

BINEGAR PARISH COUNCIL: Annual Report 2016-17

Fundraising for a new playground climber was a major focus this year. Grants and donations topped £14,500 (including a sizable one for 2017's *Let's Celebrate* in July). We must thank the National Lottery, Sperring Trust and a host of donors for their generosity.

In the **Playground**, with help from Somerset's *Healthy Living Fund*, we installed a 'bird's nest swing' which has proved very popular. We monitor the safety of the playground and must thank the volunteers who joined our rota of inspections.

Dementia friendly villages is one of our cherished aims. There is much we can do to help sufferers and it is often very simple. We put on a number of events in the year to help explain the illness and give practical help. We will hold further sessions in 2017.

The Great British Clean Up last autumn and this spring was possible only because villagers gave freely of their time, keen, like us, to keep the place spic and span.

We unveiled our first **blue plaque** in honour of Henry Martin, a hero of the battle of Rorke's Drift. Mr Bill Coombes, who lives in the house Henry occupied, suggested the idea and we were delighted to make it happen.

We know **Richard Emery** best for his milk deliveries but the County Chairman honoured him with her *Service to the Community* Award. For many years, Richard has checked that his customers, especially the older ones, are safe and sound. That is a real service to his community.

Binegar Bottom received attention from councillors and volunteers who cleared the lower side early in 2017. It is the start of a programme of work to help prevent flooding downstream in Gurney Slade and to increase the bio-diversity – flora and fauna – of our *Local Wildlife Site*.

Holy Trinity Churchyard is an area we maintain and we continued to bring the overgrown yew trees back to size and shape. This year, we cut the trees back from the listed tombs by the church porch. We had to do some emergency tree lopping when trunks gave way in the winter winds.

In the Cemetery, we obtained planning permission for our **lych gate** work on which began just before our 31 March year-end.

The Somerset & Dorset Railway celebrated the sad 50th birthday of its closure. We hosted a lively and interesting exhibition that many parishioners came to enjoy.

Mendip District Council consult us on **planning applications** and, on average, we consider one at each meeting. Where a proposal is controversial, we ask for your help. More than 70 parishioners came to shape our recommendation on the plan for a housing estate. Mendip agreed with our recommendation and refused the application – but we must be on our guard. It may return.

Mendip also listened to our proposals for the future **development of the village**. In 2015, more than 100 parishioners contributed to our response to Mendip's *Local Plan*. The draft *Local Plan* foresees no great housing development in the villages and says they should retain their open aspects and views. There will be more consultation in 2017 and the timetable sees the plan adopted in March 2018.

Finally, we must thank Diane, our Parish Clerk, without whom none of this would have happened.

Your parish councillors

Jon Abbott, Philip Blatchford, Richard Higgins, Cath Law, Phil Roberts, John Scadding, David Stone