

Ellisfield Volunteers Group – Chairman’s Report of 2015

Once again welcome to the AGM.

When I was thinking about putting together this years report, I wasn’t sure we had much to say since it had been a relatively uneventful year. However, that was before the recent exceptional weather conditions prior to this meeting. More on this subject later.

During 2015, we once again had a good turnout for volunteers with many new people joining for the season. Also one of our volunteers got married and I’d like to pass on the committee’s congratulations to Ted Dowson and Barbara. For 2016, we have a few changes in the volunteers with Robert Aylesbury and Tony Simmons stepping down and Ashley Turberfield, Mick Walker and Linda Springett joining the group. On behalf of the committee I’d like to thank Robert and Tony for their support and say welcome to Mick and Linda who moved into the Hopwoods house in August last year and Ashley and Annie who moved into Patches. Please do find some time to introduce yourself to them.

Last year, I mentioned that the current committee had remained largely unchanged and offered the opportunity for others to come forward to join the committee. I do believe it’s always healthy to have new blood on the committee since it brings with it new ideas. So for 2016, I’d like to communicate the following changes:

- At her own request, Margaret will be step down as co-ordinator for the Gravel Pits but remain as a volunteer
- Graham Simpson (currently looking after the Burial Ground) will take over the responsibility for Margaret’s role
- Paul Brown has offered to join the committee and take over the running of the Burial Ground

I’d very much like to thank Margaret (also supported by Julian) for her help in the last 3 years. Hannah, as secretary, has also indicated that she would like to step down sometime in the coming year given she is already committed to EVA and other rural activities. If anyone would like to put themselves forward for this position – do let Hannah or me know.

On the equipment side we have now replaced the other Burial Ground mower, as proposed at last years AGM. For 2016 we will need to replace the hand mower at Lower Common and resolve a long standing fault with the ride-on mower. Both of these will be actioned before the start of the new season. Other Repairs and Servicing to the equipment were minimal.

On the Finances, we have agreed to maintain the parish grant at the same level as 2015, recognizing the investment we will need to make in 2016. Zani will provide more updates in her report.

On the safety side, I can confirm the Risk Assessments and Instructions have been through their annual check by the area co-ordinators. There are some changes to the Burial Ground, which Graham has completed. If you are scheduled to cut the Burial Ground, please take some time to review the updated document either on the website or by request to the co-ordinator. There are no changes to Lower Common or Gravel Pits risk profile.

I'd now like to say a few words about the recent Flooding in early January. Firstly, I'd like to say a big thank you to the volunteers who were able to help with clearing of ditches, roads and the grips. I would also like to acknowledge that a number of villagers not related to the volunteers group also came forward to help. Whilst there were some frustrations, I think the message for me is that many Ellisfield villagers worked together as a team under what can only be described as exceptional circumstances. From what I saw and the emails I received offering to help in other ways, such as organizing digging equipment, this was a great example of a village community spirit of which we should all be very proud.

Following on from this, I'm often asked if the EVG can take on more activities. I'm always careful in my response for a number of reasons. Firstly, each year the EVG spends around £500 on liability and road insurance – about a third of the tender we receive from the Parish Council. Any additional activity therefore under the banner of the EVG comes with additional risk and cost. Secondly, we are a volunteers organization. People provide their time free of charge for the benefit of the community and I believe we need to be careful not to take their commitment for granted. However, I am aware that people are happy to offer additional ad hoc help (as we saw in the recent floods) and for this reason I'm OK to communicate any reasonable requests on this basis. However, I will stop short of including such requests as part of the EVG remit for the reasons mentioned above.

Finally, I'd like to thank YOU the volunteers for your on-going commitment to the group. From the comments I receive, I do believe the EVG is an essential part of the Ellisfield village community, which only exists through your support.

And of course, I would also like to thank the EVG committee for their support in the day to day running of the organization, without whom I wouldn't be able to do my role as Chairman.

Andy Swanston
EVG Chairman
January 25, 2016