

Milton Damerel Parish Council Minutes

Minutes of Milton Damerel Parish Council Annual Open Meeting held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 15th April 2025 which commenced at 19:30.

Present: Councillors Stephen Moyse (Chair), Peter Bromley, Edgar Pett, Jim Richardson, Teresa Walters and County Councillor Lynne Rowsell.

Also present were Residents Julie and Robert Sage, George Preston, and representatives of local groups Lesley Self: Skittles, Mel Richardson & David Wyatt: Parish Hall, Grace Milman: Methodist Church, Rev. Mark James and Duncan Bridge: Holy Trinity Church and the Clerk Jane Elliott.

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Piper, Councillor Gareth Piper, Michael Jackson: Neighbourhood Watch.

Reports from Local Groups:

Milton Damerel Skittles Teams reported that the MD Ladies A & B Skittle teams meet once a month from October to March. They play in Division A and have games at the Parish Hall and away. At the end of the season, they hold a Cup Competition. Member of the A Team have qualified to represent Holsworthy and District in the Devon County Competition. New members are welcome to join.

The Newsletter is printed quarterly and produces 240 copies of between 24 and 36 pages which are delivered free of charge by hand to all households in the Milton Damerel Parish and Abbots Bickington. The Newsletter celebrated its 100th edition during 2025. As a result, the Newsletter is running a photograph competition for parishioners to submit pictures for the front cover. Content from local groups and for significant family events are welcome. The Newsletter is running a photograph competition for parishioners to submit pictures for the front cover. **Contact mdnld@hotmail.co.uk**

The Neighbourhood Watch Torridge and Rural North Devon are still considered to be very low crime areas lying in 4th place behind North Yorkshire, The Shetland Isles and South Norfolk. This parish is fortunate to avoid anti-social behaviour, burglaries to shed and outbuildings and even sheep rustling; all of which have been reported in neighbouring parishes. There is little contact with the Police since the PCSO positions were removed from Holsworthy. The beat team is made up of the Sergeant, who also covers Great Torrington, and 2 police constables. The NHW is grateful for space in the Parish Newsletter each edition enabling all residents to be kept informed. The NHW may close down as there is virtually no crime, other than opportunist thefts from sheds/outbuildings. Concerns can easily and quickly be shared on social media platforms. Residents are thanked for being vigilant in reporting strange vehicles and are welcome to get in touch.

The Methodist Church has a minimum of 2 Sunday services per month on the 2nd and 3rd weeks of the month, with a congregation aged 5 to 90. There is something for "All Ages", including Café Worship with crafts, quizzes and childrens activities organised by Sheila Daniel and Della Bealey from Frithelstock. Details of services are posted to Milton Damerel Facebook page and advertised in the noticeboard on the chapel railings. The Church has obligations to support the Torridge Methodist Circuit the Ministers, Lay Workers etc in addition to meeting the running costs of the buildings and graveyard and is only able to cover costs by regularly drawing on the funds held from the sale of Chapel Cottage and from bequests etc. Deaconess Debbie Marsh has recently joined the Torridge Methodist Circuit moving from the Bude area where she has initiated many outreach activities and events. A valued team of Parish residents organise events including Easter Sunday, Harvest Festival and Christmas. All are welcome to join the friendly Chapel.

Holy Trinity Church Holy Trinity Church in Milton Damerel continues to serve as a valued presence within the life of the community. The congregation remains small but there is a clear and ongoing commitment to the church, both as a place of worship and as a shared community space. Regular worship continues with a monthly Holy Communion service, alongside occasional benefice-wide and seasonal gatherings. Attendance varies, but key moments in the year, particularly at Christmas, demonstrate that there remains a strong connection between the wider community and the church. These occasions highlight both affection for the building and a desire for it to remain part of village life. Much of the work of the church remains pastoral and relational, often unseen but important, supporting individuals and families at key moments, responding to need where possible, and seeking to be a steady and approachable presence within the parish.

There are significant challenges around the building itself. Concerns remain regarding the condition of the roof and bell tower, and more broadly the long-term sustainability of the building as a place of worship. These are not small issues, and they naturally raise questions about the future. There is a commitment to exploring how the building can be maintained and used well, working with the Diocese to consider both immediate safety needs and longer-term solutions.

Looking ahead, the approach remains a careful balance; the aim is not to overextend, but to remain faithful, present, and open, supporting what is here, while discerning what may be possible in the future. **Friends of Holy Trinity Church** Thanks to Roberta Jackson for her work as chair to the Friends of Holy Trinity and to Steven and Adrain Moyse for mowing the churchyard. Thanks for £150 received from the Parish Council. 2025 Financial highlights Remedial works £2,300 with a grant of £1,000 from the archdeaconry, Insurance £1,900, Architect fee £900, Parish share to Diocese £670 Wind turbine credit £1,000, overall, around £2,000 loss of wealth over the year 2025.

Church Structure Estimate of refurbishment costs roof and tower £300,000 money will not come from the parish and there is no competition with the Parish Hall and Methodist Church. There is a very real danger that the building will have to close in the foreseeable future.

The Village Hall has received £100 from the Parish Council and £250 from Councillor N Kenneally to use towards the improvements of the car park surface. During the last year the Hall has hosted monthly Community Cafes, Big Breakfasts, and monthly Whist drives. The Midsummer BBQ/Live music and tug of war were very popular. The Christmas Party and New Years Eve Party were also well supported. Several charities including Air Ambulance, Chemo heroes and British Legion have benefitted from Hall fund raising events. The new heating system is working well and the hall has recently received a defibrillator through the British heat Foundation which will be located on the front of the building. The next project is to renovate the floor of the skittle alley to make a multi-use meeting room. Local supporters are thanked and valued but more groups and residents would be really welcome as would new committee members.

The meeting concluded at 20:05 and everyone enjoyed the refreshments and a short time to chat together.