

Mistley Parish Council - Chairman's Annual Report 2022

I am delighted to start my report by saying that 2022 sees the Parish Council in a better position than we found ourselves at our last Annual Meeting, with physical meetings having resumed last May. We all agree that the benefits of face to face meetings far outweigh those of meeting virtually, although I think we probably all thought wistfully of the comforts of Zoom meetings in the depths of winter, when the car needed defrosting and the thought of leaving the house was less than appealing.

For Mistley Parish Council the headline news of the last 12 months has been its award of Foundation Status in the Local Council Award Scheme run by the National Association of Local Councils. This is a fantastic achievement and provides our stakeholders and parishioners with the assurance of the high standards to which the Parish Council works. We were delighted to welcome the Chairman of Tendring District Council, Cllr Jeff Bray, to our December meeting at which he formally presented us with the award. The certificate itself is now framed and hung with pride on the wall of the village hall.

Over the last twelve months we have together worked on some excellent projects to enhance the village that we all love so dearly. One of our parishioners, Bob Horlock, has led a project to re-site an old limestone mile marker which had been rescued from the quayside when the Thom Quay Warehouse was demolished in 2017. The mile marker, along with a replica Bendalls milestone, were re-sited on either side of the Swan Basin in a project worked on by many, all of whom gave their time without cost. The project was a long time in the making as the Swan Basin is a listed building, and various consents were required, in addition to the work of actually making the replica mile marker and installing both structures in their new home. We would like to reiterate our thanks to Bob Horlock, along with Rose Builders, EDME, and numerous other partners who worked together to make this wonderful project happen. The milestones have been enthusiastically embraced by locals and visitors and are now very much at home in their new location in the heart of Mistley, which is officially 61 miles from London, 10 miles from Colchester and 11 miles from Harwich.

Staying with the Swan Basin. it is currently being repaired and the basin surrounding the fountain, brickwork and the railings will soon be restored to tip-top condition. Meanwhile last Autumn the Parish Council added some lilies to the basin which have started growing now that Spring is here, and we are looking at adding some fish as a trial.

Over the last few years, and particularly since the expansion of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to include the south bank of the River Stour on the Essex side, we have experienced increasing numbers of visitors to our riverside, known as The Walls. While it is wonderful to see everyone enjoying our beautiful greensward, having picnics and feeding the ducks and swans (in the water at high tide only, please!), the ever-increasing footfall has resulted in larger amounts of litter and rubbish in the area, and our tired bins were starting to become inadequate. The Open topped design of the bins was also an invitation to passing seagulls who regularly emptied the contents onto the grass in their quest to find some dinner, and that attracted rats who were similarly keen to feast on leftovers. So last year we purchased some smart new larger bins, which feature heavy swing lids and are much more suitable for their AONB surroundings, and we are grateful to Manningtree Rotary Club, which provided us with a contribution towards the cost of the bins. Thanks too, to Sam and Paul for installing the new bins which have really improved the area (although the seagulls and rats are slightly less impressed and would prefer to have the old bins back).

In December, at the Welcome Home Field, of which the Parish Council is sole trustee, we planted a horse chestnut tree to replace one that had died. The Welcome Home Field, purchased in 1946 for village celebrations, and so named because it was first used to welcome home those who had returned from the war, was planted with a horse chestnut tree for each soldier from Mistley and Manningtree who did not return, and one oak tree to commemorate all who fell. The trustees felt

it was important that the tree that had died was replaced, as each tree is a living monument. Meanwhile the wooden sign commemorating the history of the field, and bearing brass plaques with the names those who fell, had deteriorated and appeared to be beyond repair; our very skilled councillor, Derek Bell, has performed a carpentry miracle and restored the sign, which will shortly be returned to the Welcome Home Field. Huge thanks to Derek for restoring this very precious piece of our history.

As a rural community we have been hugely supported by our Footpath Warden, Mr Keith Garwood and our Tree Warden, Councillor Paul Nutter. We are also grateful to the work of our handy man and warden, Mr Brian (or Sam) Forrester, who has not only kept Mistley sparkling but kept the loo at Furze Hill clean and open for use, and opened and closed the car park gate daily, along with his other work around the village, including projects such as the replacement of the bins along The Walls, watering new trees and improving the Welcome Home Field in New Road.

Extensive tree works to coppice parts of Furze Hill were carried out earlier this year. This work, the first in several decades, was necessary to thin parts of the overgrown woodland where self-seeded trees were causing others to fight for light and nourishment to survive. Although the immediate aftermath of such works can look draconian, it was necessary for the long-term health of our woodlands and the work was carried out following surveys by experts.

The Brunswick allotments, now just over a year old, are well established and we are currently in the process of transferring ownership to the Parish Council of the additional allotments at River Reach, which will enable additional parishioners to take on allotments. We are sorry to see the departure of Mr Michael Appleton as the chairman of MALGA who has been a diligent chair with limitless wisdom about vegetable growing and allotment management but welcome Mr Andrew Norman in his place.

At Furze Hill, almost two years ago we responded to issues of anti-social behaviour in the car park by putting a gate at its entrance to restrict access during the evenings and at night. We are pleased that the nightly closure of the car park seems to have resulted in a significant reduction in the problems we had previously experienced, and thanks again to Sam for his work in opening and closing the gate. Looking ahead we have agreed with Tendring District Council to use Section 106 funds to resurface and improve the car park at Furze Hill and are optimistic that this project will begin in the near future.

We continue to work closely with our various sports clubs and are currently in the process of renewing leases with the rugby, football, cricket and bowls clubs, all of which provide Mistley and the surrounding area with excellent and much valued sporting facilities.

As is customary the Parish Council laid a wreath at our war memorial at the annual Remembrance Sunday event in November and we also arranged for 500 daffodil bulbs to be planted nearby. This Spring it was wonderful to see the daffodils come up for the first time and to see some beautiful photographs taken by members of the public, of the cheerful yellow flowers against the background of Mistley Towers.

We held village litter picks in May, October and April using the Parish Councils own new litter pickers and bag holders, which means we no longer need to make trips to Weeley to borrow the District Council's equipment. We are always grateful for the enthusiastic way in which so many members of the public join in with our efforts to keep Mistley clean and tidy. We would also like to thank The Mistley Thorn for kindly making delicious flapjacks and muffins for the participants, refreshments, after recent litter picks.

We have also continued our project to swap our old streetlights for modern and efficient LEDs, as and when the old ones develop faults, in order to carry out the project in a cost-efficient manner and the Parish Council is proud of its work to reduce energy consumption as widely as possible. Last year I commented on the periodic frustration experienced by the Parish Council as a result of planning consents achieved by developers which had led to the continuing of large amounts of

housebuilding in our village, particularly on greenfield sites. We were therefore very pleased to hear that the Local Plan was formally adopted by the District Council in March 2022. We were also pleased that the District Council refused the planning application submitted to develop part of Mistley Place Park, also in March, in line with the overwhelming view of parishioners and the Parish Council's own objections to the plans submitted.

We were sorry to say goodbye to two of our councillors in the past year; Mark Lawry and Jamie Cambridge, but we have been joined by William Meston and Philip Cunningham. We extend our sincere thanks to departing Parish Councillors, although Jamie remains a valued trustee of the Rigby and Berry Charity. We also extend a warm welcome to our new joiners, both of whom have settled into the Parish Council to the point that it feels as if they have been with us forever.

As always we are indebted to Susan Clements, our amazing parish clerk. Quite simply we would be unable to function without her. Efficient, ever-patient and a friend to us all, Susan is the glue that holds us all together. As previously mentioned the Parish Council has been awarded Foundation Status, in the Local Council Award Scheme - now she's got her sights set on Quality Award Status. Goodness knows how she finds the time - but we're so grateful that she does.

We probably do not often enough express our thanks to our hard-working District Councillors, Alan Coley, and Carlo and Val Guglielmi who assist us all so greatly in their work for the community, so this moment in our Council year provides an opportune moment to let them know how much we appreciate everything they do for us all.

It is customary for the Chairman of the Parish Council to announce in this report the recipient of its annual Chairman's Award. This year we have joint worthy winners: Angie and Barry Soames, who, for 41 years, have run Barry's mobile Fish and Chips, serving customers in Mistley and the surrounding towns and villages. Not only have they tirelessly fed most of the Tendring Peninsula for over four decades, but they have been huge and constant supporters of the Parish Council, attending our meetings and bringing delicious tarts, pastries and sausage rolls to our Christmas meetings. Barry talks about retirement; Angie and the rest of Mistley, along with Manningtree, Bradfield, Lawford, East Bergholt and the other parishes they serve, are not quite so keen.

As summer approaches there is much to look forward to: our second annual Parish Council bowls match against the Bowls Club is on Saturday 21st May, and meanwhile we are all excited about our community celebration to commemorate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee at the Welcome Home Field on Friday 3rd June. Our party, which promises to be a memorable occasion for all generations. and which we are organising jointly with Lawford Parish Council, will enable residents of Mistley, Manningtree and Lawford to celebrate this unique and landmark occasion together. We are delighted with the enthusiasm seen so far from residents and grateful for the support of local businesses, who have been extremely generous in their financial sponsorship of the event.

The last two years presented us with several unforeseen challenges but we are hopeful that they are now behind us. We have a wonderful team of Parish Councillors in Mistley who pull together with good humour and genuine love of the village. As always it is a privilege to be part of this exceptional group.

Charlotte Howell

25th April 2022

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