

## Offton Village Report for the Year 2012

A Hedgerow survey was conducted throughout Suffolk between 1998 and 2012. The result of the survey was published in 2012 by Guy Ackers, the co-ordinator of the survey.

The hedges were assessed by the number of species found over a sample distance of 30 m and the survey records hedges with <4 species, 5, 6 & 7 species, and 8 + species. The average of species found in 'Rolling Valley Farmland' into which category Offton land was grouped was 17% (<4), 35% (5-7), and 49% (over 8). In Offton the survey was carried out by me over a number of years and 147 hedges were assessed. The percentages here were 14% (<4), 50% (5-7), 36% (over 8). Hence Offton had more hedgerows at 5-7 species than the average, but less than average of hedges with more than 8 species. The idea behind the survey is to monitor the decline or increase of hedges and the species within them.

The year started with a very dry winter and Spring, so much so that a hose pipe ban was imposed. But the day it started on the 4<sup>th</sup> April the heavens opened and from then on we had a very wet year with record rainfalls. 2012 was, of course, Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Year. The villagers marked this by holding a street celebration in St. Mary's Close with games and lots of shared food. There was also a Lighting of a beacon ceremony on the village hall meadow after watching the London celebrations on the big screen. The whole weekend showed real community spirit as lots of people got involved.

In the church calendar Children's workshops for Easter, Autumn, and Christmas featured prominently and found great support.

The Annual Church Fete raised £1200 and the Gardens Open & Flower Festival a month later raised another £1273 and a Family Quiz added further to the funds in November.

Paul & Anne Chapman retired from the PCC this year after Paul having served on the council since 1955 and Anne since 1972. The PCC were very grateful for all their dedication over those years and wished them a happy retirement.

The parish council welcomed a new parish clerk, namely Jayne Double who has since carried out her duties most efficiently and has attended a number of courses to bring her up-to-date with the latest requirements of that post. The outgoing parish clerk Mr. Pip Sands was given a farewell dinner at the Limes in Needham Market and presented with a gift from the councillors with their heartfelt thanks for all the years of his service.

The results of a Parish Plan questionnaire which had been distributed to every household in the parishes of Offton and Willisham were presented at an exhibition in the village hall where the most requested points were

displayed and where people had a further chance to emphasise their concerns.

Just before Christmas the parish council once more hosted a dinner for the Senior Citizens of the two villages which was again a jolly affair.

Somersham and District Community Shop opened this year and Offton villagers are supporting it by shopping there as well as several of them volunteering to help in the shop.

The newness of the village hall has led to it being used a lot more than the old one was with more people willing to organise various events.

An attempt to start a lunch/pudding club did not have any response and did not start. Equally Keep-fit and Pilates classes ran for a while and then closed for lack of support. However a Canasta club and coffee mornings continue to be offered and are doing well. The Film Evenings are very well attended and seen as a great success for and by the hall committee.

The hall booking clerk has also taken a number of private hirings, which is very welcome as the hall expenses are naturally much higher now. This is mainly due to insurances and fuel costs.

A Charity Folk Evening organised by Ted Sampson raised £500 for Adoption UK.

Other well attended functions were a Country & Western Evening with Bob Keeley (also for Charity) and an Antiques Valuation, as well as a Quiz Night.

The Carpet Bowls Club is still the most regular user of the hall and in April held a big competition to benefit the village hall. The club is not having as many members as in former years and again held Open Evenings to encourage new members. They would love to enlarge their membership.

I would like to highlight again the importance of the Link magazine which goes out to 750 homes and costs £300 to print each month; this is funded by advertising within the magazine and donations from other users thereby being self-financing.

This magazine is still the preferred choice for keeping everyone informed about goings-on in the parishes despite websites being available both for the parish council and the village hall. I guess the readership likes to have something in print to keep for reference.

This concludes my report and I wish to thank the Parish Council for their support and for giving me an opportunity to pass on my historical titbits on their website.

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Offton Village Recorder