

MUCH DEWCHURCH SOCIETY

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE AGM

12 NOVEMBER 2009

Purpose to protect and enhance the natural and built environment of the parish and to improve communication within the rather scattered rural Parish.

Renewal of membership, although declined was strong, indicating good support for the society. Approx 75 members.

One of things we are good at is walking and there has been strong support for the Society's walks, which are aimed at getting members to explore the parish 'more extensively' than they might otherwise. We originally thought that 3 walks a year, in differing seasons may be timely. However, we're learning from experience as you always do.

- The Christmas walk – twice planned for between Xmas and New Year thinking members would be coming up for air, desperate to escape the left-over turkey and craving some exercise and company other than the intensive family hot-house. The first year attracted record low numbers, poured with rain and thanks to the Dale's generous hospitality turned out a positive calorific balance as the walk was abandoned within the first few hundred yards and the exclusive team retired to Home Farm for delights of the fireside, mulled wine and more mince pies. I have to say from experience, the hospitality at Home farm is excellent! Last Christmas we timed the walk a little later, nearer to New Year, by which time people had been able to escape, north presumably for the new Year festivities. OK we've learnt now, you don't want a Society walk at Christmas.
- Easter is a different story and has always pulled in the biggest crowd of walkers young and old, 2 legs and 4, all energised by the longer days and milder weather. Until this year at least.....when we may have explored the Parish 'too extensively' for one outing. It was a beautiful day, a fabulous walk and incredible viewsbut may have been better in parts. Maybe I should have mentioned before that I am renowned among friends for leading walks that end up neck deep in bracken! Someone else had better plan it next time.
- The autumn walk was to be a field walk but had to be cancelled as the pitch was water-logged.

Race Night at the Black Swan was a new experience for most of us, including Fiona who organised it superbly. Appropriately the MFH whipped in and gee'd (sorry!) everyone along. The week before we had heard the sad news that a member of our community had lost his arm to infection, having already lost a leg as a child and was thus facing a very challenging future, if indeed he survived. There was unanimous support for giving the proceeds of the night to his family and enthusiastic support from regulars and irregulars of the Black Swan for the racing. One drinker was nearly arrested for breaking into a £5 note but he was let off as it was his first offence...and his £5 horse won him £20.

In June 10 gardens in and around the village were opened to the public which gave all the gardeners a good incentive to catch up with the garden chores that had maybe slipped during the spring. We also thought it would be a good opportunity to have a jolly good sticky beak around gardens that had only be seen from a distance but interest from the village was 'limited' despite an pretty much perfect summer afternoon. However, we did attract around 60 visitors from as far afield as Worcestershire, Shropshire and one couple came all the way from Huddersfield described the experience as 'a privilege'. Delicious teas were served at Home farm and the Old Vicarage and a plant sale was on offer alongside the Pimms at Stone House.

Once again the sun shone on 3 July when classical crossover Soprano Linda Tolchard performed to around 85 people at the Mynde. It was the most idyllic evening of music and wine, bathed in sunshine and we are grateful to Linda for giving her time free of charge for the Society.

The local history group finally met for the first time at the end of the summer and was immediately intrigued by news from John Davies, which we will hear more about later. The group is committed as a priority to capturing anecdotal history from the longer standing members of the community and integrating with our written history, before we progress more desk-based research.

The development at the Steiner Academy has begun in earnest, implementing the 2004 planning permission for a Hall, classrooms, eurhythmy and music facilities. The Society now has a rep on the school's community forum and is an official entity with the planning department. Communication and consultation with the community has improved but the flow of planning applications continues and the parking issue does not appear to have been resolved.

Next year we expect to break even! Not all about fund raising but we started life with a significant challenge and were fortunate to receive the generous financial support that we did. We are well towards repaying the loan and have given sizeable donations to the church and a local family along the way. Plans for a quiz night and fete next summer – we need as many volunteers as possible FUN. Then we can look at investing more in community activities or facilities.

Thanks to everyone who has worked so hard and given so much time. Hope it has been fun along the way and let's make more fun and interest ahead.