

Little Bentley - 2020 History Recorder Report

2020 was of course dominated by the pandemic. It was a difficult year but it did bring villagers closer together to share resources and ways to cope with lockdown. A village WhatsApp group was started which provided a means for organising socially distanced outdoor events and provide an outlet for local news, traffic reports, offers of items for sale or giving away, jokes and memes, and exchanges of best wishes on special occasions. During periods of more relaxed regulations, villagers gathered together outside the pub on Friday evenings and organised regular churchyard maintenance sessions. Special events, organised via the WhatsApp group, included a Halloween walk through Little Bentley wood, which had been transformed by installation of lighting, spooky props, and scary sound effects.

The Parish Council organised a decorated Christmas tree on the village green, and a socially distanced carol service was held on the green on the 23rd December. The use of village footpaths for exercise increased as other exercise opportunities were closed down. Painted and decorated stones were left alongside the Little Bentley Wood footpath with messages celebrating the outdoors, marking events such as VE day and supporting the NHS. Higher levels of usage did, however, create some conflicts over access, with signs going up at several locations to remind people to keep to the paths and at one stage early on in lockdown a sign appeared discouraging non-locals from parking at the Church in order to use local footpaths.

Parish Council meetings discussed possible options for managing traffic on Ravens Green Road and applied to the Local Highways Panel to pursue options including weight restrictions, signage and access limitations.

Nigel Dyson stepped down from the Parish Council after many years of service, including serving as Vice-Chairman and then Chairman. James Hunt was co-opted onto the Council in November to fill the vacancy.

The Parish Council formed a working group to investigate development of a playground, including potential locations, equipment type, and funding options.