so we were not allowed to fit normal double glazing to the windows. Total cost for all six was a little over £5000. This was done in October and the residents have reported a noticeable improvement in the warmth of the buildings.

We had a new tenant in number six in January and this almshouse was fitted with a new bedroom carpet and a new storage heater. This cost £1300.

There has been a steady stream, throughout the year, of minor repairs required for plumbing and draining, electrical works and kitchens and bathrooms. This brought the total expenditure on repairs and maintenance to £9500.

During 2019 cash income exceeded expenditure by some £4000 which is the first surplus that we have had since 2015. Our long-term investments continue to provide reinvested income.

The Charity funds remain in good order and enable the trustees to maintain comfortable albeit limited accommodation for the residents.

Walter Harvey

St Edmund's Church - Past, Present and Future?

The village of Thurlaston has existed since Anglo-Saxon times, when it was beholden to the King of Mercia, held by Wigar, and was a village of 5 "hides" i.e. sufficient land to support 5 households, reckoned to be about 120 acres per hide, but also used as a tax assessment. Following the Norman invasion, the term hide continued to be used for some time, and at the time of the Domesday Book a hide was valued at about £1 of income.

In 1086 Thurlaston, then called Torlavestone, was shared equally by The Count of Meulan and Hugh de Grantemesnil, together reckoned to be worth £4.15s a year. Count of Meulan's estate passed to the Earls of Warwick and then to the Duke of Montagu, who by 1730 owned 1307 acres in Thurlaston with 20 tenants. The Monks of Pipewell were granted a large amount of the property and land in Thurlaston and in 1291 this was reckoned at 4 carucates, a Danelaw measurement of ploughland. There are references to the chapel of St Edmund's in Thurlaston in 1316 and 1360.

Hugh de Grantemesnil's estate is thought to have passed to Wigan the Marshall in return for King's service (Henry 1st). The land passed to the Segrave family, and in 1230 was computed at 10 virgates, about 2.5 hides, about one half of the village, and remained with the family for over a century until it was joined with the Lord of Dunchurch's manor in 1572.

The Pipewell monks were part of a Cistercian order who founded an abbey near Kettering in 1143, and it became the second richest abbey in Northamptonshire. They built numerous granges/farms in Warwickshire, and the one in Cawston was probably moated and was virtually a monastery in miniature, providing weekly bread to all the local granges. According to records, Biggin Grange in Thurlaston was situated away from the village on a large furlong named Stockwell Furlong lying in an open field called "Feld nere Draycott" on the west of the village. Since that time, many of the furlong names have changed which makes location of the grange difficult. In 1360 the inhabitants of Thurlaston were allowed to celebrate divine offices in the chapel at Thurlaston for a period of two years. The exact site of the grange and chapel is not known, but dressed stones have been dug up from time to time on Biggin Hall farm. There are earthworks in the fields below and next to the farm, which may indicate the site of the grange and chapel – for example a large fish pond, trackways, prominent banks and possibly house foundations. A list of Pipewell Abbey property in Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire in 1539 shows the value of all holdings as £334 0s 1d, of which Thurlaston was £14 14s 5d. No doubt Thomas Cromwell knew these figures backwards! The dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII started in 1536 and lasted about 4 years. Nevertheless, St Edmund's appears to have lasted until Queen Elizabeth I's reign, when Lord Berkley's officers pulled it down.

The division of lands between the Abbots of Pipewell and the lay lords, is noted in the early 1700s in which the meadows were divided up, and classed as Lord's hides and Abbot's hides. Then later the land was enclosed by an agreement between the Duke of Montagu and the owners of great tithes, rather than by an official Act. The vicar of Dunchurch and other freeholders were entitled to the small tithes (redeemed in the 1950s). The enclosures caused great hardship to the villagers, having no land for corn or cattle they were forced either to work for the Lord of the Manor or move to the towns to find work. To relieve the poor in Thurlaston, 43 acres of land were set aside and are still used today, and administered by the Poor's Plot charity. With the passing of time, the land enclosures improved farming practices, and until recent times Thurlaston was basically a self-sustaining farming village with a mill and baker, dairy, butcher, blacksmith and other trades.

By 1850, there were clearly many children in Thurlaston and it was decided to erect a school, and by 1880 there were thought to be 50 children attending. The current church has a maximum seating for 100 so the school was certainly crowded. A booklet on St Peter's contains the following:

In 1849 the Rev. Sandford built at Thurlaston a building so designed that it could be used as a school and a chapel, with a tower in which was living accommodation for the schoolmaster. The architect was the celebrated William Butterfield, and the site was given by the Duke of Buccleuch. A deed dated 1849 conveys the lands to the vicar and churchwardens of Dunchurch and Thurlaston and their successors. However, the school was closed in 1905, and the children

transferred to Boughton School in Dunchurch, and in the next year, when the Parish Church was about to be closed for restoration, the school at Thurlaston was licensed for public worship. In 1919, when the Buccleuch estates were sold, a new deed was drawn up vesting the land and buildings to the Diocesan Trustees to be used for worship according to the Rites of the Church of England, and for meetings and classes as the vicar for the time being shall direct. Finally in 1925, the building now furnished as a church was dedicated in honour of St Edmund King and Martyr, the ceremony being performed by Archdeacon Blagdon, Rector of Rugby, and later Bishop of Peterborough.

St Edmund's is designated as a Chapel-of-Ease; that is a church building other than the parish church, built within the bounds of the parish for the attendance of those who cannot reach the parish church conveniently. Regular services, baptisms and funerals are allowed, but weddings must be authorised by the Bishop. Interestingly, the footpath across the fields between Thurlaston and Dunchurch was supposed to be kept at least 8 feet wide for the use of bearers at funerals, there being no churchyard at Thurlaston. In the early days the Village Fete took place in and around St Edmund's, rather than centred on Main Street. When built, the tower was quite different and in 1908 a bell turret was added. The design for St Edmund's appears to have been reused by Butterfield in 1848 for a chapel-school with master's house for Canterbury, New Zealand, but no-one has tried to trace this I think. The accommodation comprises a living room about 12 foot square and a kitchen and bathroom at ground level, with 2 bedrooms above the living room, reached by an internal stairway built outside the basic tower. It is not known who lived there after the school closed, but in 1973 a notice of closure was issued, and

presumably it was decided to up-date the flat. Subsequently Mr Brian Whitlock lived there for some 35 years until his death at the end of 2019, and many people will remember him there. He seemed to accept the ringing of the bell above him each Sunday morning at 9 o'clock, the bell rope enclosed but passing through the bedrooms!



Jackie and I moved into the village in 1988, just before Ron Elverson was appointed vicar, and services were held each Sunday with 9.00am Communion alternating with Evensong, and we were blessed with two resident organists, so never short of music. Attendance was typically about 20 at that time. Since then Elizabeth Dyke and then Malcolm Garratt have presided and currently, of course, Pat Townshend. Over time many different forms of service have been used, including Café church, but the Book of Common Prayer with its wonderful language, and the reflective Evensong are no longer so popular, and it has been necessary to reduce to 2 formal services a month. What has proved to be more involving for the village recently is a weekday informal gathering at 9.00am every Wednesday for half an hour, and the special services such as the Carol Service are very well supported with up to 70 attending.



View from Church House

Average attendance at formal services in 2019 was 14, including perhaps 3 or 4 from Dunchurch. As the committee that runs the church ages, and indeed the congregation ages, and few younger people are attracted to old-fashioned services on busy family Sundays, we face some difficult decisions about the direction to take St Edmund's. There does seem to be a dichotomy between older people who find comfort in familiar words, ritual and companionship, and younger people who seek new friendships, experiences and causes. Strong family ties bridge the gap, but families tend to move frequently nowadays, so continuity is lost. Up-lifting music appeals to all ages, which is perhaps the way forward. A Thurlaston community choir or indeed a Gospel choir could bring ages together and enhance church services, but we would need someone musical to take us forward. Previously middle-aged people moving here, maybe with a religious up-bringing, have taken up the reins, but this appears to be less the case now. We are not alone in this situation, as all the rural churches around us have the same dilemmas, and we face pressures to amalgamate with them when in fact all our roots as a church are with St Peter's.

We have some strong factors in our favour. St Edmund's enhances our village status as a vibrant community, and saves us from being just another dormitory township. St Edmund's has been very well supported financially by the village over the years, and has a very special and much loved building. Although the current lack of income from the flat is problematic, we have made the decision to modernise the flat, and now have diocesan permission to do so. This has been made possible by a very generous legacy from the Baugh family, who did so much to help run the church, and gave us the wonderful stained glass window of Our Lord as the Good Shepherd with St Edmund and the wolf and St Peter with the keys, which is much admired. The design of the church is unique, and visited on occasion by Butterfield aficionados and the many walkers passing by who often show an interest. Its position overlooking the Draycote Reservoir is quite superb, as are the views from the flat. The flexible seating, much of it purchased by villagers, means the space can be used for many purposes, and toilet and limited kitchen space is available.

Assuming the flat is let successfully, we should be financially stable again, and probably the biggest issue is the age of those running the church. If villagers do not come forward then it may be necessary to think of new uses for St Edmund's. Having space for 100 seats in the village, it could become a community centre and church, but of course the deeds lie with the Church of England. There could be a conflict of purpose with the much loved Village Hall, though as the village will inevitably expand under the current housing pressures, the hall will not be large enough and a new hall may perhaps be

built elsewhere in the village with suitable parking. This would need to be compared with up-dating, modification and running costs of a community centre based on St Edmund's, for which grants may be available.

Your committee is dedicated to keeping the church running, but noting all the above, we need the views and support of the village in order to plan for the future of St Edmund's.

Brian Bowsher

*What would the Monks have said?
(Biggin Hall Farm 2020)*



Christmas Lights Party 2019

On Friday 6th December 2019 the annual Christmas Lights switch on saw the start of the Christmas festivities in Thurlaston. Carols were sung around the oak tree by the stocks and then Father Christmas arrived to lead the procession to the Village Hall. With plates of food to share and presents for young carers, everyone made their way to a very warm welcome at the hall. It looked amazing thanks to the team who had decorated it. The mulled wine was gorgeous, the band were great as always and the generosity of donating in excess of 80 presents to Rugby Young Carers made it a very special Thurlaston evening.

Once Father Christmas had received all the presents he then left to carry on with his Christmas work. Steve Murphy took over as MC and encouraged everyone to join in the singing and very quickly the hall was filled with music and laughter. As the evening wore on and children needed their beds, families drifted home. The remaining adults chatted and laughed with fellow Thurlastonians until 'closing time'.

A big thank you to everyone involved in making this event such a great Thurlaston tradition, long may it last.

Sue Winton

REPORTS FROM VARIOUS VILLAGE GROUPS & OTHER ACTIVITIES

Thurlaston Ramblers

Thurlaston Ramblers have been going now for over 30 years. We are a very inclusive group and everyone living in Thurlaston is very welcome to walk with us.

The date of the walk is posted on ThurlastonNet two weeks before the walk and residents are asked to reply to the walk leader if they wish to take part.

Each walk leader organises the walk and the venue for lunch. If you can't do the walk then you are welcome to just lunch with us.

In the past we have had some very interesting walks often with historical interest. We have walked all over the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire countryside. Who knew we have such beautiful and diverse scenery on our doorstep.

Unfortunately COVID pandemic has struck and this has curtailed our walks this year. The couple of photos below were taken just before lockdown (March) and a local walk during July.

*Sawbridge Walk
March 2020*



*Birdingbury Walk
July 2020*



Brian Coleman, our village archivist, has a book of walks dating back over thirty years. It is worth looking through this record as there are descriptions of the walks and photographs too. Summaries of current and archive information are also available on our website at thurlaston-pc.gov.uk.

Fingers crossed that we can resume all our walks again as they are much missed. We would love to see some new faces on the walks.

Mary Cook

Monthly Coffee Mornings

The monthly coffee mornings in aid of St Edmund's and held in the Village Hall are of course suspended at the moment. Villagers have enjoyed meeting to drink freshly brewed coffee, nibble biscuits and chat.

The coffee mornings are normally held on the third Friday of each month and everyone is welcome. We hope to be able to continue with them in the autumn and dates will be put on the ThurlastonNet and the village noticeboard.

Jenny Cooper

The Village Fete 2019

We had the same team as in 2018 for the organising of the Fete, although sadly Karen stepped down because of prior commitments. We thanked her for her hard work running the children's area. Ronnie took over this area and it was a great success.

The date of the Fete was 6th July 2019 and the theme was the 50th anniversary of the Moon Landing.

We had some exceptional scarecrows again and the yarnbombing decorations were outstanding and supplied by the WI to celebrate their 150 years anniversary. We had a different Ukulele Band this year and they kept a jolly atmosphere all afternoon with their music. In the evening, *After Dark* band played in Main Street and entertained all. The Rugby Beekeepers came again with their bees and honey. Various other stalls and activities as usual with the result of the takings slightly up on the previous year.

We spent some money on repairs to the shed in 2019, the shed was also painted and the hedge and rubble cleared from around the outside to keep a clear pathway around. A barrier was erected at the rear of the shed to keep the soil away.

Fete profits were shared between the Village Hall and the Church.

We had already started to organize the Fete 2020, and the theme was going to be the Olympics. We were hoping for some more spectacular scarecrows and were thinking up some new games and events. Sadly, we had to cancel this year because of the Coronavirus.

However, there is always next year and surely, we will be able to hold our Fete and we can make it bigger and better than before.



Photos are from the 2019 Fete

The recipients of the Fete money will also suffer this year without the funds they have come to rely on for the upkeep of the Church and the Village Hall.

Sylvia Jacques (Fete Organiser)

Fete Team: Mary, Ronnie, Janette, John and Robert

The Village Quiz 2020

The quiz was held on February 15th. The volunteer team of organisers were Mary and Colin Cook, Tracey and Charles Powiesnik and Des and Helen Creery who spent many hours researching topics such as St. Valentine, Local knowledge, Inventions, Europe, Airports and Food and Alcohol - the last of which required some sociable evenings of sampling whilst planning the quiz!

There were six teams with 6 members each who were faced with four rounds on each side of the interval, plus an interval round accompanied by a fish and chip supper from Waves of Cawston.

The excellent quizmaster was Tracey with support from other team members scoring and doing 'housekeeping tasks'.

The winning team was *The Beech Nuts* and a draw was held to select the team to set the 2021 quiz – *The Better Halves* won.

It was a happy, sociable village evening which raised £308, of which £136 was proceeds from the raffle, and the total was divided equally between the Village Hall and Rugby Young Carers.

Helen Creery

Coffee Morning in aid of Myton Hospice

The annual Coffee Morning in aid of Myton Hospice was held in St Edmund's at the end of November. £558 was raised for this important charity. This event is the start of the Christmas season in Thurlaston and very grateful thanks are due to all who organise and support it.

We hope it will be possible to hold the next Myton Coffee morning in St Edmund's on Friday 4th December.

Jenny Cooper

Thurlaston Ladies Club

In 2019 we have had another happy year with a membership of 41. Our annual subscription stays at £10 and this year we have given the Village Hall and St Edmunds a donation of £200 each. We also donated £100 to the local Pony Sanctuary and £200 each to Warwickshire Vision and the Arden Centre.

Just before Christmas Jo Owen passed away. She was a founder member of the club and always enjoyed coming to the meetings and joining in the activities. Jo will be remembered with great affection by us all.

In March, Graham Sutherland gave us a humorous talk about past Prime Ministers and their spouses. He had very interesting tales to tell about many of them and we now see them through slightly different eyes.

The speaker in April was Jean Chollerton. She and her husband have created a wildlife reserve from half a mile of redundant railway track. This includes three ponds and Jean showed us pictures of their wonderful plants and the birds, animals and insects that frequent

their reserve. It looked idyllic.

In May, Robert Lister, an actor who is seen on TV and in theatre and heard on radio talked about his career in acting. He describes himself as a 'Journeyman Actor' and has only ever had six months not working and that was at the beginning of his career.

June is the month of our outing, arranged, as usual by our very own Blue Badge Guide, Kay. Once again a full coach set out for a great day, this year to Stoke-on-Trent visiting Middleport Pottery where the TV contest takes place. Then we visited the Wedgwood factory and museum and also their enticing refectory. It was a lovely day.

July is the month of the Village Fete. Once again we manned the craft and gift stall and the strawberries and cream stall. In total we made £326. In August we all sat down to a summer tea provided by The Chef's Kitchen plus an extra fruit cake donated and made by Kath Owens. The tea was delicious, we shall do that again.

In September Peter and Margaret Preece returned once more to show us another beautiful group of wildlife photos.

October was our charity meeting. Members generously gave us items of food and drink for our Christmas hampers which we raffled. We also had a small bring and buy stall and we served scones with jam and cream.

In November Gail Froggett-Higgs demonstrated some Christmas flower arrangements from very small to very big. The bigger ones were auctioned. She also brought some gifts from her shop. We had a large audience for this event. We went to the Butchers Arms for our Christmas Lunch. A beautiful venue and the lunch was enjoyed by all.

We are delighted that Jackie Harvey is now back with us looking very well. Marlene Dean has been doing a great job, providing us all with refreshments. We welcome Jeanette Chinn to the committee and she has kindly been helping Marlene.

We are now the proud owners of a new digital projector and screen. This is available to borrow within the Village Hall, on request.

Our best wishes to everyone and keep safe.

Judy Douglas

Village Art Group

After David has so expertly lead our Village Art Group over the last three years, we jointly decided it was time to share the lead of the sessions. Given David had given us all a good grounding in lots of interesting and clever drawing techniques, we were ready to use our skills and stay together as an active group.

We put together a calendar for the forthcoming year, so we knew what subjects we were to cover each month. We agreed to rotate the leading and preparations of the sessions.

We started with miniatures, followed by being inspired by letters / text and then had a morning inspired by animals.

We have always met on a Friday morning once a month on the same day as the Village Coffee Mornings, as we used to go up for coffee at our break.

However since Covid caused us to need to social distance we have gone online.

We are still meeting monthly using Zoom. We set ourselves a challenge in the first month to research an artist and make a drawing or painting in their style.

Our second monthly challenge was to be inspired by the Grayson Perry Art club series filmed in lockdown, using any of his six themes, Britain, home, portraits etc.

In July we are doing monochromatic drawings or paintings, which can be so much more than just black and white, tones of orange, browns, blues, red etc. have been used.

See the picture opposite by Mary using water soluble oil pastels for the monochromatic challenge.

If you are interested in joining the group we welcome new members. Contact:

Gill: martinandgilld@gmail.com

Mary: Mary@maryharwood.co.uk

Gill Dakin & Mary Harwood



Village Book Club

Our normal book club routine is to all read the same book each month and to meet in one of our houses to discuss it, decide on our next read and then put the world to rights with a drink and nibbles. With the libraries closed it has been difficult unless you owned the Kindle App to read a chosen book which is one reason we chose to read different books within a theme for one session.

In April, Kay came to our rescue by organising a Zoom meeting. It was great to see each other but less easy to have a lively discussion. However Zoom is a fantastic tool and has been a great asset during lockdown and we had a second meeting in the same way.

In early July, Kay invited us into her beautiful garden. We all sat in a circle, 2m apart, and each with our own side table so staying very safe. It was lovely to be back face to face talking about our reads.

The Warwickshire library will soon reopen for book club sets which we like to use every other month. We already have the offer of a garden for August so things are looking up.

What would we do without books?

Judy Douglas

Village Art & Craft Show 2019

This was the fifth Thurlaston Art and Crafts show we have had in recent years and it was held in the Village Hall and St Edmund's Church over the weekend of 26th and 27th October 2019. Twenty villagers exhibited a fantastic variety of work they had done which provided visitors with wonderful displays in both venues. Their displays included soft furnishings and upholstery, creative knitting, quilting and felting, textile art, millinery, reconditioned furniture, dressmaking, artistic patchwork and lacemaking, together with many paintings by several village artists. Martin Dakin and Paul Jacques provided live musical accompaniment throughout the show.

A hardworking team provided tea and homemade cake in the Village Hall. Money received from the sale of these together with an agreed donation from exhibitors for any work they had sold enabled us to raise just over £400.00. We divided this between the Village Hall and St Edmund's, Myton Hospice and Rugby Young Carers. Sue Winton amazingly raised an additional £130 at the show for the Rugby Young Carers from the sale of Christmas cards handmade by the Carers themselves.

May I thank everyone who took part and all who helped to put the show together.

David Cooper



Thurlaston St Edmund's Book Club

Thurlaston St. Edmund's Book Club continued to enjoy a monthly choice of books from the extensive and varied list offered to reading groups by Rugby Library, until Coronavirus put an abrupt stop to our programme. Initially we shared our thoughts via email, then Zoom, now choosing themes rather than individual books - that meant trawling our own memories and bookshelves.

More recently on a very cold day six of us finally had a face-to-face meeting and with the help of hot tea and blankets, shared poems which had made us laugh.

We look forward to the resumption of normality before too long.

Kay Thorpe

Surplus Garden Produce Sale 2019

This was a new venture held on a Saturday morning at the beginning of October in which villagers were invited to bring their surplus fruit and vegetables to a 'Mini-farmers' Market' in St Edmund's. Tea and cake were available and the event went well. There was a very good display of produce and flowers, proof of everyone's gardening skills.

It is hoped that it will be possible to repeat this event in the autumn.

Jenny Cooper

COVID LOCKDOWN ACTIVITIES & MISCELLANY

Newcomers

We finally made it.....

After purchasing Stocks Cottage in July 2019 we finally moved into our new home on 27th February 2020 three weeks before the country was put into lockdown. Feeling extremely lucky to have been able to move before lockdown we were able to spend lots of time unpacking boxes and getting to know our lovely new garden and of course the great weather was a bonus to us all. Steve spent the first six weeks of lockdown working from home in his new home office!

From the moment we purchased Stocks cottage our new neighbours and the villagers of Thurlaston have made us feel extremely welcome. Everything from a quick chat when passing by, our first Thurlaston Quiz night in February, Tracy's first walk with the Thurlaston Ramblers in March to the early Thursday morning chats in the queue to buy our fresh fish from Gary the fishmonger.

We settled into our new home very quickly and both love living in the village of Thurlaston. Having previously lived in Dunchurch for 32 years we know the area well but during our daily exercise walks we were excited to find lots of new footpaths we didn't know existed. We are very much looking forward joining in with the Beer Tree nights and other village events.



It felt strange moving into a new home and not being able to show it off to our family and friends due to the lockdown but, having our weekly quiz Saturday quiz night on Zoom with family and friends was a brilliant way of seeing everyone. The quiz themes for team names and fancy dress varied greatly *On the farm, Seaside, Scotland, Summer and Best of British*. Being limited with our dressing up props following a big declutter before moving house we improvised with the use of our printer and some colouring crayons and also the help of our niece and nephew Owen and Emma, who made our dinosaur masks for the prehistoric theme during their home schooling lesson on dinosaurs!

Tracy & Steve Brown

Volunteering

On the 7th March I happily went on leave just as the Corona Virus was starting to make its way through the country. By the time I was due to return to work as a pilot at easyJet, we were in lockdown. I found the first week quite surreal as the roads went quiet; the skies cleared of vapour trails and became clear blue. Over 77,000 commercial aircraft around the world were grounded and this would have serious financial implications for the companies and its employees. For easyJet it was estimated that it was costing in the order of £250,000 an hour for the aircraft to just sit on the ground. With these sorts of numbers floating around I was starting to wonder if I had flown my last commercial flight, it certainly caused me some serious worries in the first two weeks.

As things calmed down I got on with some DIY jobs, which gave me something positive to focus on. A sort of routine was developing, dog walk in the morning and then something constructive during the day. The community spirit started to develop as we checked in on each other; sacks of potatoes were bought from Mitchell's and divided up between neighbours and the same was done with 16kg bags of flour as the supermarket shelves emptied and we distributed bags of white powder to various houses in Biggin Hall Lane! Despite all this I still felt I needed to do something else to give myself purpose and help others during the crisis.

It was about this time an email came in from the Rugby and East Warwickshire Hockey Club with a direct plea for volunteers at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, as the majority of their existing volunteers were in

the vulnerable age group and now shielding. I sent in my details and about a week later I was at the hospital on an induction day learning how to wash my hands properly and wear a mask correctly. Once completed I was a driver supporting the NHS, delivering medicine, medical equipment and moving patients. As the hospital was developing its response they identified a need for support on the wards. I put my hand up and found myself at the back of the Covid wards helping the doctors and nurses put on their PPE kit and being a general pair of hands collecting and moving as required. To say I was outside of my comfort zone was an understatement, however I quickly adapted and had the pleasure of meeting some fantastic people and got to be a small cog in a wonderful team. Life now had some sort of routine, two shifts at the hospital, walking our dogs and a more but very different 'normal life' began to emerge.

Eventually the company reminded me that I had a "proper" job to do and I needed to complete some ground school refresher training and a simulator session to revalidate my licence as I had not done 3 take offs and landings in the previous 90 days to stay current. Then eventually after 123 days since my last flight, I got airborne again with passengers.

Greg Winton

Lockdown Experience

My children were really looking forward to performing at the Benn Hall back in March 2020, and thankfully their performance came just prior to lockdown, so aside from a few missing cast members, *A Night at the Musicals* went ahead. A few days later their basketball tournament was cancelled and not long after that, their schools and other clubs shut too. Even their favourite *Harry the Horse* biscuit was no longer available from the supermarket after the store had to close the bakery. I thought it was about time I gained a milkman; so I did, with milk, cheese, eggs, potatoes and lemonade on a regular order to tide us over in case we couldn't get any from anywhere else. Just after lockdown began, came Mothers' Day, two of our households' birthdays and Easter. Thankfully *The Huntsman* did some takeaway food, so although we'd booked a table which was cancelled, we were still able to keep our meal plans by taking the birthday carvery home instead. We managed to buy an Easter cake in lieu of one of the birthday cakes and shops had no shortage of Easter Eggs at all so we were able to do an Easter Egg hunt in the garden. There was a bit of a joke amongst our friends that the Thursday night clap for carers, was actually the UK coming together to clap us a happy birthday; we even played *Happy Birthday* on a speaker from our driveway. I'm not sure anyone could hear us out on Coventry Road, but it was nice to see the neighbours out too and they shouted over to check we were ok. Birthday gifts included toilet roll and a box of Corona of course and people sent us videos of Boris Johnson washing his hands whilst singing happy birthday.



It was 23rd March when it was confirmed that we were both key workers. Luckily I was able to work from home whilst home-schooling the children, whilst my husband had to go to work in Leicestershire. School work from the local primary school initially consisted of provided sheets of paper or emails of items to print. The secondary school work was online. We attempted to do the work provided, as well as daily walks and a bit of PE with Joe Wicks. The daily walks were brilliant. We really appreciated living next to an Alpaca farm, a reservoir, woods, lots of public footpaths with fields full of horses, chickens and sheep, ploughing tractors, as well as what we called 'The Thurlaston Monster' (*Ed. he lurks on another page!*). Thank you to the creator of that! However, after the first 2 or 3 weeks, we decided it was impossible for me to work and home-school both children effectively so one child went back to school (he asked, so no preferential treatment). School was apparently much better in lockdown and suddenly, a lot more school work was being done compared to normal even though there was less time dedicated to actual work. The school day consisted of approximately two hours of schoolwork, 1.5 hours PE, lunch and then an activity; the activity being something like weeding the school grounds, painting, cooking, clay sculpting, fun quizzes and dropping eggs off a roof in a self-created box to see whose could survive.



Back at home in the evenings, we found a renewed love for cooking with fish thanks to the weekly fishmonger visits to Thurlaston. I was very thankful for the fishmonger as I also had to deliver food to relatives in other towns who were self-isolating, so fresh fish was a great unexpected treat for them. I also became a COVID volunteer covering part of Dunchurch and Thurlaston, but was only needed in the end as a contact between residents and other volunteers for items such as hand sanitiser, plus one shopping and prescription run. The children also became part-time chefs, making homemade pizzas, soup, scones, biscuits, pancakes and cakes regularly. They were particularly spurred on by one of the

schools doing a weekly cooking challenge; which they won one week! We also delivered some food items to friends' doorsteps and they kindly did the same back.

Another new found hobby included painting. I'd once been to a painting class nearby and the same company decided they would do the sessions for free online, so I jumped at the chance. Even when we made the crazy decision to camp outside for a week surrounded by the pheasants that had made a home at the end of our garden (in lieu of a camping expedition that had been cancelled), I still got up bright and early for weekly painting classes, with even my eight year-old joining in to paint her own canvas.

Due to the children being unable to do their usual hobbies, they instead took part in the lockdown tradition of creating key worker videos. These were arranged by their musical theatre and dancing teachers and were shared on the Internet. Another way they took part in lockdown tradition was by putting a 5 foot flag of a unicorn jumping through a rainbow in the window of our house; it was great to hear children (most we'd never seen before) getting excited as they walked past. We equally enjoyed seeing all of the rainbows and NHS signs others had put up in the village and surrounding areas. We even found some painted rocks on our village walks. The children also did some other activities, including flower arranging using a kit from the nearby florist.

Also in lockdown, VE day took place. We spent it having water fights in the back garden and making fancy VE day themed sandwiches, before cycling around Thurlaston and Dunchurch to look at VE day tributes that had been put up by residents.

We were unfortunate that two of us became ill during lockdown and the one at school ended up with a head injury. None of us had COVID though thankfully and luckily, none of us had anything as serious as others. We did however spend many days at doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and hospitals; sometimes having to travel to Coventry. However, seeing a doctor was actually the easiest and quickest it has ever been and most of the time, we were the only people there. It was a sad time however when one of the children's friends passed away, which meant that due to lockdown, we could not attend a funeral. We instead played their favourite song in our garden in dedication and placed a tribute on their parents' tree. We know other people lost people close to them during lockdown and our thoughts are with them too. More recently lockdown restrictions have lifted quite a lot compared to before but there is still a way to go.

Overall we had quite a good lockdown in Thurlaston. There was always something to do to keep us entertained whilst maintaining social distancing and although nearby shops ran out of items on occasion, there was always someone somewhere ready to help out. It was also great to see so many businesses, local and otherwise, delivering to the area and the egg cart keeping up well with demand. Speaking to other residents on their doorsteps, on walks or in the fishmonger queue was great for breaking up the days whereby otherwise, we'd have just been sitting working at home.

Thank you all.

Selina Larque



The Clarinet Ladies and One Gent are Back in Town

For three months the Thurlaston Clarinet Group (aka Fresh Air) has been silent. The dreaded lockdown brought this exciting village musical enterprise initiated by Gill Wood to silence. The Group had been meeting for 17 years in school term time and practising often twice a week.

During the lockdown we have not been able to play together but we have been Zooming to keep in contact. We however missed our communal coffee and cakes that formed an immutable part of every meeting.

Now the liquorice sticks are out again. Dusted down and oiled, the instruments are all behaving well. However the players appear to have acquired a tinge of rust and stiffness. Some of our liquid mellifluous style has slipped from our fingers. However with due diligence to avoid virus contamination we have resumed practising and the glorious sound of 5 clarinets in (almost) harmony is once again heralding the village.

Paul Jacques

Thurlaston Meadows in Lockdown 2020

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic the Home made the decision to go into lockdown for the safety and well-being of residents and staff, this entailed staff living-in over a two-week period of full lockdown and sadly stopping visitors to the Home. Both staff and residents remained in good spirits throughout whilst minimising the risk of COVID-19 being transmitted. These times have been and remain trying for all with restrictions preventing socialisation.

As a Home we wanted to continue our high-level ethics of care, one part of this is mindfulness and stimulation, therefore we ensured residents would continue with their daily activities. Whilst all in-house activities remained the same those plans for outside entertainers were sadly cancelled. These gaps though were soon filled with Pizza and wine evenings, Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day celebrations. VE day was spectacular with our very own street party on the terrace. Residents and staff had a fabulous day.

One celebration which will never be forgotten was that of our resident Clarice who had a fantastic 100th birthday in June with all staff and residents attending including her immediate family with social distancing measures applied.

For the residents it has been especially difficult

not being able to have physical contact with their loved ones, we introduced FaceTime, Skype and telephone calls to ensure they were able to remain in as close contact as possible. As time has gone by and with restrictions easing the social distancing picnics were carefully planned, invitations went out and as you can imagine families were extremely excited. We provided the picnic baskets with delicious food and drinks inside but most importantly the residents had the opportunity to see their loved ones face to face, which has had a very positive effect to all involved.

The Home is very proud with how all the residents and staff have come together during these difficult and very unexpected times, we owe this success to everybody involved, staff, residents, families, and of course the professionals who have supported us throughout. Having ensured all possible safety measures were put into place at the very start of this pandemic it has demonstrated its importance. Receiving compliments from relatives and indeed the Council have given the staff a well-deserved emotional lift whilst providing us with great feedback; this only enhances the notion that we have all done amazingly at keeping this awful virus out of the Home.

Heather Davis

Life Under Coronavirus Lockdown

Like a lot of other people, Noel and I have had to get used to many lifestyle changes which have come into our everyday lives under Covid-19 and its ever-present threat of life-changing effects. Therefore, there are many things that we have subsequently learned to live without, such as longed-for holidays, and for me particularly, being able to hug my grandchildren.

Anyway, there has been another aspect that has affected us, in that Noel has for many years now been taking care of all our bread supplies by baking the most delicious home-made loaves, and since lockdown took hold, both bread flour and yeast in domestic use quantities have become very difficult to come by. This was due to the fact that the plants packing the 1.5 kg bags of flour were running at full capacity and couldn't produce any more. Similarly, yeast in small packets and tins were subject to the same problem too. Never one to resist a challenge, Noel searched high and low and eventually, managed to find a supplier of commercial sized sacks of flour, and large quantities of yeast.



We then realised we needed a large drum in which to store the sack of flour. After more intrepid searching, he found a supplier who could provide large, floor-standing air-tight drums, and one was duly ordered. There was just one minor problem – the opening was a little on the small side, so we were then faced with trying to squeeze the enormous bag into it! Suffice to say we eventually managed it and bread production resumed once more, thank goodness!

Mary Harwood

Wedding Anniversary

John and I celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary on the 1st April. We had to get married on the Tuesday so John did not miss the Cattle Market on the Monday - only two weeks holiday in those days.

Having been in Round Table with Robert Pargetter he sent a hearse for me. Thankfully the ex-Deputy Chief Constable of Birmingham, who gave me away, and I did not have to lie down in the back of the hearse, but wonder whether anybody would have stopped to help if we had broken down? Girl in a wedding dress a hearse a man in a morning suit and the driver?

Hopefully when lockdown finishes we will get to celebrate. Would like to thank the support from the village for shopping; Richard and Clare Street have just been amazing.

John & Polly Hall

My Experience Under Lockdown

As an A Level student studying mathematics, chemistry and biology I have looked at the effect viruses can have around the world. However, to currently be living through COVID-19 and see the devastation it has had on so many lives is extremely shocking.

Compared to the majority of people around the world, the problems I have faced as a result of this virus have been insignificant. However, the uncertainty surrounding how A level grades will be awarded to students, such as myself, is now likely to dictate which university I and so many others will progress to in September. I am frustrated at the fact that I did not have the opportunity to showcase the progress I have made, in relation to my studies, over the past two years. However, I am thankful that I have not had to deal with the increased levels of stress that I would have faced had I sat my A Level examinations.

While at home, I have improved my cooking skills greatly and helped around the house whilst trying to prepare for my university experience which is likely to be drastically different to those experienced by those who have gone to university in previous years. My father has also been teaching me to drive

which has been quite a novel experience for us both. Lockdown has given me the time to go running, cycling and walking with Charlie, our one year old working cocker spaniel.

COVID-19 has stopped me from doing routine activities. I have not been able to play badminton and have missed playing league matches. It has been difficult to socialise face to face and I imagine lots of young people, including myself, are longing a return to normality.

I am really looking forward to going to university and hope that I will not be required to stay at home for the first few months of my course, which is a genuine possibility if the number of people infected by COVID-19 remains significant. In the meantime, I will continue to support those around me while staying safe myself.

Best Wishes,

James Irish

Walking in Lockdown

6 a.m., late May
The sun shines from a cloudless sky
Free of vapour trails
A chill breeze still, cheating eye and brain
To see frost, or dew, on the grass
No - leavings of the cutting of the grass
Nature demands we make hay while the sun
shines
Old saws survive

Over the fields ring out the raucous calls of
rooks
The manic scolding of jackdaws
So many more this year
Covid corvids

The edge of the woods sound with birdsong
The insistent seep seep of the tits
The buzz and burr of the tiny wren
Robin parades his virtuosity
Volume belies size – braggadocio in a red vest
A whirr of wings and alarm call from the
blackbirds
Rising from near my feet
First staying boldly near, then choosing flight

Kay Thorpe

Life In Lockdown

Ron and I have adapted to lockdown quite easily. Partly because parties and dancing etc are no longer top of our priorities. Also, we both feel that our chequered lives during the war have made us adaptable. For instance, I had lived in seven different houses before I was ten years old. Ron was sent away to school aged 8 and lost his mother two years later.

The way is well-trodden these days
Over parched earth the sun pierces trees
To zebra-stripe the path in flickering light
Bluebells hang fading heads to say
Their earlier glory will return

Irises wave jaunty yellow flags by the lake
No lockdown for them
New crops poke green shoots through dry soil
Thirsty for rain

Now the path leads between hedgerows
Calling old roads to mind
How many feet, how many centuries?
New ferns glow lime in a sunbeam
Campion still bravely waving
Nettles slyly reaching out for the unshielded
hand

Back to the road, no longer silent
Will we remember the stillness?
Resent the return of fumes and noise?
Or forget.
A lone lorry heard first from far
Rumbles under my feet as I cross the bridge
home.

Since the middle of March, Ron and I have been in each other's company more than any other time, except for holidays, in our 59 years of marriage. Although Ron spends a few hours a day doing crosswords in the kitchen whilst I'm in the dining room with a jigsaw!
Being in charge of the housework is another

first for me and, on the strength of that, we have acquired quite a few more light weight gadgets, cordless, of course. Initially, food shopping was a cause for concern until Ocado gave us regular slots. However, the Eden family Erica, Ian, Haidee and George have been marvellous right from the beginning, including our needs to their shopping list twice a week all with a friendly smile and chat. We could not have coped without them and it is particularly

great for fresh fruit and vegetables. Thanks to them we have lacked for nothing.

Ron misses chatting to people and visiting DIY shops. We walk up and down Main Street every day to keep us mobile and our aim is to stay safe and look forward to a few more years together.

Judy Douglas

Alphabet Art

Covid 19 arrived in early 2020 like a virus tsunami, everyone taking avoiding action and heading for safe territory, it caused an emotional and psychological chasm in many lives.

We had six out of our 7 grandchildren in further education at the time, ranging from an on-line degree while full time working, through the spectrum to a granddaughter spending a year in Africa as part of a Public Health degree (you can imagine that was a sharp learning curve when Covid 19 turned up).

The others experienced a cliff fall in expectations having been dispatched from university /college with impending critical exams disappearing like mist.

One granddaughter who was studying for a health science degree, immediately volunteered to help at UHCW and one other housed under a roof with parents one of whom is a front line health worker and the other a national infrastructure project manager working full-on from home, felt she needed a coping concept so we decided on a challenge that each day we would each create a piece of 'art' on paper and swop them via the 'airwaves' the subject matter each day being driven by successive letters of the alphabet.

By the time 'H' came round (week 2) one is having serious doubts and longing for Z to arrive!! Or even zzzzz!!.

Of the 26 days, 52 pieces of 'art' only twice was the subject duplicated. Unicorn and windmill. For Z, I was not adventurous as it was a bit drawn out for me by then, I did some zebras, however my granddaughter chose to do a portrait of Zendaya an American actress and not just because her name began with a Z but because her surname is Coleman . . . the same as ours.

We have now joined with the Thurlaston Sketching group that was originated by our good friend David Cooper and is now prospered by Gill, Mary and others currently by Zoom.

Brian Coleman



Stalag Somerset and the Ivy Phone

I am a gentleman caller on a Somerset lady and we alternate between each other's homes. However on 21st March 2020 I was trapped in Somerset as the COVID Guidelines prohibited travel to a second home. Naturally this injunction did not apply to a favoured Political Adviser who had to test his eye sight.

During my incarceration in Somerset I made excellent use of local facilities including a private woodland with a river and became very friendly with the owner. I had played music at his wedding and provided a number of other small favours. In return he provided me with a piece of ivy wood about 4 inches in diameter and 3 feet long which he was convinced could be made into an amazing musical instrument because of the special acoustical properties of ivy.

I was very grateful and at the same time stumped (!) about how to convert this present of special wood into a musical instrument. I consulted a local sculptor who asked me whether I wished to blow into it, hit it, or twang it. I opted to blow it and worked out details of how to make the wood (log) into a didgeridoo.

My new sculptor friend and I got down to detailed planning and we were then suddenly advised that ivy is poisonous and can produce a skin rash. So we abandoned this idea and made the wood into a stringed instrument. We then attached a contact microphone to it and behold we had invented the ivyphone.

I am now working hard on developing a repertoire of specialist music (as the instrument is completely atonal) and my skill level is building to a point when I hope to enter next year's *Young Musician of the Year* competition. The trouble is I might be too late (about 60 years) and I am not sure which section to go in. The obvious one is string, but it could also qualify for wind as this was the starting point for the invention, or even percussion as it makes quite a nice noise when you bash it.

There will be a full demonstration at the next Garden Fete.

Paul Jacques

Beating the Bunnies



Like many of you we have been spending more time in the garden recently. Unfortunately, much of this time has been spent battling bunnies. There is nothing – nothing – a rabbit won't eat, including all the items on our list of rabbit-proof plants. I'm told they don't like tough or highly scented plants but nobody told the rabbits : our lavender plants are singularly flower-free, our cotton lavender and curry plants have been given serious crew cuts and every leaf to a height of 60cm has been stripped from our roses.

We don't give up easily and we've now tried a number of rabbit rebuffers. First off - tinsel. Attaching it to plants works quite well – and has the added benefits of encouraging us to sort through old Xmas decorations and adding unexpected interest to the garden. But the effects are sadly short lived.

We try scattering the rabbits' favourite plants with rabbit repellent, both Dobbies best and our own mix of chillies, cumin and Chinese five spice. This doesn't work very well especially as it doesn't survive rain and would end up being extremely expensive.

Next, the high tech option – the *Voss Sonic 2000 Ultraschall-Tiervertreiber*. The Voss promises to be the answer to our problems until I read the intensity settings listed in very small print on the instruction leaflet : 1 – repels dogs, cats, raccoons... 2 – repels animals such as hares, foxes, deer, wild boar (!).... 3 – repels mice, rats, badgers, otters . . . 4 and 5 – includes flashing to repel birds. No mention of rabbits!

We invested in chicken wire. A huge roll arrives. We Alcatraz what remains of our borders. Roses

and geraniums, hydrangeas and clematis all now shelter behind cages for their protection. Now they're enclosed they've begun to recover and I feel encouraged when I spot some buds.

Yet even this may not be the answer for just last night at dusk I came across a band of bunnies sitting together on the patio looking longingly at the plants on the far side of the fence.

I could swear they were hatching a plot but then, so was I!



Sheena Ashford

Groups and Clubs can adapt

Groups and clubs can adapt to social distancing with surprising results.

As a member of a monthly sewing group, we missed each other's company and the sharing of our work.

So we decided to pay a tutor and have our first ever mini workshop on line using Zoom. The tutor introduced us to, what we now call, a co create session. We have an initial short demonstration for about 15 mins, (then having prepared a list of sewing materials on our table) we mute our microphones and point our computer devices at our sewing machines, or for the hand stitchers their sewing tables. We then all stitch away for about 1.5 hours. Then we all come back together to take part in a very enjoyable 'show and tell' session.

We have since done another session where we had no tutor where we made a stitched piece – in this case inspired by a piece of ceramics, using its design or shape.

We are to continue with our online sewing workshops and talks and are realising it opens up other possibilities like access to overseas tutors.

Technology has allowed us to stay together and keep our club afloat. It's very uplifting for us all to see each other, whilst sharing our skills and ideas, through unusual times.

Gill Dakin



