

Village Recorder's Report for Badwell Ash, Suffolk 2016

2016 began with no incumbent priest so the village continued to feel on the back foot despite several successful events, both enjoyable and also financially beneficial. Traditionally there has been an Epiphany concert and service which began in St Mary's in Badwell but was moved to Walsham-Le-Willow's St. Mary's church a few years ago as their acoustics are better. However, the 50/50 split of donations dwindled to nothing this year for some reason. How these village churches, including our own, need to work better together in each Benefice! Not a good start to the year as the burden of the ever increasing Benefice Quota rests with just 6 parishes now.

Crime within the village has not been very noticeable thankfully this year although one incident of hare coursers from Surrey and Berkshire being caught in The Street made the headlines. A quad bike was stolen in August and there was also a small break-in at the Village Hall. The perennial problems of speeding and heavy traffic have also abated though they still cause a problem. It was thought prudent to install of an alarm on the church roof to avert the potential lead thefts which the whole of Suffolk has seen increase in 2016.

The ex-primary school site was left untouched during the year as the planning has still not been resolved with regard to the proposed housing development. However, other plans in the village have been approved like the development of two detached houses now nearing completion on land in Richer Road adjacent to 'The Bailey', on the left hand side as you exit the village.



Houses at The Bailey under construction.

On the opposite side of the road, Outline Consent was granted in June for three houses in Dovedale close. Several extensions, changes of use and replacement windows were also on the agenda. The Spring also saw kerb improvements/heightening in The Street close to the Church to stop water flowing down Richer Road in times of heavy rains and into the houses adjoining and the overdue replacement of the sewer outside the chip shop and houses opposite the Church.



Sewer works in The Street in August

However the perennial flooding outside the school site in The Street continues – any number of attempts to un-block it have failed.

From late February until early April the annual toad patrol along the Hunston Road took place. This has been existent for over five years now with the saving of nearly 600 toads in our village, Walsham Le Willows and in Stowlangtoft in 2016.

February 2016 saw 10 years of our voluntary Village newsheet, the Badwell Broadsheet, which can be seen online @ <http://www.badwellash.onesuffolk.net/badwell-broadsheet/> helped by the arrival of superfast Broadband (at last!) in April.

Again, the Parish Council saw several Councillor changes this year, in particular following the retirement of Karl Horrt as chair in December 2015 and then also the Clerk. Later in the year 3 other councillors resigned and their places had not been filled by December 2016. However, the Queen's Jubilee year needed both the Parish Council and Parochial Church Council members to pull together to organise various events beginning with the Village Clean in April. A Queen's party tea was held on June 12th along with a flower festival supported by a timeline for Elizabeth II's life in the church.

Funding for the Village Hall has again been ongoing but without the monthly bingo sessions. The committee were fortunate to receive £7,000 from a Locality budget for general improvements, a great boost. The hall was well supported during the year by various clubs and external groups like the Ladies Night – apparently a regular event here in previous years. It was such a shame that the outdoor games were rained off in August for the Village Fayre but the later Halloween, Fireworks and Xmas party events were all well attended to bring the general village events to a better close this year. In excess of £1,200 has been donated to the Village Hall over the year.

In December a village History Society was formed to join the list of existent clubs. Members have been working closely to help the PCC as, in October, they were successful in acquiring a £23,300 Lottery Grant to restore the turret clock in St Mary's church. The idea to provide something tangible for all to see was the choice here as opposed to seeking funding for the fabric maintenance, an ongoing saga as everywhere. In November the clock face and workings were removed by Hayward Horological from Felixstowe, clock restorers for five generations. In December the newly gilded and blue clock face was reinstated with the workings to be returned in 2017 after restoration.



The clock face being hoisted into position in December

The church management continued its rocky ride. Mrs Pam Robson, the priest for our interregnum, continued to undertake church duties until the end of April. There was then a mass exodus of PCC members and no Council bar the Church Warden and one other member until July when a Lay Reader who knows the village well, Mrs Freddie Montgomery, took over the incumbent's position and 2 new PCC members were also instated. The joys of village politics!

Our church warden, Stephen Rose, continued to promote events during the year to raise funds for the church fabric repairs and the Quota. In March a successful Village History Day exhibiting the Recorder books from 1969 to 1979 along with other memorabilia saw 100 in attendance and £1,000 raised for Church funds. This was followed by the annual Easter egg hunt, a walk from St Mary's to Langham, St Mary the Virgin - well attended this year with more eggs being needed but £400 was raised. An Art exhibition and a Flower show were similarly well supported for further church funds. Later in the year the Suffolk Historic Churches Bike Ride within the Benefice in September raised £1,160 through just two villagers' efforts. There was no Harvest Festival or Quiz night this year, the latter being organised by a long standing couple within the area, Eileen & Roy Le Grice who have now left the village after 20+ years as both Secretary and Treasurer of the PCC, Roy also being a PC councillor. In October the History Group with the PCC held a Centenary Commemoration on the death of Hester Maria Payne, a resident of Badwell who was a great benefactor of the village - £680 was raised for the fabric fund.



Vistors to the History Exhibition in October

The village Pub, the White Horse, again changed hands this year in September but the various themed nights and cooked food seem to have continued well with our new landladies from Market Weston.

The village football team were successful in being promoted from the Sunday Football League Division 4 (with 10 clubs) to Division 3, a great success for such a new team.

October brought a Tractor Run through the village in aid of ovarian cancer, a great reminder of how this agricultural part of our county can support very deserving causes.

Throughout the year small changes and improvements were seen in the village including the installation of a street light in Back Lane – very necessary to help avoid the several un-mended potholes. In the church new curtains section off the tower and a new carpet was laid in the Chancel. At last a bus timetable has been mounted on a post centrally in the village for all to view – we are fortunate to still have still two buses daily which pass through the village from Bury to Diss on weekdays. The village has been kept relatively tidy though we are still missing a village cleaner. The churchyard and cemetery grass have been kept in

good order by the Church Warden. Unfortunately, at the end of 2016, the Parish Council decided to no longer fund the grass cutting, which they had been doing for at least 30 years since the churchyard was closed. Therefore the responsibility for this has been transferred to Mid Suffolk District Council. The issue of the ongoing maintenance of the cemetery grass has yet to be resolved.

In November, the Armistice ceremony was less special than in 2015 as there was no church service but purely a ceremony at the war memorial. The roads were not closed so of course traffic continued to flow past during the event.

December brought the annual events which included Xmas wreath making, a childrens' Christmas party and the Christmas Eve Carol service with 140 people packing the church. So again life in Badwell Ash has been eventful. The population has been mobile with a dozen houses changing hands for yet higher prices than in 2015. Some farmland off Richer Road has changed hands but will this be redeveloped, hopefully not? Our previous manor house, Shackerland Hall, put up for sale in September 2015 was withdrawn from sale in 2016. By December 31st ten properties with varying prices remained unsold. St Mary's recorded one marriage, a burial of ashes and there confirmations. The anticipated redevelopment along the Walsham Road, on the eastern side has not yet materialised so some of us are still happy!

Pat Monk
Village Recorder
March 2017