

LEIGH ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES DRAFT

20th May 2024

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday at The Pavilion, Leigh Recreation Ground, Bunce Common Road commencing at 7.30 pm.

The Meeting was chaired by Joanne Willoughby, Chairman of the Parish Council. Also present: Cllr Wilkinson, L Mann (Clerk), SCC Helyn Clack, Robin Worth (Footpath officer) and two members of the public.

1. **Apologies for absence** were noted and accepted by Cllr Brockwell, Cllr Foulsham, Cllr Tomkins, Cllr Everett and MVDC Cllr Farrar-Astrop.
2. **The minutes** of the Leigh Parish Assembly meeting held on Monday 15th May 2023 were approved and signed by Cllr Willoughby as a true record.
3. **Chairman's Report – 2023-24** (read by Joanne Willoughby)
4. **Audited Accounts – 2022-23** Report (Circulated by Clerk/RFO)
5. **Reports** from the following Village Organisations were received (attached below where available):

| Group | Representative | Delivery |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Leigh and District Cottage Garden Society | Mark Dobell | In person |
| Apple Press Group | Robin Worth | In person |
| History Group | C/O Adria Kinloch | Report received |
| Smith's Charity | Jane Sturt | Report Received |
| Leigh WI | Elaine Gover/Judy Bartley | In person |
| North Downs School | Mrs Douglass | Report outstanding |
| Leigh Cricket Club | Richard Slade | Report |
| Leigh WI Hall | Judy Bartley | In person |
| County Councillor Update | Helyn Clack | Report Received |

6. **Close of meeting.** There being no further business, the meeting was closed and refreshments were served. Cllr Willoughby thanked everybody for attending the meeting and for their support and comments.

Reports

Leigh Apple Press Group 2023-24

Update for Annual Parish Meeting April 22nd 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the activities of the Leigh Apple Press Group over the last year or so. We have had another busy and exciting year.

At the last Food Festival and Apple Press Day on 30th September 2023 our new hydraulic press was in action for the first time, alongside our original rack press. It has a yield of 50 litres and the manually operated hydraulic jack applies up to 5 tonnes of pressure, so you get the maximum amount of juice out of the apples. We were grateful to County Councillor Helyn Clack and the Your Councillor Community Fund and to MVDC for funding toward the press. It is easier to use than the rack press and some young volunteers were able to operate it and experience the excitement of making apples juice for themselves.

We were about a third down on the amount we pressed this year than in 2022, with many people saying that their crop is not good compared to last year. We still had a lot of satisfied customers and were also able to sell juice from our own orchard as well as other orchards in the area, whose owners kindly donate their apples to us. We were able to put some apples from local orchards aside and took them to the Dorking Food Bank a couple of days later. New for this year we also offered timed slots for pressing on the following day for people who had over 75kg to press, and pressed another 200kg then.

On the food festival side our stall holders were kept busy, with some new stalls including delicious sourdough bread (a sell-out), jams and preserves, fudge and cheese as well as returning favourites such as Leigh's own Village Cakery. We also provided lots of information about the John Motion Orchard following the bioblitz ecological survey last year.

Leigh Lollipops kept the young ones entertained with various activities including a very popular apple trail around the event. Boxhill Bedlam were also back with their unique brand of Morris dancing and live music. Sarah and her team at the Plough worked flat out keeping our visitors fed and watered, with the barbeque serving burgers at full capacity throughout the day.

A presenter from Surrey Hills Radio came along and put out a lovely broadcast all about our Apple Press day as a great community event.

We have also been very busy in the John Motion Orchard.

We have had a second Wassail this January, with an open invitation to all villagers as well as our members and volunteers. This is a fun occasion with music and dancing from Boxhill Bedlam, an apple blessing ceremony, lots of banging of pots and pans, all aided by Paul's delicious home made mulled cider.

We have been awarded a grant from the Tree Council for some more trees and are working on clearing areas of the Orchard where these can be planted.

The more practical members of the group are working to put in a small open structure for storage and more importantly rain water capture to irrigate the new trees.

In February we were fortunate enough to have the Gatwick Greenspace Partnership volunteers help us with several activities in the orchard (part of Sussex Wildlife Trust). They helped with bramble clearance, Blackthorn encroachment and, best of all, built the magnificent dead hedge I had been planning for some time. Dead hedges are a marvellous habitat for many creatures and also help manage garden waste without having to resort to burning.

Also, in February we had another pruning workshop with Jim Arbury (RHS) to continue the restoration of the trees. This was very well attended, including Tom Forward (the ecologist from Knepp who carried out the Bioblitz Survey).

In March Jim also delivered our first grafting workshop. This is to help continue some of the varieties we have in the orchard, both for the JMO site and other small orchards in the village. We were donated some free root stock from the People's Trust for Endangered Species to support this.

Because of these activities at the Orchard, we have been working to improve the access, with a wider and more stable bridge. The next improvement will be an attractive rustic gate in the hedge.

We will be having another pub quiz on 13th July to help with fundraising, and will be back with a stall at the Summer Show on 20th July – look out for us opposite the entry to the Show Tent, and why not join as a member? This is only £5 and entitles you to join our workshops for free.

The next Leigh Food Festival and Apple Press Day will be on Saturday 28th September – we are watching the weather anxiously at the moment as a frost about now may be bad for the apple harvest this year.

Report of Henry Smiths Charity.

April2024

The Michaelmas gift for last year was £5.700.

The Parish of Leigh is the fortunate beneficiary of the annual gift derived from property investments dating back to the 17th century.

Distribution is authorised by a board of trustees appointed by the Parish Council and carried out by the clerk

Beneficiaries must be residents of Leigh and of retiring age to qualify.
Other cases of extreme hardship or illness may be considered.

In Leigh the gift this year was in the form of cash.

A total of 19 residents received a gift at Christmas 2023.

Jane Sturt Clerk.

Leigh WI

Leigh WI meets on the 2nd Monday of the month usually at the Village Hall; in December we enjoy a Christmas feast at The Plough and in July we walk from the pub, having put our supper orders in, and return (hopefully still dry) to join those who have headed straight to The Plough to enjoy Sarah's hospitality.

We organise monthly walks, out of Monsoon season, some local and others further afield. A favourite is Ferring with lunch at the Bluebird Cafe. Last month we walked from Hogspudding Lane to Tanhouse Farm for coffee and cake. We had 8 walkers, 6 dogs and another 8 who joined us for our long coffee stop. The extra 8 being members, not dogs!

At our meetings in the Hall we have had some excellent speakers and a local singer: professional tenor Paul Weakley. We had an evening of songs and stories from the shows; tales of the three tenors and operas in beautiful auditoriums. The finale was Paul, still the ultimate showman in his eighties, in character as 'Topov' singing a spine tingling rendition of 'If I Were A Rich Man' which nearly took the roof off the hall!

Another night of pure drama was Tony Harris from easy speakers who came as Winston Churchill complete with bowler, cigar and a glass of whisky (apple juice in reality as Tony had to drive home to Bexhill). It was fascinating to hear 'Winston' talk about his life: from boarding school and lack of exam success to his years as a young War correspondent during WWI. His meteoric rise as a politician, culminating in his leadership as Prime Minister through WWII. And finally the real man; a loving husband to his adored Clemmie and his talent as a painter.

Everyone agreed it was such a great evening that Tony is coming back this year as Henry VIII

We hold two very busy and financially lucrative Jumble Sales at the hall each year and give generous 'payments' to speakers who give their time for charity. We also support St Catherine's Hospice with a donation from members after the Christmas Meal.

At our AGM in November Judy stepped down as Chair after many years but we are very fortunate that she is still an active part of the committee and we can all draw on her years of experience.

Judy organises monthly cinema trips, west end theatre shows and last autumn a visit to the Houses of Parliament. The sun glistening off a newly refurbished Big Ben made me stop for a moment and appreciate all that WI does for me. I am very glad to give back just a little as Chair for the next three years.

We have a vibrant committee and lots planned for the summer including a visit to the Hannah Peschar Sculpture Garden in Walliswood and boating along the Wey and Arun Canal from Loxwood.

County Councillor Helyn Clack, Dorking Rural Division, Surrey County Council spoke of her Annual report 2023/2024

- LOOKING BACK
- COUNTY COUNCIL BOUNDARY CHANGES
- BUDGET 2024/2025
- LOCAL ISSUES AND SURREY HIGHWAYS
- GRANTS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
- GATWICK AIRPORT
- DEMOCRACY

APM Update – ‘A History of Leigh’.

A History of Leigh, Harriet Hall’s long-planned book, was published in July 2021 with the support of a grant from the Parish Council.

As you would expect highest sales were in 2021, and 2022 was a good year too, with quite a few copies being sold at the Leigh Jubilee Photo Exhibition. Sales are still coming in though in a steady trickle. It is popular with new residents as a way of finding out more about the village when they move in.

So far 119 copies have been sold in total, but there are plenty still in stock if anyone is interested!

Plans to spend the income received on a bench for the Glebe stalled a bit last year. A good spot has been identified though and I am trying to get agreement from Clarion as the land owner. Watch this space!

Adria Kinloch

21st April 2024

