

 **BENSON BULLETING REPORT – APRIL 2022**

Since this article is not a joke (although some might say it is) I can’t say ….APRIL FOOL …… and even if it were, I don’t know when you will read this piece and, of course, if it were after mid-day on the 1st, it would be me not you who would be the FOOL

The first mention of this tradition in the UK was in 1686 and by 1698 it had taken hold enough for several people to be tricked into going to the Tower of London to see the lions being washed! I guess we can all remember the splendid BBC TV report on the spaghetti harvest in Italy and The Guardian’s 7 page travel supplement on the tropical San Serriffe archipelago. Let’s hope that such a tradition and such memories can divert our thoughts for a moment from the less than funny circumstances the world and particularly Ukraine face. Life is certainly not a joke for them.

Since last month’s piece the Parish Council’s open meeting on the revisions to the Neighbourhood Plan has taken place. The Neighbourhood Plan Development Team, all unpaid volunteers, must be congratulated on the content and clear presentation. The team must have put in an enormous effort and judging by the comments I heard after the meeting their efforts were much appreciated.

For many years another dedicated group of volunteers have been researching the history of our Village, its people, industries, societies and buildings and have now established a valuable archive that they are busy digitising. This archive is used by national and local researchers as well as individuals from around the world trying to find out about their family’s history in Benson. Dr Kate Tiller, OBE DL, the well-known Oxford Historian says:-

 *“The village and parish of Benson is highly interesting and significant historically. This is true both for its own residents and also for historians of the county and nationally, in whose work Benson is often cited. To collect and record local evidence and to make it known and accessible, either digitally or by providing research and viewing facilities for a consolidated local collection, would be a really valuable step. It will preserve evidence and foster further research, locally and by family historians, as well as general historians, and archaeological, architectural and landscape researchers. At a time of rapid growth in the village it can help raise awareness of Benson's history, character and community identity.”*

In the dim and distant past The Bensington Society was asked for funds to support the volunteers in their work of creating a Village Archive. The group became a Sub-committee of the Society which provided funds to help the research programme and over the years we have done so to the tune of many thousands of pounds and still continue to do so,

This archive is disseminated in various locations, mainly in people’s homes, garages and sheds and, as such, is not easy to use and is at risk of deterioration and potential loss, as researchers move and unfortunately die. Since the mid 1970’s we have had discussions with the Parish Council about the provision of space to accommodate what is our Village’s history archive. Although currently owned and managed by the Society, it is a valuable Village asset and desperately needs the Parish Council’s help in preserving it.

Now that the Village, in the form of the Parish Council, thanks to the recent developments, has acquired a great deal more space our request for storage space is being listened to more attentively. Let us hope that finally this valuable Village Archive can be given the safe storage space it deserves, so that our Village’s history is not lost to the ravages of time.

David McGill