

Parish Council News

Happy New Year

All the Members of Witton Gilbert Parish Council and the Clerk would like to wish the residents a very happy, prosperous and harmonious New Year

A new year.....a new roof on St. Michael and All Angels!

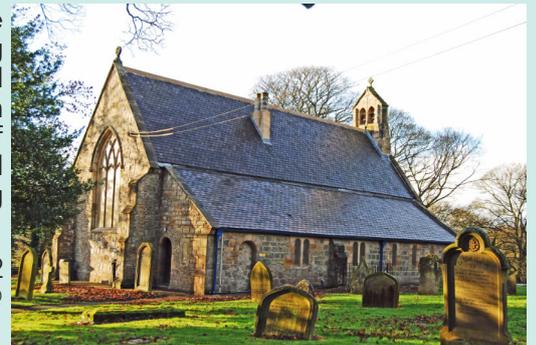


Over 12 months have passed since Pam Barmby took up her post as Breathing Space Project Officer, based at St Michael's Church. So much has happened!! The Church has a new porch (with toilet and office), a new vestry (with kitchenette and meeting room), plus a new roof (let's hope it lasts for at least 100 years)! A BIG THANK YOU to everyone locally who has supported the renovation appeal. This year we aim to create more flexible use of space within the church so that everyone can use it easily, especially groups taking part in Breathing Space activities.

Breathing Space has held a number of activities over the past year including: monthly mindfulness walks in the Dene led by Pam (these are set to continue on the 4th of each month at 10.00am from the church); two very enjoyable art courses focused on colour, one at Sacriston in

the Spring and one in Witton Gilbert in the Autumn (further art courses are planned); 'Woodland wellbeing' conservation work in Witton Dene with the help of the Cyrenians (more of this is planned also); young people's 'Nature Detectives' groups in the Summer; plus movement and exercise groups for up to 25 people at a time at the Methodist Chapel (in conjunction with the Methodist's Parish Nurse, Maureen Brown, and staff from Willowburn Hospice). Breathing Space is for everyone and is focused on promoting health and well-being through a variety of activities, using the peaceful location of the Church and the Dene.

If you have any suggestions or requests, please call Pam on 07508471522 or 03333 666 300 (option 3), or by email at breathingspacedurham@gmail.com



Witton Gilbert post office to move...as Neil bids farewell...



Early in the new year our Post Office is to move into R S McColls on Sacriston Lane.

Which is good news as many smaller Post Offices have closed and Neil Liddle, who has been our Postmaster for 23 years is retiring. Neil and his wife Christine came to the village on November 2nd 1990 and his friendly helpful manner has been greatly appreciated by us all. They have a married daughter living in Green Lea. Neil has various interests, he audits the accounts for the Community Association, he is member of the Parish Council and this year will become President of Sacriston Everymans Club, and he also enjoys his garden, so he will have plenty to keep him busy in what we hope is a long and happy retirement. Cheers Neil!

Criminal Damage/Vandalism – Yes.... In Witton Gilbert

Last summer the Parish Council re-vamped the children's play area in South Lea. This followed nearly a year of consultation with the children in the village so that the equipment was what they wanted. There was also consultation with residents in the nearby area who received individual letters asking if there were any problems that could be foreseen. The children had many good ideas and NO problems were aired by the residents. So the parish council used finance from the parish precept and a grant from the county council (i.e. your money) to create a new and first class area for the children of the village. It was opened officially by one of our oldest and most respected residents, Ray Gibbon.

What happened next? Within 48 hours someone from the village, in the dead of night, and using sophisticated cutting equipment cut down the zip wire and destroyed the swings. How cowardly and despicable!! A few weeks ago the swing was replaced and what happened.....the same thing again! Presumably the same coward cut down the swing and removed it from the site. How can this happen in our village?? Someone knows who has done this. How many people

have the necessary cutting equipment? Whoever it was needs to be prosecuted and brought to justice for the wilful criminal damage done. If we do not bring this person to justice what lesson are we teaching our children? We are clearly telling them that if they do not agree with something then they should take the law into their own hands, perform criminal acts and not get caught. Is that what we want our children to think? Or do we want them to realise that criminal acts have consequences??

So I repeat, someone knows who has done this crime and it is their moral and community responsibility to tell the police or their local councillor (in confidence) just what they DO know. It is the responsibility of us all to create a law abiding and safe environment by ensuring that wilful criminal acts are punished appropriately.

PLEASE SPEAK OUT NOW.

Your councillors to whom you can speak in confidence are:

Fraser Reynolds
Arnie Simpson
Tony Harries

Durham Police Report

Durham Police have issued a warning to all vehicle owners to ensure vehicles are made secure at all times when left unattended. Several incidents of theft have been reported in the Nevilles Cross, Merryoaks and Coxhoe areas, so random areas are being targeted..... Don't let it be you! Also, closer to home, a theft has occurred whilst a porch outer door was left unlocked....watch out....thieves are about!!



We have received reports of bogus callers targeting the elderly. They have been telephoning people offering huge discounts on their electricity bills.

Always ask for their name and which company they represent, and never commit to anything over the phone on impulse.

These people are very persistent and convincing and can easily catch people unaware.....so please be on your guard.

Sacriston Surgery News

More changes are coming to the surgery, with Dr Martin Judson retiring at the end of February 2014. We wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement. His replacement will be announced in the next Witton Gilbert Parish News.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Health Fair in October which was held in Sacriston's local church. It was lovely to meet you all. If any of our patients would like to join the Sacriston Surgery Patient Representative Group, which is held every couple of months, please contact Julia Haswell or email julia.haswell@nhs.net

Bonfire Night

As the bonfire team are getting older year on year we have sought ways in which the tough job of building the bonfire could be made easier. We have used John Holmes of Witton Hall Farm and his tractor in the past, but we have now sourced pallets from Lanchester Wines and free delivery to site from Ian Wright removals. This means that in future years we will not need any additional wood for the bonfire. We would like to thank all those people who have contributed to the bonfire over the years, without whose help the bonfire would not have happened. This is an opportune time to mention that if any community-minded, able-bodied folk that wish to get involved in the planning and managing the bonfire, then please contact either **David Wilcox on 0191370529 OR Noel Dixon on 01913710657.**



No One Should Go Hungry.....

St Michael and All Angels Church is a drop-off point for the collection of donations for the Durham Food Bank, which is helping many families cope when, through no fault of their own, they have found themselves unable to feed their families. This can happen unexpectedly through redundancy, sickness, delays in benefits, homelessness and many other unforeseen circumstances.

If you can spare one or two items of dried or canned food which would be gratefully appreciated by those in this plight you can contact **STEPHEN ELLIS ON 3711491 or PAM BARMBY ON 07508471422**please give what you can.

Counting the birds that are counting on you...



It will be all eyes to the skies on Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th January 2014, as the nation takes part in the RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch.

The activity is the biggest garden wildlife survey in the world and last year almost 600,000 people counted the birds in their garden.

Big Garden Birdwatch, which has been running for 35 years, provides the RSPB with masses of information about changes in numbers of garden birds in winter, and helps to alert conservationists to significant declines in UK garden species such as house sparrows and starlings. And this time, for the first time, we need you to log some of the other wildlife you see in your

garden too.

We want to know whether you ever see deer, squirrels, badgers, hedgehogs, frogs and toads in your gardens, to help build an overall picture of how important our gardens are for giving all types of wildlife a home.

Doing the Big Garden Birdwatch is fun and easy, and you don't even need to leave the comfort of your own home. To take part, spend just one hour at any time over the Big Garden Birdwatch weekend noting the highest number of each species seen in your garden or local space at any one time. You then simply submit your results to the RSPB, either on-line at www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch or in the post.

Witton Gilbert Parish Development Group

The Witton Gilbert Group formed last year to deliver the action points in the 'Parish Plan' is currently working on the following projects.

The Gateway Project: which aims to improve the entrances to the village.

Parish Footpaths Project: working with the keen walkers in the village, we are cataloguing the footpaths and rights of way, we hope to produce a booklet describing each walk with information about the history and wildlife that may be encountered to make the walks more enjoyable and hopefully encourage more people to get out and about in our parish.

We are also working alongside the Parish Council on the very important "Neighbourhood Plan".

We have recently been awarded grant funding for the Witton Gilbert Youth Initiative which is designed to engage the young people of the parish in village life and deliver a programme which will meet their needs.

We will be holding a public meeting sometime in February to keep everyone informed and get your views on what and how we should deliver the Parish Plan. (date to be posted)

If you would like to be involved or have a particular interest in any of the aims given in the Parish Plan please contact us Email:- terrycrozier@btinternet.com

Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan... What is neighbourhood planning?

Neighbourhood planning is a new way for communities to decide the future of places where they live and work.

We will be able to:

1. Choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
2. Have our their say on what those new buildings should look like
3. Grant planning permission for the new buildings we want to see go ahead

Once a neighbourhood plan is in force, it carries real legal weight. Decision makers will be obliged, by law, to take what it says into account when they consider proposals for development on the neighbourhood.

The exercise is being led by the Parish Council but it's the residents of Witton Gilbert who should provide the vision and detail of the plan.

Why does it matter

1. It gives the local community a chance to plan the future of the parish
2. Sway decisions on development, roads, footpaths and transport in the parish.
3. Enable the construction of projects which will benefit the community
4. Protect sites of importance to the community.
5. Encourage types of development which will enhance the economic and/or health of the village for future generations.
6. If we don't have a plan, we will be unable to influence development decisions in the parish.
7. Communities that have a neighbourhood plan, receive 25% of any community infrastructure levy money that will be used to benefit the Parish.

We want you to get involved.

It doesn't mean turning up to endless management meetings! You can get involved in many ways, such as workshops, an online forum, in person, or write to us, or email.

We will try to keep everyone informed about progress, please let us have your views on any issues which will affect you.

Do you have a particular interest or experience which you think could help?

For example: - Planning. Project management. Planning Law. Data & Statistical Analysis. Landscape design. Master planning. Architecture. Community consultations. Web page or Facebook communications. Parish and architectural history. Environmental protection. Transport. Energy & Communications infrastructure. Representatives of local special interest groups. Local shops. Business and Charities. Health and Fitness. Disability issues. Youth work. Sports and Recreation. Development. Housing. Education & Children's issues. Church Groups. Fund raising. Local Government. Farming and Rural Groups.

In fact anyone who would like to help shape the future of our community. Please contact us at wittongilbertparishcouncil@gmail.com

Santa's Visit To Playgroup

Witton Gilbert Playgroup's 14 children got a surprise when Santa popped in during their Christmas Party. Most of the 2 year olds were wide-eyed with wondrous trepidation when faced with the 'real' man himself.... but the handing out of presents soon brought looks of delight to their faces. Witton Gilbert Playgroup is open daily in Witton Gilbert Community Centre from 9am. - 11am for children aged 2 years and over. We provide a wide range of activities and learning experiences for your child to enjoy through play whilst building up independence and confidence. September brought a visit from "little kickers" where coach Simon gave a fun session of exercise and activities for our playgroup children. This was a huge success with both children and adults taking part! Leaders of the group would like to thank John Reynolds of Charity Group Chad for their kind donation of £300.00 If you would like to enrol your child or would like more information about Witton Gilbert Playgroup please telephone Joanne Embleton on 01913710668 or 078252555323.



Parish Notice Board

For the 5th year in a row Witton Gilbert Parish Council have decided not to increase the Parish Precept. Money in this coming year has been allocated to flower tubs, grass-cutting in the Allotments and the Garden of Remembrance in the churchyard. The Council will again provide a Christmas Tree and fireworks for the bonfire night; give financial support to various groups within the village and continue producing the Parish Newsletter.

In response from findings in the Parish Plan a Young People's consultation is to be carried out to find out what can be done to help the younger members of our community. The council is also looking to improve street lighting.

Your Parish Councillors

Fraser Reynolds (Chair)	3711198
Arnie Simpson (Vice Chair)	3712161
Lynne Michelle Cowan	3719461
Paul Guy	3710455
Anthony V. Harries	3710988
Amanda Hillary	3718239
Neil Liddle	3710339
Maria Waller	3718365
Alexander Woodmass	3710732
Geo.Thompson (Clerk)	3711808



Tell us what you think.....

Name:..... Address:.....

Tel:..... Email:.....