

# Drinkstone Parish Council

## Playing Field

**Report to the Annual Parish Meeting (AGM) Dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Agenda Item 3a; Parish Council Report (Recreation ground)**

It's been my first year as a councillor and being responsible for the play field "The Cricket" and all the children's play equipment. Although it has been a fairly quiet year with no major problems arising, the following list represents the work carried out during the year;

- a. **"Dog Fouling" on the park.** This had become an issue for many people using the park from people just walking the area to the sporting activities using the main football pitch and most importantly the children's play equipment/areas!

I believe we have come a long way in this matter, now with only the occasional report of a problem; this is due in a long way to the dog owners taking responsibility for their pets plus a greater awareness of the health issues that can occur, especially to young children. I thank the dog owners for their understanding and the park users for their patience.

- b. **"Weekly park & playground equipment inspections"** up and until December of last year these were carried out by a team of 5 volunteers from the village. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sharon Rose and her team for their time and efforts.

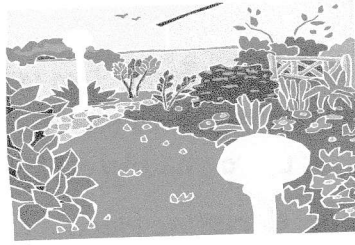
Since the beginning of the year the inspections have been carried out by myself, the main reason for this was to get a better understanding of the park, equipment and the park users. This has been most useful, however Sharon, did indicate at the end of last year that she along with the volunteers were happy to carry on with helping me with the inspections, I shall be contacting Sharon, in the coming months.

- c. **"Annual Playground Equipment Inspection"** this was carried out by The Play Inspection Company Ltd back in September of last year (Ref: 177338)

and is available to view on the village web site. The equipment was deemed safe to use with a "Risk Assessment 8-Low Risk" with only minor maintenance recommendations. These were reviewed and reported to the full council.

- d. **"Maintenance carried out to the Play Equipment"** the main recommendation from the report (Ref:177338) was to lift and relay/replace the "Grass Matrix Tiles" under the two double swing sets as they had become silted up and lost their impact absorbing properties. Quotations were obtained and reported to the full council, unfortunately the costs came in considerably higher than expected and would have had a major impact on the play field budget (approx. £2,500.00) so with full council approval a DIY approach has been adopted. Work has started on the twin cradle swing set and should be finished in just a few days. Good news here was the grass matrix tiles once dug up were found to be in good and reusable condition plus with a kind donation of several wheelbarrows of top soil, the only cost in-cued was £9.75 for the cable ties needed to hold the rubber mats together. Work will shortly be starting on the twin flat seat swing set. So far the DIY approach has saved the village a considerable amount of money!
- e. **"The area at the far end on the play field"** this area formally known as the cheese wedge has been the subject of many a debate and has become project of mine. A working group has been formed to gather info and ideas to best use this land. Suggestions put forward have been quite varied, ranging from.....wildlife area for the children of the village, building a woodland path with benches, adult exercise equipment area through to just leaving alone and maintain in a neat and tidy manner. At the moment and until the maintenance work is completed I will organise a work party to keep the area under control.
- f. So I believe the park is and keeps being an asset and pleasant addition to the village of Drinkstone.

**Repaired by Cllr Hembra**



## Drinkstone Gardening Club - report to the Annual Parish Meeting 12 May 2016

We welcome everyone, from total novices to experts. We have 45 Members now.

As usual, we started our year in October with Barry Gayton and our own version of Gardener's Question Time. Barry has a truly encyclopaedic knowledge of plants, so he was able to answer everyone's queries in a friendly manner. He casually mentioned he was busy bringing his half-hardys inside; it turned out that there were 2000!

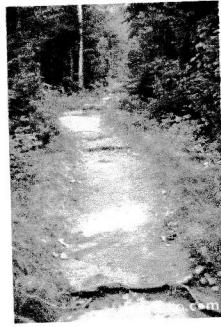
In November, Martin Gibbison from The Place for Plants gave a very interesting talk on clematis climbers. His pictures were sublime and he took some of the mystery out of pruning the beasts.

In December, we went to the Beth Chatto garden for a night time lantern walk around the garden, followed by carols and mince pies in the café. It was very dark but no-one broke a leg or got lost.

Sadly, we had to cancel our February meeting because the speaker was ill. In March, Phil Mizen, an organic gardener, came along to talk about this, proclaiming that it is a 'philosophy'. After hearing that he has to follow the stern commandments in a very thick book published by the Soil Association, some of us decided to follow a different gardening faith and keep on using fertilisers and dear old glyphosate.

Our April meeting was a visit to East Bergholt's The Place for Plants. We had a totally enchanting tour round the garden. Its hilly situation and acid soil made for a complete contrast to what we have round here. The camellias and acers were amazing, as were the woodland slopes with fritillaries, daffodils and snowdrops. There were notices everywhere warning us about 'slippery paths'; obviously, they have no experience of Drinkstone footpaths in the winter.

We are looking forward to our May meeting, when Melanie Collins of Mickfield Hostas is coming to tell us all about these lovely plants. Some advice on how to avoid making them into a slug restaurant would be



### **Drinkstone Annual Parish Council meeting – Footpath Warden’s report 2016**

We have 10.7 miles of footpaths in Drinkstone, all of which are well walked, especially by dog walkers from Drinkstone, Rattlesden, Woolpit and Beyton. We have ramblers every year from Colchester, who think our footpaths are great.

As always, we have problems with mud in the winter because of the heavy clay soil. The footpaths are now dry and a pleasure to walk on.

This year, there have been 2 changes to footpaths ..... and ..... now runs down the meadow, turning right at the bottom of the existing footpath, joining footpath 8 which has been a permissive path. It’s now footpath 11. A new bridge has been constructed leading to footpath 8.

I was appointed by the then Rights of Way Officer, Norman Slater, in August 1990 and was awarded the Ramblers’ Certificate for improvements to footpaths over the past year. Most landowners keep their footpaths cut. The Rights of Way people cut the footpath twice a year, in May and October. They are responsible for all footpaths except Crossfield footpaths, which are the responsibility of the landowner. We did have one Crossfield footpath, but the land was sold and split into 2 paddocks owned by separate people, so Rights of Way now cut it.

Archfield footpath has been the subject of complaint from dog walkers because of the long grass.

# Drinkstone Parish Council AGM Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> May

## Tree Wardens Report

We had two incidents in August last year concerning trees adjoining the highway.

The first involved a lorry hitting the bough of an oak tree near the allotments in Rattlesden Road. A large limb was left hanging off the tree partially blocking the road. An emergency team from the Highways Department soon cleared the road but they left a 3 metre long torn limb still attached to the tree. I subsequently met an officer from the Highways Department, and persuaded him to get tree surgeons to come back to remove all of the torn limb and lift other low branches to give better clearance for high sided vehicles.

The second incident was more serious when a very large rotten bough on a horse chestnut tree in Gedding Road was blown down in a storm and brought down electricity cables, cutting off power to many properties in Drinkstone for several hours. UK Power Networks quickly sent in a team to clear the debris and restored power the same day.

The main cause for concern for the health of our trees continues to be Ash Dieback. Many Ash trees in the Parish are now starting to show symptoms of the disease and although I am not aware of any that have totally succumbed yet, we can expect to see more ash trees looking in poor health this summer. The symptoms can be quite varied, but in mature trees the first obvious sign is rapid wilting and blackening of leaves between June and August followed by dying shoots and twigs. Diamond shaped necrosis then develop on the bark between branches and main stems. Regrowth of buds and new leaves sometimes occurs at the point of infection later in the growing season. The tree's crown becomes progressively thinner and more sky will be seen between the diminishing number leaves as the crown dies back. Sometimes bunches of old seeds (keys) remain hanging on the twigs.

If you suspect an ash tree on your land is showing symptoms of Ash dieback there is no need to panic or take precipitate action to fell the tree. Decline of mature trees is quite slow and they may eventually succumb to a secondary cause such as Honey fungus. Ash trees close to buildings, highways, public rights of way and on public open space should be closely monitored. If you are concerned about the condition of ash trees in your garden I am happy to give you an initial opinion, but you should consult a qualified arboricultural expert if there is any doubt about the safety of the tree. If the tree has to be felled I can also suggest suitable replacements.

The good news is that some Ash trees are resistant to the disease and researchers from a government-backed consortium of universities and research centres have developed three genetic markers to enable them to predict whether a tree is likely to be tolerant to the disease, raising the possibility of using selective breeding to develop strains of disease-resistant trees.

Peter Holborn

Drinkstone Parish Tree Warden