

## **Clr Macintyre's Annual Report 2024-2025**

### **Community Matters**

#### **Whispers of a Chalk Stream and the Environmental Matters**

Summer 2024 brought Dr Sharon Witt & Dr Helen Clarke's glorious "Whispers of Chalk Stream" project to a close, with a celebratory event, and more recently, two publications, a) Exploring the Bishop's Sutton headwaters of the River Alre and b) A Community Poetry Anthology, using material generated during the year-long project. I also submitted entries to celebrate the project to our parish magazine, Bismonroptis, and to Clerks and Councils Magazines.

A sign is soon to be positioned at the Village Hall, artwork by talented village artist, Mel Wall. This will incorporate a map of the core of the village and will celebrate and inform those passing of our precious chalk stream and its ecosystem.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to again thank Drs Clarke and Witt for the huge amount of time, thought, and effort they put into these events.

The legacy of this project lives on in the community; friendships have been formed, and an increase in knowledge and appreciation of the village's natural world is evident.

One such development is the exciting discovery, by a team acting on behalf of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, of evidence of at least one water vole living beside the ford. This has implications relevant to verge and ditch maintenance, so I reported this to WCC to ensure that their schedules do not endanger this creature or its immediate environment.

In November, I attended a Hampshire Pollinator networking event, where I met representatives of many groups actively involved with increasing the numbers of wildflowers and pollinating insects in their areas. I continue to be on the lookout for people in the village who might want to lead such activity in the village, and for places to plant new trees, for which there are often grants available. Recently, the PC has discussed replacing the dying ash trees beside the phone box with maples.

#### **Social Events**

Following on from the Whispers of a Chalk Stream community project, the social life of the village is currently benefitting from the work of a team of volunteers, led by Julia Bailey, who are organising regular village social events including events such as: activity afternoons and evenings, cinema nights with the village hall's new equipment and quizzes. The regular pub nights in the village hall fill the gap left by the closing of The Ship, which is under new

management and is being refurbished. These are very well attended and are giving the new management time to interact with the villagers, which must be beneficial for everyone. Since the last Assembly, the Parish Council has hosted two information events for the village: a talk from Hampshire Police about online safety, and HeartStart training, for villagers interested in understanding how to use the defibrillator.

### **Water Lane**

From winter to summer in 2024, Water Lane experienced severe flooding from groundwater, which froze in cold weather and did not start to recede until June. This caused significant damage to the road, which was lightly repaired by Highways later in the year. However, the road is still in poor condition.

Following the flooding and as a result of a review of signage regulation within HCC, in June, signs for ice, brake testing, and a 6-foot depth gauge were added to Water Lane and the Ford. These were met with exasperation by some villagers, their size being disproportionate to their location. Highways eventually agreed to replace the depth gauge with a narrower option, which we are expecting to be installed soon.

As March has turned to April this year, we have been pleased to see the earlier receding of flood water on Water Lane, which so far in 2025, has been less severe. This was helped by the scything of the weeds in the stream, commissioned by the Mills' farm. It should be noted, however, that winter '24 to spring '25 have been unusually dry (with March being reported as driest since 1961), yet the quantity of water collecting on the road is still significant.

We are very grateful to Winchester City Councillor, Claire Pinniger, who has taken on the mantle to try to get to the bottom of the causes of the flooding and what might be possible to do to protect ourselves from it. She has recently commissioned a short hydrologist's report which may help to inform any future work the village should any possibilities become apparent. It notes that the rainfall in the first half of 2024 and hence the groundwater levels, had not been as high since 1976. Climate Change would suggest that the village should expect unusually high water events to become more frequent, and as such, there will be an increase in the chances of significant flooding. With the agreement of the Mills, we hope that the appropriate management of the weed in the stream will go some way to mitigating any severe problems. Whilst we adjust to our new normal, farmers and residents, including the Parish Council, are doing our best to deal with unusual circumstances as they arise.