



90TH BIRTHDAY FOR THE WAR MEMORIAL HALL

Chorleywood War Memorial Hall first opened its door in 1922. Funded by public subscription to commemorate those who died in the First World War, the hall has long been a well-known village landmark.

Delving back into the history of the Hall, the minutes of the inaugural meeting held in August 1922 record that Captain Lawford was elected Chairman and that the first users were the Infant Welfare Association, who were charged five shillings per meeting. They were swiftly followed by the Girl Guides, the Chorleywood Choral Society and Badminton. The Hall was extended in 1969 to add a stage and changing rooms (see article in our summer 2006 edition on our website).

Over the years it has hosted a dazzling array of activities including dog shows, horticultural shows, indoor bowls, jumble sales, quizzes, dance and drama lessons and performances, pantos, keep fit, antique fairs and countless lectures. As well as all these, the Hall is an important venue for all sorts of private functions and celebrations.

Cllr. Max Green, a previous Chairman of the Council, recalls an incident from a few years ago after he had introduced radio clocks to the Parish Council and the halls. Controlled by a transmitter from Rugby, the clocks are completely accurate and adjust automatically to British summertime. However, the caretaker was unaware of this and went in early one morning to adjust the clock. Unknown to the caretaker, Cllr. Green was also there, out of sight in a corridor behind the stage trying to fix a leak. The strange noises emerging from the apparently empty hall and the fact that the clock had mysteriously gained an hour without human intervention may have contributed to the myth of the Memorial Hall ghost....

The Council is considering ways to commemorate the Hall's 90 years of service, so keep an eye on the web site.

GRAZING UPDATE

The Parish Council has revised its plans for grazing on Chorleywood Common to take account of residents' concerns with the scheme used in 2011. A working party has been set up and is in the process of meeting with those people who contacted the Council both in favour and against the original proposals to explain the new plan. It is still believed that grazing will prove to be a great benefit to the biodiversity of the Common and we hope that the cattle will be back this Autumn but with temporary fencing being used for the whole enclosure. A survey of Larks Meadow will be carried out during this coming year so that any improvements to the plant life following a period of grazing can be determined.

Councillor's contact details are available from the Parish Council Officers, Parish notice boards, or from the Council's Website.

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Chorleywood Matters



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NEWS & VIEWS FROM CHORLEYWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT

The precept is the tax set by the Parish Council to finance its functions and is collected by the District Council as part of the Council Tax.

For the fourth year running there has been no increase to the precept; in fact, due to the increase in properties within the Parish, the precept has been reduced by 0.14% from £56.19 to £56.11 per annum for a Band D property. Due to careful budgeting the Council will continue to offer its usual services and will still be able to fund the Christmas lights in the village centre and Chorleywood Village Day.

PETER HITS 65

Peter Monahan, our Senior Parish Ranger, has been with the Parish Council now for over twenty years. When he joined us, the Common was managed merely as a recreation area, mowed closely six times a year. When the Council learned of the ecological importance of the Common and the need for more sensitive management of the site, it decided to employ its first Ranger.

During Peter's time with the Council he has overseen these changes, which have re-discovered the Common's diversity of habitat and seen it become a County Heritage and Wildlife Site and a Local Nature Reserve, with countryside recognition of its environmental importance.

Peter will reach retirement age this spring, but we are glad to be able to tell you that he wishes to continue with us for at least another two years, while reducing his hours to three days a week. So we shall not be losing his knowledge and experience entirely just yet.

AN APPRENTICE RANGER?

The Council is now looking to fill this approaching gap in the work force and has been in contact with local colleges that run Apprentice Training Courses in Countryside Management with a view to taking on an apprentice ranger.

These courses are fully funded by the Government and the cost to the Council would only be for pay and equipment for the apprentice. The course work is mainly online with monthly workplace assessments. Courses do not adhere to traditional academic terms and a Level 2 Course is usually completed in about 18 months. These courses are available to more mature students as well as school leavers. The colleges would fully support the Council should they wish to recruit from the local area.

The Council is in favour of taking on an apprentice via such a scheme and has opened discussions with Oaklands College on how to move this forward. We would be looking to start recruitment in late spring with employment to commence in late summer/early autumn.

Peter will be a hard act to follow but, if you care about the environment, value the Common, enjoy working outdoors and think this apprenticeship might suit you, please contact Oaklands College at www.oaklands.ac.uk. Further details will be placed on the web site in due course.

CHANGES IN POND MANAGEMENT

Recently nature conservation organisations such as Natural England and other experts have reviewed their ideas on how ponds should be managed. They are now recommending that "natural succession" should be allowed to take place. This term describes the process by which ponds go through transition from newly-created, bare pools, which then become increasingly vegetated, gradually accumulate organic matter and silt and then dry out. Since this gradual change is a natural process, particular plants and animals have adapted to living in ponds at these different stages. It is therefore beneficial for wildlife to have ponds at differing stages of development and thus maximise the diversity of species. For example, great crested newts prey on the larvae of smooth and palmate newts and on tadpoles, but they like deep water. As a pond loses its depth of water, the great crested newts will move to another pond, leaving the other species, which are comfortable in shallower water, free to develop.

The advantage of having a cluster of ponds, as we do on the Common, is that species can move from one pond to another as the conditions change. So allowing some ponds to become shallow will help increase the variety of amphibians and invertebrates, rather than trying to keep all the ponds at the same mid-life stage. The expert advice now is that we should avoid "over-maintenance". So from now on we shall be looking at gradually moving our ponds to different stages of succession, from newly cleared to almost dry.

No ponds will be lost. When one pond reaches the end of this natural succession process, it will be cleared and will begin again. Nor will this happen overnight. A deep pond like Darvells could take many years to dry out. Also we are exploring various areas on the Common to see whether we can create one or two new ponds, so that there will always be some ponds with clear water and attractive marginal vegetation.



POND WORK THIS YEAR

The main pond work this year will be to restore Christchurch pond. This pond has lost almost all its aquatic vegetation and nearly a metre of silt has accumulated at the bottom. A uniform cover of duckweed last summer indicates that the level of nutrients in this pond is far too high. This is partially due to leaf fall into the water and vegetation and trees around the pond have been cut back to reduce this. However, this pond's water quality is also being affected by run-off from the A404 via a drain. A reed bed has been created, with help from the Friends of the Common volunteers, to filter out the run-off but further action on the drain will be required. Silt in the pond has been sent for analysis and been found to contain high levels of contaminants. The Council is now awaiting advice from the Environment Agency on how we should best clear and dispose of this.

As newts are still present and breeding in this pond, major work cannot begin until the autumn when the newts leave the ponds to hibernate.

PLAY AREA

Following an announcement by Three Rivers District Council that it was allocating £95,000 for improving play facilities in Chorleywood, the Parish Council formed an Advisory Committee to see where a play area might be accommodated. The committee comprised two Parish Councillors, two representative of Friends of the Common and one representative each from Chorleywood Residents' Association and Chorleywood Mums.

Over a period of two months the Committee discussed all possible sites in the Parish and made site visits to three areas: Chorleywood Common, Chorleywood House Estate and the Swillett play-ground. Pros and cons for each site were detailed and the Police were invited to give their opinion on any safety issues. As a result, a few areas on the Common were discounted on their recommendation.

Following this groundwork, the Advisory Committee formulated a detailed and informative report of its findings, identifying the advantages and disadvantages for all possible sites in Chorleywood for formal and informal play opportunities and recommending an upgrade of the existing facilities at the Swillett. This is available on the Parish Website.

This was submitted to the Open Spaces Committee of the Parish Council, who agreed to forward the report to Three Rivers Council. Any further action on this matter is now the responsibility of the District Council. The Council is very grateful to all the members of the Advisory Committee for the work they have put in on this study.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

* For more details contact Chorleywood Business Association



ADDITION TO THE WEBSITE

The Parish Council is introducing several useful new features to its website. One of these is a Diary of Events for activities in Chorleywood. The aim is to promote events run by not-for-profit or charitable organisations, including schools. If you are running such an event and would like to publicise it on the Parish website, please contact Claire at admin@chorleywood-pc.gov.uk

NEW DOG BINS

The Parish Council would like to thank Chorleywood Residents' Association for the donation of two dog bins for the Common.

These have been sited at the Lorry Permissive Parking Area on the A404 and opposite Appletree Dell on Dog Kennel Lane. May we also remind you that dog bags are available at Chorleywood Library, the Parish Office and are now also available at Chess Veterinary Clinic, in Main Parade Chorleywood.

Chorleywood French Market
13th May 2012*

Village Day on the Common
14th July 2012
for more details please contact the Parish Office.

Parish Council Charity Quiz Night
24th November 2012

Christmas Festival
7th December 2012*