



Rural Review

The Newsletter of Wem Rural Parish Council
Issue 41 Autumn 2023

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Rural Review

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WELCOME.... to the Autumn issue of Rural Review.

It has been a summer of mixed weather and as autumn approaches, the leaves start to fall and the days are getting noticeably shorter we mark the changing cycles of the year with our Autumn Rural Review. Thanks to everyone who has submitted articles which continue to demonstrate the range of activities and interests across the parish so please read on.

We're proud to have been recertified for the Quality Gold Award (article below) and we continue to strive to provide the very best support for our community. Please take a little time to look at our website and social media places where you will see topical and local content that is updated frequently. Well done to those that created, supported and attended the Wem Carnival, it is an excellent example a whole community gathering to celebrate together. There are also events being run by the Wem Arts Society and Edstaston Village Hall such as a Quiz Night and Coffee Mornings so please check their website for details.

My personal objective for the autumn is to walk as many of the local paths that I can (see article from Wem P3 Group) and will report on my progress in the next review.

Huw Edwards
Chair, Wem Rural Parish Council
email: chair@wemrural-pc.gov.uk



Quality Gold Award Announced

The Local Council Award Scheme exists to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils, and to provide a framework to support all local councils to meet their full potential and it has recently been announced that Wem Rural Parish Council has been re-accredited with the Gold Quality Award.

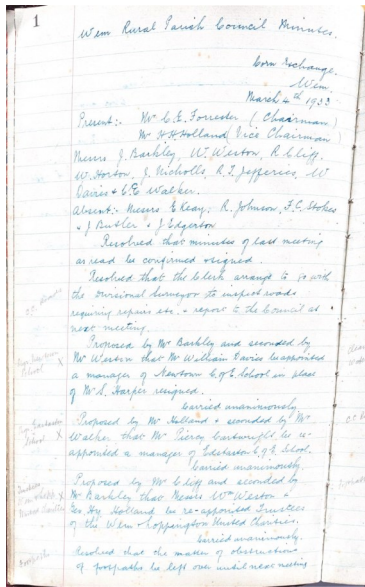
The Accreditation Panel from from Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) met with the Chair, Clerk and Deputy Clerk on 12th July 2023 and once again commended the Council for our high professional standards which has been maintained.



Dianne Dorrell, County Secretary of SALC said "*Of particular note was the council's passion, professionalism, enthusiasm and commitment*" and then asked that their thanks be passed on to all the Parish Councillors.

A little piece of Parish Council history

We have several beautifully bound ledgers that hold the minutes of council meetings between 1933 and 1992. They are going to be archived so we thought it might be interesting to share a snippet from the earliest meeting. The minutes are hand written as you can see from the image below so please excuse any minor transcription errors on my part. As you can see there are some topics that never go away.



Wem Rural Parish Council Minutes Corn Exchange Wem March 4th 1933

Present:

- Mr C E. Forrester (Chairman)
- Mr H. H. Holland (Vice Chairman)
Messrs J. Barkley, W. Weston, R. Cliff, W. Horton, J. Nicholls, R.J. Jeffries, W. Davies & C.E. Walker.

Absent:

- Messrs E. Keay, R. Johnson, F.C. Stokes, J. Butler, J Edgerton.

Resolved that minutes of the last meeting as read be confirmed and signed.

Resolved that the Clerk arrange to go with the Divisional Surveyor to inspect roads requiring repairs etc & report to the council at next meeting.

Proposed by Mr. Barkley and seconded by Mr. Weston that Mr.

William Davies be appointed a manager of Newtown C. of E. School in place of Mr. S. Harper resigned.
Carried unanimously.

Proposed by Mr. Holland and seconded by Mr. Walker that Mr. Piercy Cartwright be re-appointed a manager of Edstaston C. of E. School.
Carried unanimously.

Proposed by Mr. Cliff and seconded by Mr. Barkley that Messrs W Weston & Holland be reappointed Trustees of the Wem & Loppington United Charities.
Carried unanimously.

Resolved that the matter of obstructions of footpaths be left over until next meeting & that the Clerk bring before the Council the Ordnance Survey Maps of the districts concerned.

Signed. Charles Edward Forrester
Chairman.

Plant Sale Couple Stand Down

For over 20 years Deborah and Clive have been the only producers of plants for the Annual Newtown Church and Afternoon Tea and Plant Sale.

Whilst it has been a terrific fundraiser for the church, it also means so much more to Deborah and Clive. They both have seen it as a Community Event and rightly so.

Cakes and tea are served and many locals kindly donate homemade cakes. People visit from all over the parish and further afield. Sadly for us, this year's was their last.

The amount of effort and dedication shown by this modest couple has been incredible. Hard work, whilst rewarding, it has now come time for them to step down.

Somehow we don't think they will be putting their feet up for long. A huge thank you from all of us.



Archaeological Excavations at Soulton Hall

May and June 2023 saw the fourth season of archaeological excavations at Soulton Hall, led by Dig Ventures.

This research compliments ongoing scholarship by James D. Wenn on the thousand year story of the Manor of Soulton. Previous seasons have looked at the mound near Soulton Bridge which is now confirmed to be a small chivalric castle-type structure which was established by the mid 1200s and was in occupation until around 1400, when the focus of the occupation shifted to the present home site of the Manor.

This year's work sought to prove some theories about the sixteenth century phases of Soulton's story, when it was the Shropshire headquarters of the important Tudor statesman Sir Rowland Hill.

In returning to the investigations this Summer, it is understood that Soulton Hall was built in an elaborate set of codes that draw on the ideas in scripture, humanism, and classical philosophy. For instance, the view of the hall from the bridge with the two tower-like projections is intended to evoke Solomon's Temple, while the precinct being the same size as the Telesterion of Ancient Greece is consciously suggesting Eleusis, where the Athenians performed the senior mysteries of the classical world.

These allusions to different aspects in the architectural project go on and on and are very sophisticated. Though outside the scope of this article, they are covered in a James D Wenn's forthcoming book *Stones of the Magi* (Canalside Press), as well as in a lecture available on Youtube under the title *Garnet as Emblem of Goodness | Philosophical architecture from Henry III to George III*.

Rowland Hill clearly incorporated the landscape beyond Soulton Hall for these architectural games, and the team were looking into how this might have worked and what remained.

The outputs of this year's work appear to confirm;

- 1) that there was a large lawn down the currently lost axis addressing the rising sun on Easter morning;
- 2) that the mound of the lost castle was recruited in some form in this landscape in the 1500s; and
- 3) that there may have been a very large yard between the current hall (Hill's elite accommodation block of the wider palace he built which has since been moated and lost) and what is now Soulton Road.

These developments support the theory that Hill was staging theatre just outside Wem, the generation before Shakespeare – which is profoundly important to our understanding of how the renaissance happened in England. Tantalisingly, the dancing pavement behind Soulton Hall begins to look like it shows the lost choreography for the dance performed at the end of *As You Like It*.

There is a need for further research in several disciplines to get an appropriately deep understanding of the full extent of what was happening at Soulton in these times. It is, however, very exciting in terms of what may be able to be unlocked for our county in terms of heritage and cultural led regeneration and hence economic opportunities for Wem Rural.

By Tim Ashton, Soulton Hall



The Wem P3 (Parish Paths Partnership) Group

Those who like walking in the countryside around Wem Town and Rural parishes may have noticed some improvements to the paths and infrastructure recently. This is due in main to the Wem P3 group where P3 stands for Parish Paths Partnership. We are a small group of #volunteers who are supported by Shropshire Council to help maintain the local footpaths. The Council supplies the stiles, field gates, posts, railings and other hardware along with a small annual budget to cover sundries such as #replacement tools, nails, fuel for strimmers etc. In addition they also organize training days for power tool usage and we are also covered by their insurance whilst working provided of course, that we have followed the correct procedures.

Many years ago there was a series of Wem Walks published in the form of a small booklet which is now out of print. A lot of these circular walks started in Wem Town and then went into Wem Rural where the majority of the footpaths are situated. However time, nature and a few inconsiderate land owners have taken a toll on the footpaths so that most if not all now require some degree of maintenance. This is where the Wem P3 and Shropshire Council's Rights of Way department come in.

Over the past couple of years we have been slowly but steadily trying to clear and repair the walks with a view to signing them correctly and then publishing them. As mentioned before the original walks were published in a booklet but things have moved on somewhat now.

Therefore a decision has been made on financial grounds to initially try to publish them in future on the Wem Town and Wem Rural Council websites. There they can either be loaded onto a smartphone or printed off directly. This may change in the future if / when funding becomes available and walk leaflets can be produced.

A good example of one of our walks is that of WW6 (Wem Walk 6). This starts in the Co-Op car park and goes to Alderley Lane via Church Lane. 3 years ago it was impossible to get onto Alderley Lane via the footpath as it was completely blocked by brambles. These have now been cleared and 2 gates fitted. Further on the track through Souldon Woods was completely impassable but this has now been cleared and is now well used. Further on a small rotten bridge over a brook has been completely replaced. The route now takes us into Whixhill and then back into Lee Brockhurst where it goes up the 100 Steps. Now this was a challenge in the mud. We have tried to stabilise the rocks to a greater degree along with repairing the handrail and improving the stile at the bottom.

Bottom of the 100 Steps before the work (left) and after (right):

Although the steps are now much safer care should be taken especially in the winter as they do get very slippery which is a situation that we as a group cannot do anything about. However, this walk of about 7 miles is now a going concern and if it continues to be used will be kept naturally clear.



Go to the Facebook page by searching for **Wem Parish Paths Partnership** so you can find out how you can get involved. We usually meet on a Monday morning. All you need is outdoor clothing, wellies in the winter and a sense of humour!

Peter Hutchison, The Wem P3 Group.

EDSTASTON
VILLAGE HALL

QUIZ
NIGHT

Hotpot Supper

BAR

SATURDAY 21 October 7.30pm
£10 in advance (£12 on the door)
per person / teams of 4 (max 5)
(includes hotpot supper - veg option available)

Tickets from Elaine Brown / Bev Horsley / Sandra Price / Don Gregory
Anna Thomas / Corrine Brown / Liz Vernon / Neale Sadler / Hazel Rees
or email evh@ryebank.co.uk or leave a message on our
Edstaston Village Hall Facebook page

Raising funds for Edstaston Village Hall Charity no. 1095886

Helping to combat speeding in Northwood

The most lethal roads in Britain are rural roads with a 60mph speed limit, with **514 deaths in 2021** according to figures from the Department of Transport. So traffic passing through villages like Northwood, where 60mph changes to 30mph, needs monitoring and drivers need to observe the 30mph limit for the safety of all road users.

This is why Parish Councillor John Britton has been talking to local residents and handing out wheelie bin speeding stickers in Northwood to help combat drivers speeding over the 30mph limit.

Parish Councillor Britton is also one of the 8 volunteers of SpeedWatch in Northwood that monitors traffic and report any violations to West Mercia Police, who then issue a warning to drivers.

Please contact the Clerk if you would like any wheelie bin stickers for your street.



1st Prize for the Tilley Raven and Friends

Congratulations to the Tilley Raven and friends for best decorated float at Wem Carnival in September.

Their float was called Old McClarkson Had a Farm and several local people including one of our Parish Councillors Morgan were dressed up as animals. They went with a farming theme mash up with Old McDonald Had a Farm and Diddy Squat farm in order to highlight the struggle that farmers have. They also had sunflowers in order to represent mental health month in September which were kindly donated. The float was generously sponsored by local business The Tilley Raven and contained a sprinkling of love of all things Jeremy Clarkson.

They certainly brought the bacon back to Tilley with their 1st place prizes! Well done to everyone in Tilley that took part – you have shown great community effort!

Parish Councillor Page was kindly driving the tractor for the Young Farmers float and is a keen advocate of health and wellbeing of young local farmers in Wem Rural Parish.



Spotlight on Businesses

Wem Rural Parish Council is keen to support businesses in the area. If you have any news you would like to include please email them to the Clerk at clerk@wemrural-pc.gov.uk

** BUSINESS NEWS **

Sweet Treats on Wem High Street have recently celebrated 3 years of running their own business.



Clean Cut Barbers in Wem have recently launched a new booking app to avoid waiting times for their customers

The mobile App is called Nearcut and once downloaded customers can then look for the barbers to make an appointment.

Matthews Legal, already with offices in Shrewsbury and Telford, has opened up a new office in Wem. This is located at the newly-refurbished Charleston Business Centre (number 2 Aston Street).

Steve Matthews, Director, has over 30 years' experience as a solicitor is close to hand for appointments.

They are also part of the Free Charity Wills Network and are offering free wills to people when they leave a donation to charity. Find out more about them at www.matthews-legal.org.uk

Don't forget to book your place for the next FREE Business Networking Event on Monday 23rd October 2023 between 6-8pm. Free drink and canapes on arrival. Contact the Clerk or Sign up online at www.wembusinesspartnership.co.uk

Communities Supporting Each Other

The father of one of the member of Wem Rural Parish Council passed away recently.

Tony Matthews was a true Shropshire Lad. He was so proud of his county and in particular, the areas of Barkers Green and Aston, where he lived all of his 88 years.

Tony was a farm and factory worker with great knowledge of the local history and ways of the countryside and enjoyed passing much of this knowledge onto Andrew, who serves as a Parish Councillor.

To help support their friend, one of the fellow parish councillors offered to make the lunch for those attending the funeral and an SOS was sent to the rest of the team to see if anyone could possibly help out on the day.

The response was remarkable. Several councillors rallied and it was an honour and a pleasure to work as a team.

The centrepiece on the table was this fabulous pork pie, which had been commissioned from The Pastry Box in Wem. It was perfect.

When people come together, in support of each other, somehow things don't seem quite so bad.

Tony leaves behind his devoted wife Sylvia of 55 years, son Andrew and the wider Matthews family along with many friends and memories.

You can read more about this on the Wem Rural Parish Council website www.wemrural-pc.gov.uk



Photo of the custom-made Pork Pie by local business, The Pastry Box in Wem.

The Biodiversity of Ragwort!

At the time of writing, verges, waste ground and some fields are lit up by the bright yellow flowers of Ragwort - *Senecio jacobea* to give its biological name. There is no doubt that Ragwort is a serious enemy to farming and livestock. It is a native species of the British Isles and is a specified weed under the Weeds Act 1959. It contains toxins which can have debilitating or fatal consequences if eaten by horses and other grazing animals. DEFRA states that it is specifically covered by the Ragwort Control Act 2003. Although this code does not seek to eradicate it, it is necessary to prevent its spread as it presents a high risk of poisoning horses and livestock or spreading to fields used for the production of forage.

But does Ragwort have any saving graces? Yes, because it is very important for wildlife in the UK. Its ecological importance is considered significant for biodiversity because it provides a home and food source to at least 77 insect species. Thirty of these species of invertebrate use it exclusively as their food source, and there are another 22 species where Ragwort forms a significant part of their diet.



The most common of those totally reliant species on Ragwort for their survival is the Cinnabar moth. The Cinnabar is a United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan Species, its status described as "common and widespread, but rapidly declining". You may well have noticed groups of the orange and black caterpillars, and maybe even seen the adult moth, as shown in the photographs. Other species feeding on Ragwort are named in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and include some that are defined as Nationally Scarce.

Help for Veterans

Three of Wem Rural Parish Councillors recently met up with the Royal British Legion to hear about the important work they do to support veterans and their families.

You can contact them via their Facebook group if you know anyone that would like to get in touch. The address is www.facebook.com/RBLWem

Wem Art Society

This year our fantastic Art Exhibition will be held in October.

Venue: St Peters & St Pauls Church Hall in Wem on

Dates: 5th, 6th and 7th October 2023

Opening Times: 10am – 4pm

As usual there will be a large selection of original art to enjoy, plus greeting cards and our annual calendar.


Art work is available to purchase. A lovely original gift or for you to enjoy at home.

Start your gift shopping early. See you there!




To help support local businesses Wem Rural Parish Council, along with Wem Town Council and Wem Town Hall is holding a Business Networking Event.

The theme for the event is **Healthy Leadership** and the key speaker is Samantha Brettell. There will be plenty of time to network with other businesses, take part in some table-top consultation and find out more about future events.

 23rd October 2023

 6-8pm

 **Wem Town Hall**
High St, Wem
SY4 5DG

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Samantha Brettell DL has over 25-years military experience, having recently retired from full time service in the Army. She now runs a successful consultancy business, helping businesses promote healthy leadership and wellbeing within their organisations.



We will be joined by two special guests:

- ▶▶ His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant Mrs Anna Turner
- ▶▶ High Sheriff of Shropshire Mandy Thorn MBE DL

Businesses are invited to bring a sample of products and/or literature for display - don't forget your business cards!

Register online at www.wembusinesspartnership.co.uk

New Planters in Northwood

Many thanks to Northwood Nurseries who have planted new flowers in Northwood.

They also cut the verges so that the flowers are more visible which wasn't a particularly nice job as several bags of dog poo have been left.

Please do remember to pick up any dog poo and leave in the bins provided. If the bins are full please take it home.

Many thanks for your help and we hope that you enjoy the flowers which have been kindly donated by Northwood nurseries for people in the village and those driving by to enjoy.

NEW TOWN



ED STASTON

RODEN

Wem Rural Parish Council

www.wemrural-pc.gov.uk
www.facebook.com/wemruralPC

Councillors invite members of their ward to contact them to discuss any issues or matters of concern.

You can also contact us:

Parish Clerk:
 Helen McCabe
 Tel: 07720 854185
 Email:
clerk@wemrural-pc.gov.uk
www.wemrural-pc.gov.uk

PARISH COUNCILLORS

12 Councillors represent the 3 wards

EDSTASTON

Huw Edwards	07834 252412	Bank House Farm, Paddol Green, Wem, SY4 5QZ
Jan Hilditch	07973 934713	West View, Newtown, Wem, SY4 5UF
William Minty	07762 478353	Low Pond Farm, Lowe, Wem, SY4 5UE
Pete Slack	01939 236990	Fairview, 7 Paddol Green, Wem, SY4 5QZ
Liz Vernon	01939 234896	The Park, Edstaston, Wem, SY4 5RF

NEWTOWN

John Britton	01948 710846	Salters Rest, Northwood, SY4 5NW
Julia Goode	07971 102569	3 Oakhurst Villas, Newtown, SY4 5NT

RODEN

Peter Broomhall	01939 231565	Tilleycroft, 77 Roden Grove, Wem, SY4 5HJ
Andrew Matthews	07929 783456	1 Pyms Cottages, Lowe Hill, Wem, SY4 5UD
Denise Morgan	01939 232906	4 Locksmith Cottage, Tilley, Wem, SY4 5HE
Jordan Page	07508 270009	2 Tilley Green, Wem, SY4 5PL
Len Staines	01939 234415	The Hawthorns, Barkers Green, Wem, SY4 5JW

M E E T I N G S

The Parish Council normally meet on the first Tuesday of the month at Edstaston Village Hall at 7pm . Please refer to the Council's website.

Agendas for all meetings are available on the website at least 3 days before the meeting.

Members of the community are welcome to attend all meetings and there is time set by at the start to allow you to address the Council.

Do you have a story to share?

Wem Rural Parish Council would like to share news from local businesses, charities and community groups.

Please send your stories to the Clerk



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This newsletter can be made available in large print and audio tape. Please call 07720 854185 further details.



LOCAL COUNCIL
 AWARD SCHEME
 QUALITY GOLD