

Northby NorthEast



Local Community News

www.great-linford.gov.uk

Lending a hand...



FEED THE METER OR FEED THE KIDS?

How MK Food Bank copes with growing demand... *see page 3*

DRAGONFLIES FLEE DRAGON PARK

Local wildlife struggles to survive in neglected pond ... *see page 5*

NATURAL PLAY PARK TAKES SHAPE

Good news at last for Redhouse Park residents... *see page 8*

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Below is a list of GLPC parish councillors, the wards they represent and their contact details.

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Photo of robin © Anthony Bedford
Reporter: Linda Inoki



autumn 2013

councillor comment

From two of your newest Councillors

Ian Foskett, Great Linford ward

"Great Linford has been our home for 30 years and continues to be a great place to live. Being a Councillor is a great way to help improve the quality of life for people living in our parish. I started work at the age of 15 as an engineering apprentice with the Army (REME). Next came Information Technology, working my way from engineering into sales and management. I travelled widely on business to Europe, USA and South Africa, which helped me appreciate different cultures and attitudes."

Ian is a passionate yachtsman, and also enjoys golf, cooking and spending time with his grandchildren. He is former Governor of Stantonbury School and is currently Chair of the Great Linford Memorial Hall Trust.

Sam Crooks, Great Linford ward

"My first job, at the Open University, brought me to Milton Keynes. Years later I haven't forgotten the excitement of helping start something so new, while living in a new city-to-be. I moved to Great Linford in 1982 and always kept the house even when working in America and Paris (my wife is French). You can't beat Milton Keynes for its open spaces, limited congestion or the variety of its people. I decided to become a Councillor for two reasons. Life has been good to me and I want to give something back, especially for people missing out on MK's success. And democracy is not a spectator sport – if you want something to happen you've got to play your part."

Sam is a former Ward Councillor for the borough of Milton Keynes, but wanted to join GLPC because of its increasing influence over issues that matter to people, such as landscaping, litter and planning applications.

Ian Foskett & Sam Crooks
GLPC Councillors

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LENDING A HAND in a crisis

Every week or so a volunteer calls at Neath Hill to pick up a box of food from the parish office, all donated by local people. It swiftly joins thousands of other items stacked in the MK Food Bank, and within days much of it has already gone out to help hungry locals, both adults and children. So far this year, 619 residents of Great Linford parish have turned to the Food Bank for help, compared to 251 for the same period last year.

According to John Marshall, project manager of the MK Food Bank, "There has been an explosion of food banks across the nation. Last year we broke records with 9,000 food parcels in Milton Keynes and this year we expect it will be even more. Most people are very embarrassed to ask for help, but we try to make it pleasant for them and they're very grateful, if a bit overwhelmed!"

John showed me round the Food Bank's expanding headquarters in Stacey Bushes one bright autumn morning.

It is an impressive operation. Volunteers were sorting donations at the counter while others were completing batches of food parcels to send out. Residents who have qualified for a voucher can collect a parcel from five distribution centres or via the mobile service.

Tinned vegetables, rice pudding, cereal, tea and long life juice; the typical bag contains a balance of simple, nutritious food designed to last one adult or child for three days.

Sometimes this is enough to tide people over a crisis, sometimes it takes longer, but usually there is a limit of five parcels for any individual in a year.

What brings people to the Food Bank? John says that typical triggers include losing a job, getting divorced and changes in the benefits system including the so-called 'bedroom tax'. All these strains are made worse in an era of rising prices, unemployment and zero-hours contracts.

During my visit a volunteer manning the mobile van phoned in. A familiar face has arrived in Netherfield asking for two bags of food. Daniel Sharp, the office administrator, quickly checks the man's file on the computer which confirms that he has had more than his fair share. John decides he can have one more bag, but this is his last.

"We don't like to turn people away empty-handed," he said, "but we also have a responsibility to everyone who has given us food, and to everyone who truly needs it."

If you want to lend a hand, you can drop off your donation at the GLPC parish office, or at the Little Bookshop and community cafe, Great Linford local centre, where a food basket is ready and waiting!

ABOVE: Volunteer driver Bob Kirk (left) and volunteer Pete Simpson (right).

Photo by David Stabler

Pete Simpson from Great Linford started volunteering for the MK Food Bank over two years ago.

He decided to help this particular cause because "It's very direct, and very local. Someone gives a tin of beans and someone gets one!" Pete, who cares for his elderly father, says he has made new friends among his fellow volunteers, and also changed his outlook. "I'm used to shopping in Waitrose without a second thought. But this has been an eye-opener, especially meeting people at the serving sessions or when attending our mobile service. Most people who use the Food Bank are in genuine need."

**MK Food Bank
needs over 2,500
food items a week!**

Please help by dropping your donations in the basket in the GLPC parish office at Neath Hill or at Tescos (Kingston & Wolverton), Asda (Bletchley) and Morrisons (Westcroft).

MK Food Bank:
www.mkfoodbank.org.uk
or phone 01908 322800

MEET THE TEAM

Your parish office is here to lend a hand



Eirwen Tagg, Parish Manager

"We are all part-time employees but we do give our all to this job because we really do care about our community. For example, Les does a huge amount of work organising the Summer of Fun activities to help out children during the summer holidays, and Ruth is so passionate about the environment she pioneered the Eco-Festival, which is now an annual event. As for me, if I'm out walking my own dogs I often ask people to clear up after theirs!"

It can be frustrating when someone storms into the office with the attitude that it is someone else's responsibility to sort out every problem. But I try to remind them that we all have a responsibility towards what goes on in our street, and the best solution is often to get involved. Just look at Simon's Parish Ranger's report opposite; in a couple of hours a few volunteers can make a big difference!

Tessa Phypers is our newest member; although she doesn't live in the parish she has been heavily involved in setting up a toddler group in Monkston. So as well as having thorough administrative skills she has loads of 'get up and go' to tackle any of the queries that come her way.

True, the Parish Council can't solve all the problems all the time and sometimes rules and regulations get in our way. But we always have a go at finding a solution, or pointing people towards another agency that should be able to help."

Ruth Panther, Administrative Assistant

"I love helping people, and get a real sense of job satisfaction from helping people solve their problems. Although sometimes we don't actually perform the action that solves the problem ourselves, we're often instrumental in getting the result people want or deserve. When I started working here I wasn't really involved in the community as I didn't know how to be involved. That has changed quite a bit; through working on the community events and also having more personal time as our children are growing up. A good expression Liisa Clark, our arts advisor, used recently was the 'closed door syndrome'. I think this aptly describes the majority of people in MK who come home, shut their door and don't care about or just forget about what's going on outside. If we as a Parish Council can get residents even halfway to an 'open door' way of thinking (maybe more of a 'stable door syndrome'?) then we've succeeded in what we're trying to do – maintaining a lovely place for us all to live in, with real community spirit!"

Lesley Martin, Administrative Assistant

"My main focus is the allotments and finances. When I started there were over 400 people on the waiting list and lots of allotments not being worked to their full potential. Now we have changed the arrangements, so that Simon our Parish Ranger does monthly visits and we react much quicker to complaints about dormant plots. As a result the waiting list has been dramatically reduced, there are no empty plots, and we have more dedicated allotment holders on site. The people who really want plots and put in the time and effort can now get the benefit rather than waiting for years on a list. It is lovely when we meet enthusiastic people who are keen to get their hands dirty!"

TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: Eirwen, Ruth, Tessa and Lesley outside the parish office.
Photo by Anthony Bedford



TOP TO BOTTOM: Migrant hawkfly surveying his domain; Little grebe or dabchick; Bank vole in a cosy home near a local pond.

All photos © Anthony Bedford

DRAGON PARK needs your help

Ponds are life-giving havens for some of our most treasured creatures. But one ancient pond in the parish is clearly struggling, and needs your help. This is in Dragon Park, in Great Linford, part of a historic system of farmland and natural springs.

"At the moment this pond is an eyesore because it's been neglected over the years," says Ruth Panther from the parish office. "But it needs to be preserved for its historical value and for wildlife. At one stage it was a breeding pond for great crested newts. They may still be using it but I'd be surprised if anything can survive the treatment this pond gets. Incredibly, during the summer people used what was left of the water to dump their disposable barbecues, and recently we even pulled out a rusty old scooter!"

Tony Bedford, who took these wonderful photos, is Chairman of the Friends of Hanson Environmental Study Centre, at the Linford Lakes, and is passionate about

ponds. "Ponds are part of our heritage and their tranquil beauty enhances any location," says Tony. "Unfortunately they are a fast decreasing habitat in the UK. They are extremely important as a home and breeding environment for frogs, toads and newts and also superb insects such as dragon and damselflies. Many birds and other wildlife also visit ponds to drink and feed from their rich insect life."

If you would like to 'lend a hand' to Dragon Park pond, or have any other comments on a pond near you, please get in touch with the parish office, tel 01908 606613.

The Friends of Hanson Environmental Study Centre is a 160 strong group involved with maintaining and protecting the habitat at HESC along with various projects, open days, walks and talks.

You can find out more at <http://fohescnews.blogspot.co.uk/>

Ranger's Review By Simon Bates

The Community Payback Team has been a brilliant source of manpower since early summer, working on Sundays and tackling various projects. In Pennyland, Neath Hill and Great Linford they have cleared paths and redways of litter and overgrown landscaping. More importantly they have worked at bringing the pathways back to the correct widths and restoring the straight edges. It's hard to believe but in some areas the redways are now double the width they were! This makes them safer for cyclists and better to look at too.

The team has also worked in several parks, clearing weeds, cutting back very overgrown landscaping and clearing up litter and smashed glass. Next time you visit Dragon Park in Great Linford, Hainault Avenue park in Giffard Park & Wedgwood Avenue park in Blakelands, I hope you will notice the difference.

This year's new programme of Tidy Up Days & Ranger Days has been great fun and our trawls of local ponds and hedgerows have given up very fruitful hauls of rubbish. We are gradually gaining more volunteers so word seems to be spreading that tidying up and exploring your local area can be fun!

The next tidy up day is at The Mound, Neath Hill, Thursday 23rd January, 10am-12 noon.

Please contact the parish office for details, or check our website: www.great-linford.gov.uk



ABOVE: Rubbish hauled from Conniburrow Pond.
Photo by Simon Bates

GREAT LINFORD

Parklands – an evolving picture

Great Linford is a scenic jigsaw puzzle of historic and modern landscapes, with many uses from wildlife to worship. While the green spaces give much pleasure to nearby residents they also serve the wider community as a district park.

Since the Parks Trust launched its booklet on ideas for improving the parkland, GLPC has strongly encouraged them to consult with as many residents as possible. In early October, the Parks Trust invited a number of stakeholders to a meeting to discuss the subject further. Attendees included local residents' associations, interest groups and the Parish Council.

David Foster, chief executive of the Parks Trust, said there were no firm plans at this stage but planning is essential as any changes to the landscape could take 15-20 years to mature, and may cost about £1m for the capital costs, plus £1m for upkeep.

During extensive discussions, there was general support for the work



of the Parks Trust and the ideas for improving Manor Park. The main question however was how the changes would be financed. This was the focus of much debate as one option is for the Parks Trust to finance the improvements through selling some paddocks for development.

As the Parish Council, GLPC has to look at the 'big picture', and how successfully the entire district park (including the sports grounds it manages) serves the wider community. When the Parks Trust has published its final proposals in 2014 for public consultation, GLPC will then be in a position to put them in context, and discuss them at the Parish Council meetings, where members of the public will be welcome to attend to hear the debate.

Please check the parish website for the dates of upcoming Parks Trust public meetings so you can be sure to have your say: www.great-linford.gov.uk



David Sim

David Sim, a former Great Linford Parish Councillor, passed away peacefully aged 71 on the 27th September, after a short fight against cancer. David was an architect in Milton Keynes for over forty years and an active member of the community, being involved in Stony Stratford Cricket Club for some time. Parish Manager Eirwen Tagg says "David was passionate about cricket, especially the High Street Ground where he played as a young man. From his house, overlooking the pitches, he was vigilant in making sure it was not used inappropriately. He was a pleasure to work with and one of life's true gentlemen. David will be sadly missed by all."



news&views

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YOUNG BADMINTON CHAMPIONS OFF TO TAIWAN!

Local youngster Steven Stallwood of Redhouse Park can realise his dream of playing badminton in Taiwan next May, after GLPC approved a parish grant of £1000.



UK badminton champions (2011) with coach Mike Stewart and Steven Stallwood (front, far left).

Steven, aged 14, and his three team-mates, are very excited about taking part in the World Schools Badminton Championships in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. They are all students at Stantonbury Campus; the dominant force in British schools badminton. In 2011 Stantonbury boys won the national championships, followed by the girls in 2012, followed by the boys again in March 2013!

Coach Mike Stewart says "We are thrilled that we've now raised the £9000 we needed for the trip. It's an incredible opportunity for the team to play on the international stage and it will do wonders for their sporting careers."

Daffodil Express

Thirty years ago Giffard Park was a new estate and the Milton Keynes Development Corporation planted great drifts of spring bulbs along the main road. It was just part of their wide-ranging mission to create an outstanding landscape for new arrivals to enjoy. One of those early residents was Liz Bell, who says "The daffodils all along Hainault Avenue used to be so pretty! They used to leave them to die down naturally but over the last ten years they've been cutting the verges too early, and we've had no daffodils."

So when GLPC asked for community improvement ideas Liz suggested restoring the spring flowers. GLPC agreed to fund it and also asked MK Council to donate some bulbs. The Scouts are planting all the bulbs this autumn, along Hainault Avenue in Giffard Park and Hammond Crescent in Willen Park. Both Liz and her husband Jonathan are volunteer Parish Guardians, so if you see them out and about, picking up litter or walking their Labrador, you know who to thank for bringing daffodils back to this corner of Milton Keynes.



Photo by Mark Coster.

REDHOUSE PARK NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH COMMUNITY PICNIC *By Sandy Henry*

Helping to reduce crime within the estate is just one focus of the Redhouse Park Neighbourhood Watch group. The other is to help create a community spirit through social events; especially important for our new and growing estate.

Community spirit was certainly in evidence on the 10th of August, when a sub-committee of members organised and held our first community picnic. This took place around the pond in The Hambledines, in the North East corner of Redhouse Park. Luckily it was perfect picnic weather! A crowd of some 45 residents and their children enjoyed games, a treasure hunt and raffle. Local retailers donated most of the prizes, while the raffle raised funds for Willen Hospice.

While even more neighbours would have been welcome, we still attracted the occupiers of nine new residences to join the group and made new friends. It was a very successful day for our first neighbourhood event. Roll on the next one!

For information on membership or forthcoming events, please contact Sandy Henry, Co-ordinator RHP NHW. Tel: 01908 614797

A Lively summer for local kids!



Every year GLPC's Summer of Fun programme gets more ambitious.

It is a good way of helping local children (and parents) through the long summer break. Administrator Les Martin helps organise all the events and this year she booked 45 adults and 255 children into activities old and new.

This year's most popular activities were tennis, special operations, survival skills,



Kids take aim with Sgt Mack.

laser tag and Future Foodies cookery classes. The feedback for 'Special Ops' was very good showing that the children thoroughly enjoyed their day in the open air with army veteran Sgt. Mack!

Parkour, street dance and orienteering were main targets for the boys, while more girls chose musical theatre, drama and dance. However both were keen to try circus, tennis and cookery.

NEW PLAY AREA

for Redhouse Park

A giant newt, multi-use games area and climbing equipment for toddlers are just part of the new play area underway off Rowditch Furlong, in Redhouse Park. Jamie Chalmers, the Landscape Adoptions Officer for MK Council, has been working with local residents and Country & Metropolitan, the house-builder, to fulfil the developer's obligations in the best possible way.

"We had a very useful public consultation early this year and, after the original delays, things are now progressing well," says Jamie. The project, which he describes as "very high specification", is likely to cost the developer around £200,000.

Councillor David Stabler, who has been involved in the Redhouse Park development since planning began in 2004, says "The open space/play area should have been designed and approved before the 100th dwelling was occupied. It was only pressure from the

residents, with a helping hand from GLPC, that finally kick-started the delivery of this essential play park."

The views of local residents have been wrapped into the plans, which now include:

- An area for various ball sports, to keep youngsters safely off the streets
- Retaining the pond, as part of the strong desire for a natural feel to the area
- Providing play equipment suitable for all age ranges

A controversial proposal to include a concrete 'three piece suite' as a piece of public art has been abandoned, and MK Council's public arts department will work with residents to develop an art scheme more suited to the location.

Meanwhile, the planning application has been filed, and contractors are already at work clearing the site. Jamie, who has been chasing this project for several years, is pleased that the



end is in sight; "There are no other community facilities in Redhouse Park so it's important to get this right. Fortunately Donna Goodship and lots of other residents have been very active and the developer has been very willing to listen. It's about having a landmark and creating a sense of identity. I'm optimistic that, subject to planning approval, the play area should be open in early 2014."

ABOVE: Spot the newt! Plans of new Redhouse Park play area, courtesy of Miracle Design & Play Ltd.

Community celebrates another ECO FESTIVAL

What with giant bees roaming the grounds, pond life under the microscope and dizzying walls to climb, there was plenty to amuse visitors at this summer's Eco Festival, held in Great Linford. Dog-lovers enjoyed the huge range of canines in the dog show, from sharp-eared Japanese Akitas to silky Afghan Hounds. "It was great to see such a wide variety of people taking part. I think our local Eco Festival is now firmly on the map," says Ruth Panther, organiser.

LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: MK Mayor Councillor Brian White greets 'queen bee' Brittany Wilkinson of MK Friends of the Earth; Tess Halling and Rosie the Afghan Hound; Garden therapy from Branch-out MK; Pedal-powered smoothies; Henry a Greyhound Friends rescue dog; South Midlands Orienteering Club; The Conservation Volunteers.



All photos by Linda Inoki except Queen Bee, by David Stabler.



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