

Milton Damerel Annual Parish Meeting

Minutes

of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Parish Hall on Wednesday 17 April 2013. The meeting commenced at 7.32pm.

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| Present | Cllr Grace Millman | Cllr Gareth Piper |
| | Cllr Rose Haynes | Cllr Stephen Moyse |
| | Cllr Richard Piper | Cllr John Webb |
| | Mrs Roberta Jackson (Clerk) | Mr Matt Edworthy (Biosphere Reserve Outreach Coordinator) |

There were 14 members of the public present including County Cllr Alison Boyle.

Apologies were received from Cllr Edgar Pett, PC Andy Moakes, Sheila Daniel, Joyce Daley and Roger Copp

1. Welcome and Introductions by the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Cllr Grace Millman chaired the meeting and opened by welcoming the speaker Mr. Matt Edworthy, Biosphere Reserve Outreach Coordinator. Grace welcomed the members of the public and Councillors who needed no introduction as their names were displayed.

2. Parish Planning Update. Torridge District Council are compiling and consulting on a revised Local Plan to 2031, Part 3: Rural Areas will identify boundaries for any village assessed as able to take on growth. The Parish Council has been asked to recommend development boundaries for Milton Town and Venn Green identified as 'a village' but could see no reason why other hamlets should be considered different to these two hamlets. Areas outside development boundaries will be eligible for development only under exceptional circumstances. In making a response by 1 June the conclusions from the Parish Plan will be used. Comments from parishioners on this matter were invited.

Housing and development: The main concern was local needs housing and affordability and although one planning application was submitted that included 5 affordable houses it has since been withdrawn for technical reasons. At the time, it was agreed with the developer that an Open Forum would be arranged when the application was re-submitted.

Roads and Public Footpaths: Speed watch has continued occasionally at Venn Green but speeding is still an issue in the parish. Mike Jackson, the P3 co-ordinator is thanked for checking the public footpaths and liaising with Devon County Council Rights of Way officers regarding maintenance matters. (see separate report)

Community Involvement and Spirit: The Parish Hall management committee continue to maintain and improve the facilities (see separate report) All organisations in the parish would be delighted to have more support for their events and more volunteers or leaders to organise and manage them. Thanks to all who are involved and provide support.

Our Environment: Congratulations to Milton Monsters for their recent litter pick. DCC Highways have worked on the verges to keep water off the roads but their good work is undone when verges are regularly damaged. A little more road courtesy would go a long way towards maintaining our environment. Problems are regularly reported to Highways and our County Councillor.

3. Report from Parish Paths Partnership (P3) Co-ordinator. Mike Jackson explained that Milton Damerel had been involved with the P3 scheme for just over one year. The scheme allows the local co-ordinator to report and arrange remedies for footpath problems more quickly than the DCC bi-annual review. Works that have already been done include improvements to the drainage on Butterfly Lane. The broken stile on FP1 was replaced with a self closing gate. The finger post at Holy Trinity Church was replaced after being broken off by escaped cattle and a new finger was fitted at Worden Cross after it was damaged during hedge cutting. Currently there are problems with FP15 with very deep mud on the path behind Whitebear farm yard and the ladder stile at Whitebear Cottage is awaiting repair after the steps were broken off. Subject to finance being available it is proposed to construct a 30m board walk through the copse on FP16 between the Church and Whitebear Cottage to re-align the path to its correct route and make it more accessible.

4. Reports from Local Organisations

a) **Milton Damerel Parish Hall.** Lesley Self thanks the Parish Council for the grant made to the Parish Hall. She reported that the hall is reasonably well used. Income also comes from regular users including the Parish Council, Skittlers, Linedancing, Over 60s Group and Gardening Society in addition to individual hirers but income from hirers is usually insufficient to cover basic expenses. Events are also organised throughout the year to boost the income, with the monthly Whist Drive this weekend and a Wine and Wisdom next weekend. All events are advertised in the newsletter and with posters around the parish. The car park has recently been cleared of surface mud and the outside of the hall is going to be painted in the near future.

b) **Milton Damerel & District Over 60s** report was read out by the Clerk on behalf of Joyce Daley who expressed appreciation for the new lighter weight tables recently obtain by the Parish Hall. Recent outings were well supported by friends making up numbers to fill the coach as member numbers dwindle. Despite the poor summer weather they were only caught out by the rain once as they arrived in Sidmouth in April. The Christmas lunch at the Royal Hotel, Bideford was enjoyed by all. Meetings are held first Tuesday of the month (except January) and new members are invited. The programme of outings for 2013 was made available at the meeting.

c) **Newsletter Group.** David Taylor reported that 235 copies of the newsletter containing 26-28 pages are hand delivered to all households in Milton Damerel and Abbots Bickington. Advertising paid annually in advance had simplified the collection and a 10% increase in charges has boosted the income to cover increased printing costs without advertisers withdrawing their advertisements.

Newsletter Group report continued:

To the year ending December 2012 there was only a small deficit on the year, due to the cost of the 50th Edition Social Evening, despite no fundraising events being organised. Community groups continue to support the newsletter with interesting reports of their activities but it's difficult to encourage input from individuals. David Taylor has taken over advertising from Margaret Stannard who was thanked for her work on advertising but she remains on the group which is unchanged from last year.

d) **Milton Damerel Gardening Society:** Bill Wrighton reported another successful year with 18-20 attending the meetings with a diverse range of speakers and topics. The Garden Show in September was the best yet with 237 entries despite the worst summer most can remember. Speakers included Mr & Mrs Heard from Cheristow Lavender who explained the many things that can be done with lavender and in February Dave Hopkins explained his novel way of deciding if the soil was warm enough to start sowing! Dave Meredith talked about his organic smallholding and weed control and Diane Lee, a medicinal herbalist talked about putting weeds to good use. Next month Dartmoor Paul will talk on Wild Flowers of the West Country and in June a visit to a member's vinery where he planted 200 vines 4 years ago, is arranged. The Garden Show will be on 14 September 2013.

e) **Milton Damerel Sunday Club** report read by the Clerk on behalf of Sheila Daniel. The small but enthusiastic group of 2 to 4 young people meet about 3 Sundays per month, joining in with part of the Chapel service before going to their own activities. Recently the group were treated to tea and tickets to a performance of the musical Joseph and his Technicolor Dream Coat at The Plough in Torrington, also 29 Easter eggs were given away to local children from funds. On Easter Sunday the Sunday Club did Brunch with Easter crafts and was pleased to have 6 young people attend. A litter pick at Venn Green was also undertaken during the Easter holidays with one volunteer from the community. The Special Anniversary Service on 26 May will raise funds for the Sunday Club.

f) **Milton Monsters Club** report read by the Clerk on behalf of Sheila Daniel. There are 12 to 14 youngsters most club evenings where activities such as fencing, den making, crafts, cooking and games are undertaken. Tea is still provided for just £1 thanks to a generous donation from a local business which helps to cover the cost.

All helpers with the Sunday Club and Milton Monsters adhere to the strict Methodist Church safeguarding policy.

g) **Milton Damerel Neighbourhood Watch** report was given by Mike Jackson on behalf of Roger Copp. The Parish Council was thanked for the grant towards street signs for the new watch area at Holsworthy Beacon, the other part of which is in the parish of Holsworthy Hamlets. About half the residents of Holsworthy Beacon have signed up and the other watches in the parish have 77 members in total. A national database has been set up on www.ourwatch.org.uk for people to find their local Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Although rural north Devon is a low crime area, some criminal activity does occur and crime prevention tips are published for the benefit of all in the parish newsletter. Neighbourhood watch members can also receive weekly newsletters, by email, covering Holsworthy, Bideford and Torrington areas. Mike reported that the Holsworthy co-ordinators have a good working relationship with the Holsworthy Beat Team mainly through the PCSOs.

h) **PCSO Raquel Rowe**, who regularly reports at Parish Council meetings and in the newsletter, informed residents that there had been 15 reported crimes in the parish over the last year including theft, violence, antisocial behaviour and criminal damage.

5. The Guest speaker Matt Edworthy, Biosphere Reserve Outreach Coordinator, explained that the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve is the only one of its type in the UK from approximately 700 worldwide sites. The North Devon Nature Improvement Area (NIA) Project covers 72,000 hectares wholly within the Biosphere Reserve and aims to engage with people who live in the area to try and secure a sustainable future working with nature not against it. Restoring and recreating wildlife habitats and helping to improve the management of watercourses. The North Devon NIA hosts 35% of the UK's remaining Culm grassland which soaks up the rainfall and 'drip feeds' it into the watercourses during very wet weather. The area has important populations of two of Europe's ten most threatened species – the marsh fritillary butterfly and the freshwater pearl mussel. Sites of environmental interest within the parish have been identified by the Parish Biodiversity Audit which was partly done by aerial photos and partly by ground surveys however some sites are not accessible to the public and the project does not have the resources to visit these sites and would welcome input from the community. Matt also talked about non-native invasive plants many of which were introduced into Victorian gardens, especially Japanese Knotweed which is a notifiable weed and sightings can be reported via smart phone apps. Himalayan Balsam is another invasive species; this has exploding seed pods that can project seeds over a wide area, their growth smothering native plants. There are no reported cases of Balsam in Milton Damerel.

6. Questions from members of the community. The Chairman asked the speaker where the Parish Council might obtain a copy of the Parish Biodiversity Report and he was also asked to provide information on reporting of knotweed in the parish for those without smart phones and apps. He agreed to provide the report and information to the Parish Clerk by email.

7. Any other matters. Following the recent litter pick it was suggested that a litter bin might be provided at the Venn Green lay-by. It was thought to be policy not to have bins in such places due to mis-use with the depositing of inappropriate rubbish in these bins. It was also brought to the attention of the meeting that the single row of flags at the Venn Green bus stop made it dangerous for anyone waiting with a pram or small children due to having to stand so close to the carriageway. The Parish Council will investigate both matters.

The Chairman thanked the speaker for his interesting presentation and closed the Annual Parish Meeting at 8.58pm.

Everyone was invited to remain for refreshments before a Parish Council meeting commenced.