

Preston Brook Village News

July 2020



Resident,

Welcome to the Summer Edition of our Village Newsletter full of the reports from our local groups, your tips and many other interesting articles.

At the time of putting this to bed, as they say in the printers shop, or going to press, we are entering the midsummer solstice and hopefully return to some glorious weather. By now we may be allowed to get a little closer to each other to have a chat, rather than the Ship to Shore greetings across the street, under the strict rules of the past three months.

What can we say other than 'Well Done' everyone for playing your part in self isolation and helping to keep this terrible Covid virus at bay. We have clapped weekly, arranged grocery deliveries, one way or another, and well, what can we say about the amazing team that provided meals to sections of our community. A huge Well Done to them too.

Nature was unaware of this upheaval and continued to flourish, especially the wildlife. The birds may have thought that humans had become extinct at one point, taking liberties, walking along the middle of the road for one example. The reduction in heavy traffic on the A56 was well noticeable.

Many of us took advantage of this time by getting the gardens organised ready for the bedding plants. Inside this issue, will be our resident gardeners' article with tips and advice.

Enjoy the Summer from the Editorial Team.



Gardening tips for July

I am going to focus on vegetable growing today because there has been such a surge in it during the Coronavirus crisis.

So now is the time to make sure that you continue to earth up potato plants as they grow. You can use grass clippings as a mulch around potato



plants to stop tubers near the surface from turning green. If you're growing potatoes in bags, gradually add more compost until the bag is full. and also keep the compost moist, but take care not to overwater, as this compacts the soil, squeezing out the oxygen, and prevents the developing tubers from swelling.

Your tomatoes should be growing well but if they are the tall upright (indeterminate) varieties you must pinch out any side shoots. You can pot these up to create new tomato plants. There needs to be just one central stem Of course bush (determinate) tomatoes grow in bush form and do not need side shoots removing. Start to feed all tomato plants once a week when the first truss is setting fruit. Use your own home-made mix or but a tomato food and follow instructions re dilution. If leaves look pale and yellow feed more regularly. From July you can cut off any leaves growing below the lowest ripening fruit trusses to improve air circulation and prevent diseases.

Continue to harvest salad crops, and re-sow every 2 weeks (succession sowing) for a constant supply of tasty leaves. I stop sowing any more spinach until the end of July or even early August as they tend to bolt so quickly.

Depending on when you planted your onions will determine when they are ready to harvest. I over winter mine so they are ready to harvest from mid June. They are ready to be harvested when the onion tops naturally fall over. This is a sign that the onions have stopped growing. Onion harvest time should be early in the morning when temperatures are not too hot and also when it has been dry for some time. Moisture is the enemy when storing onions. Carefully pull or dig onions up from the ground with the tops intact. Gently shake the soil from around the bulbs. Onions must first be dried before they can be stored. To dry them, spread them out on a clean and dry surface in a well-ventilated location, such as a garage or a shed. Onions should be cured for at least two to three weeks or until the tops necks are completely dry and the outer skin on the onion becomes slightly crisp. Cut tops off to within one inch after drying is complete. Store dried onions in a wire basket, crate or nylon bag or string them together, which is basically plaiting them! Treat garlic in much the same way.

Once we get into July it is important to make sure that pepper plants are potted on into progressively larger pots. Train cucumber stems upwards instead of trailing over the ground, to make the most of the space available. Simply tie in their long stems to vertical wires or use cane supports to create a wigwam of poles. If you're growing aubergines, pinch out the growing tip once they have 5 or 6 fruits. Pick fruits while they are young. You can expect to start harvesting mid- to late summer. Nip off the growing tips of squash and courgette plants to encourage branching and remember to pick your courgettes while they're young. Regular picking encourages more fruit. Also pick runner beans regularly to prevent them becoming stringy and to make room for developing pods. Leaving mature pods on the plant can prevent further flowers forming and reduce your crop. I tend to pick my broad beans when they are young, I find them not as tough and it reduces the need to have to take the outer skin off individual beans. Tackle blackfly on broad beans by pinching off any affected growing tips.

Keep up with general good housekeeping by clearing away any diseased and spent foliage on and around your vegetable plants to keep them healthy. Also remember to clear weeds regularly, as they compete with your crops for nutrients and water. And plants need feeding! Feed all crops with a general purpose fertiliser and apply a high-potash fertiliser once fruits start to form on peppers, cucumber and tomatoes. You can use this on sunflowers too. From the end of July resist the temptation to harvest more rhubarb. Leave the stems in place; this will allow the plant to build up reserves for next year.

A quick word about the fruit garden, now is the time to start to prune your plum or cherry trees. Doing it now to reduce the risk of silver leaf disease. I have the stump of a dead Victoria plum tree which demonstrates this! Also, although fruit trees will naturally shed some fruit (called the 'June drop'), aim to thin out congested branches further for bigger and better fruits. If you have plants fruiting in containers, remember to give them a high potash liquid feed to keep them healthy and productive. Top-dress patio dwarf fruit trees with fresh compost and a slow-release fertiliser. Peg down runners on your strawberry plants to create more plants for next year. If you don't need more plants simply remove the strawberry runners completely. Always water potted blueberries with rainwater, as the lime contained in tap water reduces the acidity of the soil over time. Check the leaves of gooseberry bushes for sawfly larvae, which can completely strip the foliage in a matter of days. Jet them off with water or pick them off by hand. Maximise your fig crop by pinching out the tips of side shoots after they've developed five leaves. Prune the fruited stems of blackcurrant bushes after harvesting. And remember that Raspberries are shallow rooted so they'll appreciate being watered generously if we do return to hot, dry weather.

Preston Brook & District History Group

Like other organisations we have had to cancel some really nice events due to the recent pandemic.

April would have been a talk on the History of the Mersey Tunnels from John Hatfield

June was to be a coach trip to the National Coal Mining Museum including a descent down the Caphouse mine

July we were to go on a summer evening tour of St Helen's Church in Witton.

Sadly all these events had to be cancelled.

However we hope to return to some normality on Thursday September 17th with a talk on The Dunham Hill Bomb Store by Phil Pritchard.

The History Group Events Programme is on the Preston Brook website and you are most welcome to join us on the third Thursday of the month in the Lewis Carrol Centre, All Saints Church, Daresbury at 7.30pm. All the talks are followed by home-made refreshments from our Ladies.

If you need any further information about our group, please contact our secretary Sue Potter on sukupot45@gmail.com

Did You Know



A lid to match the kettle

To ensure that a kettle is as efficient as possible, it needs a tight-fitting lid. And this is the reference when it is said of a married couple, that 'the lid matches the kettle'. It means that they are well suited

Preston Brook Pre-School

Hello to all

I hope that you are all well and staying safe? Pre-School remains closed however that has not stopped us completing fabulous activities. Our Easter Bonnet's were judged by Granny Sue. Once again, we had some fantastic entries. We made and sent a lovely card to Captain Tom for his 100th birthday.

I had planned a VE Day party, obviously this did not take place, however the children completed some VE Day activities. These included making bunting, drawing/painting pictures and making model aeroplanes. Some delicious afternoon teas were eaten.

Over the next few weeks, before the end of term. We are completing Hungary Caterpillar activities, making sponge boats to sail with Daddy for Father's Day.

We will also be holding Sports Day at home. All children will compete a Sports Day event within their gardens. I am looking forward to seeing all the videos. I'm hoping that all the parents take part as well in the parent's race!

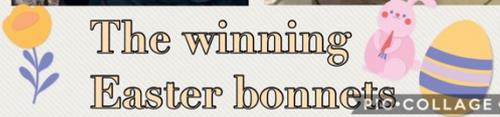
We have spent some time tidying the Pre-School garden. I had taken home all the Sunflowers and Sweet Peas that the children had planted. These are thriving in my garden; Noah's Sunflower is the tallest at the moment.

Alison and I were delighted last week to be able to carry out a Doorstep Visit to all the children. They were so very excited to see us. Some had made us cards and drawn us pictures. We enjoyed seeing all their gardens and toys. Hopefully we will be back at Pre-School in September all together again. In the meantime, we continue to stay safe at home and prepare our school leavers who are transiting to school in September. We want to say a huge thank you to all our Keyworker parents who are working hard to keep us safe.



We've shared some more wonderful pictures on the next page of recent events with our children, we hope you enjoy viewing them as much as we did taking them!

Sarah Williams
Pre-School Manager





Spicy harissa aubergine pie

Serves 4 - Ingredients

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 aubergines cut into chunks
- 2 red onions, finely sliced
- 2 large garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tbsp rose harissa paste
- 1 tbsp ground coriander
- 1 tin tomatoes
- 1 tin green lentils
- 100g pitted green olives
- 1.3kg sweet potatoes peeled and cut into 3cm chunks
- 100g feta, crumbled



Method Heat 2 tbsp of the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Fry the aubergines for 10-15 mins until golden and softened. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Fry the onions with the remaining oil for 7-10 mins or until softened. Add the garlic, 1 tbsp of the harissa and the coriander and cook for 1 min more. Return the aubergines to the pan with the tomatoes, lentils, olives and a can of water. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 mins. Season, then stir through the parsley.

Cook the sweet potatoes in a large pan of boiling lightly salted water for 15 mins. Drain and leave to steam-dry, then mash and stir through the remaining harissa. Spoon the aubergine filling into a large baking dish, scatter over half the feta and spoon over the potatoes. Scatter the remaining feta over the pie.

Heat the grill to its highest setting. Grill the pie for 7-10 mins or until the top is crisp and golden.

Parish Council updates

Speed sign



Following a successful grant bid process from the Area Forum Grant, we were awarded £4000 towards the purchase of a movable speed sign for the village – the cost of this was topped up by the parish council.

For many years we have been subject to the continued speeding of traffic through our village and this will help monitor the volume and speed of traffic at pinpointed locations. Chosen locations include Chester Road (A56), Northwich Road and Windmill Lane but more could be introduced over time – these locations are subject to final approval by Halton BC but it will start with monitoring at Windmill Lane. The speed sign will be moved at intervals throughout the year monitoring speed in both directions with data being fed back to the parish council. This will allow us to identify hotspots and work more closely with Cheshire Police to identify opportunities of reduction.

Planning

Applications received which are for consideration at our July meeting;

- Proposed first floor extension over existing single storey flat roof structure at 2 Tunnel Top Cottages Northwich Road Runcorn Cheshire WA4 4JY
- Proposed extension to garage at 14 Redacre Close Cheshire WA4 4JU

Village Hall

Due to depleting numbers of committee members to support the continued hard work of the village hall and raising much needed revenue to aid improvement and increase hall hire, there have been discussions on the potential of the parish council merging ownership with the village hall.

There are varying reasons for these proposals but principally there are good opportunities in merging e.g. accessing of external funding opportunities, stronger purchasing powers through parish council, security and more. Furthermore, the parish council supports the committee through becoming trustees or possibly sole trustee providing additional benefits of accessing localised services at best value.

There are varying works that are planned or to be completed at the hall but funds are limited and therefore stronger linkage with the council will realise stronger benefits to achieve more thus helping the hall to flourish and develop into a community asset which we can all be proud of and make more use of.

In order to achieve this though, there are some pitfalls and yes, this does include £money£. We can utilise the parish precept to support this and indeed if we choose to (via council approval) raise the precept to generate funds to support further development of the hall. Of course, we'd like to avoid this and as such, this is why we'd like to seek the thoughts of residents on what they would like to see developed in the hall, how it can be funded, would you be open to a one or two year precept increase to develop your hall and make it a thriving asset for the future.

We've developed a brief questionnaire which is joined with a questions for neighbourhood projects (see article below) which can be accessed at the following link <https://forms.gle/g8pcmTsD5ur86uth8>. Please take a few moments of your time to answer a few questions and provide some feedback. This will be really helpful to take back for wider discussion and to help conclude what approach we choose to take. If you'd like to discuss please contact the parish clerk on 07753 848382 or you can email pbpc@hotmail.co.uk

Neighbourhood Plan

Several months ago, we invited all residents to attend a meeting to discuss the potential of the parish

council developing a neighbourhood plan. The session was well attended and it prompted some good discussions resulting in a positive outcome being the council progressed forward with further investigation to developing one.

This has been a standing item on our agenda and has been discussed at length with some further research undertaken on the work required to create one as well as determining the legal avenues required to implement a plan as well as associated costs.

In our meeting in May, I presented back to the council the sheer volume of work required by the parish and potential volunteers to help develop this including areas such as;

- Policy development including community wellbeing, traffic & transport, employment & skills
- Detailed process, frequent engagement with the community
- Identifying community wellbeing in more detail including recreational, health & care, infrastructure, education
- Traffic & transport
- Housing
- Design policy development

As part of those discussions we identified that this was a great deal of work to undertake and was a rather lengthy process to implement and whilst there would be positive outcomes in us having one, could we truly and actually seek the relevant support from residents to volunteer in developing this. We felt overall and concluded that it was probably unrealistic at this stage.

This led to further discussion into what we should be reviewing as a parish council being that we focus on creating an '**Identity**' for Preston Brook which could be split into four areas which identifies the needs of residents of each area and bringing together the village in further developing our community facilities (this led to discussions in merging the village hall with parish council – see article above).

We felt that this approach concentrated on the absolute need and requirements of our residents across the village and would provide us with much needed detail to help us focus and prioritise on areas to develop for our community.

As such, we have created a questionnaire <https://forms.gle/g8pcmTsD5ur86uth8>, which we'd be grateful if you could take some time to complete. This detail, along with the responses of a possible hall/parish council merger would be fed back to the council for further discussion and will help conclude a way forward for all residents.

Junction 11a

It is with regret I have to pass on bad news. Despite many years of battling, then achieving the development of a Junction 11a which would have had massive benefits for the village, we recently received notification from Highways England that this was no more. I have pasted below the content of their letter. This is extremely disappointing and has been shared with Halton BC for their views. We have also written back to Highways England to ask what has changed since their original proposal and recommendations to implement. Feel free to email Tristram expressing your disappointment in their decision. This has come as a surprise and with no consultation and whilst they may not overturn their decision, I'd suggest residents still feed back their thoughts on the situation.

I am writing to update you on the M56 New Junction 11a scheme and to inform you of our intention to retract our Notification of Development for the New Junction 11a.

In March, the Department for Transport announced the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) for 2020 – 2025 which confirmed the scheme would not be part of the five-year plan and will not be progressed further.

Our assessments suggested the scheme would not provide value for money because of improved traffic flows due to recent improvements to the roundabout at junctions 12 for the Mersey Gateway Bridge. Further investigations concluded that the benefit to cost ratio of a new junction could not be improved.

Although the scheme will not be progressing, we will continue with work to replace the A533 Expressway Bridge, with work set to start later in the year and completion in 2022. A new Notification of Development has been submitted for the A533 Expressway Bridge replacement.

The bridge is a vital local link that provides access across the m56 to Runcorn from Preston Brook and Northwich. It needs to be replaced to ensure this link is safe, maintained and future proofed for the many motorists who use it. If you have any questions about this of the A533 Expressway Bridge replacement, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Tristram Bardrick Project Manager, Highways England Email: Tristram.bardrick@highwaysengland.co.uk

Would you like to support your local community and become a Parish Councillor?

Following the resignation of Cllr Mike Byrne, we are now at 3 parish councilors from a constitution of 8. As such, we now have five positions to fill – we'd very much like to welcome residents to join from all areas of the village both young (18+) and mature.

By becoming a parish councillor you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support - a community leader with the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve.

There's lots of benefits in becoming involved and of course, there's lots of support and training available to help you develop. You can look to support in improving the Village and its amenities amongst much more! If you would consider being co-opted on to the Parish Council then please contact the Clerk or any Parish Councillor. There are a range of topics that are discussed at the council including local projects, planning applications, funding opportunities and much more.

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month except August. Visit our website www.prestonbrookparishcouncil.gov.uk for more information.

Of course, whilst most of the information will be made available for viewing, we'd also encourage residents to attend our meetings – 3rd Tuesday of the month.

Newsletter Distributors

As you know the quarterly newsletter is produced and printed by the Parish Council. What keeps it going is the support from residents – from the contributions and continual feedback for new information.

We do however, require the support of residents to help distribute – once a quarter for an hour or so if all that's needed. If you can spare some time, please contact the Clerk. Many thanks
