

## **WAG annual report May 2024**

**Events 2023:** March saw WAG in the throes of preparing for a celebration, on 7 May, of the coronation of King Charles III. The Rec was waterlogged, so it was held in the grounds of the Ploughman Hall in – fortunately – glorious weather, which meant it was exceptionally well attended. With music from Stone Cold Stumble, food, drink, ice creams and an array of stalls, plus picnickers on the grass, the atmosphere on that Sunday was very enjoyable.

Preparations then commenced for the Feast Week with a Ceilidh on Friday 22 September, a Gardeners' Fayre on the Saturday, organised with the invaluable help of Katja Gauci and Pete Cornish (with thanks to Linda Horne for storage and retrieval of the tables), and a Repair Café organised by WAG member Alex Mueller on the Sunday. The following weekend there were two History Walks led by Steve Moore, a Gujarati Thali dining experience provided by Prakash Nayee and his brothers (all the way from Crawley) and a Litter Pick. The programme ended the following weekend on 6 October with a Wine Quiz and Dance courtesy of Cat and Clive Pawsey, with live band Hoarse With No Name, held in the Main School Hall. The Christmas period saw WAG involved in the Big Switch On of committee members Sue and Howard Berry's lights display at 41 High Street, with Advent Windows across the village, and a hastily arranged but nevertheless well attended Carols Singalong on the Green on Christmas Eve (impetus provided by Coun. Simon Clark, singing led by Cat Pawsey).

**Events 2024:** Ceilidh 6 April with caller John Mullett, organised by Sue and Howard Berry, their family and friends, with raffle on behalf of Friends of Willingham Church (FOWC) – and we have co-opted Frances and James Watts from that organisation to assist us in our activities. Plans are being made for a "Willingham Welcomes" recruitment festival on 14 July with invitations going out to all clubs, societies and community organisations to run an information stall, and with the whole village to be leafleted and invited to attend so that people can find out what is available. The Willingham Feast dates have also been set for end of September/beginning of October with a programme very similar to that of 2023. The Big Switch On and Carols on the Green will also be part of the WAG effort, in close(r) cooperation with Willingham Parish Council, to which we would like to extend our thanks for their always unwavering support.

**Media:** We have a lively Facebook page which has really taken off this year, and are in the process of introducing a new village website – our thanks go to the WAG members Prakash Nayee, Martin Smith and Connor McLure who have taken on these tasks. We would also like to thank the editors of Willingham News for their support in advertising many of our main events on the front page of that excellent publication.

**Enviro:** The Community Orchard continues to prosper with maintenance tasks on trees and paths being undertaken regularly by the group of volunteers coordinated by Andrew Harris, so thanks to all of them. Bulb planting took place in the autumn period and we look forward to an increasing show over the coming years. This spring we are experimenting by introducing bee friendly wild flower plant plugs into the wild flower areas of the orchard. It is hoped to involve the community with producing the plugs in the future so planting can continue at a lower cost. Apart from grants received from various bodies, the Adopt-a-Tree scheme has generated funds used for enhancement. Thanks to Marion Barber for organising the bulb and wild flower planting and Andrew and Amanda Harris for the continued running of the Adopt-a-Tree scheme. Edd Gilbert of Queenholme Farm

continues with mowing the perimeter but the mowing of the orchard area has been taken over by a contractor appointed by WPC.

The high level of winter rainfall resulted in standing water in the orchard and woodland for prolonged periods. Combined with high winds this resulted in some trees leaning and one blown over. Two trees were replaced in the winter having suffered from unexplained problems.

The willow patch is now producing a greater quantity of useable willow allowing bundles to be shared between willow group members. Steven Smith continues to look after the bee hives and sell the honey in the village. Future plans include installing more bird nesting boxes, placing a more visible sign board in the entrance area and planting more bulbs.

**General:** WAG has had a change in personnel as we say thanks (words are not enough!) to Graham Mumby, last of the 2008 WAG intake, author of the above piece on the Community Orchard, and indeed the author of the Community Orchard per se – among other enviro-improvements around the village! Graham is only leaving the WAG Board, however. He will remain active on our and the village's behalf. His place on the Board has been taken by Jeremy Sweet and we very much welcome his already fruit-bearing engagement with both the Enviro portfolio and the village's flooding problems.

**Finances:** Due to personal circumstances, preparation of our end-of-year accounts was delayed beyond the 3 May deadline, but we hope they will be available in time for the annual parish meeting. For information, our bank balance as of 31 March 2024 was a healthy £ 2,998.66 with no major expenses or income items outstanding.

**Finally:** We look forward to forging ever closer ties with other groups in the Willingham as we endeavour to create an integrated approach to adding value to village life.

Paul Knighton, WAG Chair