

February 2021

Teme TRIANGLE

Clifton upon Teme • The Shelsleys • Lower Sapey



Shelsleys' Car-ol Service

In this edition

- ✦ Clifton Four Acre Field Latest
- ✦ Shelsley Parish Council Project
- ✦ Clifton School On-line Learning
- ✦ Former Rector's New Book

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A wintery scene in Clifton

EDITOR: Jerry Johns
WEBSITE/CLIFTON NEWS: 01886 812304
crown.house@polperropress.co.uk
SHELSLEYS NEWS: Michelle Whitefoot:
michelle@whitefootpr.co.uk
LOWER SAPEY NEWS: Marion West 01886 853249
marionjeanwest@googlemail.com
ADVERTISING/SPONSORSHIP: Andrew and Anna Brazier
01886 887898
teme.triangle@thebraziers.co.uk

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Front Cover Picture

The Rev Canon David Sherwin on guitar with a pop-up choir at the Car-of Service held in the Shelsley Walsh hillclimb paddock (see page 19) .

CLIFTON PARISH COUNCIL

Four Acre Field Project

Parish councillors have unanimously approved the completed application to Malvern Hills District Council for S106 funding for the Four Acre Field Project presented by Chris Hurley and his team, subject to a minor change in the project management costing. The application is now with the District Council whose Community Services Manager, Mark Hammond, described it as: ‘One of the best that the Council has worked with over a number of years... underpinned by very good levels of community and contractor engagement which is pleasing to see. I will be signposting other communities in your direction as an example of best practice’.

Responsibility for the project is now in the hands of the Parish Council. It is hoped that the children’s play area and sport zones will be completed in time for the school summer holidays, with the perimeter path following in the autumn. The bowling green is expected to be ready for 2022. The Parish Council is grateful to Chris Hurley and his team for their hard work.

The Sensory Garden, which forms an integral part of the main project, was also approved in principal to allow work to continue on its planning and design.

Parish Council Chairman John Bowden said: “We are looking forward to delivering this project, once we get the final go-ahead from Malvern, and bring to fruition something that will really enhance the village and provide excellent facilities for young and old alike.”

Improving The Village

The Parish Council is reviewing its current maintenance schedules and is looking to improve the look and the attractiveness of the village and is seeking views and ideas as to how this might best be done and what villagers would like to see. This will build on the Four Acre Field Project and, whilst the budget is limited, this is an opportunity to combine the two issues and make Clifton upon Teme an even better place to live. If anyone would like to offer any ideas, please email them to the clerk of the Parish Council via the Parish Council website or drop a note in to the Village Shop before the end of February.

Draft Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of Clifton Parish Council held Thursday 7th January 2021

Present: Councillors J. Bowden (Chairman), A. Henry (Vice-Chairman), R. Henry, J. Colins and B. Gilbert. Also present: County Cllr K. Pollock, C. Hurley and J. Johns.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Clifton Hill Helpers for their continued support to the community. A moment of silent reflection was held following the recent deaths of two residents, in separate tragic circumstances.

Apologies: Councillor C. Haywood, Clerk M. Alexander and District Cllr C. Palethorpe.

To agree the Minutes of a virtual meeting held 3rd December 2020 – The minutes were agreed as a true record. Proposed Cllr Bowden, seconded Cllr Gilbert. All agreed.

Matters arising/reports – Finishing the tree work in Kenelm Close (R. Wilks) / Additional vehicle activated signage monitors for the village (possible funding contribution from County Cllr Pollock) – the Clerk to liaise with KP re costs / PC contribution / Hedge at Pound Lane, opposite the school – R. Wilks liaising with resident re cutting back / Lovells development – verge damage by vehicles – the Clerk to liaise with Highways re tarmac options. Also, re removal of development signage? / Road closure notices – could a white board be in place to show local businesses open and accessible? The Clerk to liaise with Highways. / Footpath closure notices – the Clerk is checking why we aren't receiving notices from WCC / Shelsley Walsh could also circulate information to local parishes? It may be that WCC are emailing the wrong PC address? Leaves removal around the village – work completed recently.

District & County Councillor Reports: Reports to be uploaded to the website as circulated.

County Cllr Pollock reported - The Old Road will be closed from 10th Feb for works (max 3 days) – notice to be circulated. WCC Cabinet have looked at next year budget – details are available on the website. Balanced budget planned, and increase will be 2.5% overall. Allocation of funding for schools also explained and concerns noted re deprivation in rural areas. Noted that the Lengthsman Scheme is to continue during lock down periods, subject to risks being assessed locally.

Financial & Governance Matters: Payments were approved as per the schedule circulated. Parish Website – the Clerk is working with B. Higgins currently to update the website. Parish Precept & Draft Budget as circulated by the Clerk - C. Hurley's comments re the CFAF project maintenance figures were noted. Cllr Bowden proposed acceptance of the draft budget and £30,000 precept to remain unchanged, seconded Cllr R. Henry. All agreed. Clerk to notify MHDC.

Parish Matters: Village Archive Storage – Cllr Gilbert & J. Johns updated that they are waiting for the school to confirm that it can go ahead. Damp damage a current concern - a survey has been requested via Place Partnership but is taking a while. Discussion took place re other survey options / costs, but it was noted that the building is not a PC asset and belongs to the school. Cllr A, Henry raised concern about the PC paying for a survey if it is not a PC asset, and Cllr Gilbert agreed to look at further options.

Section 106 Matters: CFAF Committee update (C. Hurley): A briefing had been circulated by Cllr Bowden, which was noted. Cllr Bowden asked the Council to consider including project management costs as part of the s.106 application to be submitted. C. Hurley confirmed that MHDC had confirmed that these costs could be built into the application, but he believed that this had not yet been agreed by the PC at previous meetings. Costs for Project Management would need to be assessed and could be as much as £5k - £8k – possibly round up project costs to £250K? C. Hurley raised concern about this money being used now rather than being retained for future local projects. Cllr Bowden confirmed that project management can be supported through MHDC Property Services. C. Hurley confirmed that there is currently no contingency built into the project costs so any project management costs would need to be added on to the bottom line total. The application would need to be amended to reflect this addition. It was noted that there will still be additional s.106 funding available to the village following this project. C. Hurley also suggested that the PC should indicate a contribution to the project costs as this would be supported by MHDC. Further to discussion, Cllr Bowden proposed that the Project Management fees should be drawn from the s.106 funding. Cllr R. Henry asked how prejudicial to the process, not having a PC contribution to the project

would be? C. Hurley confirmed that MHDC already understood the basis of the application but that any PC contribution would also be beneficial to the application. Any s.106 money from Hope Lane development would also benefit from an underspend in this current tranche. Cllrs A. Henry and Collins also acknowledged the comments made during these discussions but supported the CFAF project going forward. Cllr Gilbert suggested 50% PC funds / 50% s.106 funds for project management costs? C. Hurley confirmed that contractor costs are now 'locked' and that any s.106 money would be drawn down from MHDC to the PC bank account for invoice payments. VAT timing / cashflow will also be critical going forward. C. Hurley also confirmed that to round up the project to £250k, the project management costs would be shown as £8533.33 (estimated fig) and cross reference that within the application. Further to discussion, Cllr Gilbert proposed that the PC contribute £4k of the costs to the approximate project management amount suggested. Seconded Cllr Bowden. All agreed. C. Hurley then confirmed that the total of the application for s.106 funding would then become £245k. Cllr Bowden then made the following proposal, seconded by Cllr R. Henry and which was agreed unanimously –that Clifton upon Teme Parish Council formerly applies to Malvern Hills District Council for circa £245,000 (or as required) of Section 106 grant funding, to deliver a range of community improvements at Clifton Four Acre Field in line with the draft Section 106 application. Specifically, to include: - The creation of new children's play zones / The development of new sports zones / Drainage improvements for the existing football pitch and new play zones / Redevelopment of the bowling green and surrounds / Creation of a perimeter path / Car park improvements / Project management fees. It was further proposed by Cllr R. Henry, seconded by Cllr Gilbert, that finalisation of the application, including further engagement with Malvern Hills District Council as required, is delegated to the Parish Council Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Parish Council and CFAF Project Team Lead C. Hurley. All agreed unanimously. C. Hurley also reported that the CFAF project will be used as a best practice model by MHDC, and thanks were given by the Parish Council for all the work completed by Chris and the team.

Sensory Garden – H. Hurley has had to leave the project team, but the rest of the team will move this forward. Heather was thanked for all her hard work. Cllr Gilbert commented that the project is very worthwhile and should be fully supported by the Parish Council and there is a need to move forward while EU funding remains available from Natural Networks (NN). C. Hurley confirmed that the PC would need to provide cash flow initially as NN funding is paid retrospectively (approx. Autumn 2022). Garden submissions to NN will be required early summer 2021. Cllr Gilbert proposed that the project is accepted in principle at this stage with further cost detail to be confirmed by the team, to enable the project to be progressed. Seconded Cllr A. Henry. All agreed.

Section 106 Community Transport Proposal – matter currently with WCC Officer and awaiting an update via the Clerk.

Planning Matters: Notifications Received – 20/01800/HP Hope End, Hope Lane, Clifton WR6 6DN – front single storey extension to create increased entrance space and utility room. Bedroom dormer window to the side of the property. No objections submitted.

It was noted that several Councillors are attending the MHDC Planning course next week.

Highways Matters: Parish Lengthsman – no update made.

Correspondence: A letter had been received from Brookside Fire who need to access the pavilion to service the fire extinguishers – Cllr Bowden has made arrangements.

Councillors Reports & Items for Future Agendas: Cllr A. Henry reported concerns raised about litter locally and asked if equipment could be made available for residents to use. Cllr Henry will liaise with the Clerk about what can be done currently – next agenda item. It was noted that playing field bins are currently being replaced and delivery is awaited. Cllr Gilbert reported on the recent school proposal to raise funds. Cllr Gilbert also asked about the Lengthsman scheme and future general maintenance around the village and of our assets – should a forward plan be drafted / allocated funds? It was suggested that Cllrs Bowden, Gilbert and the Clerk should meet to discuss next steps. The Clerk to arrange a meeting and all Cllrs to suggest items for inclusion. Next agenda item.

Next virtual meeting to be held Thursday 4th February 2021 by Zoom invitation.

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SHELSLEYS COVID HELPLINE

Who would have thought nearly a year on, that we would be in our third national lockdown due to coronavirus! Such a terrible time for the country, during what some consider to be the most depressing months of the year anyway. However, with the national vaccination programme now being rolled out, let's hope and pray that this is the last time we are all confined to our houses.

But whilst we are, please remember that there is a group of willing volunteers in the Shelsleys, happy to help anyone needing support - whether that be with practical issues such as shopping, looking after / walking pets, delivering medication, or simply with moral support if someone is isolating, or just needs a friendly voice to chat to on the phone.

Whatever the reason may be, please do not hesitate in contacting us and we will ensure that one of the volunteers assists you as soon as possible. In the first instance, please contact the group co-ordinator Louise Hutton on 01299 896 126.

And please, please remember that the lockdown rules apply to each and every one of us and it is everyone's responsibility to keep our villages safe. The commitment from every individual in abiding to the rules is what makes this such a caring and supportive community.

A friend shared the drawing below with me and I think it very apt for the current situation. It reminds us that things 'will' get better... and the sight of snowdrops in the garden this week demonstrates that there are better times coming...

Louise Hutton



CLIFTON PRIMARY SCHOOL ONLINE LEARNING

Clifton Primary School's 81 pupils have started the new term this year by adopting remote learning via Seesaw, a classroom app that their teachers can upload schoolwork as well as using the school's own website.

Head teacher Karen Groves said: 'It was brilliant to see all of the children during their live sessions on Google Meet where they shared how they are getting on, as well as playing some fun games with their friends. I have a feeling these sessions will prove to be a real highlight of the week. The staff team has been so impressed with all of the brilliant work that is being uploaded to Seesaw and the way in which the children are responding to their feedback.'



In a message to parents, Mrs Groves added: 'I know that it is incredibly difficult to juggle everything at the moment and would like urge parents not to put pressure on themselves. Do what you can and please get in touch with your child's class teacher if there is anything else we can do as a school to support you'.

She also said it was 'amazing' to see almost every pupil via the online Friday live whole school assembly. 'We all believe it is so important to keep our wonderful community together during this lockdown period, even if we cannot be with each other in person. We have been overwhelmed by the kindness shown by members of the local community who have donated devices to the school in order to help children access the remote learning; this has made a real difference to families.'

SHELSLEYS PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY PROJECT

The national lockdown has reduced everyone's horizon and we have learnt to focus on our own landscape, possibly for the first time, appreciating what a very special place this is in which to live. The Shelsleys are fortunate in having valley, woodland and river walks, hills to climb and open spaces just to stand, look and relax.

The Parish Council would love to have any suggestions on how this parish could be made even more special and it has limited funds to use for the community benefit, be it a bench to appreciate a view, or maybe some bulbs to enhance one. Your suggestion might include an indoor activity when allowed, setting up a club or society, a walking group or promoting a local charity – anything which would be appreciated by those who live in this parish.

If you have an idea or a suggestion, please contact the Parish Clerk, Jan Speyer, on 01886 812 444. Or email shelsleyspc@gmail.com

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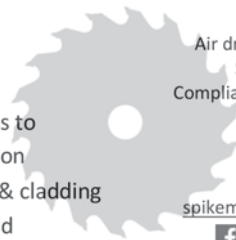
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LOWER SAPEY NEWS

A belated Happy New Year to everyone, may it bring us all good health, happiness and a possible return to near normal times. Just now, this is difficult to believe, but we must all have hope. Seeing the snowdrop and daffodil bulbs peeping through is a wonderful sight and the Spring will soon be here. We have the worst winter months to go through, but time flies, even in lockdown!

Being over 80, my husband and I have recently had our first Covid vaccine as I believe most in the area have and this brings hope for the future. The death rates from the virus continue to go up as do the hospital admissions and we all have great admiration for staff in hospitals and care homes who are dealing with this. Perhaps after the Christmas effect has gone through, these will improve and begin to fall.

My nephew lives and works in New York and by all accounts, it is much worse there and now they have the worry of the very odd behaviour of President Trump to cope with. The world is a very strange place just now and looking back to January 2020, it is difficult to believe where we are today.

Christmas and the New Year in Harpley passed very quickly and without the usual celebrations, although we had a very enjoyable Zoom Christmas service with some singing and poetry. This was very well 'attended'. By the time the lockdown is over, I may even have grasped the principles of zoom!

Because of the situation and the weather, the repairs to St Bartholomew's have not been started, though be assured, the plans are well in hand for this. It may be some time before we can hold proper services again, but anyone who wishes can still come for private worship on a Sunday. Please let Candy know beforehand if you would like to do this.

Celebrations (as such) for the New Year also seemed non-existent; no bells, no fireworks, but we did first foot at home, hoping this would bring better fortune for all in 2021. We hope this will include better health for Jen and for David Dallow and for all who have been ill recently.

We look forward now to lighter evenings, the spring bulbs, maybe the birds nesting in the new Church nest boxes and most of all, being able to meet up with friends and family., Take care, stay safe and well.

Margaret Griffiths

WINTER WARMER FUEL VOUCHERS

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PARISH COUNCILLOR VACANCY FOR SHELSLEY BEAUCHAMP

A vacancy has arisen to represent the parish of Shelsley Beauchamp. The Parish Council hopes to co-opt a new member at the meeting on November 10th 2020.

The Shelsleys Parish Council meets six times a year to discuss & decide local issues. Applicants do not necessarily have to live within the parish but must be within three miles of the parish boundary. The Clerk can give more details on eligibility.

If you are interested and would like more information or an application form please contact Jan Speyer 01886 812 444, email shelsleyspc@gmail.com.

FOOD BANK PLEA

The local food banks are in desperate need of 'bags for life' or even fabric homemade bags - anything that can help them to deliver food supplies to those in need.

If anybody has spare bags that they could donate, this would be hugely appreciated. Please drop them off at the door of 'Brockhill Lodge' (adjoined to Brockhill Court) and Beryl Robson will ensure that they are delivered to the local food banks. Thank you for your support and kindness.

Church Matters

by Rev Canon David Sherwin



Watching the news at the moment is quite an assault on our senses. We may range from compassion and tears to anger and rage at what we see happening in our world and in particular our country. There is Good news, but equally there is Bad news, sadly so often too much bad news.

It is important that we know what is going on, that we follow advice, yet in this day and age we are bombarded with information from so many sources. It can be a little overwhelming, but what I do not want to do with my short thought is overwhelm you nor cause you more stress rather I want to BLESS YOU.

It's a phrase we often use to infer upon someone we love, maybe if you see a baby the words 'bless' might flow from your lips, or you hear of someone doing something unselfish or achieve a goal, you want to say, 'Bless'.

But what do we mean and how can it help us at this moment? A blessing does indeed have its root in religion and as a Christian there is a specific reason for passing on a blessing, we want you to know God by your side in all you do and whatever you may face. A blessing is often seen as a prayer given to an individual or group that they might prosper, not just in a material way, but in ways that benefit their whole being and others around them.

I am privileged to be in a position to be asked from time to time to pray with someone, when I do, I always finish with a word of blessing, for me there is an added extra to the words 'Bless You'. I want to identify where the blessing comes from, for me that is God. So it is 'God Bless You', letting the persons know the source of that blessing. When Jesus walked the Earth people sought him out to bless them, with healing and wholeness so that their situation and lot in life might improve. We may not be one who has material or financial needs at the moment, although I know there are those for whom the situation has caused great distress in these areas, yet all of us need hope and blessing at this time. Just like the hope and blessing of that Vaccine Jab might bring to us to enable us to live a life of freedom once again, my prayer of Blessing for us all is one that will bring us a life of freedom both now and always as Jesus promised.

During a previous pandemic when Europe was engulfed by the plague of AD 590 the Church through Pope Gregory 1 ordered unceasing Prayer for divine intercession. Part of his command was that anyone sneezing should be blessed immediately, with the words, 'God Bless You', hence even to this day we hear

people say 'Bless you' when someone sneezes. Maybe at this point in time let's not wait for a sneeze to bless one another, let's use it as a prayer for the well being of each other whether ill or not, whether a key worker or not, whoever we are we all need to know God's blessing.

As I finish there are two blessings below for us to ponder:

The Biblical blessing; Numbers 6:24-26

24 May the Lord bless you and take care of you;

25 May the Lord be kind and gracious to you;

26 May the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace.

And a modern popular blessing;

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

The rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,

May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

God bless you all, David

Church Services

As I write this article we are in the midst of the third lockdown, and though churches are allowed to open for services of public worship we along with many have chosen to suspend such services until the numbers of cases decrease and it is once again safer to meet. However, this does not mean the church buildings are closed, they are not and each Parish offers certain times during the week and Sundays when the building is open for private prayer. You are welcome to use the building and will find guidance to help keep you and others safe.

For further information concerning your parish church opening you might like to go to 'achurchnearyou.com' and find your own parish where information about opening and when services will start again.

LOCAL CHURCH SERVICES IN FEBRUARY

7th February Celtic Morning prayer on ZOOM, Harpley

14th February 10.30am morning worship, St. Kenelm's Clifton

21st February Worcestershire West Rural Team (WWRT) joint service on Zoom.

28th February 6.30pm Evensong, St. Kenelm's Clifton

The Shelsleys; no services planned in the church building until March.

For details of the ZOOM links please contact Rev Canon David Sherwin 01886 888664, davidwin56@aol.com

Abbreviated Draft Minutes of The Virtual Shelsleys Parish Council Meeting held on January 12th 2021

Present: Dr Laura Taylor (Chairman), Mrs Karen Metcalfe (Vice- Chairman) Mrs Val Jones and Mrs Louise Hutton.

In Attendance: County Councillor Dr Ken Pollock, 1 member of the public and the Clerk.

Apologies: Mr David Bates, Mr J Stinton, Mr David Styles, Mrs Jean Hammond. (accepted). District Councillor Mrs Caroline Palethorpe. Declarations of Interest: None.

Minutes: The minutes of November 10th 2020 were agreed as a true record.

Public Question Time: Covered under Broadband.

County Councillor and District Councillor's reports: The full reports are available on the website details below. Highways: The Lengthsman submitted a time sheets for November. Agreed.

Planning: The application for 20/01964/HP Associated 20/01965/LB Harborough Bank Shelsley Beauchamp relocation of existing access and gates was discussed at length. There is no objection from the Parish Council but comments will be made to MHDC regarding the vision splay bordering a neighbouring property and the hope that the hedge and nearby damson tree will remain undamaged.

Precept: The Precept request for 2021/2022 will remain the same at £4,000

Finance: Payments authorised. Lengthsman's invoice for November £273.60. Clerk's salary and expenses for Q3 £525.85 HMRC PAYE £143.80. WCC Salt Invoice £124.72

Village Hall hire invoice. Not received.

Received WCC Lengthsman £156.00

Broadband: The Chairman welcomed Robert Stepniewski Senior Project manager Broadband & Connectivity Team Worcester County Council who gave an update on the current situation with the four projects progressing in the parish.

There are currently 215 projects with Openreach in Worcestershire four of which are in this parish. The Government states it wishes Superfast Broadband to be available to as many households and businesses as possible by 2025 and the national lockdowns have highlighted the need for such with home working and home schooling.

This first part of the project consists of 01299 numbers, currently 38 properties. The Openreach quotation for this project is £122,000

The next project which includes parts of Camp Lane, Birch Berrow, Fetterlocks Lane and an area near the old quarry has identified enough interest to secure funding via the gigabit voucher and WCC matched funding for the project to be viable and participating residents will be invited to claim free gigabit vouchers.

A further project in area around The Grange is more difficult. The physical terrain is challenging and the number of households is low. This project is looking at the

possibility of self-dig for the cables in order to keep costs low.

The final project is in Pudford Lane. 16 properties here could be involved but many households are already benefitting from the Martley Mesh and funding could therefore be more of an issue.

The cut off for Government funding via WCC has been advertised as 31st March 2021 but it is expected the scheme will be extended. Covid-19: The council will engage with the public via the *Teme Triangle* to identify ways in which the Parish Council could help financially with those organisations in the parish affected by Covid-19 or ways in which the parish could be enhanced now that so many residents have been enjoying their own locality.

Councillors' Reports and items for future agenda. The waste bin at The Stirt lay by is being well used, too well used at times. MHDC to be contacted to review the waste collection frequency and whether this would entail an extra cost. It was suggested that a litter pick be organised.

Lengthsman to be informed of blocked grating in Kingswood Lane.

Future Meeting Dates: March 16th 2021. May 11th 2021. July 13th 2021. September 14th 2021

The meeting concluded at 20.35

To view the minutes and agenda online go to the WCC website and look at The Shelsleys: <http://e-services.worcestershire.gov.uk/myparish/>

Jan Speyer Clerk 01886 812444

SHELSLEYS CAR-OL SERVICE

Our first ever Shelsleys Car-ol Service was an enormous success, attended by 94 adults and lots of children. The cars were very enthusiastically decorated, with a prize given for the best dressed car. The carol singing echoed all around the valley and could be heard as far away as Homme Castle!

We would like to thank the MAC most sincerely for allowing us to use the pits area at the Hill Climb and also the car parking stewards, who did an amazing job with the number of cars that arrived. It was a very happy, atmospheric event, led by David Sherwin playing his guitar and our pop-up choir who were in excellent voice.

Thank you to everyone for taking part and giving us something to celebrate together, which was a good start to Christmas.

Jane Froggatt

CLIFTON OLD ROAD CLOSURE

The Old Road in Clifton will be closed on Wednesday the 10th February for up to three days for a duct connection work to take place. Premises will be accessible from either end, but through traffic will need to use the main road.

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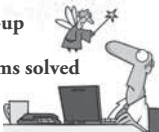


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FORMER RECTOR'S MEMOIRS

The Rev. Clifford Owen, Rector of Clifton, Lower Sapey and the Shelsleys between 1989-2002, has just published a book in which he describes 'fifty years of joys and trials as a Church of England vicar'. Two chapters of **10 Churches, 3 Crises, 1 God** cover the time he spent ministering in the Teme Valley parishes. In this first abridged extract, he describes his arrival and induction in Clifton in July 1989:



The United Benefice of Clifton-on-Teme, Lower Sapey, and the Shelsleys was described by my predecessor, Patrick Hobson, as 'perhaps the loveliest three parishes in all of England'. It sounded a bit OTT but it was obvious what he was referring to. I used to say that a professional photographer could make at least two Beautiful Britain calendars out of the views within the parish and beyond. Clifton-on-Teme is an attractive one third half-timbered village set around a curved village street almost 600 feet above the Teme Valley. The River Teme is one of the three big rivers that rise in Central Wales and flow to the Bristol Channel. The Severn and the Wye are the two well-known ones, but the Teme is not far behind in beauty; and it bisected our benefice. From the Rectory bedroom window I looked across to the Malvern Hills where Elgar gained inspiration for 'Pomp and Circumstance'. Slightly left and one looked to Bredon Hill and beyond to the Cotswold Edge above Broadway. More locally just beyond the Teme lay Woodbury Hill, where legend says the Welsh were supposed to have perched threateningly for a week in the days when the Welsh and English weren't so friendly to each other! It was a glorious part of England to live in and I could write not a few pages just as a guide book. However I have to lift the veil off the human species who inhabited it!

Sadness at my induction

I still have to own up to some nervousness when one is the centre of attention. Ordination was OK because there were five of us, but when being instituted into a new job as minister, all eyes are on you as first opinions are being formed by the locals of what you look like, how you sound and of course what 'Mrs Vicar' looks like! My induction at Clifton was on a glorious summer's evening in July 1989. It proceeded well. The service ran according to the script. Everyone did their bit and the six churchwardens had drilled with their wands like Roman soldiers escorting Caesar! We were enjoying the tea and refreshments in the village hall chatting away. "Owen, may I introduce you to Sir Francis and Lady Winnington", said Leonard [Birch], retired priest (and himself a veteran of the Dunkirk evacuation) with the caveat, "Let them speak to you first. He only has one arm" added Leonard. "He lost the other at Dunkirk".

Sir Francis Winnington then greeted me. "Welcome to the parish. I am Lay Rector. I gather I am responsible for the chancel". Putting on my best John Cleese, I replied: "Ah splendid. It's good to meet you Sir". Actually, I hadn't a clue what a lay rector was at that point, so I quickly consulted the churchwardens, who hadn't too much idea either.

But then my mother came up to me suddenly and said: "Where's Avis? A man has collapsed inside the hall and he doesn't look too good". Being a nurse and midwife, Avis was automatically summoned for medical emergencies. Sadly a local farmer from Lower Sapey, Tom Dallow, had had a cardiac arrest and passed away at my induction. Instantly I had to switch to pastoral mode and try to console a widow. Her family gathered around her and I was straight into the job.

One benefice, three parishes

I quickly discovered that the three separate parishes could have happily existed on their own planets. A united benefice is a theoretical ecclesiastical construct for logistical convenience! It defines a vicar's territory and is a financial unit for assessing quota, but beyond that any attempt to level out, unify the style of hymnbooks or mix the social pudding was done at one's peril! Colonel Bill was quickly off the mark by making sure I knew which services I was expected to take in the Shelsleys. Then one day at our regular churchwardens meeting he said: "Rector ('Clifford' came a few weeks later) I do have to point out to you that the people of the Shelsleys will not come up to Clifton". He said it with the tone of voice that Monty might have used in the Western Desert when pronouncing doom upon Rommel.

"OK, thank you for telling me Bill. I accept that and won't waste a grain of my energy trying to get them up to Clifton; but they will get the same sermons!"

It was a serious sociological comment, which most people in the benefice accepted. Dorothy, one of the Clifton churchwardens put it thus: "We do ask the Shelsleys to join in things from time to time but they always seem to display a certain amount of hauteur". Actually the division between Clifton and the Shelsleys may be rooted partially in the Civil War. Homme Castle on the Clifton side of the Teme Valley was in Royalist hands whilst Oliver Cromwell shelled it from Pudford Lane on the north side of the River. Cannon balls and other Civil War finds have been retrieved at the site. Given also that the County boundary was a moving piece of rope between Hereford and Worcester it is not hard to see how these differences between parishes can arise. I was whispered to after I had been there some years and informed quietly that the Shelsleys never really wanted to be joined up with Clifton. At a meeting with a previous archdeacon who came to outline the pastoral scheme, he was verbally abused! However, I got on with the job despite the bits of chequered history.

My first weeks and months in the new patch were almost universally good. A string of dinner parties quickly appeared in our diaries, mostly in the Shelsleys, and a few in Clifton. Some of those dinner parties were really 'old style'. A couple (including Colonel Bill's) were scaled down mess dinners. The mess silver was on the polished mahogany table top. The candelabra were aligned with a laser beam. The ladies dressed for dinner and retired after the sweet to another room to play scrabble whilst the men puffed at cigars! I doubt whether our conversation changed the world but the attempt was made.

Getting around the patch at Christmas and Easter

The benefice was roughly a rectangle six miles by three, but with narrow lanes and winding hills journeys took longer than the distance would suggest. I quickly discovered that all the churches hoped the rector to show his face at all services if at all possible. It was clearly unrealistic but still expected! My predecessor, Patrick Hobson, had cleverly evolved the system of 'top and tailing'. He had people to start and finish services whilst he would either arrive late or move on early. It required timing to the minute but it was just about do-able. So on Christmas and Easter mornings, when I really did think it important for me to see folk, I would make a good flask of coffee for the car, set off about 7.20 for St Andrew's, Shelsley Walsh and take the very traditional 8.00 Book of Common Prayer service in the time honoured way. It was almost entirely priest-led; no hymns, a short five minute word on the gospel or epistle, 'Merry Christmas' at the door and off I would set on the six miles to St Bartholomew's Lower Sapey, on the border of Herefordshire. A dozen or so folk would be waiting for me to start the 9.00 service, and they expected a good ten minute sermon at least (they were mainly Methodists). I managed to get them to have one or two hymns and they had an organist from the village. The congregation nearly always included the Patron, Ancrum, and his wife in the front pew. On a normal third Sunday Communion the organist liked a day off! So I would lead a hymn or two unaccompanied. Having been trained as a choirboy over many years I could stay in tune. The only snag was that Ancrum had a powerful voice and if I didn't 'give it some welly' (to use the country jargon) Ancrum could easily derail the whole hymn - the only way around it was to choose a hymn he didn't know! I used to give Lower Sapey their full hour's service and chat to folk afterwards. It always seemed important to me not to rush worship or cut the pastoral time down for the smallest church. After all it was their only Sunday service; although a few of us frequently said evensong. Ancrum insisted on it!

After Lower Sapey I had a quick coffee in the car and arrived back in the Rectory drive about 1015. At Clifton the first twenty minutes or so were led by an excellent Family Service planning team, who competently led everything and, on many occasions, did the talk. Obviously they expected me to preach for Christmas and Easter and celebrate Holy Communion. Clifton was invariably

well attended for a country church. 90 on the electoral roll and average Sunday attendance at least sixty.

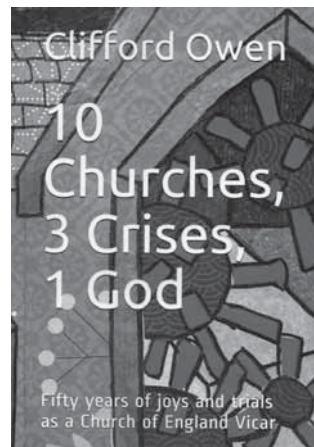
I would make sure I got away from Clifton after the blessing, and then drive down to Shelsley Beauchamp, where Colonel Bill would be in full flight leading Morning Prayer. I usually timed my arrival in the second hymn and walked straight up to the pulpit. The Sermon was delivered in about 13 minutes and then blessing. At Christmas and Easter I had a short Communion immediately after Morning Prayer and if you thought the job was then done you would be mistaken because at Christmas the Rector was expected to visit the large house next to the church for more Christmas drinks! *The Vicar of Dibley* episode with Dawn French trying to force down three Christmas dinners isn't so far from reality. I would finally arrive for my own Christmas dinner at the Rectory about 1.30 as the family were crying with hunger. I was 'pretty flat' having been on the go since 7.30 giving and receiving at least a hundred Christmas greetings at church doors plus the sherry at the big house. Trying to turn from 'Rector' into 'Dad' and take an interest in your own children's Christmas presents when you are exhausted is one of the price tags of having to put the parishes first. Most clergy know what I mean!

I have described trying to get around all four churches at Christmas and Easter, but in addition at Christmas there would have been a preceding Carol Service (usually the Sunday before Christmas). Then on Christmas Eve we held the popular candlelit Christingle service and midnight Communion. The Christingle service was the best attended service of the festival. About 120 regularly came and it continued to puzzle me why such a large number would turn up. So I stopped analysing why and just got on with it! One year I rewrote the whole introduction to the service as if Compo, Clegg and Foggy from the sitcom *Last of the Summer Wine* were chatting about the service. I had good feedback. I even did their accents! But it was the Millennium Service on New Year's Eve 1999 that made me think hard when 71 people turned up to a watchnight service after which we all joined in fireworks on the village green (more actually came out of church than the pub).

The one thing you could not say was that this rural benefice was spiritually dead. By no means! I once calculated without fudging the figures that during the course of four months in a typical autumn, if I included all services, plus baptisms, weddings and funerals, about 1,500 different people passed through St Kenelm's Clifton doors. Rural ministry: thinned out bits of suburbia?

Clifford Owen's book is available via Amazon in paperback and Kindle formats:

www.temetriangle.net



CLIFTON WI

Clifton-upon-Teme WI has embraced Zoom and has had three successful meetings using this online technology.



At our meeting on January 12th, Nick Wilkes, the Malvern Bard, delightfully entertained us with the story of his life and an actor and playwright. Nick lives in Malvern and has 30 years experience in the theatre as an actor and writer. He has no acting background and spent an idyllic childhood on the family farm and after leaving school, he worked for Thomas Cook and travelled widely with his job. His first acting experience was to make up numbers in a local production of *West Side Story* and was 'bitten by the bug'.

Nick then studied performing arts in Cheltenham, followed by the University of Vancouver and Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Whilst at the Bristol Old Vic, Charlton Heston agreed to be interviewed by Nick in front of a paying audience at the Roses Theatre in Cheltenham. This helped to pay for his theatre school fees. After graduating, there followed many years of working in a repertory company, appearing in panto, working with an outdoor Shakespeare company, and as an extra in film work. In between jobs, there was always work backstage or bar work in local theatres. Nick has used his many years of acting experience to write and produce his own plays. His energy, enthusiasm and love of the theatre was enjoyed by us all. We look forward to experiencing again, and hopefully soon, the special atmosphere that only live performances can bring.

For your diary: Our next meeting is on February 9th. We have Dr Sophie Moore, lecturer in Archaeology at Newcastle University as our speaker. Her talk is 'Principles of Stratigraphy with Trifle'. To find out what geology and trifle have in common, join us on zoom!! Contact Penny Bowden on 812784 for zoom details.

Nina Gilbert

NORA PARSONS DAY CENTRE

Everyone at Nora Parsons Centre would like to thank all those who supported our Christmas Raffle which was so successful that 1000 tickets were sold with minimal expenses so a tremendous boost to our funds! We would especially like to thank Richard Goodman for the donation of a Goodmans Turkey and local Artist Margaret Burns for her donation of a beautifully decorated coffee table. A list of winners is available on Facebook. We are still unable to reopen of course but the committee have furnished the Centre to a high Covid safe level and are perusing news bulletins for any helpful advice on how and when it could be done. Perhaps when we are all vaccinated there will be a let up in the rules of congregating. Very Best wishes for a Better New Year. *Pam Morgan*



DEREK BROOKS

Janet Brooks and family would like to thank everybody for all the kind words and cards of condolences that they have received after the sad loss of Derek. The support of the entire village during this difficult time has meant more to them than you can imagine.

CLIFTON SCOUTS

Clifton Scouts have continued to 'meet' virtually through lockdown and our leaders have done a wonderful job of keeping the young people engaged and earning badges. Our Beaver, Cub and Scout sections took part in a Virtual Three Peaks Challenge during the 2020 lockdown, with each scout challenged to climb either Scafell Pike, Snowdon or Ben Nevis on local walks to raise funds for equipment which will enable us to deliver even better camping activities when we are able to. A big well done to Charlotte, Adam, Eddie R, Noah, Linus and Daniel for conquering at least one of the peaks each, and a special mention to Toby who climbed all 3 summits. Between them they have ascended more than the height of Everest! Their efforts helped us to raise over £600, and we are very grateful to all of the members of our fantastic community who donated. We have spaces for young people to join all three sections, and are always looking for adult support, in both section leader and executive support roles. If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity please contact me at exec@cliftonontemescouts.org; if your child would like to join let us know at gsl@cliftonontemescouts.org and we can provide further details.

Helen Wain, Group Chair, Clifton on Teme Scout Group



The River Teme burst its banks after heavy rain at the end of January



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Contributions for the next (March) edition by Friday, 12 February 2021 please

Printed by Orphans Press of Leominster Tel: 01568 612460