

THE 2022 REPORT BY THE LAYHAM LOCAL HISTORY RECORDER

This report is designed to follow-on directly from the 2021 report – using the same layout.

There were no significant occurrences or events during the winter months of **January** and **February**.

March saw the annual spring clean when thirty volunteers in Upper and Lower Layham collected litter and storm damaged debris, cut back overgrown vegetation at a number of sites and cleaned road signs.

April saw an appeal for volunteers to help mow the grass and cut back shrubs in the churchyard and burial ground. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) has lost the support of the government's 'Payback Scheme' which ceased when Covid struck and has not revived. This is a serious loss for the PCC as they, like so many similar groups are short of funds. In the photograph below is Brian Hempstead of the PCC cutting back some shrubs.



Village life moved up a gear in **May** when preparatory work by the PCC and the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) came to fruition.

Charlie Haylock, at the invitation of the PCC gave an entertaining talk based on 'The Dig' at Sutton Hoo. The PCC also organised their annual plant sale and served the ever-popular cream teas.



A Grand Book Sale run by the VHMC took place on the same afternoon. These events were socially and financially successful.

Momentum continued in **June** with a weekend of celebration to mark the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. During Friday 3 and Saturday 4 June the Layham Local History Group (LLHG) provided an exhibition in the church of 'Snapshots of life in Layham during 1952-2022'. Over 100 people called in, enjoyed the show, reminisced and took advantage of the refreshments provided by the PCC.



Sunday 5th June was devoted to a 'Jubilee Fete' on the playing field organised by the Layham Events Group (LEG). A good turn-out saw a mixture of stalls, fancy dress and fine hats, races and competitions. A magnificent £3000 was raised for local groups and £450 to support Ukranian refugees.





A week later, an evening with garden experts (ex-National Trust) Sarah Cook and Jim Marshall was enjoyed in the village hall, courtesy of the VHMC. Village Life was beginning to flourish again.

July saw the return of the monthly ‘Coffee, Cake and Chat’ sessions at the church.

August - the villages of Layham and Shelley entered modestly into the Suffolk County Council ‘Quiet Lanes’ project. Agreement was reached to designate Shelley Road, Layham; Layham Road, Shelley; North Hill (from Shelley Road to Stoke Road) and Water Lane and a small part of Mill Lane in Upper Layham.



Quiet Lanes are routes where walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders and motorists can use rural lanes in the knowledge that they will show consideration for each other – ‘expect’ and ‘respect’ are the key words

that all road users should have in mind. The designated lanes are signed with green advisory signs at the beginning, the end and with reminders in between.



There was a bit of a drama in the Conservation Area of the Playing Field when a fire was started and, due to very dry conditions, quickly spread to several large piles of logs (remnants from the harvesting of the cricket bat willows the previous year). It was necessary for two fire appliances to attend the incident and to bring the fires under control.



A new Social Club was launched in **September** as one of the initiatives promoted by members of the new VHMC. Twenty-one people attended the opening session and attendance since has been maintained. Kay Whittle, Pauline Palfreman and John Gurr are in conversation during the first meeting.



The Layham Events Group (LEG) announced very welcome financial contributions to village initiatives from the Jubilee Fete profits:

- Village Hall wall insulation, re-cladding and re-painting;
- Help with cost of a new flagpole for the church
- Help with cost of playgroup sessions for very young children
- Parts to make the display stands more flexible for LLHG
- Support for the new Social Club
- Plant containers on Turner's Hill verge

The Friends of St Andrews ran a 'Late Summer Fair' at Waterhouse Farm, offering a chance for residents to shop from unique local businesses. Profits went into the church maintenance fund.

In **October** it was found to be necessary to fell one of the yew trees growing beside the church, due to roots interfering with the building. The pictures show before and after:



The Harvest Festival took place as usual. The new VHM have been successful in promoting activities in the hall. The Social Club is now well established and commercially run yoga and ballet classes are under way.

An autumn village tidy-up with twenty volunteers made a difference once again. Several jobs were done including the trimming of grass edges in Brett Green and the removal of redundant hedgerow guards in Lower Layham.

A weekly 'warm drinks, snacks and socialising' took place in the Village Hall every Tuesday morning throughout the winter months. The initiative was organised by members of the Village Hall committee and funded by a Babergh District Council Winter Warmth Grant

November. The traditional Remembrance Service was conducted around the war memorial and in the church. There was a good attendance.

The Layham Playgroup closed its doors for the last time at the end of November having struggled to make ends meet financially since the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. It has not been possible to attract enough young children to meet the costs of running the group.

A statement from the Layham Playgroup Trustees said:

"It is with deep regret that, after nearly fifty years of operating, we announce that Layham Playgroup is having to close. It is not a decision that has been taken lightly. We would like to thank all the families who have made us part of their lives over the years. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to be part of your little ones' learning journey".



A further statement from the playgroup staff (pictured above) said:

"It was with much sadness that Layham Playgroup closed at the end of November 2022. It had been managed for over forty years by a parent-run committee. It became a Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2015. We have always felt that Layham Playgroup was a special place, being a small, friendly, traditional village organisation. We were able to build relationships and support children as they took their first steps away from home. We would like to thank everyone for their kindness and good wishes. Both Michelle Elmer (right) and Liz Chisnall (left) have been at the playgroup for many years and have had the pleasure of seeing many families and pupils grow and return to support fundraising and social events."

The playgroup was active to the end – the last monthly reports tell of the following stimulating activities: soup making; celebrating World Book Day; walks to the mill to see the swans nest building, sitting on eggs and finally raising a large family of cygnets; visiting local farm animals; observing insects and growing flowers and herbs; ‘Active August’ challenge; observing harvest and autumn changes.

The loss of this village facility will leave a big hole.

December. The LEG ran another successful and well-attended ‘Festive Fayre’ raising over £500 to support local causes. Church members set up Christmas trees outside the church porch and led a ‘Crib Service’ on Christmas Eve.

I should close by noting that a large extension to the Marquis has been under construction during most of the year. The owner argued successfully that if the restaurant and hotel were to be financially viable,



then further facilities would be needed. Babergh District Council’s planning department agreed that a banqueting facility, a wellness centre and extra bedrooms should be built. This was made possible by moving the car park further along the site.

Michael Woods

Layham Local History Recorder

January 2023