

Chairman's Report 2023

This year's report marks an interesting time, having got over the restrictions of the Covid period and moved on to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, we were then faced with the sadness of her death in September 2022. Not having experienced anything of such momentous importance for 70 years, the knowledge of the necessary procedures was an interesting and occasionally humorous proposition. The acquisition of a book of condolence and flowers was more straightforward than the putting up of the Union flag at the top of the church tower, Many thanks to the Halesworth Fire and Rescue who readily climbed the tower to achieve this feat. I'm sure that it will have to be repeated for the Coronation in May.

We also lost one of our notable residents this year with June Brereton moving to Henley on Thames from the Old Vicarage. June will be sorely missed having dedicated a lot of her time in Bramfield to such activities as the Parish Council, the Village Hall and to the history of Bramfield itself. June was very keen to promote the development of Bramfield for the future and it would be a good thing if her intentions and wishes for the village could be acted upon in the future.

This is my first year as Chair for the Council and a number of issues such as the ones mentioned above as well as the various planning applications that we have had to consider have made me realise the need for all of the various organisations who do so much for the village need to work more together. We already work with the committee of the Village Hall and this year contributed to the cost of the new kitchen which will do much for the ability to rent the facility to more organisations. The new village green (whose name has yet to be announced) is another enterprise that will do much for our village. Congratulations are offered to the organisers of this new public space for all their hard work. In a similar vein the two village schools, the nursery and the churches of both villages are all institutions that we can hopefully work together with to improve our lovely village for everyone.

One of the greatest features of our two villages is the wonderful natural environment that surrounds us, and I would like to propose a working group, perhaps with the wonderful hedge planting group to map such things as ancient hedges, wildlife corridors, footpaths, ponds as well as the different types of flora and fauna that can be found here. It was very clear in the meeting for the new village green that such matters are of importance to us villagers and should be treasured for future generations.

I would particularly like to thank two members of the Parish Council team, Paul Widdowson who has been our clerk for many years and is moving on to different things and also to Anne Thomas, our previous Chair who has served the Parish Council for twenty-four years. Anne has worked hard for Bramfield and Thorington and her knowledge of the local area has proved invaluable on many occasions. On behalf of the rest of the Parish team I would like to thank them both and to present them with these small tokens of our regard.

Finally, a bit of a plea on behalf of the Council. We are a very small group and need to have more councillors particularly from Thorington. We meet ten times a year on the first Monday

of the month (August and December excepting) and only by working together can we ensure the future of both villages.

Village Hall report 2023

To start with.

Village hall regular users Stepping stone pre-school / 0-67 drama group / Bridge club / Bramfield indoor bowels club / Bramfield and Thorington Parish council / Bramfield lunch club / Karate club thank you to all of these.

The hall now has full WIFI access free to be used by hall users this has been possible due to the parish council for the community and hires of the hall.

Web site has been developed and being improved so that hall booking can be take on line with information about the hall prices for hire and so on to promote events and advertising of future events club activities etc.

This is an on-going improving site that will grow and change with time.

The village hall has taken on one of its largest projects to date as in the purchase of the village green / Bridge Meadow and the development up keep of the green to be used for leisure sport meeting place a community green space to be enjoyed by all including the use of local organisation and Bramfield Primary school for the sports days etc.

The decision was made the Village Hall Charity and its governing committee would take on this task as it would involve fund raising applying for grants and funds that only a charity could manage this would enable it to access to lottery community fund and other organisations, moneys have been pledge by the local community but fund raising will be needed for the full amount and continuing up keep and maintenance of the green.

Maintenance is an on-going thing with the hall the floor needs to be resealed some of the exit lights need replacing and many other jobs that happen during the year as always this costs money with funds dwindling and with costs keep going up as in heating insurance and all the other things.

Hall usage has fallen in the last year with some of the regular users giving up to low numbers of members hall hire has also dropped off less party's and celebrations with this in mind hall committee has been looking and organising other events to rase funds.

To finish we are always looking for new committee members part time of full time people just to help out at the odd event or give us some ideas on events help with maintenance grass cutting repairs etc.

Bramfield Parish Council Report March 2023

Since first opening our doors in 2008 Bramfield Stepping Stones Pre-school has gone from strength to strength. During this time we have had literally hundreds of Children pass through our doors, with our first cohort of Children now in their early twenties!

However it's not all been plain sailing. We have had to weather many storms throughout the years including low birth rate, the Covid pandemic and currently, the serious lack of funding that our industry has been subject to, exacerbated by the rising cost of living. All factors have impacted on the number of children on roll. To counter this situation there have been long periods when our main Lead Practitioners have taken voluntary reductions in pay in order to maintain the viability of the setting. When several other local nurseries and preschools have closed under the financial pressure, Bramfield Stepping Stones has survived which can, in part, also be attributed to the understanding and support we have received from our landlords, the Village Hall Committee.

The lack of funding in Early Years is nationally taking its toll on the workforce, as it is not considered a lucrative profession to enter into, off set against the long hours of study to gain the necessary qualifications, responsibility required by the profession and high demands of Ofsted. Sadly, recruiting staff has become very difficult as a result of this.

Fortunately Bramfield Stepping Stones is in a very healthy position at present. The number of children on roll continues to rise steadily and even after the current cohort of children have left us for Primary School in September, we have an impressive list of children waiting in the wings.

I like to think that in our own little way Bramfield Stepping Stones has made a positive contribution to the village. Our Preschool parents often stop at Clarkes to stock up and several families, ourselves included, use the services of Bramfield garage. We feel very much part of the community. A bond which we hope to develop still further in the years to come.

Anna Warwick

Manager / Lead Practitioner

Tree Warden report March 2023

Since 2017 the Bramfield hedge planting group have been planting hedges on David Thompson's land along Low Road and along the Halesworth road. This year we planted on Valley Farm, Low Road. Mick Hart offered a permissive footpath through a small copse where people could walk parallel to the road , enjoy views over the water meadow and avoid traffic on a narrow stretch of road.

We infilled the remnant hedge beside the road, using free trees from the Woodland Trust and the last length of weed suppressing membrane kindly donated by the Parish Council. We cut a footpath and then children from Bramfield Primary School came to plant trees along the route. We have also planted trees to thicken up the scrub areas. The pack chosen for planting was called 'Wild Harvest' and offered indigenous trees that produce nuts, berries and fruit for wildlife.

There are three old oak trees on the boundary of the area next to the meadows, the largest has a circumference of 4.40m. We decided to reduce the competition for these old oaks by cutting the small trees below and making them part of a dead hedge which defines the boundary.

We have also cleared a patch of brambles and seedlings that we hope will benefit from the increased light and support plants like moschatel which we found a patch of last year.

The stretch of hedge that we planted in 2019, opposite Valley Farm, suffered from last year's drought and we replaced trees that had not survived. Likewise, some trees in the 2018 stretch were also replaced.

All the planting then received a good dollop of horse manure .

We do not have a planting plan for 2023. There will be maintenance work to carry out on all the hedging as well as work parties to tend the copse and footpath. If the Bramfield Green project needs tree or hedge planting I am sure the group would be happy to get involved with that.

Marie Rolfe