

THE UPPER WYLYE VALLEY PARISH NEWS – A BRIEF BY THE CHAIRMAN (as at August 2022)

INTRODUCTION

1. This brief on the Parish News covers an outline of the principles involved in the 10-monthly production of the Parish News each year and a pen-picture of the committee members that run it now; finally, it takes a brief look into future needs and aspirations. As Chairman, and since 2012, I believe it is competently run, its management is sound, and it is enjoyed by a lot of people. We will never know how many copies go straight into the recycling bin, but comments received verbally and by email are many and usually complimentary. Importantly, the Rector describes it as ‘one of the best mission tools that we have getting, as it does, information out on a wide variety of topics, including the environment.’

THE COMMITTEE

2. The constitution of the committee aims to combine a mix of useful talents with a fair distribution of representation across the Team area. The Rector has oversight, but the day to day running of the magazine is vested in the Chairman and the Committee with personalities and responsibilities set out below:

- Chairman: David Shaw; brings experience of senior management, an ability to see the bigger picture and some writing skill. Accepts overall responsibility. He signs off the final draft for publication. Represents the Codfords, and is responsible for distribution across the five eastern villages.
- Editor: Robin Culver (now for six years); from a professional background as an English teacher, he brings many years’ experience of producing such magazines in schools and beyond. Receives all material and, with the designer and setter (Gilly Milne), tailors it with the 35 or so (ideal figure) advertisements to fit the 5500 words we have available in a 12-page newsletter. He has concentrated on photography in retirement; is the committee consultant on that discipline and a contributor of many of our photographs. Helps represent Heytesbury. Robin has moved out of the county during late summer of 2022 and we are now actively seeking a new editor.
- Katherine Venning: deputises when required. As an LLM and leader of the Team Choir, contributes on those aspects as well as the rota for the Ministry Letter, the church notices and the Team page (services and personality lists). She also has wide and varied experience in many other areas not least in music, printing and typesetting. Manages the advertising portfolio (advert rates for 2022 are being held at the same rates but will have to rise in 2023) but has recently handed over responsibility but retains hands on for the quarterly Market Place back page, proof-reads the penultimate draft and lives in Heytesbury; she often hosts the monthly Committee meetings which are usually at 10.30am on the first Monday of the month (when we are able to meet face to face and not on Zoom).
- Treasurer: Jon Royds; brings 26 years’ experience of running our finances and a wise and careful head for figures to the committee. Manages the finances with an aim of carrying forward c.£1000 into each new calendar year (our aim, anyway). As Treasurer, he liaises with Graham Connellan, our Auditor, and represents Norton

Bavant as a resident. Jon retires as Treasurer in 2022 but will remain on the Committee as our 'corporate memory'.

- Diana Walker takes over as Honorary Treasurer in August 22 and having been a partner in a most successful horticultural business brings wide experience to management in the Committee.
- Angela Rosenthal: a former teacher and a talented artist, she brings a wise perspective to many matters, conducts some specific projects and represents Corton and Boyton.
- Jonathan Wansey: a former Headmaster and now in retirement is a key Governor of Leehurst Swan School and Vice Chairman of Trustees of the Hospital of St John; he is a talented artist and keen sportsman. He lives in Heytesbury and has taken on the committee's focus for our distribution network (see details on distribution later).
- Ralph Oxborrow has taken on responsibility for our advertising portfolio. He lives in Heytesbury and brings a lifetime of experience to us of 'getting things done.'
- Vacant. A respected resident of Sutton Veny and 'doer' there, to represent the village and be a link with the Parish Council, village hall, church, school and pub.
- Vacant. A respected resident of Upton Lovell and 'doer' there, to represent the village and be a link with village hall, church and pub.
- Gilly Milne; designer and typesetter since 2001 and responsible for the despatch of the finished product to the printer. Her skills, supplemented by Robin's experience, have combined to produce a magazine that has a coherence in layout that is pleasing to the reader's eye. Recently re-located to Yorkshire, she conducts her work remotely but efficiently and skilfully and, importantly, in a timely way. She is the only committee member who is paid a fee.
- As we approach the middle of 2022, we are actively seeking a new Editor and the advertisement will appear on the front cover of the September issue of the Parish News to be out by the Bank Holiday weekend. While the Committee overall is responsible for distribution, it now has one member completely au fait with the whole process and able to oversee its efficient processes.

3. At the monthly committee meetings (10.30 am on the first Monday of the month for an hour and no more than 90 minutes), we usually have an agenda of about eight items put out by the Chairman that cover a review of the previous edition, current and future finances, making the plan for the next edition and looking ahead to the one after that. Material for inclusion in each edition is invited, via the inside of the back page and common practice, to reach the Editor by the 10th of the month. A copy of the Minutes (notes taken) of the meeting is sent out usually by Angela Rosenthal once they are compiled and, given the urgency of some items, this is usually within 24 hours of the meeting.

PRINCIPLES

4. We continue to strive for a sound balance between providing timely information on the past, present and future activities of the Upper Wylve Valley Team and assorted other local organisations whilst providing at the same time an inspirational, interesting and amusing mix of articles, observations and snippets from around the villages. There is also the potentially difficult balance to be found between church and non-church, and we try hard for a 70:30 mix. The title of 'Parish News' refers to either; not everyone will think it through to that extent but the totally secular will note the Team logo at the top of the front cover and will realise

that it is, in the end, 'sponsored' by the Team. Most of our readers do not go to church and are not going to be attracted by heavy-duty, church-centred information so we aim for the Christian message to enter minds by osmosis. At present we are keeping the majority happy, or at least content – we think - but, after a comprehensive review conducted in 2020, we decided to soften the 'churchy' look and relax the content and the New Year saw a revitalised front cover as a start. 'UWVT'- driven content is now concentrated on page 3 and in the information pages at the back. Above all, and as a principle, we consciously aim not to antagonise, despite some tricky critics. There is no argy-bargy in print and because we are all volunteers, we steer clear of controversy!

5. The magazine must continue to be self-supporting and the system that, in turn, supports it must be capable of delivering it to over 1400 households free of charge by the end of the preceding month. That system must be robust enough to continue as at present – and also in a crisis. To achieve all this, the committee must identify and manage a number of advertisements but never so many as to swamp the other content, so experience tells us that up to 35 or 36 is about the right number and that also keeps us economically viable. The Parish News is always reproduced concurrently on the Team website www.upperwylevalleyteam.com together with any articles or items we could not fit into the hard copy. The Team website also provides the archive where past copies are stored, and this is not only a useful repository but an important one too. While having charitable intent, it is not actually a charity itself; it ought to be one, and we are determined to find a way to make it so one day; work in progress.

DISTRIBUTORS

6. The system of distribution, in broad terms, works like this. The Printer (Footfall in Melksham) delivers the boxes to David Shaw's garage at The Dairy House in Codford, usually on a Thursday or Friday night a week or so before the end of the month. David Atkin-Berry receives his 800 copies for the western end of the Team area, and David Shaw separates his 500 for the eastern end. They are then broken down into relevant bundles and delivered to the 'postmen and women'. There is a core of about forty distributors altogether, but this number probably doubles with spouses, other family members and friends helping out on occasions. Between them the Parish News is usually delivered in good time, in all weathers and with a great deal of shoe leather being worn down personally by local people as they go to each letterbox. They do it to help and they do it voluntarily and we appreciate their commitment enormously. We thank them with a fulsome note in the Christmas edition and, more practically, with a drinks party hosted by the committee in September most years and held, up to now, in the Chairman's garden, in late August/early September.

PROGRESS ON THE REVIEW OF 2020

7. The principle of 'evolution' and not 'revolution' is important to us and another was that a lot of what we were doing and how we did it had stood us in good stead in the past. That said, the first lockdown stretched the committee and its distribution system and while some advertisers remained loyal, others took a 'holiday' and others gave us up. The financial position looked precarious at the end of that summer, and we decided that a fundraising campaign, coupled with a drive to recruit new advertisers, had to take place. Both happened

in October and November, and both were great successes. Readers were generous and we have enough money now to comfortably see us through 2022 and hopefully into 2024 provided our running costs are covered by a full quota of advertisers. As I write this, it looks as if we are keeping our heads above water, and we are secure for the foreseeable future (that being 2 to 3 years!)

8. We have three colour editions a year at Easter, in the summer and at Christmas and they are budgeted; additional ones that attract sponsorship can be accommodated depending on the theme. The December/January edition and the July/August one cover two months each thus allowing for ten editions per year.

CONCLUSION

9. The Parish News has evolved in a most positive way in recent years and 2019's Christmas edition doubled as the Ruby Edition marking the 40th anniversary of its first production in its present form back in 1979.

10. The Parish News is a communications vehicle that is a good example of something 'that ain't broke and therefore doesn't need much fixing' at present but, that said, we are always striving to improve it. For example, we need to keep up the number of advertisers, and a slightly wider group of representatives would close a couple of gaps in villages; otherwise, we have survived the 2020s and 'a wing and a prayer' was a reasonably accurate description of how we came through the months of the pandemic. Some changes and improvements were necessary, including some measures to strengthen the committee and to raise additional funds lost during lockdown. A number of changes have now taken place, while others are still in the pipeline, but I am confident the Parish News is in a good place to conduct its business next year and beyond.

David Shaw
Chairman; August 2022
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