

Northby NorthEast

Local Community News

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Let's get
together!

OVER A CUP OF TEA...

...at the new community bookshop and coffee shop in Great Linford.

See The Little Bookshop on page 3

ON A FRIENDLY WALK...

...join your new Parish Ranger and help spruce up your area.

See Patrolling the Parish on page 5

AT THE SUPER NEW COMMUNITY CENTRE...

...in Conniburrow.

Join Joy Cowell at the new facility on Page 6

contacts

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

Conniburrow

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Vacancy - please contact Parish Manager if interested

Parish Manager

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Front Cover:

Spring Celebrations in Milton Keynes.
Photo by Mark Coster.

Reporter: Linda Inoki.



spring 2013

councillor comment

Solving problems together

A local resident came into the parish office last month and berated the Parish Manager. Her complaint was that none of Great Linford parish councillors had been through a contested election and therefore they did not necessarily represent the local community. She also accused us of using public money for 'pet' projects that reflected our own interests rather than those of the community we serve.

Although it was unfair to direct her frustration at the Parish Manager, in many respects she had a point! There are only eleven parish councillors serving the community at present and not the twenty there should be. None of us have been through a contested election because nobody else has been prepared to take an active interest in their parish by standing for election. Again, although we are working to a five year strategic plan no-one has asked to see it in at least two years, and only twice have members of the public attended a full council meeting, even though these are public meetings, and take place twice each month.

Why is there so little interest in the parish council? As a council we manage several sports facilities and open spaces, and six allotment sites. We provide services that help tackle local environment issues and work closely with residents and other parties to solve local problems. Milton Keynes Council has to consult us when they receive a planning application and we provide a local perspective before they take any planning decisions. Our volunteer network of parish guardians helps us to pinpoint issues and look for solutions as well as provide information to residents and feedback on consultations

Parliament passed the Localism Act in 2011 and now much more responsibility will begin to flow from Milton Keynes Council to parish councils. This includes the transfer of MK Council's assets into parish council ownership, and the responsibility for providing certain services too.

This is a considerable challenge for us but it will also give residents more control over their locality. That is why we are preparing a Neighbourhood Plan which will set in policy the 'blueprint' for development within the parish for the next 25 years, including housing, parkland, recreational facilities, transport, local facilities and local centres. Residents of each estate will have every opportunity to offer their views on each of these important issues through workshops and events. These events will be publicised in print and on the GLPC web site.

Therefore, if people are concerned that their parish council is unrepresentative and does not reflect the views of the local community, the solution is two-fold. First, more residents need to put their name forward to become co-opted as a councillor until the next elections in 2014. Secondly, all residents need to take part in the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan so that it truly reflects the needs and aspirations of our local communities.



Keith Panes OBE

Chair of Great Linford Parish Council

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A BIG WELCOME to The Little Bookshop

Imagine a warm, friendly place you can pop in for a snack, pick up a book for as little as 50p, and meet neighbours you never knew were just around the corner. Sounds too good to be true? Well it's time to wake up and smell the coffee, because after two years in the making, the Little Bookshop has now opened in Great Linford.

I called in recently to meet Anwen Lewis and John McArthur, the couple behind this friendly enterprise. The Little Bookshop is just round the corner from the Co-op, off St Leger Drive, with room for a few tables to spill outside near Peartree Pond.

Inside, the bookshop is cheerful and cosy, with a wonderful selection of books. Anwen made me a great cup of coffee which was better than anything I've had in Starbucks, and for a fraction of the price. "People may not have much money, but they still deserve a nice cup of coffee!" she said with a grin.

Anwen grew up in Fishermead, and inherited a love of books from her father, Michael Lewis, who worked for The Ark, a well known shelter for young people. Later, she and her partner John lived in inner London, where they worked as teachers for children with learning disabilities.

Five years ago they moved to Great Linford for a change of scene, and when they saw the Local Centre looking bleak and run down they had a bright idea. "We had this vision of people sitting outside, enjoying the sun," said John, "a place where people could get together and bring the area back to life. There's still some way to go, but with a few flowers, a cycle rack and so on, it could look lovely!"

Back in the 70's, the unit was a newsagent and sweetshop, and before the days of 24-hour convenience stores, it would have been a busy spot for young and old. For some years the Co-op used it for

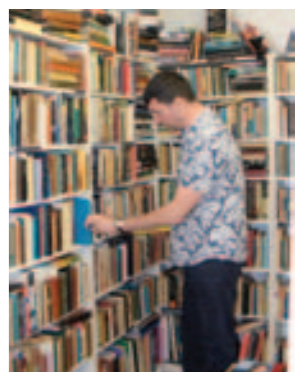
storage, but once again it's coming back to life.

During our chat several people stopped by to browse the bookshelves. One young lady flopped down on the sofa and fired up her laptop, a gentleman staggered in with donations of books, and two elderly ladies in wheelchairs came in from the brisk morning air for a hot drink with their carers.

"It's a dream come true," said Julia Salyuk, activity co-ordinator at the Willows Care Centre. "We're going to use it all the time."

The Little Bookshop was made possible through a grant from the Milton Keynes Community Foundation. It was also the first community interest company in the country to benefit from a new, subsidised rental scheme from the Co-op. Despite a great start, however, John and Anwen need local support to make the enterprise thrive. John says, "We haven't got much money for advertising, but we hope people will spread the word through friends and neighbours." Over to you!

Open 10am- 4pm daily (closed Wednesdays and Sundays)
Tel: 01908 412591



TOP LEFT: Anwen Lewis and John McArthur welcome visitors to The Little Bookshop.

TOP RIGHT: Local residents enjoying a friendly break.

RIGHT: Good reads galore at bargain prices!

BLAKELANDS | BOLBECK PARK | CONNIBURROW | DOWNHEAD PARK
DOWNS BARN | GIFFARD PARK | GREAT LINFORD | NEATH HILL
PENNYLAND | REDHOUSE PARK | TONGWELL | WILLEN PARK

YOUR PARISH TAXES are they good value?

G LPC looks after a large, varied parish which is home to 20,000 residents. Distinctive features include historic buildings, a conservation area, woods, ponds, canal, playgrounds, pubs, industrial estates and busy local centres.

Our priorities are to:

- provide and maintain a high quality local environment
- increase residents' involvement
- improve the management of the parish council
- work more closely with other organisations to help fund and deliver services.

To achieve this we rely on the precept or parish tax, charged to each household through the Council Tax system. This year the total precept amounts to £193,959, which is similar to last year. However, as part of the Government's austerity measures borough councils will lose millions of pounds in subsidies for Council Tax Benefits. As a result, MK Council has changed the formula for calculating parish incomes, which means we have had to increase your household charge to help make up the shortfall.

This year a Band D property will be paying £34.08 a year, which is up from £29.46 last year. It is the equivalent of paying £2.84 a month per house.

To keep the increase to a minimum GLPC has decided to use some of its reserves, which we have accumulated through good financial planning. We believe our budget will allow the parish to achieve its community goals even though MK Council is cutting back services.

Your parish taxes are essential to help fill the gap and complete some of the following tasks:

Community Asset Transfer. MK Council is off-loading several buildings and open spaces to community groups, including Downs Barn, Marsh Drive, Loriner Place and Sandy Close Depots. GLPC might take on the ownership and cost of maintaining these places to keep them for the benefit of the local community.

Parish Ranger. From April this year we will be employing a part time Parish Ranger. We have been trying this out for a few months, and residents have welcomed the move as a way to help deal with issues such as litter, overgrown shrubbery, dog fouling and vandalism. Our Parish Ranger is tackling these problems head on, quickly and effectively.

Producing a Neighbourhood Plan. This will help map out future development in the parish, and is being part-funded by Government grant.

Parish Grants. Last year the "Dragons' Den" project showed us how many community groups are doing great work on limited budgets in our parish. Therefore we have increased the grants available to groups this year to support their good work. Once again, we will also pay for security at the popular Waterside Festival to help ensure that it is safe and enjoyable for all.

For less than £3 a month for a Band D household, we hope you will agree that this is pretty good value!

ABOVE: Children enjoying some fresh air at Downhead Park play area.



GLPC Budget for 2013/14		
	Expenditure	Income
Operating Costs Includes salaries, office and communications	118,203	
Residents' Facilities Costs Includes allotments, sports facilities, playgrounds and community events. Some income is generated from hire	54,771	22,528
Project Costs Includes Community Asset Transfer, Neighbourhood Plan and Summer of Fun	128,989	
Sub Total	301,963	22,528
Net Expenditure	279,435	
Grants	26,969	
From Reserves	58,507	
Total Precept 2013/14	193,959	

Summer of Fun 2013 - see back page
Get ready for all your old favourites and some new activities too in GLPC's ever popular Summer of Fun programme of school holiday events.

Patrolling the parish

"...its so easy to clear up after your dog, even if you're in a mobility scooter".

On a bright, frosty morning in spring, I met up with Parish Ranger Simon Bates for a patrol of the footpaths round Great Linford. It was a sparkling morning with robins hopping through the hedgerows and the moon still visible in the sky. But Simon had no time to enjoy the scenery. He was on the lookout for irresponsible dog-owners: people who spoil the landscape for everyone by leaving piles of poisonous dung in their wake.

In the space of an hour Simon had greeted over half a dozen dog-walkers, politely asking if they needed any poo bags. Most people instantly reached for their pockets to show they were well-equipped, but a few looked embarrassed, as well they might.

"Sometimes people say there aren't enough dog bins around, but I just explain that they can double-bag any poo and drop it in any ordinary litter bin. It goes off to landfill, along with the other rubbish, and it's not against the law. But dog fouling is!"

Simon says some people have even stopped walking their children to school because of the mess. "But it's so easy to clear up after your dog, even if you're in a mobility scooter," says Simon, brandishing the latest pooper-scooper device, which scoops and bags in a few, deft clicks.

"Dog fouling is a constant headache for most parish councils," says Parish Manager Eirwen Tagg, "but it already costs £3,600 a

year for the dog bins, and paying for more isn't the answer. Nor is throwing it in the hedgerows, where it's a hazard for children and wildlife. Now that we've got a Parish Ranger out and about in his high-viz jacket we hope it will make a difference. And he's pretty nippy on his bicycle when needs be!"

The ranger's other duties include getting the shears out, if he finds overgrown paths in need of a quick trim, dealing with litter and fly-tipping, and generally working with residents to solve various problems where 'a stitch in time saves nine'.

"I have had the odd person shouting in my face, especially when I've caught them parking in a disabled spot, and running in to the local chippy," says Simon with a twinkle in his eye, "but generally people are very friendly and appreciative, and that's one of the best things about being on parish patrol."

Simon is on duty 20 hours a week and is organising various neighbourly tidy-up days and walks. You can contact him about any problems you spot via the parish office on 01908 606613 or email ranger@great-linford.gov.uk

BELOW LEFT: Parish Ranger Simon Bates on litter and trolley patrol. BELOW CENTRE: Dog fouling is a punishable offence. BELOW RIGHT: Responsible dog owners welcome!





See you in Conniburrow!

After three years of hard work, Joy Cowell, chair of the Conniburrow Community Association, is clearly delighted to show people round the brand new community centre on Conniburrow Boulevard.

The airy pavilion offers a large hall which can be divided into two spaces, with a boardroom, kitchen and changing rooms.

After a disastrous fire in August 2010 destroyed the original pavilion, the future of this important community centre was in doubt. But Joy is nothing if not determined! "If it hadn't been for Joy, and her tireless work dealing with the Council, the insurance company, and managing the building project, there simply wouldn't be a community centre in Conniburrow any more," says Edwin Mahinda, trustee of the CCA.

"I'm pleased to say that bookings are coming in quickly, from regular bookings for lunch clubs and sports groups, to one-off private functions such as Christenings and children's parties," says Joy. Income from the community centre helps fund the CCA's extensive programme of activities for Conniburrow residents throughout the year.

Enquiries to Conniburrow Community Association, Neighbourhood House, Conniburrow, MK14 7AJ. Tel: 01908 670937 email: ccaoffice@conniburrow.org

TOP LEFT: Joy Cowell with keys of the new centre.



Gyosei Art Trail – Looking Good

Last autumn the residents' workshop was a great success, and spurred on some creative ideas. One lady popped into the parish office afterwards with some colourful origami birds that her husband makes, and hey presto - the idea of an origami sculpture was born!

To recap, the four themes for the new art trail along the Grand Union Canal are:

- The history of the canal
- Japanese connections
- Fish and fowl
- Insects and invertebrates

Some of the most popular types of artworks on the wish-list include a mosaic, set into one of the bridges or footpaths,

and a living picture made from spring bulbs and wildflowers. These are artworks the community can help to create.

In recent months the project team has been studying the banks of the Grand Union Canal, finding just the right spots where different works of art could go. "Now the different landowners have a clear map to work from, and can choose the sites they prefer," says Councillor David Stabler.

Since residents have been so enthusiastic, GLPC has also set its sights on a more ambitious trail. As well as using the original grant of £60,000, David thinks the parish council might succeed in winning further art grants.

"We'd like to make the Art Trail as remarkable as we can," says arts consultant Liisa Clark. "The aim is to enhance this green, lush part of the countryside, and show artworks living in harmony with nature."

All being well, GLPC hope to commission the first artworks this summer. Watch this green and pleasant space!

ABOVE LEFT: The new art trail will follow the Grand Union Canal. *Photo by Bryan Lea*
CENTRE: Painting a picture in spring bulbs. *Photo by Mark Coster*

ABOVE RIGHT: Sample of mosaic artwork by Melanie Watts

news

your local news



TOP: Bletchley Park veteran William Edwards, left, at Peartree Pond with Alan Senior, right.

ABOVE: Volunteers working on the large new raised herb garden in the Community Orchard at Loriner Place, Downs Barn.

BELOW: Mrs Jenny Sharp, GLPC Parish Clerk 2002-2008.



GRANTING COMMUNITY WISHES

Thanks to volunteers from the Peartree Pond Association, and a grant from the parish council's "Dragons' Den" project, wheelchair users in Great Linford can now feed the ducks in safety. Marcus Smith and his small team of carpenters completed the installation in the freezing semi-darkness of January.

"There are dozens of local wheelchair users passing the Pond every day and now they will have somewhere easy and safe to sit, and watch the world go by," says Alan Senior, who won the grant last September.

"We're very pleased that this has been a local effort, with local funding, to enrich a small but important corner for the local community," says Alan.

Over in Downs Barn, meanwhile, the Great Linford Allotments Association has built an impressive new herb garden in a large raised bed, also with a grant from GLPC. The volunteers will plant as well as maintain the garden so that local residents can pick fresh, organic herbs. Nectar-rich flowers will also support wildlife such as butterflies and bees.

This year GPLC has put aside £6,000 for grants to benefit the local community. "Due to the shortage of Parish Councillors we will not be able to run the popular Dragons' Den event this year," says Eirwen Tagg, Parish Manager. "However we

encourage any residents' group, large or small, to apply for a grant as we may be able to help turn their community dreams into reality."

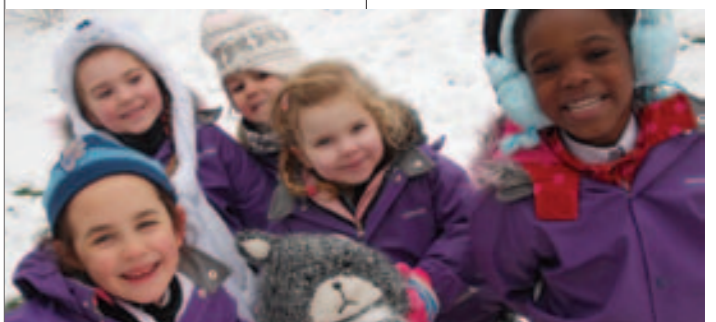
MRS JENNY SHARP, 1948-2013

Jenny Sharp was a true 'local girl'. She was born in Sherington and lived mainly in Newport Pagnell and Great Linford parish. Always active in the local community, Jenny was parish clerk to several parish councils, including GLPC.

Jenny served as a magistrate for seventeen years, stood for election as ward councillor for Newport Pagnell and was chair of the Great Linford Memorial Hall, where she helped to raise funds and manage the refurbishment.

Jenny was Parish Manager for GLPC during a busy period which included opening the Neath Hill office. Her husband Richard says she enjoyed her cruise liner holidays but always loved her work. "She treated the parish councils the same as her family. If they stepped out of line, she put them straight!"

Jenny is survived by Richard, two children and six granddaughters.



BYO BIN BAGS?

Some people have been complaining loudly because MK Council has cut the allowance of black sacks from 52 to 26 sacks a year. But this is because black bags end up in expensive landfill sites and it is so easy to recycle in Milton Keynes. If you are recycling everything from paper to plastic to old clothes you should have much less rubbish going into black sacks. Also they should only be put out for collection when full. Pink recycling sacks are free at the parish office but if you really need more black sacks you can always BYO - buy your own!

TOP OF THE CLASS!

The teachers and children at Great Linford Primary School have won praise in the latest Ofsted report for improving the school's performance, receiving a 'good' grade. The children have also been working with GLPC on the Big Tidy Up programme to reduce litter and improve recycling in the parish. Well done one and all!

BELOW: Happy days at Great Linford Primary School.

and finally...

a calendar of local events to look out for

APRIL

Conniburrow Tidy Up & Pond Clean Thursday 11th April

Let's get together for a local Spring Clean. Meet at 10am at Conniburrow Pond (near Woodruff Avenue).

MAY

Annual Parish Meeting

Wednesday 15 May, Great Linford Memorial Hall 7:30pm to 9pm. Our inspirational guest speaker will be



Pete Winkelman, of the MK Dons. Pete is a well known local figure, whose career spans the music industry, business and sports. He is also a resident of Great Linford Parish. This is your yearly chance to get together with residents from all over the parish. Come along and join in the debate about how we can tackle various problems together, and keep this a pleasant parish for all.

Neath Hill, Taylors Mews Area – Tidy Up Thursday 30th May

Get together with neighbours for a local Spring Clean.

JUNE

Waterside Festival, Great Linford Friday 15th June to Sunday 17th June

Fun, music and festivities in a lovely parkland setting.

JULY

Eco Festival & Dog Show Sunday 14th July

Marsh Drive Football Ground. From bee-keeping to cider-making, the second GLPC eco festival combined with the popular Dog Show promises to make this a fun day out for the entire family. Pick up crafts, plants, home-made goodies and lots of ideas from the many interesting stalls.

Summer of Fun Monday 29th July to Friday 30th August

Weekly events for residents of all ages throughout the Summer Holidays. Return of popular activities including Sgt Mack, Ninja & Paramount Parkour, MK Play Association, juggling, circus skills and dance. Most activities are free or available at very affordable ticket prices. A full programme of activities will be included in the next issue of North by North East.

SEPTEMBER

Guerilla Garden Friday 13th September

We are looking for an overgrown area that needs some attention. Please send us your suggestions.

Parish Ranger Days Thursday 25th April Friday 17th May Thursday 27th June Friday 26th July Thursday 29th August Friday 20th September

Get out and about with Simon Bates, your friendly Parish Ranger, and find out how to improve your local district.

Contact the parish office or check the new, easy-to-use website for further details of all our events.

don't forget...

Get together with Pete Winkelman at the Annual Parish Meeting

15 May, 7.30-9pm



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