

## **NEWPORT VILLAGE RECORDER REPORT FOR 2012**

2012 was probably the busiest year ever in Newport. Major events included the Royal Jubilee, the passage of the Olympic Torch, the Carnival and associated Fete and entertainments and a Local History Exhibition. Societies and clubs covering social aspects, sport and the arts have prospered and continue to contribute greatly to enhancing the quality of life in the village. Other than the redevelopment of the Station Maltings there has been little development of new housing or infrastructure in the village. However, the consultation stage of the UDC development plan has caused controversy with a draft plan to develop the Grammar School site together with another, at the south end of the village, for housing.

### LOCAL HISTORY RECORDER WORK

Recorder activities in 2012 continued at a high level of activity:

**Family History:** Several enquiries concerning family history were received, mostly through the Recorder website, from Australia, USA and UK. Significant ones were received from descendants of the Searle, Bailey, Brace, Gayler, Howard and Ware families. These were handled by reference to the invaluable archives of the History Group and Newport News.

**Property Matters:** Property related matters were prominent in this year's activities. Work on the Cheffins Archive of property sales was concluded and has added considerably to the store of information in the Newport archives. Further work is needed on the huge goods and chattels records of Cheffins.

Work was also concluded on an archive of the property sales etc. records of Heckford Norton of Saffron Walden which had been handed to the Saffron Walden Historical Society for draft cataloguing prior to transfer to Essex Record Office. This contained a number of significant documents pertaining to Newport, most notably a description of waterworks at Shortgrove in 1765, and a marriage settlement between Fanny Rowley King and William Charles Smith. The great majority of these documents have been copied for subsequent analysis.

The deeds of 'Bellmans', a 1960's bungalow on Belmont Hill were loaned by a former owner and were copied for the archives. These deeds allow the history of the site to be traced back to around 1850 when it was

owned by James Joseph Baker of Bisham Abbey, Berks whose connection with Newport remains unexplained. The cottages on that site were destroyed by fire in 1907 and thereafter it was used as a croquet lawn until the present building was made for Miss J Waterhouse, daughter of the former Headmaster of NFGS. It is hoped that research will reveal the early history of this property.

Information was provided on the Widdington Windmill and the Church Altar Chest.

A number of notable acquisitions/donations were made to the Newport Archives including a fine colour aerial photograph of Shortgrove Hall shortly before the fire; an original print of the Spy Cartoon of Sir Anthony Meyer; a photocopy of the hitherto unknown Particulars of Sale of the Shortgrove Estate of 1986 (Cheffins, Grain & Chalk) and a digital archive of Pearce House, Bishops Stortford which includes a section on Fanny Smith of Shortgrove.

Victoria County History Project: The VCH project has progressed rapidly in 2012 with the greater proportion of sections completed to final draft i.e. prior to general editing. The VCH central body has decided that the finished history will be published as a 'print on demand' booklet.

## EVENTS

The Royal Jubilee: On 4 June the Jubilee was celebrated with three street parties despite poor weather. At Tenterfields the day was saved with the help of five gazebos to protect the participants! About forty people attended the High St party which was held at White Cottage. The other event was a barbeque for friends and neighbours at 125 Cherry Garden Lane and raised £192 for the Primary School. It included a fancy dress event for the children.

Olympic Torch Weekend: On 7 July the Olympic Torch passed through Newport with four runners covering this stage, one being Jamie Oliver formerly a pupil at the Free Grammar School. It was attended by about six thousand spectators from the village and surrounding areas many of them getting wet through by two periods of torrential rain. This once in a lifetime event was recorded in over 200 pictures taken by and donated by those attending. A competition for the best decorated house was sponsored by the Village Store; it was won by the Benge family of Frambury Lane for a display including a cut out group of the Royal Family overlooking the massed crowds.

Village Carnival and Fete: This event commenced shortly after the Torch procession left Newport for Saffron Walden. The carnival ran from the north of the village to the common which despite the terrible weather had been transformed into an arena of colour and splendour. Many of those who had come for the Torch procession stayed on for the carnival which was very well received. It included various vintage vehicles and floats carrying e.g. a band, NATS, Brownies, the Primary School etc. and walking representatives of various societies and clubs. The Fete followed on from the carnival and began in brilliant sunshine with many stalls and music provided by the Scratch Band and the Dennis Stratton Story. Again the weather intervened but without noticeably reducing the activities though probably increasing sales of refreshments, notably at the Village Hall provided by a team from the Church. The day was brought to an end by The Concert on the Common which attracted a good crowd.

Overall these events raised a total of £5,600. The whole weekend was the result of a tremendous effort by many unsung heroes who produced a wonderful weekend for the vast numbers who participated and enjoyed it. A great example of the best in rural village life.

National Heritage Weekend: In September the Local History Group staged a two day 'Newport Bygones' exhibition at the Village Hall as part of this National Event. This required a substantial refurbishment of many of the Bygones exhibits. The exhibition included a collection of Newport artefacts kindly loaned by the Saffron Walden Museum. The exhibition was successful and generated many enquiries, all of which have been followed up.

## HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

UDC Consultation on Housing: The UDC has gone through a consultative process on the problem of meeting housing needs in Uttlesford, including Newport. Two meetings have been held in Newport to discuss proposals and a key decision is scheduled for early 2013. Their proposal calls for a large number of homes to be allocated to Newport and identifies two potential sites for development. The first site straddles Whiteditch Lane but is mostly on the north west of it and could include 300 - 430 houses. Access would be from the main north - south highway via Bury Water Lane past the Grammar School. This already congested narrow lane would require three new roundabouts. The second site is to the south behind the houses on the south side of Frambury Lane and those on London Road and could accommodate 70 - 131 houses. Access would be from a new roundabout on London Rd. and possibly from Frambury Lane

via a spur passing next to the southern boundary of the primary school. In total this could mean a minimum of 371 new houses with no limit identified but possibly 560 new homes on these two sites. Presently there are about 950 homes in Newport so any development of this scale, even at the minimum is likely to have a massive impact. An alternative proposal by Pelham Structures would involve relocation of the Grammar School to allow redevelopment of that site and also further building on a site at the south end the village between London Road and the M11. The process thus far has created considerable controversy which has resulted in formation of an action group (Save Newport Village or SNV) to resist UDC proposals for a distributed housing plan. Claims and counterclaims have been made of a major shift in policy; ignoring a recent Newport Survey; bias towards developers; deficiencies in UDC documentation and lack of due process. There is undoubtedly considerable opposition to the high number of houses and scale of development allocated to Newport which would result in a major increase in population and further stress on an already struggling infra-structure and environment. There is also disquiet in other parts of Uttlesford including Saffron Walden and Henham; this is likely to mean a long campaign of resistance.

## GENERAL

There continues to be good demand for property in Newport but it is evident that the present 'buyers market' has resulted in some price reduction relative to previous years. There have been only a small number of house completions and despite on-going discussions there has been little progress on social or affordable housing. However, in December the UDC gave planning approval for redevelopment of a disused part of the 'Carnation Nurseries' which will result in construction of 17 detached and semi-detached houses with 9 of them affordable properties. The redevelopment of the Station Maltings site is approaching completion and will deliver a mix of new build houses and conversion of most of one range to apartments; eleven new homes in total. The remainder of the maltings will remain as light industrial units which are being refurbished. Some of the units have already been occupied by existing tenants. The new development was re-launched in November 2012 and will be completed in 2013

## TRAFFIC

Traffic congestion and parking remain an issue and further housing development under the UDC dispersal policy will inevitably cause a further deterioration. The insertion of roundabouts at the junction of Bury Water

Lane or on London Rd. will hardly improve traffic flow should those proposals come about. The proposed zebra crossing on Belmont Hill has finally been agreed and is expected to be installed in 2013. 20 mph speed restrictions have been introduced for Frambury Lane, Bury Water Lane and Bridgend. There have been adverse comments on the proliferation of signage to that effect especially in Bridgend. On the positive side, four new flower beds have been installed in the village, financed by funds made available by the UDC new Homes bonus.

## CHURCH

St. Mary's Church: The Rev. Neil McLeod was inducted as Vicar of the parishes of Newport and Widdington early in 2012 and is making an impact with new ideas.

Over the last ten years £560,000 has been spent on the most urgent repairs to the parish church. However, the main present challenge is the need to raise funds for renovation of the Chancel roof etc. This major project is scheduled for 2013 at a cost of nearly £200,000. Although there has been considerable success in raising funds by means of grants and local events during the year, there remains a substantial shortfall to allow timely completion of the works. More events are planned to enable the funds to be obtained. Much work has gone into improving the appearance of the churchyard by removal of intrusive vegetation.

**David Evans**

**Newport Village Recorder; December 2012**



**Olympic Torch going through Newport**