

Aynho



The Apricot Village

Aynho Village Report

April 2012

THE PARISH COUNCIL

Aynho – A little Village with a Big Community Heartbeat

Few villages of 630 inhabitants, with over 100 children are as starved of infrastructure resources as is Aynho. We do not have a school; we do not have a shop; our village is physically divided by a main road, which is often congested with speeding traffic, driven by people who have little respect for our village and our environment. What we do have, and what we should all be immensely proud of, is a social and community fabric that makes Aynho a warm, vibrant and attractive place to live and in which to enjoy a fulfilling lifestyle.

2011 was a year when many seemingly disparate projects and movements in the village have meshed together to add new and exciting dimensions to the life of our village. Consider ASRA – the Playing Field Association. Yes, over the years young and old from many village generations have benefited from the use of its facilities. Over the last year the ASRA team, brilliantly led by Kay Anderson and the team of volunteers that have formed around her, have added an array of facilities and services, which have created new dimensions to the way that villagers meet, socialise, work together and relax. The largely self-funded Running Track is a lasting tribute to the way that this village can use self-help to develop our social networks and add new dimensions to the lives of our residents. Many dedicated people gave their free-time to endow the village with something new. We all owe them a big vote of thanks and our gratitude for their selfless contribution.

Over the last few years the Parish Council has made a major financial and moral contribution to support and sustain the work of ASRA. This is a good example of our development focus which is to work with and support the work of the wide range of social interest and recreational groups that exist in the village. Interest groups thrive within our village. The Parish Council sees its role as helping those groups to grow and develop. We want this year's Annual Village Meeting, to which you are invited on 16th April at 7.30pm to be a "Celebration of Community" in the village and to provide all Village Groups with the Opportunity to "Showcase" their work so that they can hopefully capture the interest of an even wider cross section of the village.

During the year we are delighted to report that:

- The follow-up programme of Rightracks works delivered in conjunction with Northants County Council has rectified a number of design issues from the original programme.
- We have increased the Village Maintenance budget and used a mixture of local contractor and SNC/NCC staff to significantly upgrade the Village Maintenance Programme and ensure that the Village looks neater and tidier.
- We have worked with NCC to design Village Gates for the Charlton Road entrance to the village (to be installed shortly) as a means of reducing speeding on that road.

- We have formed a Car Parking subcommittee to look at parking issues in The Glebe, The Square/Village Green and also the Charlton Road. In this work we have engaged with NCC to draw-up schemes designed to rectify the serious issues that we need to solve in these areas. Villagers will be updated once these detailed plans have been received. Uncontrolled Parking and particularly the way that cars are churning-up the grass verges means that this is a major issue that must become an even greater priority to be solved in 2012.
- We have repeated the annual Village Clean-up Campaign when a large number of villagers collected a record amount of litter from the vicinity of the village. Their hard work is much appreciated but it does underline that we have a major issue with rubbish being dumped indiscriminately from vehicles as they pass through the village.
- We replaced the successful Farm Walk this year with a new Village History Walk, led by the History Society members. Held in September 2011, 68 people attended a very successful event. The Parish Council has decided that going forward a History Walk and a Farm Walk will be held on alternate years starting with a re-run of the Farm Walk on 1st July 2012.

In April 2011 a new Parish Council was elected meaning that people like Keith McClellan and Nigel Oakey who had both served as Councillors, and in Keith's case as Chairman for 10-years, retired. I would like to thank them both for their big contribution to the development of our village. In those elections 4 new councillors were elected unopposed – Cllr James Belcher, Cllr Fi Burge, Cllr Richard Hoddinott and Cllr Bob Mann. I welcome them to the council together with their diverse range of skills and opinions that are already having a positive impact on the way the Parish Council functions. The core of the council who were also elected unopposed – Cllr Andy Anderson, Cllr Stephen Brook, Cllr Jeremy James and Cllr Ian Parkes – have continued to be devoted to the cause of making the Village of Aynho a better place in which to live, to work and to play. I thank them all for their excellent contribution to the Parish Council. Lastly, I pay tribute to the untiring work and devotion to duty in the running of the Village of the Parish Clerk – Sadie Patamia and the RFO Amby Hitchcox. Their support is much appreciated by the whole council.

2011 was the year of the Royal Wedding, where villagers were invited into Aynhoe Park to celebrate the event in an enjoyable and convivial setting. This year will be the year of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. A dedicated group of villagers has been working for 15-months to create a Village Party to commemorate the event which will be held on the ASRA Sports Field in June – more details to follow.

In closing I can assure you that Aynho Parish Council will work diligently to further develop the village and its facilities during 2012.

Colin Macklin - Chairman.

Finance

At 31st March 2012 the Council had £3499.90 in its bank accounts, and assets to the value of £129,149. The precept is £18,558.54 towards a budget of £28,445.12.

Planning

The following applications were received during the year

Address	Outline of application	PC Decision	SNC Decision
2 Butts Close	Variation of conditions 2, 3 & 4 of planning permission S/2010/0206/FUL to increase the size of the conservatory and change the exterior materials to the west elevation.	Objections raised	Approval
The Grammar House, Croughton Road	Amendment to S/2007/1580/P (rebuild of double garage incorporating roof space as studio accommodation) Retrospective.	Supported	Approval
Oriel Cottage, 14 The Square	Replace garage roof, convert garage into habitable room (Resubmission of S/2011/0080/FUL to incorporate a lantern roof light).	Supported	Approval

Address	Outline of application	PC Decision	SNC Decision
8 Little Lane	New window to kitchen	Supported with comments	Approval
10 The Butts	2 No 'A' frame solar panels to flat garage roof (5 panels on each frame)	Supported with comments	Approval
Upper Aynho Grounds	Installation of three ground mounted arrays to secure a total of 122 solar PV panels. One structure will secure 52 panels (2 x 26), the second structure will secure 44 panels (2 x 22) and the third structure will secure 26 panels (2 x 13). Each panel will measure 1652mm x 995mm, covering 615.5sqm	Supported	Approval
College Farm House	Reduce Yew Tree by 1/3rd & remove bough on northern side	Supported	No Objections
The Warren Croughton	Construction of new double garage	Supported	Approval
4 The Glebe	Replace window in side elevation with glazed double doors	Supported with comments	Approval
14 Cartwright Gardens	Single storey extensions to front and rear	Supported	Approval
Land at Aynhoe Corner	The erection of a Working Heritage Centre and associated car parking to accommodate the storage restoration and study of plaster cast artefacts and heritage interior design and furniture studio	Supported with conditions	Approval
Cherwell Cottage, 22 Charlton Road	Fell one lawson cypress tree	Supported	No Objections
11 Blacksmiths Hill	Wooden garage door	Supported with comments	Approval
5 The Hill	Single storey rear extension to provide kitchen and extend existing garden room. Internal alterations to bedroom, shower room and existing kitchen.	Supported	Approval
5 The Hill	Single storey rear extension to provide kitchen and extend existing garden room.	Supported	Approval
The Pediment, Croughton Road	Conversion of storage cupboard to shower room on the first floor	Supported	Approval
The Warren, Croughton	Variation of condition 5 on S/2011/0534/FUL (New double garage) to fit up and over metal garage doors instead of side hung doors	Supported	Approval
12 The Square	Installation of downstairs WC by dividing existing kitchen to include construction of partition wall. Install window in existing kitchen & also in new WC, modification of existing external brickwork in matching bricks. Relocate existing external kitchen door. Relocate existing internal kitchen door to hall.	Supported	Approval
12 The Glebe	Demolition of existing outbuilding - Erection of a single storey side extension.	Supported with comments	Approval
14 The Glebe	First floor side extension	Approval	Approval
The Old School House, Butts Close	Erect two storey rear extension	Objects raised	Withdrawn
Nell Bridge Farm	Cattle building	Supported	Approval
1 The Butts	Side extension	Supported	Approval

Communications

We are now using an e-mail list so we can contact people directly, should they wish, with news and happenings. If you'd like to be contacted in this way please email Sadie Patamia at aynhopc@gmail.com with your e mail address. You can also visit www.aynho.net for information.

AYNHO WRITERS

This has been a very successful year for Aynho Writers. Membership has remained steady at 17 for most of the year and much interesting work has been written, in all genres. Some members have continued to have their poetry regularly published in national anthologies, and others have had stories and articles in magazines and newspapers. At least one novel and one biography have come to fruition over the last 12 months, in addition to Rhoda Woodward's auto-biography which has been attractively produced and is selling well. We have encouraged each other by listening to each other's work and offering comments, and suggestions of where to get published.

In September we enjoyed a group visit to Chipping Norton Theatre to see the hilarious farce See How They Run.

Our annual whole-day Writers' Workshop was held in November when we were pleased to welcome Geoffrey Lewis, a prolific writer many of whose stories centre round the canal network. It was interesting to hear how he researched his market and ensured excellent sales for his novels, most of which were self-published. This led us to consider the merits of various forms of publishing, including e-publishing and self-publishing as well as the more traditional system.

Our annual book, which this year was called Random Thoughts, was very well received. As usual we donated 6 copies to be sold in Katharine House Hospice, thus maintaining our links with the caring work done there.

It was decided to follow Random Thoughts with a special publication to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. This book is currently in production and will include reflections and reminiscences over the past 60 years. Copies will soon be available from Brian Reynolds (01869 811007) priced at £5 each.

We concluded 2011 with a most enjoyable Christmas lunch at the Rose and Crown, Charlton.

I would like to thank all members for their enthusiastic attendance and lively contributions, which make our meetings such jolly occasions.

Sue Hunter (facilitator)

AYNHO GARDENING CLUB

In 2011, the Gardening Club continued with its normal format of monthly meetings with a talk on garden-related matters or a slide show of beautiful gardens in the UK and abroad. Topics last year ranged from summer bulbs and plant folklore to bees and pollination, with presentations on gardens in Sussex, Patagonia and Japan.

During the summer we offer a range of day and evening trips to gardens of interest. Last year we went to two beautiful private gardens in the Cotswolds and Arley Arboretum in Worcestershire. Our evening trips were to places nearer to home: Brook Cottage, Alkerton and Tom Duncan's delightful garden right here in the village.



The main village events during the year are Maytime in the Square, where we have a stall with home grown plants to help people stock their gardens for summer with annuals, perennials and vegetable seedlings. Then in September, we hold the Flower and Produce Show. It is worth repeating here that this is a village event. Any resident of Aynho can enter flowers, vegetables, fruit, cakes, craft items, photographs etc. We are particularly keen to involve children in this and have a number of specific children's categories. We would be delighted if parents and grandparents could encourage children to take part in this village event, both for their own interest and as a stepping stone to getting involved in the community. Over the past two years we have held a free hands-on art session in August to help children develop their creativity and prepare for the Show. We intend to hold another one this August.

Looking forward to the 2012 programme, we have a day trip to Hidcote and Kiftsgate Gardens near Chipping Campden in May, followed by a trip to RHS Wisley in July to see their newly developed rose garden. Non-members are welcome to join us on these days out. For information please contact Barbara Williams on 810797. We will also be making a return visit to Tom Duncan's garden in May to see his wonderful display of tulips. This is a visit reserved for members only and a good reason to join the Club (Annual fee £5). We will also be visiting Springhill House in Hethe in June.

Future talks include: The Heritage Seed Library, The Night Garden, Day Lilies, Bulgaria, East Ruston Vicarage and Autumn and Winter Decorations. We are always delighted to welcome new members. You can come along to any meeting or talk to Anthea Bazin (810629) about the programme. A specialist knowledge of gardening and plants is not required. We are a friendly group of people who enjoy spending time in our gardens and would like to learn a little more about plants and how to make the most of our outdoor spaces.

We had a successful year despite extreme weather conditions – from heavy snow in January, via drought conditions in June to heavy rains in August. These extremes affected garden plants, but members and the village as a whole rose to the challenge and made the annual Flower and Produce Show in September a very colourful display. Before the show, some children attended a hands-on art morning, run by Liz Mann. This proved popular and we hope it will encourage further participation by young Aynho residents in future shows, which is something we are very keen to promote.

None of the trips we made this year was rained off, which was a definite improvement on 2009. We had a combined trip in May to the recently restored Elizabethan Garden in Kenilworth Castle and nearby Avondale nursery, which has a fantastic quarry garden, at that time ablaze with azaleas and rhododendrons. Our second day out was to RHS Wisley in Surrey. This is a fascinating place to visit, which is why we go frequently. As the club is affiliated to the RHS, we get free entrance, which makes the trip very reasonable. It is worth pointing out here that non-members are welcome to join our day trips. For information about this please contact Barbara Williams on 810797. Then, as a change to our normal routine, we had three evening trips over the summer: Tile House Nursery near Finmere, Chivel Farm near Chipping Norton and the Grammar House here in Aynho. They are all beautiful gardens with different styles. This year we are visiting two Cotswold Gardens in May and Arley Arboretum in Worcestershire in September. There will be two evening visits to Brook Cottage in Alkerton and Tom Duncan's garden here in Aynho.

We had seven different speakers during the year, talking on topics ranging from *The Cottage Garden to Bamboos and Grasses*. Highlights included a visit from Tim Walker, the Director of the Oxford Botanical Gardens. He is a knowledgeable and amusing speaker and we have invited him to make a return visit in 2012. Another highlight was a speaker who comes from closer to home – Tony Robinson. He gave us a very informative talk on his childhood in Tusmore Park, where he grew up as a son of the Head Gardener there. He concluded his talk by showing us part of his collection of old farming and horticultural tools from this area. It was good to be able to have a local context to the evening.

This year's programme will include talks on *Summer Bulbs, Plant Folklore and Japan's Four Seasons*. We had planned to have a talk on *'Bees and pollination'* last year, but unfortunately the speaker had to cancel. However, this has been rescheduled for October this year. It should tie in well with the aims of the new Biodiversity group in the village. Please see the newsletter for details.

If any of these talks and visits are of interest, we are always delighted to welcome new members and guests to our monthly meetings on the second Wednesday of the month in the village hall, starting at 8 p.m. Do come and join us.

AYNHO SPORTS FIELD AND PAVILION (ASRA) AND THE PAVILION CAFÉ

I am delighted that the amenity track surfacing is now complete and looks transformed. Already I have seen joggers, runners, roller bladers, cyclists and walkers using it and most noticeably little children learning to ride bikes on a safe smooth surface. All the money we have fundraised over the last two years has been added to the Parish Councils contribution and a generous grant from SNC to enable it to be completed so my thanks to all those people who have helped bring to fruition the village requests from the last two Parish Plans.

With the planting of the Jubilee Trees and the mound and the ongoing stumpery by the gate, we hope that the sports field will develop into a place where families can enjoy spending time together. Four more benches are about to be sited around the track and April sees the return of cricket to the field with Evenley Mens Third 11 using Aynho as their home ground. Fixtures will be posted on the noticeboard for those interested in watching.

Also in April the Pavilion Cafe will reopen with an Easter Monday event from 3.30pm till 5.30pm when refreshments and homemade cakes will be on sale. The Cafe will resume its weekday openings on Tuesday 17th April from 12 noon – 2pm and will also be open every Thursday from 12 noon until 2pm to coincide with the health walks. These walks have been particularly successful, led by village volunteers with a couple of choices of walk each week depending on ability. The walks are free and the cafe will be open after the walk for refreshments. Dogs can be brought along on the walks but please use the main entrance from the Charlton Road to reach the pavilion. The Parish Council have agreed to let dogs use this route to and from the Pavilion but please do not walk dogs around the track or let them off on the field.

Sadly Aynho Athletic will not be playing next season but Brackley Town Under 11's are to continue and have written their own report for this publication. My thanks to Neil O'Connell from Aynho Athletic for ably managing the side over the past few years. We intend to remove both sets of old goal posts at the end of this season as they are now becoming unsafe. Brackley will provide their own goals and we will look to some fundraising in the future to secure some more adult ones. Our next priority though is the maintenance of the tennis court which will be tackled once we have raised some more funds.

Can I take this opportunity to thank Amanda & Alice Limb, Annabel Bellamy and Amanda Leigh for running a very successful Winter Lunch club in the village hall whilst the cafe was closed over the winter. ASRA is a grateful recipient from some of the profits of this and also from the Waitrose Charity Box when it arrives. This, along with the increased revenue from the Park Club Draw this year will see our account replenished after the track spending, enabling us to keep some funds by for emergencies and running costs.

Maintenance and planting weekend is planned for 21st/22nd April when we aim to tackle some minor repairs and painting, weeding, planting flower seeds and general tidying up before the Maytime and Jubilee events in May and June. Each day we will start at 10am until 4pm and I promise everyone who attends will be fed and watered. Please come and give us your support if you can – it's a lovely community atmosphere and an opportunity to meet like-minded people, not to mention burn off a few calories. Come dressed and equipped with any tools you feel necessary – do call me on 810019 for advice!

The ASRA committee have been meeting regularly to plan events and we have Maytime on Monday 7th May at 2pm and the Big Jubilee Lunch on Sunday 3rd June at 12 noon coming up. Also, the Jubilee Tea Party on Monday 4th June in the village hall from 3.30pm. More details on all of these will be in the newsletter and on the notice boards and on the Aynho website. Anyone wanting to be involved in any way is welcome and can contact me on 810019 or at kaynho@lineone.net. We always welcome new members with ideas for the sportsfield so make yourselves known if you would like to be included on our mailing list or attend a meeting. Events suggested for later in the year are a barn dance and quiz night.

Don't forget too that the pavilion is available to hire (along with all its equipment) for only £15 a time to villagers. The Cafe also stocks greetings cards, wrapping paper, small stationery gifts, second hand books and magazines. Anyone who would like an outlet for their craft is welcome to bring it along. Again, contact me on 810019.

My thanks to all my friends in the village (and some from other villages) who always are on hand to help out. You all know who you all are and I appreciate your help.

Kay Anderson

AYNHO WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Aynho W.I. continues to maintain its membership numbers and enjoys a varied programme of activities. This past year has seen speakers on such diverse topics as a humorous talk by a butler to the stars, a serious talk about Chernobyl's children, 25 years after the explosion.

An unusual aspect of working with prisoners who did fine embroidery, an insight into traveling with the BBC World Service. We had examples shown of Russian Lacquer boxes and its history and also the restraints of corsetry. What a mixed bag.

We have had walks most months, joined other W.I.'s in our group, six in all sharing Carol Services, Christmas Parties and the usual helping out at Charity events such as the Church Fete, Maytime in the Square. Members have been on courses at Denman which is our own College of Learning in Abingdon, which offers a multitude of courses.

We attend an Annual Meeting in London or elsewhere, finding a hall that is big enough to hold about eight hundred members and vote on resolutions that the Government may be urged to put into practice, thereby knowing that our National Federation is helping to improve social concerns.

We are a friendly institute and welcome any new members to come along and see what Aynho W.I. has to offer. Our programme can be found on www.aynho.net or see the notice board outside the Village Hall.

Valerie Swann
Secretary

BIODIVERSITY GROUP

This is our second year since the formation of the group in 2010. We are a small but enthusiastic group with an interest in, and a concern, for the natural environment. Our aim is to raise interest and awareness of nature and wildlife in the parish, to identify the many threats it faces, especially in terms of habitat loss, and to protect and enhance it. We link with other organisations, especially ASRA and the Gardening Club.

For the past year we have been surveying the biodiversity of the Churchyard and have amassed data on the trees, shrubs, flowers, lichens, birds, butterflies and minibeasts there. In the Autumn we put up a display in the Church porch of our interim findings and surprised ourselves and others at nature's variety in such a relatively small area. We are continuing our churchyard surveys this year and plan to expand in other areas.

Two of our members have been counting and locating the nests of house martins, swallows and swifts each summer. These birds deserve any help we can give them, having migrated thousands of miles from sub-Saharan Africa to nest here.

In the summer we held a photo competition for juniors and although the entry was small the standard was excellent with photos of dragonfly and teasels taking the top spots.

Also in the summer we joined with the Café Club for a children's nature walk which was highly successful and another walk is planned for this year.

We were involved with the planting of the mound and the Millennium Trees at the sportsfield and will help with wildflower meadow planting there. We are also creating a stumpery-cum-woodpile at the edge of the sportsfield in the hope of providing a habitat for minibeasts and small mammals.

Our most recent initiative was the Aynho Big Garden Birdwatch held on the last weekend of January along the lines of the RSPB birdwatch. We were pleased with the response and the results have been collated and can be viewed on the Biodiversity website

We would love to have more members, advisers and suggestions so if you are interested please contact Gill on 810279 or Jill on 811206.

AYNHO SHORT MAT BOWLS

We meet every Tuesday at 2.30-4.30 in the village hall. There is an annual fee of £10 with £1 per session. Tea and biscuits are provided! The club is fully equipped with woods etc. We have one vacancy at present so if anyone is interested, please come along and have a go, you will be very welcome. Contact Jean Darby 01869 810373 or Doug Ward 01869 810723.

AYNHO RECORDED MUSIC SOCIETY

We have had solid support for our 2011/12 season. Regrettable Doris and Bernard Middleton have had to resign as comperes due to Bernard's ill health. The Society extends their warm thanks for the pleasure they have generated in the 10 years that A.R.M.S. has been running.

The format for the meetings has changed in that all members are able to nominate a choice of music, or even to present the entire programme, though this is not obligatory.

We meet in the Village Hall at 7.30pm on the first Wednesday of each month. We have an interval for refreshments (wine or soft drinks). Anyone who is interested in joining us please do, you will be most welcome. Contact 810264

AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY

In 2011, Brian Reynolds stepped down as Chairman of the Society. Brian's energy and enthusiasm for history has been evident to all. Thank you for establishing and guiding the Society through the early years.

The 2011 lecture series was typically broad ranging. In January, the Music Society joined us to experience the extraordinary sights and sounds of medieval instruments expertly played and explained by Richard York. February's meeting was a slide show of all the photographs from the Society's Archive, a packed audience were asked to help identify the faces and places. Many of the audience were taken back to their youth and stories recited. Dr Jim McDermott returned in March to talk us through another fascinating selection from the Cartwright Archive. The Archive is held at the Northampton Records Office and is therefore available to all. In the same vein, the Society minutes are posted on the village web site. These minutes are a précis of the month's lecture. They really are a valuable resource in their own right.

"Dove roads" was the topic for April; Bruce Smith opened our eyes to how to read the local landscape and buildings for signs of the centuries old routes used to move herds of beasts from the West of Wales to Northampton and London for fresh meat and skins. Thank you to the Hodge family for letting us visit the Grammar House. The evening became a wonderful mixture of "Antiques in the attic", "Through the key hole" and a "Time team" exploration. Barry Smith was our June speaker; he explained the reason for the "ridge and furrow" undulations seen in local fields. Our farming members were able to join in with their reminiscences of farming practices of yesteryear.

This year's Parish Farm Walk became a history walk around the core of the village. It was a great way to explain to villagers and visitors the way the village evolved and enabled us to recall some of the key events and characters. Our stand at the fete was well received and we are glad to say none of the artefacts were rain damaged!

The year ended with a visit to St Michael's, guided by our Churchwardens and June Smith explaining how hard it was to write the Centenary book for King Sutton School.

Typically, each lecture or visit has an attendance of 35, approximately two thirds of our membership. I defy anyone not to have left with more knowledge of the local history than they arrived with. The 2012 lecture series has started, details of which can be found in the Parish newsletter. They are held on the last Wednesday of the (most) months 7.30pm, in the village hall unless advertised. You are more than welcome to come to a one off lecture, you don't need a history degree and there is no test at the end!

Fond memories to members who are no longer with us. Finally, my thanks to Peter Cole, the Committee, the speakers and the members for supporting the Society and asking me to take the Chair.

Rupert Clark, 01869 810603

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, AYNHO



This past year has sadly seen the retirement of Rector the Revd Gill Barker due to continued ill health. Her pastoral commitment to the five parishes* of the Astwick Vale Benefice was an inspiration to all those around her despite some difficult periods of illness. Thankfully we still see her leading the worship in St Michael's on an ad hoc basis whilst the Benefice Churchwardens seek, through the Peterborough diocese, to install a new Rector. The workload in providing the wide range of pastoral care for five village parishes and all that goes with it requires a high level of commitment. We seek someone who will aspire to this important role in these challenging times of economic and social change.

We also said goodbye to our Curate Eddie Smith who continues with his ministry training in nearby Middleton Cheney. We are also grateful to the Revd Hugh Warwick (retired) and our Readers, Carrie O'Regan and William Usher, who regularly lead the worship.

Sustaining the church activities and keeping the Grade I listed church building in good order is an ongoing challenge both in people offering their time and in generous giving. It seems appropriate to say a big thank you to all who turn up to support the church as helpers or attending such events as the fete, concerts, or flower festival. A repair to a stained glass window high above the North door cost over £7,000 this year which is the first in a phased programme of repairs. The Parochial Church Council is focusing on the wider community to help provide income for this type of work in the future.

This was the first year the Church Fete was held on the Sportsfield and thanks to Kay Anderson and the ASRA committee in providing the venue and much more. As you may remember the monsoons and high winds arrived midway through the event!



Once again children and helpers from the Benefice enjoyed the August Holiday Club with wonderful support from the teenagers. A new activity was Street Dancing tuition and the whole week was well attended.

Children's activities continue in the church with Praise & Play for babies/pre-school children on the 1st & 3rd Wednesdays at 10.00am. Mum, Dad or the Grandparents all welcome. Sunday school is on the 1st & 3rd Sundays at 0930am for all children of school age.

St Michael's does support other charities both in organizing collections or providing a venue. A coffee morning was held in the church in October on behalf of Macmillan Cancer Support and thanks to all those who helped arrange this. Together with a lunch in the

pavilion organized by ASRA a grand total of £1,200 was raised.

The Children's Society box collection raised £405.65. Thanks to those who generously filled their boxes and thanks to Deborah Gibbs for organizing this and Sybil Stevens for her kind help.

We were pleased to have the History Society hold one of their meetings in the church. It gave an opportunity to look at various aspects of the building in an historical sense and how it continues to be a focus for the pastoral and cultural needs of the community through regular worship and other events.

For details of church life or to arrange a baptism/wedding please contact the Church Office on 01869 810903.

This report was produced by Graham Gibbs & Anthea Bazin the Churchwardens.

**Aynho, Croughton, Evenley, Farthinghoe, & Hinton in the Hedges with Steane.*

AYNHO COMMUNITY THEATRE

At the end of May members and guests attended a Garden Party at 'Puente Sierra', Cartwright Gardens. This was at the time of our short-lived summer and everyone was able to enjoy boules, table tennis and swimming in glorious sunshine.

At the beginning of August one of our members, Ruth Boddington, attended the West End Stage School in London to receive training in acting, dancing and singing. This culminated in a performance at Her Majesty's Theatre on the Haymarket at which Ruth received a certificate awarding her a Distinction for the part she played. Bob Mann is also to be congratulated for his excellent portrayal of King Duncan in Macbeth for the Oxford Theatre Guild in the gardens of Trinity College, Oxford.

The committee decided to have a Shakespearian evening in November entitled 'All the World's a Stage'. The audience were treated to a broad spectrum of readings from Shakespeare plays. Thanks are due to Jayne Ryman for coming up with the concept and to her and Ann Rickard for the guidance they gave to the readers during rehearsals.

Early in 2012 one of our members, Cameron Anderson, was asked to play a part in Agatha Christie's 'The unexpected Guest'. This was being produced by Banbury Cross Players and Cameron is to be congratulated on his excellent performance.

Some of our members will be continuing their education at universities later this year and there is a need to add to our numbers. Members of ACT meet on the last Monday in the month in the Village Hall in order to read extracts from plays, poetry, and other readings, and to plan future productions. We really do need new members who can either be aspiring or experienced actors, or people who would like to be involved in other ways, playing music, helping back stage or front of house. ACT presents a valuable opportunity for family involvement and also provides a medium to enhance the confidence and self-esteem of children and young people. If you are interested please contact any committee member – you can be assured of a warm welcome.

Finally, I should like to thank all our existing members for their involvement during the year and also the residents who have continued to support our performances.

Ron Sawbridge,
Chairman.

AYNHOE PARK

We are thrilled to announce the opening of our eagerly-awaited Medi-Spa, here at Aynhoe Park at the end of May 2012. There will be a wide range of treatments available including Massages, Nail Treatments and Facials. Discounts will be available to the local residents of the village of Aynho.

We are also looking forward to joining in with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations arranged by Kay Anderson.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

The Society seeks to provide a forum for like-minded photographers to meet in a non-competitive environment, regardless of technical ability, where experience and knowledge may be shared and developed through the activities of the Society. It meets regularly on the first and third Wednesdays of each month in the Apricot Room of the Cartwright Hotel. The Society's main activities include monthly presentations by outside speakers and its own members, regular workshops on digital camera controls and creativity in taking photographs, indoor studio and other workshops, occasional photo-shoots in the spring/summer, three annual exhibitions of members' work and two social events each year which have proved popular with members. In addition, the Society maintains its own web site (adandd.co.uk) that provides details on all its present and future activities. The Society welcomes all members, whose digital photographic skills and experience may vary from compact cameras through to single lens reflex cameras. Since its inception in July 2006, membership of the Society has grown steadily and includes people living in a wide catchment area of the towns and villages around Aynho.

HEALTH WALKS

Health walks from the sports pavilion set off every Thursday at 10.00 AM. Since January 12th 2012 these walks, led by trained volunteer leaders have explored the local countryside around the village and finished up at the pavilion for coffee or tea, homemade cakes and or a pre-ordered jacket potato. The welcoming atmosphere and socialising after an enjoyable walk has added to the pleasure of the exercise.

The interest has been such that two groups now do separate walks. A longer walk of about 5 miles, lasting up to two hours and a strollers walk for those who prefer a slower shorter walk or have less time to spare. Both walks are well supported but new walkers are always welcome.

This is one of many such health walks supported by South Northants Council under the Walking for Health Scheme. There is a walk leader and a back marker who have first aid provision in case of emergency and warn of any hazards walkers may encounter. Walks so far have taken us across the fields to Souldern, Charlton, Kings Sutton and the edge of Croughton, and along the Oxford Canal. A number of walk leaders from local villages join the Aynho walks and are always there for back up.

The two qualified leaders in the village are: Brian Croft and Keith McClellan.

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

The Joint Working with Cherwell District Council is now in operation. The agreement between the two Councils is that we have a Joint Top Management team and that, where compatible, share Joint services. This is in such operations as a Joint IT, Personnel, some parts of Finance, Building Control etc. Each Council though is a separate and independent organisation, able to have, and implement different policies which it thinks appropriate for its citizens. In particular I feel that it is important that each Council continues to have separate Planning departments. I think we in South Northamptonshire have always given the planning of our District a higher profile than other Councils. Other services, such as Refuse Collecting will be examined to see if there is more that can be done to cooperate and save money. This Joint Working has saved up to £2 million across the two Councils. This has meant that, whilst not increasing the Council tax, the Council has been able to maintain services.

The Localism Bill and the new National Planning Policy Framework are both now in force. Thankfully the Government would appear to have listened to the critics of the Draft version of this Framework which would I think have had serious implications for a District such as South Northants with its villages and countryside which enjoy no special status. I feel that under the Draft version every developer would be trying to build across the District. Our Geography and attractive villages and countryside make us a natural target for development if the brakes were to be taken off. The effectiveness of this new Framework will be challenged through the Appeals system over the coming year and only then will we know if the right balance has been struck.

It is very good news that the Council has signed up an agreement with Morgan Sindall to develop the Moat Lane Scheme in Towcester. This will enlarge the centre of Towcester which is due to double in size over the next 15 to 20 years. As part of this scheme the Council will be redeploying to a new building on the site which will become a Civic Centre with offices, a Library for the County Council and a much more flexible Council Chamber. It is estimated that once the move has been completed the Council should save up to £200,000 a year in running costs, and, with the redevelopment of the Springfield site, this will be achieved without cost to the Council.

Finally I am pleased to say that the Finance team at South Northants were voted the Finance team of the Year in the Local Government Chronicle awards last month. They gained this award for the way the Joint Working with Cherwell has been handled, the efficient collection of Council Tax and the way the department is run means that SNC services cost £123 per head of population against a national average of £142.

John Townsend, District Councillor

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Budget for 2012/13 was passed at the Council meeting on the 23rd February. The budget is not just about numbers on a spreadsheet; it represents an ongoing investment in the future of Northamptonshire. A future in which the County Council plays a very important and influential role. The County Council is a very successful organisation with an annual gross revenue budget of over £1bn and a Capital programme of £300m over the next four years.

This year consultation on and scrutiny of the budget has been more intense than ever before. Not only has a budget been produced but also a four year plan. This plan details how we shall save £105m by continuing to streamline how we do business over the next four years. This year we have again taken advantage of the Government's offer and frozen council tax for the year thereby retaining our position of having the lowest shire council tax in the country.

Our shared service arrangement with Cambridgeshire is now paying dividends and this together with an extension into further partnerships will result in a further saving of nearly £10m this year. In addition to this there are proposals to complete the transformation of certain services into arms-length or stand-alone self-financing organisations which will enable them to continue to run and improve their offering but to do so at little or no cost to the taxpayer. Examples of this include the proposal to complete the change of the Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts School into a stand-alone charitable organisation, and the continuation of the development of the Learning Achievement School Improvement function into an income generating service.

At the heart of the budget is considerable investment for the vulnerable in the County, an extra £27.5m into caring for older people, services for young adults, and the County's looked after children.

Although a great deal of pressure on service budgets remains we do have an enviable record of achievement. There has been a 22% increase in the number of pupils achieving higher GCSE grades in the last four years and, coupled to this, nearly 20,000 meals a day are provided by our new Nourish service. Our library service is recognised as being the most cost effective in the country with a cost per visit of just £1.67 compared with our nearest neighbour's cost of £2.10. This is largely due to the fact that 80% of our libraries are now 90% self-service.

During last year over 10,000 home fire safety checks were completed. Also, during last year there was a 23% reduction in reported road and footway defects and a 46% reduction in insurance claims. We shall continue with our annual investment of £2m into the Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership (NEP) for the next two years, after which it will become self-financing. This year we have seen NEP gain Local Enterprise Status which has attracted £3.9m into the county. You will probably have read about the plans for two university colleges, one at Silverstone and the other at Daventry.

Finances continue to be tight reflecting the national indebtedness but it is now apparent that cost reduction initiatives taken over the last two or three years are beginning to pay dividends.

Finally, I must report how I spent my Empowering Councillors allocation of £7,000 in 2011/12. This was as follows: Aynho Sports and Recreation Association , £2,500 towards the cost of improving the access road and parking facilities; Greatworth Playgroup, £2,000 towards the cost of additional equipment; Norris Playing Field Association (Hinton-in-the-Hedges), £2,000 towards the cost of a new Children's Embankment Slide; Charlton Memorial Hall Management Committee, £500 towards the cost of refurbishing the children's slide. This year, due to financial pressures the amount allocated to each councillor has been reduced to £6,000.

Ron Sawbridge.
County Councillor for Brackley West.
Chairman of Northamptonshire County Council.

COMMUNICATIONS

We are now using an e-mail list so we can contact people directly, should they wish, with news and happenings. If you'd like to be contacted in this way please email Sadie Patamia at aynhopc@gmail.com with your e mail address. You can also visit www.aynho.net for information.