

Annual Parish Meeting held Thursday 2nd April 2009 at 7.00 pm in the Main Hall of Meldreth Primary School

Apologies for absence:

Mr R A Searles (Parish Councillor)

Those present:

All Councillors with the exception of Mr Searles
The District Councillor
The County Councillor
3 members of the public

Minutes of previous meeting:

Minutes of the previous meeting held Thursday 3rd April 2008, were signed as a true record. Proposed by Mr P Ray and seconded by Mr C A Land.

Reports from the following:

CHAIRMAN

(1) The Mary Course memorial fund is now in operation. The funds raised have been deposited in a suitable account, where by interest raised is passed onto the school. This will be used by the school to award a suitable prize each year to an outstanding pupil for work done.

(2) The Flood Avoidance Sub-Committee continues to carry out it's task of following up on any information that will help prevent further flooding to parts of the village. They are having some success with work carried out by them to the High St and the Stocks area, these areas have not been as bad as they could have been after heavy rain.

(3) Work has been carried out on the pavilion roof in order to keep the building water proof. This has meant a new roof which is of rolled metal rather than fibre cement sheeting. Further work will be carried out on a new ceiling, and some decoration will be carried out. This is one of the largest outlays of funds this year.

(4) Speedwatch - There are ten kits available in the county, one yes one, is for use in South Camb's. People who wish to participate in carrying out speed checks need to sign up for training. Those who do volunteer will not be carrying out checks in there own village.

(5) Precept this year once again it has been kept as low as possible, this is in keeping with last years precept of £36,750.

(6) First Capitol Connect are now making a charge for parking in the station car par. This is set at a small amount after intervention by the District Councillor and a lot of protest from rail users at a public meeting. However, this will not last for ever, only a short time, just to get people back into the park.

(7) There could be a new bus route from Whaddon to part of the village (Fenny Lane crossroads) and then on to Royston if it can be set up. At the moment it is still being looked into.

Items raised at last years meeting:

The issue of vandalism is an ongoing issue as with many villages. However, Meldreth does appear to be fairly quiet, at the moment, but this may change when the evenings get lighter. One area of concern is Melwood where youths congregate and leave their rubbish behind, including alcohol bottles and cans. The Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) do carry out regular checks in areas of concern in Meldreth.

Repairs to the Flambards Bridge have been completed.

C.A.LAND

Chairman to the Parish Council.

FINANCIAL OFFICER

Money has been spend on projects such as the pavilion repairs, and repairs to the churchyard footpath and the village hall car park. The cemetery has also had some attention with new gateposts and repairs being made to the footpath. General costs have also increased such as the street lights.

Financial assistance was also given to the Royston & District Community Transport, Meldreth & Melbourn Self Help Group, Melbourn Library, Mobile Warden Scheme and the Village Hall.

Amount in hand £39,735.

Figures are not finalised until they have been through the External Auditor.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

Housing: The major issue from the District Council this year – and one of the most important decisions it will ever take - is the proposed transfer of the Council's stock of approximately 6000 homes. There are strong reasons to be made for and against. The Council's ruling group has taken the view that transfer should happen. A tenant vote is to take place 'in the spring' but no date has been given. Approximately £800,000 has been spent 'consulting' tenants with a voluminous flow of literature, DVDS that many tenants can't watch, a prize draw, several drop in sessions for Meldreth, and home visits. Unfortunately the information is almost comically one-sided – outlining the arguments in favour of transfer – making it difficult to come to an informed conclusion about what is best for tenants, for the future of social housing, and for the shape of the council left behind should transfer go ahead.

Sheltered Housing: after an unsettled period of changing staff, including a well-respected temporary scheme officer, it is good to have a new long term appointment. Tuesday coffee mornings continue to be an enjoyable social time.

Homelessness inquiries have nearly doubled in the second quarter, with no figures available for the 3rd and 4th quarters. More complex cases are coming forward. Support from the Citizens Advice Bureaux in Cambridge and at North Herts is critical as the first port of call in preventing homelessness and continuing support from District Councils to the CAB is fundamentally important.

Job losses: Cemex, Burlington Press and Motorola at Melbourn Science Park are some of the big local casualties of the recession and many local jobs have been lost. Other consequences of the pull-out of Cemex from Barrington include higher ground water levels due to the ceasing of cement production and the sale of pockets of Cemex-owned land in the surrounding area, including Meldreth.

Planning: The recession has had a big impact on planning. Staff are experiencing breathing space but there are serious implications. Planning applications were down 33% in last quarter of 2008 resulting in loss of revenue. There have been significant delays on Northstowe and Cambridge East, where the move of Marshalls Airport is now stalled – the move to Mildenhall will not be happening. The fact that sites such as Marshalls will now not have houses on them before 2016 means that planners have had to look elsewhere to make up the district's 2,220 housing shortfall.

A number of parishes have continued to express frustration with the Chairman's Delegation meetings, in terms of lack of democratic representation and accountability.

The Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document is far behind schedule and now an urgent priority as a policy vacuum creates difficulties for all. Identification of small sites is now expected in June or July with consultation in August.

Refuse: Kerbside plastics recycling was introduced last autumn and there has been a substantial increase in all types of recycling, including a knock on effect on glass and tin. It costs three times as much to collect plastics from kerbside as it did from banks. The problem of litter around the banks has been solved. The banks near Fieldgate are now largely obsolete and will be removed in the near future.

Pest Control: When the council was capped four years ago the free pest control service was done away with and uniform charges introduced for all residents, no exceptions made. Efforts to extend discounts for those who cannot afford the fee have been unsuccessful, and some residents find this policy particularly harsh during a period of recession.

Drainage: Our unique Flood Avoidance Subcommittee has engaged well with all the relevant parties in local drainage management – County, Parish, District councils, Anglian Water, and riparian owners. The reinstatement of a historic ditch at 110 High Street and the jetting of drains around the Stocks have helped to alleviate the flooding that regularly occurred there. The District has been commissioned to do hand work at the ditch north of the Rec and this has helped to clear the parish ditch along the Rec. Work should have taken place at Chiswick End around January but the District drainage team has recently been badly hit by long-term illness. The Council has been in the process of tendering out its drainage service and the outcome will be known in May – the in-house team is amongst those likely to be considered. But this will already have had a detrimental effect on morale and on the usual rhythm of keeping the in-house team properly staffed.

Neighbourhood Police Panels are working well. Direct dialogue between residents and the police, greater awareness of local problems, and broader perspective for individual parishes within a larger context, are part of the picture. PCSOs are moving on more quickly than we'd like but this is not possible to control.

Library at Melbourn: This is our local library but we haven't known much about how it runs, who supports it and what its future looks like. It is important because the library's future is by no means secure, and if it is lost it will be lost for good. Meldreth, together with Foxton, Shepreth and Melbourn parish councils, provides some financial support and Melbourn parish council has guaranteed the maintenance costs for the portable cabin premises, which must be vacated at the end of 2010. The 'District and Villages Association' committee is spearheading the search for new premises. Books and now ancient IT equipment are supplied by County Council; IT support is also provided by the County Council but if libraries find good second hand equipment to replace their antiquated computers and screens, the IT support will be withdrawn. The library is staffed entirely by volunteers, and new volunteers desperately needed.

Rail service: We are in the scheme of things a small station and we've been hit hard by numerous so-called 'improvements in service,' including higher fares, car park charges and reduced booking office opening hours. By fighting together we have saved the Saturday booking office hours and are in the game, we hope, for other small wins. FCC have introduced at £1 parking charge for a three month period, and the best thing we can do is to be pragmatic and explore how to make the most of what we have to work with. We have certainly let First Capital Connect know that we won't roll over and let things happen without a fight.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Firstly, we have elected a new leader of the County Council this year. Councillor Jill Tuck was elected last may, and is working hard, with the new chief executive Mark Lloyd, to tackle the challenges that the County Council face.

Again this year the County Council has been short-changed by the Government, as it has received a rise of just 1.9%, the equivalent of £1.71 per person. This compares with Essex (£3.47 per person), Suffolk (£8.87 per person) and Norfolk (£12.88 per person) and does not reflect that we are still the fastest growing county in the country.

With this settlement the County Council have had to make savings of £19million this year in order to keep the Council Tax increase as small as possible at 3.9%. But despite this the County Council has recognised that times will be difficult for all of us and have increased the amount of money going to highways maintenance by £2 million to reflect the importance of being able to depend on our roads, and boosted the amount they give to charities, such as the Citizens advice bureau who help people to cope in difficult times, to £500,000.

The Growth agenda has now been put on hold, as, although planning permissions have been granted for much of the planned new housing around Cambridge, the developers cannot afford to build, so resources are concentrated on getting essential services like drainage and roads put in, so that when building resumes, there will be some of these services already available.

With Transport, the position is similar to last year, with one important difference, which is that the County council have established a Transport Commission to look at all the options, including the Government's proposals and other ways of keeping congestion down without having a Congestion Charge. They will be talking to as many stakeholder organisations as possible, getting their views and ideas for the future, and will be reporting back later in the summer.

The County Council's preferred option is to be able to make the improvements needed without having to impose a Congestion Charge, and they have written to the government demanding just that. The County Council is also determined to increase the use of Public transport and are launching a passenger transport website to encourage this.

The County Council have won £57million as a Government grant in order to replace and improve the 44,000 street lights in Cambridgeshire, this will start this year and will make it safer to travel for traffic and pedestrians at night, the new technology will also make street lighting more efficient as well as reducing the carbon emissions which are produced at present.

Building the state of the art waste processing facility at Waterbeach is continuing and a special recycling facility at St Neots will be built this year with three more planned. Our part of the county has achieved a 50% recycling rate, one of the highest in the country, and the County Council are now planning to make 60% recycling the target to be achieved by 2010.

Locally the County Council are supporting the police neighbourhood panels which keep communities safe and help to tackle anti-social behaviour. We have been working with Melbourn Parish Council to ensure that the village library, which also serves the villages around Melbourn including Meldreth, will last two more years, while a new building is being sought as a permanent home.

The County Council provides many services in different areas and I look forward to working with your Parish Council in the future, to make sure Meldreth gets the best service possible.

David McCraith, County Councillor

MELDRETH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Staff:

There have been and will be a number of staff changes this academic year. Mrs Janet Rayment has moved to Oxfordshire, leaving Meldreth after 4 successful years as Headteacher. She is replaced by Mrs Judith Dickson, formerly Deputy Head at Bar Hill Primary School – this is her first headship. Mrs McCulloch also joined the school in September at 60%; she is a newly qualified teacher (NQT) in her first year of teaching. She and Mrs Michelle Swallow job-share in Year 1.

Sadly, one of our long serving members of staff, Mrs Jill Birch, died in March. Mrs Birch taught at the school for over 10 years, she was also the SEN coordinator ensuring that our children with educational needs gained the best possible support; the school is greatly missing her presence. We are aiming to hold a celebration of her life in the summer term to which her close family will be invited. Mrs Becky Pine, who taught in Diamond class, began maternity leave in February; her baby is due any day now! She hopes to return to school in March 2010. Mrs Michelle Swallow, in Emerald Class, has just announced that she is expecting her second baby and plans to leave at the end of the summer term.

Pupils:

The number of children on roll is 155. We have maintained 6 classes this year; Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3/4, Year 4/5 and Year 6.

Curriculum:

The main areas of focus for the school this year have been on assessing pupil progress (APP) and assessment for learning (AfL). We have also been working on extending the pupil voice through inviting children to be on working parties and help in the decision making of the school. Children are keen to participate in a variety of activities and we have formed an Anti Bullying Council. Another group that has been formed is the MELS who are working towards achieving the Green Flag Award in green issues. We have gained the Healthy Schools Award through our work on healthy lifestyles and the Activemark for providing two hours of quality PE per week. We continue to provide a range of before and after school activities and are looking into providing an art club and cookery club in the near future.

ICT has featured highly in our work, we have installed a server so that there is increased access to shared resources and we have increased our classroom ICT resources through the purchase of a laptop trolley that is self charging which can be moved from class to class; this is proving very popular.

As a school, we are very interested in helping other people and have taken part in the British Heart Foundation's Jump Rope for the Heart and held a successful Fun Run with proceeds going to Red Nose Day and school. Children have visited the sheltered housing centre to sing at Christmas and taken flowers to the nursing home in Meldreth at harvest time. We supported the re-opening of the Village Hall in February with a selection of chocolate themed entries.

Keystage 1 and Foundation stage visited the Cambridge Arts Theatre to see Jack and the Beanstalk, enjoying their own Giant's Feast completing their work on fairy tales. During the snowy weather, the school stayed open, except for one day, and we spent an exciting morning exploring, building and working in teams, making the most of our outdoor environment! Just before Christmas, we enjoyed a performance of Rapunzel and the Tower of Doom by a travelling drama company.

Bassingbourn Barracks band came along to play for us in early March. Keystage 2 has enjoyed a History Off the Page experience, dressing up as and empathising with Victorian lifestyles.

MELDRETH TENNIS CLUB

Membership

Our membership has increased in the last year and I am pleased to say we have some younger members now. The public use of the courts continues and we hope that members of the local community will use the courts, hopefully to play tennis. Notices are up at the courts to show when the Club uses the courts.

Social Events/Fund Raising

Over the year we have had some very successful fund raising events and tournaments. The weather was good for the outdoor events which included croquet, a pool party and a barbecue. All events were well attended by members and their guests. These events help us to keep the courts in good playing order.

Maintenance

Money raised at our Tournaments and social events is put to good use, ie., cutting of the conifer hedging, replacing tennis nets etc. The Tennis Club has a rota of volunteers to cut the grass surrounding the courts, and the conifer hedging is due to be cut over the next month. We do have some vandalism and this does mean we have to replace important items, like the tennis nets occasionally, and weep up broken grass, but this has not been so bad over the 2008/2009 season.

MELDRETH FOOTBALL CLUB

The club is presently in 3B of the 'Cambridgeshire Sunday League'. This season we have not had a good start with one win before Christmas then weeks without a game due to the bad weather.

We now have won three more so we now have 12 points from 9 games.

'Vallis Construction' from Royston have become a new sponsor, they purchased new kits for us which consist of yellow shirts, blue shorts and blue socks.

A competition was also held with the children from the primary school. They were asked to design a new badge which was about the village and will be placed on the new shirts. The winning design was by Millie whose design included the stocks. She received a kit and voucher from Woolworth, before it closed.

We would like to thank the Parish Council for their support over the years, with the improvement of the pavilion roof and the ceilings the pavilion is starting to be upgraded.

Our Treasurer reports that there is £1500 in the bank, out of this we have league fees and F.A fees to pay which is about £300.

These are the things which we are taking part in:

Bowls - we are joining the bowls club for a game on 27th May at 6-30 pm.

A golf day is being arranged - this is a good fund-raiser.

We play in the Chris Boote Cup and on Easter Monday we play Melbourn for the Cliff Wallman Cup at Meldreth.

Sponsors are needed for both of these games.

MELDRETH CROQUET CLUB

Meldreth Croquet Club has existed for about 17 years; we have a single lawn at the rear of the British Queen pub in Meldreth High Street, by kind permission of the landlord Jon Smith. The activities of the club are based around weekly sessions on Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings (Saturday afternoons in 2009), and Club competitions. Our members range in playing ability from novice to expert. Coaching is provided for members with little or no experience or who wish to improve

'MCC' is both a sociable and informal club. The final of our internal knock-out competition, the Nickisson Cup is held at the end of August at the same time as the Club picnic. The cup was won in 2008 by Christopher van Essen who defeated Tim Clapp in a closely fought final. We have a Speed Croquet tournament in June which is a round-robin competition of short croquet played against the clock, the 2008 winner was Alec Osborne.

A club newsletter is produced three times a year which provides information and contact with our members.

The lawn was top dressed in autumn 2007 which improved the playing surface considerably. Top dressing was done again in October 2008 so the lawn should be in even better condition for the coming season.

For the past eight years we have played in the Beds and Herts League against 7 other croquet clubs. In 2008 we won one match, drew two and lost the remaining four matches.

Our 2009 season starts at the end of April and continues until the beginning of October. We welcome new members and anyone who would like to give croquet a go is invited to contact me or our Chairman, Alec Osborne (01223 833278).

MELDRETH MOBILE WARDEN SCHEME

The Mobile Scheme continues to provide a valuable service to the elderly in Meldreth.

10 people take advantage of visits and telephone calls from the Warden, Mrs Eve Chamberlain. They are people who live in their own homes and therefore do not qualify for support from the warden, provided by the Local Authority.

The Committee would like to register their sincere thanks to Mrs Eve Chamberlain for her sympathetic and enthusiastic work.

The grant from the Parish Council goes some way to enable the scheme to carry on and is very much appreciated.

MELBOURN & MELDRETH SELF HELP GROUP

The Melbourn & Meldreth Self Help group has been in operation now for more than twenty-six years. This year was progressing very well up until the time that our excellent cook announced that she had been cleared for emigration to New Zealand. We thought we had plenty of time to organise a replacement, however we were stunned when Mary announced her intention of ceasing cooking with effect from the last Thursday in February. Our efforts to get a replacement were fruitless but we obtained the services of a professional chef, Tom, for two weeks only. **We examined the options which ranged from doing it ourselves to using the facilities of a local pub. For various reasons the latter was not possible. At a meeting to discuss our options Councillor Janice Guest suggested that Moorlands wanted to become more involved in the community and might consider catering for us. Fortunately Councillor Guest's suggestion has resulted in Moorlands supplying us with the lunches in hot boxes for our helpers to serve at Vicarage Close once they have been collected.**

This has involved the Lunch Club in considerable extra expenses. We will now be charging £4.00 for lunches, which will barely cover our costs. In addition we are having to obtain Hot Boxes, Basic Hygiene Certificates for three of our helpers and also obtain overalls for all helpers. All this is in addition to Public Liability Insurance and rent for Vicarage Close and the festive lunch at Christmas and flowers and a card on their birthdays.

On the brighter side we now have an extra driver from Meldreth and have been able, as vacancies permit, to take on extra members from Meldreth. As ever, we are extremely grateful to our volunteer drivers, who each week free of charge, pick up as many members as we can. Mary Nelson was 101 years old in December.

Jayne White with her enthusiastic helpers, have transformed the Lunch Club. We have a new group of helpers who assist in the kitchen with the serving and clearing up afterwards and also the driving. For those people living in close proximity, who are unable to get to the centre, a meal is taken out to them.

At Easter and Christmas we try to create a festive atmosphere. This year our members received a free lunch at Christmas and a visit from Father Christmas.

A mainstay of the continuing success of the Club are the generous grants from both Melbourn and Meldreth Parish Councils, and Melbourn Fete Committee. All income is used to rent the Community Centre, pay for Public Liability Insurance and any extras we can afford. We still need Volunteer Drivers.

MELDRETH VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Melbourn Library Access Point opened its door on 17th November 2003 with the provision of 1000 Fiction books and a grant of £1000.00 per year for three years. A changeover of 100 books per month for 10 months each year takes place. The LAP is entirely run by volunteers via an organisation called the Melbourn and District Villages Association and is used by residents of Melbourn and surrounding villages.

The Library is housed in a portakabin located in the grounds of Melbourn Village College, and was granted a 2 year extension to the occupation of the current building by the County Council Library Service after minor structural repairs were carried out to the building in 2006.

During 2008 the Association was informed that the library would have to close at the end of the year - the Library Service would not agree to any further expenditure on the building after a survey revealed that further structural repairs could be necessary.

The Association explored the possibility of finding alternative suitable accommodation without success. Towards the end of 2008 the future of the Library seemed very bleak until, with a new Chairman and with the support of Melbourn Parish Council confirmed, the Library Service approved the continued operation of the Melbourn Library for a further 2 years.

The Melbourn Library continues to be supported by donations from Melbourn Parish Council, Meldreth Parish Council, Shepreth Parish Council and Foxton Parish Council, and by all readers from the surrounding villages who borrow books and assist in the turnover of books.

The Association is now looking to find suitable new accommodation within Melbourn to ensure the Library will not have to close on expiry of the extended lease in December 2010.

The Library has steadily increased its turnover over the last five years. We are proud of our stock of some 3,500 books all of which are of good quality. We believe there is a real need for a Library in Melbourn serving the surrounding area.

The Library is in urgent need of volunteers to assist behind the counter. We would be able to provide training in using the Cambridgeshire Library System.

COMMUNITY ACCESS POINT

The Community Access Point, sponsored by South Cambs District Council and the Parish Council, continues to be a useful resource in the village offering free tuition for anyone who wishes to learn any of the various exciting aspects of using a computer. It is conveniently situated in the Elin Way Sheltered Housing Community Centre.

During the year our registered numbers grew from 50 to around 60 people and all the volunteer tutors who signed up in the early years are still with us.

However, it is clear that time has moved on since we started in 2005. Many more people have acquired their own computers which still become cheaper and more powerful every year. Also, more and more people now have exposure to IT technology either at school or in the workplace and the need for tuition seems to have reduced in our area with fewer people coming forward for training this year.

Several people of more senior age have come through our volunteer training sessions and gone on to be silver surfers. Some of those occasionally come back for further guidance which our volunteers are always willing to give.

Whilst we will continue to remind the local community through occasional publicity that we are there if they need IT help, we are looking to see if our services can be used in the wider area. As an example, one of our volunteers is offering a day's training to any CAP volunteers from other communities who need more technical skill to run their schemes. This offer has been passed on to the county CAP Coordinator.

In Meldreth we are extremely fortunate as all the volunteers have many years professional IT expertise.

A continuing success has been the use of the CAP facility by the Meldreth History Group which goes from strength to strength as people realise how useful internet research can be for tracing family history. Again, CAP volunteers are willing to help with any technical expertise to help people reach their goals.

Those interested in learning or enhancing their existing IT skills will be welcome and can contact us on 01763 262305. This number is published monthly in the list of useful Telephone Numbers in Meldreth Matters.

MELDRETH PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP

Meldreth P3 team have been active for five years. They are a core of fifteen volunteers and councillors, who are a happy and hard working group. We could have problems in the future, because most of our group are sixty plus. We have a network of fourteen paths, which are about eight miles in total. Our main path is path number six, which runs from the bypass bridge, over the River Mel to Topcliffe Mill near Meldreth Church.

This path is very important to the environmental well being of our community and gives access to our sister organisations The Melwood Trust and The River Mel Restoration Group.

The main aims of our group are:

- a) Initially and annually to survey the network and contact and liaise with the landowners re: any problems.
- b) To analysis surveys and prepare maintenance work schedule for next year.

- c) To seek Cambridgeshire County Council's advice and assistance on major problems or projects.
- d) To develop our administrative procedures, create on-line survey system to assist P3 coordinator with annual returns and grant application.
- e) To develop health and safety procedures plus working party check list for team leader and therefore create evidence if required for our insurers.
- f) To liaise with local tree surgeons to obtain free, if possible, chippings.
- g) To assist the Parish Council with the annual leaf clearing at The Stocks.

Our group would greatly appreciate assistance from the younger members of our community.

TREE WARDEN

I have pleasure in reporting that the trees planted over the years in Fenny Lane, Kneesworth Road and Malton Lane are in good state of growth apart from four in Malton Lane where I would like to put in replacements of Hawthorn, Cherry and Field Maple where trees are obviously struggling.

I have this February, through the generosity of the Conservation Group, planted hawthorn, crab apple, ash, rowan, oak, lime and field maple trees in my part of Melwood where there were treeless areas as well as putting in some shrub layer plants of hawthorn, blackthorn and spindle.

The hedge along the Whaddon Road interspersed with trees was cut last month and is bushing out well with buds already appearing on the wild rose and hawthorn bushes. The trees on the other side of the by-pass field maple and whitebeam with a later planted chestnut are now large trees as with the Fenny Lane line up to Whitecroft Road, they went in at least twenty years ago.

MELWOOD CONSERVATION REPORT

Guided by our Work Leader, we have followed a fairly regular cycle of woodland management this year with a programme of selective canopy clearance, regular coppicing and ground clearance of invasive weeds.

Additionally, we have needed to keep a constant watch on levels of littering and our volunteers work to a monthly rota for walking the wood, clearing rubbish and keeping a wary eye out for any other damage, either caused naturally or by human hand.

We organised 6 Work Parties over the year clocking up around 90 man-hours. Our one public event was a very productive work party in June followed by a BBQ where we took over the area of the wood known locally as the 'witches circle' which is normally frequented by local 'young persons' many of whom, unfortunately, have yet to remember or even learn to take their rubbish home.

The woodland seat, completely destroyed by vandals some years ago, was replaced this year thanks to match funding by the County Council and Meldreth Parish Council. Hopefully this reincarnation chosen for its vandal defences, will have a long and damage-free life.

In October we were pleased to receive a visit from the CCC Environment Policy and Projects Team in the persons of Phil Clarke, Countryside Manager and Michelle Russell, Biodiversity Officer. Together we walked the wood and discussed various aspects of the management.

Phil made a number of useful suggestions which we have taken on board, in particular he reminded us that it would be a good idea for our 4 year old Management Plan to be reviewed and updated.

Two long serving members of our group decided to relinquish their posts. Margaret Hunter as Treasurer and Clare Mcphee as Hon Sec are handing over to 2 new members. We thank both Margaret and Clare for their valuable services to Melwood and are very pleased to hear they both wish to continue to play an active role as committee members and so continue their services to Melwood!

This year two new members joined us and one returning member came back after a doctorate study break.

David Smith takes over as our new Treasurer and Bruce Huett as Hon Sec and Dr Jilly Hall, who devised our original Management Plan, has kindly agreed to lead on revising the Plan which I am pleased to report, will also now include Melmeadow, the meadow land owned by Margaret Hunter adjacent to the north side of Melwood.

We thank all three for adding their knowledge and skills to the service of the wood.

No annual report would be complete without a big thank you to the rest of the committee and volunteers and in particular, our Work Leader, Jim Reid, who has steered our work and ensured that our enthusiasm is used in the right directions. All volunteers give time and expertise to ensuring that this small but valuable piece of South Cambs woodland remains in good condition as an environmental resource for the natural world as well as for the enjoyment of local residents.

MELDRETH VILLAGE HALL TRUST

In the last year the hall has continued to be used mostly by Pre-School during the day. Regular users such as table tennis club, dance groups and exercise classes also occupy the hall most evening. Hirers have held various events and parties including photo shoots, weddings, christenings and barn dances. It is still a popular venue for childrens' parties.

There have been fewer teenage birthday parties since the committee introduced increased deposits and guarantees of adult supervision but we have not seen a drop in evening bookings overall. We decided not to increase hire charges again this year, and this will be reviewed as usual in September.

Finances remain secure,our most significant expenditure being the redecoration project which began last Easter and was completed over the summer. The committee are really pleased with the result and all feedback from villagers and hall users has been really positive. To celebrate the Hall's new image, the committee hosted 'Chocolate Sundae' in February. It was a fun, free afternoon which attracted a great number of people and was a real community event.

The Committee are extremely grateful to the Parish Council who contributed £500 towards the refurbishment programme,and would also like to thank MVA for the fantastic Christmas tree which Kindly put up outside the hall once again.

THE RIVER MEL RESTORATION GROUP

The group has had a good year continuing the restoration work on the river in Meldreth. Working from the Railway Bridge downstream to the end of Woolpack Way. We have received support from South Cambridgeshire County Council and the Environment Agency. The membership has increased drawing volunteers from around the county.

Following a successful campaign in Melbourn we have started another project in the river adjacent to the village college and Melbourn recreation ground, which has been supported by separate funding.

Comments from members of the public:

Concern was again raised about vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Cllr van de Ven explained that the proposal of starting a Youth Club was still being discussed. There had been changes in staff, which had resulted in delays. However, there are now new people and Cambridge Housing Society are also interested in this type of project. Cllr van de Ven is now exploring these contacts. There has not been a youth club in the village for nearly three years.

The meeting closed at 8.10 p.m.