

## **Bolton Village Parish Annual Report 2019/20**

This is my sixth annual report as chairman and it has turned out to be an unusual year, characterized sadly in the latter part by the Coronavirus which I will come on to later.

As is customary, I will try to cover some of the main events briefly but, first of all, I wish to thank my colleagues for their support – particularly Roger, Vice-Chairman and Peter, past Chairman. Shelagh, our clerk, has been indefatigable, displaying her usual efficiency and enthusiasm. John Cotter is retiring as our honorary internal auditor because he is leaving the area. We thank him for his service over the years and wish John and Judith well with their relocation.

Alas, the recent pestilence, which has caused widespread hardship and suffering, has had a damaging effect on many village activities. The Hall and Play park have had to be closed, meaning that the Exchange and various sporting activities have been cancelled as have the planned VE Day commemoration, this year's Field Day and any recent entertainment. The Litter Pick went the same way but several individuals volunteered to keep up the good work and a purge did take place in the Spring. On the credit side, a support group has been formed recently, led by Dean and Penny Dewey, which has provided assistance for the more vulnerable residents in the form of contact, shopping and prescriptions. The Allison's (Low Howgill) have played a leading role in coordinating home deliveries from Appleby tradesmen, and Darren the deliveries from Chesnut House.

The village website continues to go from strength to strength, coming into its own of late. Alan Green has taken over the maintenance, a major task in the current climate and has upgraded the site. The website in conjunction with Shelagh's round robin email system, which now comprises some 167 users, provide important methods of conveying news and practical information, invaluable in the current crisis.

Turning to events which did take place prior to March, the Field Day last June was a great success, thanks to the efforts of Andy Stevens, Claire Hudson, Christine Taylor and all their helpers.

The Open Garden Day run by the Bolton in Bloom Committee resulted in significant funds being raised for Bolton in Bloom, so they are well placed for future activity. I would like to thank the Committee, volunteers and residents for tending planters, cutting grass verges and generally keeping the village in tip top condition. The Committee decided not to enter the Cumbria In Bloom competition this year, following their outstanding success in previous years, perhaps giving the other competitors a chance?

The Bolton Friends Association (the school PTA) continues to do a sterling job raising funds for the primary school. In particular, the Scarecrow Festival proved a roaring success, raising just over £1000. There were many

imaginative entries from people of all ages, and judging was difficult due to the high standard of entry. It is hoped this will become an annual event.

The Bonfire party was also well attended again, providing great fun for all present. It was well organised by Alan Green, the BFA and their many helpers. Enough money was raised to ensure that another display will take place this year.

In terms of regular activities before Covid 19, the walking groups, Bolton Wanderers continued to venture out, come rain or shine, under the guidance of Jim Sellars.

Bolton Exchange continued to flourish, providing a valuable service and a meeting place for the community, thanks to the efforts of Lesley Ann and all the volunteers who keep it going. Lesley Ann emigrated to Scotland and will be missed. Cathy Smith is the acting Chair, pending the AGM. The weekly sessions are sorely missed during this lockdown period.

In terms of entertainment we benefited from the Film Nights organised by Paul and Pat Wilson, who put on a varied and interesting programme and have also had several live shows in the Memorial Hall performed by Highlights Productions organised by Cathy Smith and Sue Kibbler .

The Play Park, after its completion and launch last year, has continued to thrive, gaining plaudits and new users from around the area

The Parish Council was awarded a National Lottery Heritage grant to build a pinfold-inspired stone wall public bench in the field. This project included training for volunteers and the Primary School was involved, incorporating relevant materials into their curriculum and nature week. Thanks to the efforts of the volunteers, the bench was completed successfully and “opened’ in the presence of all the pupils.

Eden Grove – As you will be aware, work has started at last to refurbish the main house and build the surrounding properties. There is some way to go before completion and occupancy, although the first bungalows are up for sale now. The development will obviously have considerable impact on the village.

In June the Parish Council was made aware of a dormant trust fund holding investments intended for the education of Bolton children. The trustees did not want to continue and transferred responsibility to the Council. We decided that the fund should be rolled up and the money used for worthwhile projects in keeping with the original aims of the trust. So far money has been allocated to the Primary School for a running track, Early Years equipment, an interactive TV, a projector and screen, and software to support home learning during the Covid lockdown.

The Community Speedwatch (CSW) Team were active during the year, until the lockdown. Many thanks to the Stathams for organising this for the last few years, and to the volunteers. Stewart Tyson will take over responsibility for

organisation when the Stathams leave. The CSW and the Speed Indicator Device (coordinated by Alan Green) are both effective at slowing down traffic through the village.

At the end of this year Andy Stevens resigned as Chairman of the Memorial Hall Committee after many years sterling work and has been replaced by Walter Head. The Hall Committee has progressed the project to redevelop the Hall and bring it up to date for current usage. Designs and costings for a modernized hall have been prepared and were displayed for consultation at a public meeting on national Village Hall Day in January. These were endorsed and have been submitted for planning approval. Many thanks to the architect, Chris Reed, for the unpaid hours he spent on the plans. The question of raising the necessary funds however remains problematic, especially in the current financial climate.

At the same January meeting, proposals for a cycle pump track to be installed on the playing field were also circulated and supported by a large majority. If successful, this proposal would provide outdoor activity for older children and a safe place to learn to ride. Work is ongoing to take the project forward.

I should like to say a thank you to everyone who contributed in one form or other. I have mentioned a lot of names but I apologise to anyone I have missed out. I would like to finish as I have each year. Bolton continues to be very fortunate to have so many people who are willing to give freely of their time for the good of the community. This year has provided even more tangible evidence of this community spirit, especially in the current difficult times. This is something for which we should continue to be proud and grateful.

**Peter Griffiths, Chairman Bolton Parish Council**