

Annual Report 2005/06

(covering the year up to 31 March 2006)

The Parish

Penn parish covers about 4,000 acres and has an estimated population of some 3,682, an electorate of 3,069 and 1,535 households. It includes the communities of Penn, Knotty Green, Forty Green, Winchmore Hill, Penn Street, and the properties on either side of Hazlemere Road up to Rushmoor Corner.

The parish is divided into two wards: Penn Street and Winchmore Hill Ward with three Councillors; and Penn Ward with eight Councillors. Councillors are asked to take a particular interest in their own area, but are conscious that they also represent the whole parish.

Chiltern District Councillors Alan Dibbo and Sir John Horsburgh-Porter represent Penn & Coleshill Parishes in a single District ward. The redrawn County Council ward boundaries group Penn, Coleshill and Holmer Green and we are now represented by Cllr Francis Robinson, a County Councillor for 27 years, who has known Penn since his schooldays in Penn House.

Councillors

Michael Bayley was Chairman during the year and has been re-elected for the current year. Mike Morley has been re-elected as Vice-Chairman. Rod Falconer resigned at the end of the year on moving to Reading and we welcome David Baker, who has been co-opted in his place.

Council Meetings

The Parish Council meets at 8 pm on the third Thursday of alternate months in different parts of the parish. Forthcoming dates are:

20 July 06	- Penn Church Hall
21 Sep 06	- Winchmore Hill Memorial Hall
16 Nov 06	- Penn Street School
18 Jan 07	- Forty Green Hall
15 Mar 07	- Penn Church Hall
10 May 07	- Knotty Green Cricket Club

All these meetings are open to the public, as are the many Committee meetings with dates posted on the notice boards. During the year, we have welcomed several members of the public to the democratic quarter of an hour held at the beginning of each full Council meeting, as well as our County and District Councillors, the police, the Secretary of the Knotty Green Cricket Club, a member of the Chiltern Conservation Board and County Highways co-ordinator

Parish Councillors choose to receive no allowances. The Chairman receives £200 pa, an amount set by the District Council, to cover the costs of his role. The only Parish Council employee is the Clerk to the Council who is responsible for day to day administration and for implementing the Council's decisions. It is a part-time appointment carried out from home, greatly facilitated by e-mail and broadband and a new laptop computer.

Finance

General expenditure of £64,000 was met by £12,000 of regular income, mostly from land rents, by project grants of £16,000, and by a precept of £36,000 which represents a charge to an average household of £16 pa. This is only 1.4 % of the Council Tax and is one of the lowest in Chiltern District. Financial Regulations, following a national model, have been adopted and a Risk Assessment Policy is reviewed annually. The account is checked by independent internal and external auditors.

Planning

Chiltern District Council is the planning authority and has to provide the Parish Council with a copy of every application for comment. There were 159 during the year. A list of each batch of applications is published on the notice boards, usually every three weeks. On particularly important matters, the local District Councillor is asked to speak at the District's planning meeting. The District Council's Enforcement Officer is informed if any breach of planning permission is noted or brought to the Parish Council's attention. A representative of the Parish Council is now allowed to speak at the District's planning meetings. Planning applications can now be viewed on-line on Chiltern District Council's website.

Commons and Village Greens

The grass is cut at least five times during the year, unless conservation advice is otherwise. The Recreation Ground at Knotty Green and the area around the War Memorial near Penn Church are cut at least seven times. Various other areas, including around ponds, are strimmed. We make an annual check on all our land for dangerous trees. We are in the process of claiming a small grassed area in Brindle Lane, Forty Green as a new Village Green.

Hedge-laying

The long length of tall, straggly, overgrown hedge of the Knotty Green allotments on Forty Green Road has been transformed by being professionally laid. A grant from the Bucks Community Leaders Fund contributed towards the cost and the tenants themselves provided much assistance. The allotment hedge by the track is to be laid later this year.

Play Areas

The Friends of Knotty Green Recreation Area have completed their very successful project with another picnic table and some small wooden activity units. There is a local roster of volunteers who check for any damage or litter. Volunteers should contact Caroline Barton (678780).

Ponds

A leaflet, *A brief history of Knotty Green and the Sheep Washing Pond*, has been prepared by Debbie Marsden of the Friends of Knotty Green and is available from Beaconsfield Library, Penn Parish Council and Beaconsfield Town Council. An information board covering similar ground is to be put by the pond in the corner of the Recreation Ground. There are also leaflets available on request to the Clerk on *Penn Street Pond*, *Gatestakes* (outside the gates of Penn House), and *Gawde Water* (in Horsemoor Lane).

Local work parties, with Chiltern Society volunteers, worked on *Gawde Water*, and *Potters Cross Pond* and pond side benches have been added. *Penn Street Pond* is awaiting dry weather to allow the removal of New Zealand Pygmy Weed. There are working parties arranged for 10am at *Widmer* (11 Nov 06), *Gawd Water* (13 Jan 07) and *Potters Cross* (10 Feb 07). Volunteers are welcomed on these dates

Allotments

There are 36 plots or part plots available for tenants at Knotty Green and none are vacant. Brian Davies (Tel: 673931) and Greg Hopkins (681492) represent s the interests of tenants. An active group of allotment holders has done excellent work in putting up a perimeter fence, putting up a new gate and cutting back helping lay the roadside hedge. Any one wanting a plot should contact the Parish Clerk. There are also three garden plots at Beacon Hill, but none are vacant at present.

Street Lighting

Street lighting cost roughly £5,400 for the year (electricity, £1,600; maintenance, £2,800; repairs, £1,000). Almost all the lights are in Knotty Green with a few in Winchmore Hill and Burrows Close. The maintenance agreement requires Southern Electric to carry out a fortnightly scout to spot repairs needed. Any problems not dealt with inside two weeks should be reported to the Clerk.

Highways

We have a committee to deal specifically with highway matters. Problems of highway safety, speeding, conditions of footways and pavements, footpaths, potholes, flooding, fly-tipping and

hedges and verges are frequently raised. The County Council has reviewed all speed limits and new limits are now in place throughout the parish. Michael Bayley also sits on the Chiltern Local Area Highways Committee, which has provided funds for: a pavement on School Lane, Penn Street, where school parking has damaged the verge; a new lay-by for the Forty Green Hall; and new kerbing on the verge above Potters Cross to reduce the mud that blocks the drains after heavy rains. Please let us know if any roadside benches would meet a need.

Highway queries and reports of pot holes etc. should be made to the Buckinghamshire "Highways on Call" on 0845 230 2882.

Footpaths

Penn has 28 miles of footpaths, which is much more than the 11 miles average for Bucks parishes. Every Parish Councillor walks his group of local footpaths every year and reports any action needed. A new circular walk, which allows easy access by the disabled, has been opened in Forty Green and another is being planned.

Affordable Housing

The Rural Housing Trust project for 14 houses, 2 bungalows and 4 flats off Whielden Lane, Winchmore Hill, should be completed by the end of the year. They will be for shared ownership and rent. Priority will be given to those with strong local connections and it is essential that applicants register on the Chiltern District Council Housing Waiting List (Tel 01494 830991). The houses facing Whielden Lane are to be called 1-7 Horsletts Cottages and those on the site, 1-13 Long Meadow Close. Both are names of fields opposite shown on the 1838 Tithe Map.

Penn & Tylers Green Conservation Area Appraisal

The Joint Conservation Area has 50 Listed Buildings and a detailed appraisal of them has been carried out with the aim of identifying and so conserving its important aspects. An illustrated booklet with the historical and architectural detail will be published in due course.

Councillor vacancies

The current 4 year electoral term ends next year, May 2007, and there are likely to be several vacancies for Parish Councillors so please come to a meeting, see what is involved and consider making your contribution to your local community in this way. You will be warmly welcomed and may be surprised by the range and interest of our activities.

WE WELCOME ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING OUR SERVICE TO PARISHIONERS

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact the Parish Clerk if you want further information on any Parish Council matters.

POLICE

Penn Parish is no longer divided between Beaconsfield and Hazlemere Police Stations. The whole parish now comes under the Area Command Unit in Amersham. PC Gavin McVeigh and PCSO John Webb. Tel: 0845 8505505 (non-emergency number).

FLYTIPPING, ABANDONED VEHICLES AND ROADSIDE LITTER

Contact Graham Garner, Waste Management Enforcement Officer at Chiltern District Council. Tel 732193 or e-mail ggarner@chiltern.gov.uk

LITTER BIN COLLECTION

Report over- full bins to the Waste Management team at Amersham Tel No 732053 or e-mail to wmanagement@chiltern.gov.uk