



The Apricot Village

April 2013

THE PARISH COUNCIL

AGM update report on the Aynho Community Heartbeat

Last year, when I wrote to you in our Annual Village Report, we focussed the theme of the Annual General Meeting, and the subsequent year's work of your Parish Council, on how we could build on the wonderful sense of community that is part of the fabric of Aynho. Our objective was to foster a deeper and wider sense of community with even greater levels of community participation and involvement by residents. I'm pleased to report that the objectives we set then have been consistently achieved, culminating in the Aynho Community Weekend in October 2012, when the Village Societies successfully showcased their activities to engage with new members and to show their support for new ventures - for example the Upgrade of the Children's Playground. I think that we can all be immensely proud of the social and community cohesion that makes Aynho a warm, vibrant and attractive place to live and in which to enjoy a fulfilling lifestyle.

2012 was another 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.

- The Queen's Jubilee was celebrated in the village with considerable style – young and old set aside the atrocious weather to participate in a memorable and enjoyable event. Our especial thanks to the ladies and gentlemen of the organising group for their unstinting and generous endeavours to allow us all to enjoy ourselves.
- The Jubilee was a one-off event, when Aynho traditionally excels in fulfilling its community responsibility. However, throughout the year a number of dedicated, unselfish residents consistently give the village their time, energy and commitment. Their efforts make our village a better place to live. These people are the lifeblood of our community and we should both recognise and praise their efforts and I believe that we should salute them for their contribution to our village.
 - I mention here Amanda Limb and her helpers who have delivered excellent food in a warm and relaxed environment at the Winter Lunch Club.
 - How can we not also salute the work of Kay Anderson and her ASRA team for their continuing dedication to adding new dimensions to the life of our village?
 - Also to Douglas Ward and the Village Hall Committee for their dedication in ensuring that this vital facility is preserved in good order to act as the foundation of the life of our village.
 - I would also add a vote of thanks to my colleagues who form the Aynho Parish Council – your thoughtful efforts and hard work provide the framework that allows the village to thrive and prosper.
 - Thank you also the Fi Burge and Kay Anderson for organising the previously mentioned Aynho Community Weekend and making it an outstanding success. It was fascinating to see and hear more about the wide range of village activities that are part of our village and to appreciate the wide range of interests that are part of our village society.
 - To all the key officers and their helpers in Village Societies please accept our grateful thanks for your considerable efforts.

This years' Parish Annual General Meeting, to which you are invited on 29th April at 7.30pm will again be themed as 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 2012 we are delighted to report a year of consolidation on many fronts and the identification of some bold new initiatives to solve core issues and add new facility to life in our village:

- The Children's Playground has remained largely unchanged and undeveloped for the last 40-years. In the year Fi Burge has developed an innovative play scheme that once it is delivered will provide our growing population of young children with a safe and stimulating environment. Fi is currently applying for grants to fund this ambitious investment. A valuable start was made to the funding when over £1200 was raised in the Aynho Community Weekend.
- Under the tutelage of Ian Parkes we have further 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 as a means of reducing speeding on that road.
- Firstly under the leadership of Andy Anderson and subsequently Richard Hoddinott we have formed a Car Parking Group to look at parking issues in The Glebe, Roundtown, 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. However, the severe budget cut-backs have meant that NCC has been unable to fund such works. We are therefore left to our own Village devices to deliver solutions and we have devised a self-help/ self-funded Parish Council scheme to deliver improvements. Our parish finances are limited but we will shortly make a start on the programme.
- 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.
- A successful Farm Walk was again held and we are proud that we have been able to provide on-going financial support to the Environmental and Bio-diversity Group, as well as small but meaningful financial contributions to the work of the Church, the Air Ambulance and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Having paid tribute to the work of my Parish Council colleagues, I also 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. Amby has recently retired from her role – we thank her for her constant support and dedication and welcome Roger Wertheimer as her successor

Looking forward to 2013 and beyond the village of Aynho will be impacted by a number of profound governmental policy changes and regional structural plans. These include:

- The Government's Localism agenda where the policy from 2015 onwards will be to pass more of the responsibility for financial spending to the local government entity that is closest to the needs and point of delivery of services to the citizen – i.e. the Parish Council. Whilst this trend to greater funding is to be very much welcomed it does bring greater responsibility to our work. Handled correctly we will be able to ensure that Investment is targeted to deliver solutions directly to the villagers of Aynho. The work and scope of the Parish Council will change substantially as a result and our organisation, which will continue to rely on the principle of voluntary service, will need to develop new skills and competencies
- The Cherwell Structural Plan covering the period from now 'till 2031 has been published. It will impose dynamic growth agendas on Banbury, Bicester and the Oxfordshire villages that surround us. Aynho Parish Council has entered into an the consultation process to seek to minimise the impact of these changes on the village. Furthermore, in its consultations with

South Northants Council, Aynho Parish Council has successfully lobbied that Aynho does not participate in the growth strategy agenda that they have largely focussed on Towcester and Brackley

- Over the last decade Aynho Parish Council has successfully managed 2 village needs questionnaires to consult with residents on their views on major issues that affect them and the village. The last Village Needs Survey was organised in 2008 and covered the period from 2009 to 2014. Aynho Parish Council strongly believes that the Village Needs Questionnaire should be a high priority within its 2013 work programme and that a new questionnaire should be designed and executed in 2014 to guide the development of policy for 2015-20. This is a major undertaking and as in previous years, Aynho Parish Council would welcome volunteers from the village to assist in this key task. A meeting will be held in June to which anybody who would like to assist will be welcome

In closing I can assure you that Aynho Parish Council will work diligently to further develop the village and its facilities during 2013. It is with considerable personal sadness that I must report that I will shortly be moving from the Village to Shropshire so that my wife and myself can be nearer to our children and grandchildren. It has been a pleasure to serve you. We leave with many fond memories and will miss the friendship and camaraderie of the village of Aynho that will stay with us throughout our lives. My very best wishes for a successful future.

Colin Macklin - Chairman

01869 811989

Finance

At 31st March 2013 the Council had £12,208.38 in its bank accounts, and assets to the value of £129,149 . The precept is £ £19,486.47 towards a budget of £21,971.68.

Planning

This year Aynho Parish Council has considered the following applications.

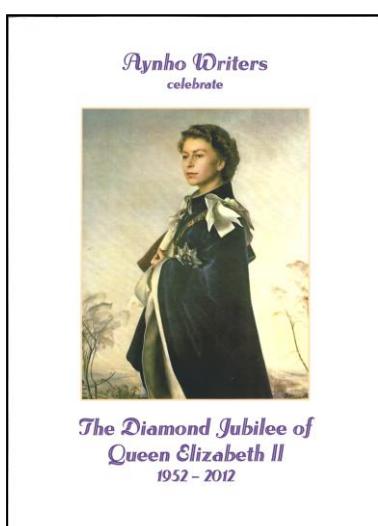
| Address | Outline of application | PC Decision | SNC Decision |
|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| The Pediment, 6 Croughton Road | Removal of existing lean to/log store and the erection of a single storey rear conservatory kitchen extension | No objections | Withdrawn |
| 24 Roundtown | External works - Two roof lights in rear elevation. Internal works - Replacement stairs. New stud partitioning to form en-suite. Reconfigure walls of existing bathroom | No objections | Approval |
| Yard 1, Station Yard, Station Road | Change of use from haulage yard to caravan storage | Object | Approval |
| Old School House, Butts Close | Single storey extension to rear | Support | Withdrawn |
| 5 Cartwright Gardens | Demolish garage & lobby replace with single storey side extension with garage | Support | Approval |
| 14 Bowmens Lea | Single storey rear extension | Support | Withdrawn |
| 5 The Hill | Replace single storey rear extensions with new single storey rear extension, replace utility window with stable cottage style door & replace existing utility window. Construction of timber stud partition between the current kitchen & dining room | Support | Approval |
| Lower Aynho Grounds | Variation of conditions 8 and 9 of planning permission S/2010/1378/FUL for the demolition and/or re-siting of modern agricultural buildings and conversion of remaining agricultural buildings to provide offices and holiday lets to remove the requirement of non-reflective glass | Supported with conditions | Approval |
| Brickyard Cottage, Aynho Wharf | Lawful Development Certificate for a proposed mobile structure in the garden to be used as ancillary living accommodation | Object | Refusal |
| 3 The Glebe | Single storey rear extension | Supported | Approval |

| Address | Outline of application | PC Decision | SNC Decision |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------|
| 24 Roundtown | Replacement windows | Supported | Approval |
| 6 The Pediment | Removal of existing lean to/log store and the erection single storey kitchen extension with glazed link. | Supported | Approval |
| 3 School End | Construction of a red brick chimney and changing of two windows to French doors. | Supported | Approval |
| Brickyard Cottage, Aynho Wharf | Mobile home to be used as ancillary living accommodation | Object | Withdrawn |
| Old School House, Butts Close | Single storey rear extension | Supported | Approval |
| 12 The Square | Replacement front door | Supported | Approval |
| Lower Aynho Grounds | Variation of condition 2 of S/2010/1378/FUL (Demolition and/or re-siting of modern agricultural buildings and conversion of remaining agricultural buildings to provide offices and holiday lets) to allow 3 no stainless steel flues for wood burning stoves. | Supported | Pending |

AYNHO WRITERS

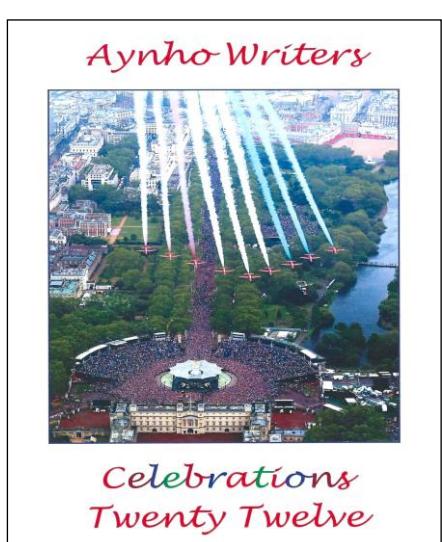
That Was The Year That Was

Yes, 2012 certainly was a year to remember. The United Kingdom was engulfed in celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and then London hosted the 27th Modern Olympic Games, becoming the first city to do so three times. A few weeks later London hosted the 2012 Paralympics, which were first held in 1948 in Stoke Mandeville, not far from Aynho.



There was a mood of inspiration throughout the nation and Aynho Writers joined in with a special commemorative publication celebrating The Queen's Diamond Jubilee. It contained many photographs and members' memories, some of personal meetings with Her Majesty. This was the first time we have had two publications in the same year. The second was our regular annual publication of a wide selection of members work appropriately titled Celebrations Twenty Twelve.

Founder and Facilitator, Sue Hunter, resigned from the group in June 2012 to spend more time with her family. Sue led Aynho Writers for sixteen years and under her experienced leadership and guidance the group has become firmly established in the village with membership at maximum capacity. Members' work has extended beyond published prose and poetry to include writing for local festivals, stage and radio performances. Many have won prizes and received commendations.



Digital developments continue to impact the world of the written word and are transforming the publishing industry with Amazon reporting that digital books now outsell printed books. Today, for every one hundred hardback and paperback books sold on the Amazon website, customers download one hundred and fourteen electronic books. Electronic readers such as Kindle are now in common use and one of our members has had her first novel published on Kindle under the pen name, Alex Johnson; the title is Run Away.

Developments in computer technology have also enabled Aynho Writers to produce a higher quality publication in recent years. You can read more about Aynho Writers on our website at www.aynho.org.uk.

AYNHO GARDENING CLUB

In 2012, the Gardening Club continued with its programme of meetings on the second Wednesday of the month from January to November. Meetings are usually in the evening in the village hall and involve a talk on garden-related matters or a slide show of beautiful gardens in the UK and abroad, followed by refreshments and time for a chat. Talks last year covered subjects from The Heritage Seed Library and the Night Garden to Day Lilies and Climbers and Wall Shrubs, while the slide presentations ranged from Great Gardens of Devon and Cornwall via East Ruston Vicarage to Bulgaria



In the summer months the club arranges two day trips to beautiful gardens. Last year we went to two famous gardens in the Cotswolds – Hidcote and Kiftsgate - in May and then in July we visited the Royal Horticultural Society's Gardens at Wisley in Surrey to see their newly reorganised rose garden. This was looking wonderful despite the terrible summer. We also arranged two evening visits to local gardens, the first to see the amazing array of tulips on a rather cold spring evening in Tom Duncan's lovely garden here in the village. And then in June we saw the summer perennials in Springhill House in Hethe in between the showers

Our main spring plant sale was combined with the Jubilee Celebrations last year. This had to be held under cover in a gazebo outside the village hall. People came in for shelter and left with an armful of plants! At the beginning of September, we held the Annual Flower and Produce Show. After a truly dreadful summer we were expecting to see empty tables, but once again members and residents of Aynho managed to find lots of fruit, flowers and vegetables to enter. We also had a record number of cakes. The show is not just a Gardening Club event. It is a village event and is open to everyone who lives in Aynho. There are cookery and craft sections plus photographs and separate categories for children. It would be wonderful to have more children entering as it is such a good way to get them involved both in the natural environment and in their local community.



Looking forward to the 2013 programme, we have a day trip to Capel Manor Gardens in Enfield in May and Bodenham Arboretum near Kidderminster in October to see the autumn colours. Non-members are welcome to join us on these days out. For information please contact Barbara Williams on 810797. We will also be making an evening visit to The Old Vicarage in Bledington in July. Future talks include: The Basics of Flower Arranging, Growing Hardy Orchids, The Flowers of Switzerland, Pelargoniums, and Christmas Wreaths. If you are interested in trying the Club please just come to a meeting, check the programme on the village website or phone Anthea Cowley (810629) for details. No specialist knowledge of gardening and plants is 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.

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

Aynho Sports & Recreation Association is an informal group that seeks to provide leisure activities and fundraising for village amenities. It works closely with, and is overseen by the Parish Council and promotes interaction with other village groups.

The sportsfield and pavilion continue to thrive and it is gratifying to see the continued increase in use of the amenity track and sports facilities, sceptics please note! The past year has seen the return of cricket to the field with Evenley Mens 3rd 11 having spent a great deal of time and money getting their pitch into reasonable shape. They are back again this year and their home fixtures are listed below for anyone who would like to watch.

May 4th Brackley, 25th Flecknoe, June 1st Preston Capes "A", 22nd Silverstone "A" July 6th Braunston Paddox "A", 20th Thornborough "A", Aug 3rd Hinton in Hedges, 10th Braunston Paddox, 31st Preston Bissett

Brackley Under 10's and Under 12's football teams have also made good use of the facilities this year and it is good to see so many lads and Dads (and a few Mums) out there both training and playing over the weekend during the winter months. For those villagers wishing to play football on the field, there are some goalposts around the back of the pavilion that you can use but please put them back again after use. Likewise, the small ride-on bikes are available for toddlers but again; please return them behind the pavilion after use. Not only do they look unsightly if they are all left out, but they are more likely to be stolen if visible from the road. Please do not use the Brackley Town goals that are by the mound.

The amenity track appears to be in constant use by all ages; from new parents pushing round their babies, to the very elderly on their walking frames – the track providing a safe, level alternative to our hilly village, especially for children learning to ride bikes. Hopefully, all the plants that were put in last year by the volunteers will again rear their heads providing some colour and wildlife attraction. About half of the trees planted for the Jubilee appear to have survived but please be mindful of those that are left, especially those by the play equipment.

The tennis court was refurbished last summer and lots of children are making use of it with our resident coach Rosie who has been out in all weathers this spring. Details of Rosie's courses are posted in the pavilion for anyone interested in tennis coaching.

The boules pitch did see some use last summer despite our appalling weather and, again boules (and rules) are available in the pavilion if anyone wishes to use them.

The field and pavilion hosted a number of events last year, the usual Fun Run organised by Sarah Thompson for Leukaemia Research went ahead but sadly the Church Fete/Maytime and The Jubilee Sunday were all rained off into the Village Hall. July saw The Village Idiots Cameron and Angus with their pre-Edinburgh Fringe show and the nature walk organised by the Biodiversity Group and on a rare fine weekend in October the first Aynho Community Weekend took place. This was a huge success (due in part to the Hedgehog Man) and raised over a thousand pounds for the small playpark fundraising campaign. Particular thanks to Councillor Fi Burge for all her hard work in organising this. The Farm Walk was back again and we hosted the South Northants Volunteer Bus and the SNC Village Games which were well attended by lots of children during the summer holidays. The Macmillan Coffee Morning and Halloween were enjoyed by many and raised valuable funds for cancer support and The Playpark. The Christmas Market in the Village Hall also raised funds for the Small Playpark refurbishment and our thanks to Father Christmas for making time in his busy schedule to stop off and hand out presents and to the Oxford Morris Men for their Mummers Play performance.

Looking back through the diary to write this, virtually every weekend was taken up by a sports team, private party or village event which, along with the regular weekly evening hire by 4 or 5 different bands has greatly contributed to the funds in ASRA's account. This has also been considerably boosted by contributions from The Winter Lunch Club and the Village Quiz, which between them raised over eight hundred pounds – my thanks to Amanda Limb, Amanda Leigh, Michael and Catherine Johnson and all their helpers for this fantastic contribution. Pavilion book sales, donations for table hire, donations from private events, speakers fees for both Andy and Kay Anderson from the WI and History Society and The Park Club draw has meant our account now stands at a healthy five thousand or so pounds after being much depleted by the amenity track completion last year. Thanks again to Val Taylor West for the Park Club Draw administration. It was a challenge with the collections this year in the poor weather in January and we are hoping to encourage more direct debits in the future to help with this.

The Pavilion Café is entering its fourth year now and is attracting increasing numbers of people, particularly the walking groups which take place on a Thursday morning at 10am. We now regularly have 20 or so walkers who take part in either a short or long walk with walk leaders and arrive back at the café late morning for homemade cake and drinks and hot lunches. This has become a very successful pastime

for many and it is lovely to see so many people engaging in social interaction with others in the village and from surrounding villages. The café continued to operate over the winter months for the walkers and is now open again on a Wednesday and Thursday from 12 noon until 3pm for everyone to come and meet up and eat simple homemade food at reasonable prices. The Parish Council kindly allows the facility to be used for the café and it is hoped that on Wednesday afternoon various groups will make use of the facilities free of charge. In particular, as we no longer have a parent and baby group we would welcome them meeting up, also crafters and card players. There will be hot drinks and food on offer. See the village newsletter for details of who meets when. The café also now has some craft gifts as well as the usual cards and second hand books and if anyone wants a showcase for their crafts, we would be only too happy to include them for sale or facilitate an event to promote them.

If anyone is interested in becoming involved in what happens on the field and in the pavilion, do get in touch. We have an informal meeting every so often to discuss events and activities and would particularly welcome anyone with any new ideas or initiatives to come forward. Sometimes an injection of new blood is enough to re-enthuse those of us who get a bit overwhelmed at times. The most rewarding thing is when two people meet up for the first time at an event or at the café and find they have a mutual interest or benefit and they go away just that little bit happier than when they came. It's understandable when people say "I haven't got the time" or "I meant to do it but..." as we all lead increasingly busy lives, but, the friends you meet now in the village you inhabit are your lifeline for the future. So, stop, slow down and do come and get involved in what's on your doorstep and right under your nose. Contact me for information about any of the above – kaynho@lineone.net or look at the Aynho Parish Council/ASRA Facebook site or the Aynho village website.

Kay Anderson, 01869 810019

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, AYNHO

The year started with an uncertain future following the retirement of Revd Gillian Baker due to ill health, and the process of discerning the new priest God was calling for the benefice of Aynho, Croughton, Evenley, Farthinghoe, Hinton and Steane began. During the interregnum services and witness was maintained by the church wardens and congregations ably assisted by Rev. Hugh Warwick, visiting clergy and the two readers Carrie O'Regan and William Usher.

At Easter the new rector was announced and the revd Simon Dommett was installed by the Bishop John of Brixworth on 4th September in the parish church of St. Michael, Aynho in a joyously packed church and a new chapter for the benefice villages began.

At the end of September all the villages enjoyed traditional Harvest Services and celebrations which are an important part of our rural heritage. But the church is called to develop with each new generation as well. Thanks and sadness abounded when in the autumn Helen Boswell announced her retirement from leading the Benefice Sunday school after 37 years and this was marked at a leaving service. Also because of changing circumstances Praise and Play for preschool children also came to an end in its current form. However the church wasn't abandoning the younger generation but launched its new Venture, Pizza Praise on Sunday afternoons, an all age family service with music, action, activity prayer and of course Pizza, which has also been hot dogs. This has been a great success building on the work of the summer Holiday club held at Croughton for 70 plus children.

The Rector has also been taking weekly assemblies at Croughton Church school and been part of celebration and RE lessons at Farthinghoe school and also visiting other preschool mums and tots groups.

The Autumn also saw a full church as people came to remember loved ones who had died and were not forgotten, invitations were sent to those who been bereaved in recent years and candles were lit for all who were remembered at the All Souls Service. This service is for anybody to remember loved ones recently or long departed. Sadly each of our villages this year have lost long standing and important members of our communities and it has been good to see so many people gather to remember them in our churches.

The churches were again full for remembrance Sunday with a special service held at the war memorial on the green at Evenley and with USA service personal attending at Croughton. These remembrance services although usually held in church because of the placement of the war memorials, are for the whole community and is a civic service in nature, one at which I would like to see all councillors' and villagers involved.



churches and around the villages. With Special thanks to the Council at Aynho who provided a tree for singing carols around on the green outside the Cartwright arms.

Lent saw a large number of people making a special effort in our Lenten studies looking at the glimpses of God's glory we see in our lives and a smaller group have enjoyed a quiet day away from it all at Stanton House, work builds on new and existing bible study groups.

My vision for the coming year is to see people grow in confidence in their faith. For the church to take its place at the center of the community, to be a place of refuge and reflection and also be the place of light and hope. Where its members show their faith by caring for themselves and for all members of their villages and beyond.

The village church is in the centre of the village for all villagers, and I as Rector am there for all villagers, and I am sorry that physically the rectory cannot be in all villages at all times, but I see myself as your Rector and hope that you see me in the same light.

Maintenance of our historic buildings is a continual drain on time and money and I believe should be the responsibility of the whole community as the church is a community building. I am very grateful for all the support received this past year and as all buildings have continued needs I look forward to your continuing support.

My thanks also go to Sybil Stevens for her sterling work on the Parish newsletter this past year.

Why not join the debate that churches are not empty barns and sites of scientific interest for bats, but places of worship and community and welcome and not just historic monuments.

AYNHO WOMEN'S INSTITUTE



2012 proved to be a busy year for its members. They supported village events by providing refreshments and during the "Open Gardens" day raised more than ever. The Northamptonshire Jubilee baton that travelled to every WI in the county was received from Charlton by tractor and passed on to Kings Sutton with the use of a wheelbarrow. Needless to say tea & cakes were provided on such a happy occasion.

Our speakers have been informative and entertaining ranging from music, antiques, to therapy and singing. The garden meeting was unfortunately cancelled because of bad weather which similarly limited the number of walks we have been able to do this year.

One fortunate member was able to attend the National AGM in the Albert Hall where speakers included the President of the Royal College of Midwives: Nick Bosanquet, Professor of Health Policy at Imperial College & scientist Maggie Aderin-Pocock.

Lord Julian Fellowes spoke of being inspired by feisty women in his writing while two professionals from "Strictly" thrilled the audience with their dances. During this meeting a new world record was set for the greatest number of people knitting simultaneously as 3083 ladies clicked their needles for 15 minutes.

Aynho arranged the autumn group meeting in October when 5 other institutes joined us for a presentation by Mr Richard Sermon, together his wife Rosemary, of his year a Sheriff of London. Refreshments were provided by members for this evening and all day during a craft fair to raise funds towards celebrating 50 years of Aynho WI in 2013. The end of the year saw an enjoyable Christmas party when members & visitors were entertained by Kevin O'Regan.

More information regarding the Federation of Women's Institute can be found on the website www.TheWI.org.uk while the Aynho programme for 2013 can be found on the village website.

BIODIVERSITY GROUP

The Biodiversity Group was formed in 2010. We are a small but enthusiastic group with interests in the natural environment. Our aim is to raise awareness of the wonders of nature, the threats facing it and what we can do within our parish to protect and enhance it. We link with other village organisations, especially the Gardening Club and ASRA.

For the past two years we have been surveying the biodiversity of the Churchyard and have collected data on the trees, shrubs, flowers, birds, butterflies, minibeasts and lichens. This summer we plan to publish our results. Last August we organised a children's nature walk in the churchyard which was much enjoyed. In March, with James Perkins' kind permission, we began a survey of the Biodiversity of one area of the grounds of Aynhoe Park.

Each January for the past two years we have held an Aynho Big Garden Birdwatch to coincide with the RSPB's count. This has raised a lot of interest but we could do with some more participants. We hold a children's photo competition as part of the Gardening Club show in September and receive some high quality photos. Two of our members have been locating and counting the nests of house martins, swallows and swifts in the village each summer. These birds need all the help we can give them, having migrated thousands of miles from their wintering areas in sub-Saharan Africa.

On the Sportsfield with ASRA we continue to create our stumpery-cum-woodpile and help plant up the mound. Last summer the wildflowers attracted large numbers of bees and butterflies. This is what Biodiversity is all about: linking all aspects of the natural environment. A change in one part of nature's web will have beneficial or detrimental effects on the rest. Many of our gardens are a haven for wildlife and there is much we can do to help.

We now have an up-to-date website with interesting features and on-line crafts and activities for children. Do check it out. Recently one of our members set up a Biodiversity Facebook page.

We would love to have more members, advisers and suggestions so if you are interested please contact us.

Gill 810279 or Jill 811206

AYNHO RECORDED MUSIC SOCIETY

Again another successful season with the added pleasure of seeing Bernard Middleton at our March meeting. The choice and presentation of the music program by individual members has proved very rewarding with a high standard of choice spanning the ages between Baroque, Classical, Romantic and modern, from organ recitals to brass bands with occasional ballet or opera dvds for good measure.

New members are most welcome at the Village Hall on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.

Bob Mann, 01869 810264

AYNHO SHORT MAT BOWLS

We meet every Tuesday afternoon 2.30-4.30, with a tea break, in the village hall. There is an annual fee of £10 and £1 per session. We have a full compliment of dedicated members.

Jean Darby 01869 810373 or Doug Ward 01869 810723

AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY

I am delighted to report that the society has maintained a membership in excess of 55. Our attempt to encourage members of the village to present their passion for history has been particularly successful. Seven of our nine lectures have been home produced so thank you to Messrs Perkins, Mills, Goodacre, Sermon, Anderson, Boswell and Clark.

Subjects covered include Aynhoe Park, above and below stairs; St Michael's House; Captain Cooke and William Peckover; the English Civil War in Banburyshire; the City Livery Companies; local Medical services other the centuries; Archives and their importance; Banbury Museum's painting collection, a 1960's view of Aynho and a military history of the village. Summaries of all the lectures are posted on the AHS section of the village web site. A number of items have been added to the society archive of books, maps, photographs and artefacts. These are available to the village.

The society continues to provide genealogical information to enquiries from around the globe and guided tours to visitors from afar. Thank you to all those who have supported the society be that at the meetings or at village events.

Rupert Clark, Chairman

AYNHO COMMUNITY THEATRE

The production of plays and other entertainment by ACT was more limited during 2012/13 due to some of our younger members taking examinations and moving on to university, for which they are all to be congratulated. The main event was a Cabaret Theatre Evening in March, a 'Pot-pourri' of local talent, which proved to be extremely popular and a great success. Several of the performances were of a high professional standard and it was great to see people from the village revealing their previously unknown talents!

Members of ACT meet in the village hall on the last Monday of the month to read extracts from plays, poetry, and other readings, and to plan future productions and we really do need more people to become involved. The theatre has been providing entertainment in the village for at least twenty-five years and we would like it to continue for at least another twenty-five. To ensure this we need to recruit more members who can either be aspiring or experienced actors, or people who would like to help directing, stage managing, playing music, dancing, singing, painting scenery, or just '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 come along to one of our Monday night meetings – you are assured of a warm welcome!

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

Ron Sawbridge, Chairman.

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.

VILLAGE WEBSITE

The www.aynho.org.uk website has been running for a while. Some years back it was changed to use the "Drupal" Content Management System to make it easier to update and maintain. Administrators for the various groups represented on the website are able to make their own updates, such as adding photographs or notifying of upcoming events.

The most popular group pages are the Neighbourhood Watch, Church, History Society, Parish Council and Biodiversity pages. We also have a lot of hits on the pages for Aynho Walks and History. It is difficult to come up with reliable numbers for website visitors, due to the frequent visits from search engines etc. but it is of the order of 50 visitors per day. Having notices, reports and photographs appear on the website is totally dependent on people sending in the information, preferably in a "ready to go" format. The less work required to put a notice on the site, the faster it will appear. If in doubt, please look at some of the existing pages to get an idea of what is possible. Notices and queries can be sent to the [web@](mailto:web@aynho.org.uk) address which is at the top of the home page.

The website is in need of a design makeover - if anyone has experience of this (especially with Drupal) and is prepared to assist, please contact me. If anyone is prepared to assist with running the site or helping new group administrators, this would also be appreciated.

A big thank-you to all those who assist with contributing to the website - it is only as good as the information it provides.

Lawrence Wilkinson (web@aynho.org.uk)

SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

As part of the drive to increase the amount of recycling across South Northants the Council is going to start introducing a new recycling collection service involving separate food waste recycling and a wheelie bin for dry recycling. These will replace the boxes. The new arrangements are going to start being phased in from June onwards, and more details will follow before the system is introduced here. Although the collection dates for our ward remain as now, from April the Council is going to operate a four day collection week which is certainly good news for those who were collected on a Monday with the inevitable inconveniences of Bank Holiday arrangements.

As you will have read the Government's drive for building new houses has seen the introduction of a new National Planning Policy Framework. Not surprisingly this has met with a degree of controversy. My own fear for South Northants, and in particular the villages, is that this will give developers the opportunity to ditch the more difficult brown field sites, and those on the edge of Northampton, Towcester and Brackley, for sites on the edge of villages, claiming that the Council has not got a deliverable 5 year housing land supply.

Renewable energy and in particular large scale wind and solar farms have given rise to concerns wherever they have been proposed. This I predict is likely to continue over the next few years, particularly as long as tariffs for these renewables remain high.

South Northants continues to share an executive team with Cherwell District Council. There has also been some sharing of officers with Stratford District. Certainly this has bought some important economic benefits which has made budget making a slightly less difficult affair, and it is good news for us all that the

District Council tax is not being increased. I do still continue to have some concerns at the pressure that gets put on hard working officers as they juggle the demands that are put on them from two different councils, councillors and their residents.

Detailed plans have been approved for the Council to relocate to new smaller offices at Moat Lane in the centre of Towcester. The building, which will include a new Library for the County Council, is part of a regeneration scheme on what was derelict land between Watling Street and Easton Neston Park. The present offices which would have required extensive repairs will be redeveloped for housing

John Townsend.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

You will all be aware by now that the County Council element of your council tax has not increased for the present financial year. This is the third consecutive year when the tax has been held at the same level. As a consequence you, as a Northamptonshire taxpayer, have for several years enjoyed the lowest rate of council tax of any county in the country. Gone are the days at the beginning of the last decade when you were having to accept an average annual increase of nearly 8% and in one year, 2002/3, an increase of a staggering 11.9%. Northamptonshire is now recognized as one of the most efficient, innovative and enterprising Councils in England and as a result the county was last year awarded the accolade 'Most Enterprising Place in Britain'.

During the last four years in particular the County Council has, as a result of the tight financial situation, had to find different ways of doing things in order to reduce its cost base. The council has been made more efficient, more accountable and more effective. The creation of the LGSS (Local Government Shared Services organisation) starting with Cambridgeshire County Council, but now including other councils, has made huge back office savings enabling the protection of front line services without increasing taxation. The upshot of all this is that someone who lives in a Band 'D' property is now paying about £200 a year less in Council Tax than the average for England.

I am now going to move on to the Boundary Review which has taken place throughout England. As a result new Electoral Divisions have been created so that they each have about 10,000 voters and this will reduce the number of County Councillors from its present 73 to 57. Another cost saving. It means of course that each councillor will represent larger areas and more electors. As a result, my current electoral Division of Brackley West, which include three wards, disappears. The west ward of Brackley is incorporated into an enlarged Brackley Division and the wards of Steane and Little Brook, which include, Aynho, Croughton and Evenley, Charlton, Hinton-in-the Hedges, Farthinghoe, Steane, Halse, and Greatworth, become part of an enlarged Middleton Cheney Division. Under the new arrangements I have been selected as the Conservative candidate for the newly formed Brackley Division. The election for the new County Councillors will take place on May 2nd and I do urge you all, whatever your political persuasion to vote. The result of this election will determine who forms the administration at County Hall for the next four years and this will impact on everyone who lives in the county. It's not about national issues, it's not about membership of the EU, it's not about immigration, gay marriage, or HS2, it is about Care for the Elderly, the Disabled, and Children in the care of the County Council, it is about Bus services, our Parks and Libraries. It's about Improving the County's Infrastructure, Expanding and Aiding the Voluntary Sector, and it is about Education and the creation of Job Opportunities. Importantly and in summary it is about how you want your local services to continue to operate at an acceptable cost.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to give you this, my last address as your County Councillor – it's been a pleasure to serve you for the last twelve years. During this time in 2011 I had the honour of being elected Chairman of the County Council and I shall always be very grateful for having this privilege. If there are any questions I shall be pleased to try to answer them.

Ron Sawbridge