

St. Mary's Church, Priors Hardwick

Starting with the weather, as is often the case, spring this year has been remarkably pleasant (except, as usual, for the odd Bank Holiday). Importantly for us it was particularly nice for our recent churchyard clear-up day, when the area around the church received its annual trim, resulting in the central architectural feature of our village looking very smart and presentable. This is thanks to the dedicated few who came to work, not only that day but also before and since with things like mowing and strimming. The village green area was also given a good cut and tidy up that day thanks to a couple of heroic volunteers, so continuing the good impression that we endeavour to make to visitors and locals alike.

The following day was Open Farm Sunday and Hill Farm was duly open, with various stalls, farm machinery (some of which is staggering in its size and complexity these days) and trailer rides around the fields to show the diverse range of wildlife around and the efforts the farmers are making to improve the environment for us all.

Encouraged by some really nice weather, there were nearly 800 visitors on the day. It was the culmination of a lot of effort in preparation and organisation, particularly for Hill Farm itself, which still has its normal work to get done in addition to all this, so many thanks to the Darbishes, and to their associates in the enterprise.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, the church also held a morning service in the marquee there, singing hymns while being able to survey fields of ripening grain leading to the beautiful rolling Warwickshire countryside - a chance to connect with the Creator and the Creation in the same moment. Having straw bales for pews added to the rustic effect.

The tent was later transformed into a pop-up cafe serving teas, coffee and cakes to the hundreds of visitors. This was an initiative of the church and the village to raise some money to go towards creating our proposed Community Area, somewhere available for all ages to meet up and "do their thing". We are hoping to extract a grant from HS2 towards this, one of the few possible positives that might be extracted from the whole High Speed charade, at least from the point of view of many of us struggling against the odds to be heard by the powers that be.

You may possibly read elsewhere about HS2, but this wonderfully planned project has already been subject to 2 major changes just in our vicinity alone (the sidings and the heave trial), and even this latter has now been delayed by a significant local archaeological discovery (near our historic villages – what a surprise!). Common sense would have doomed the exercise by now, but tribalism and group-think will probably make it stagger on, at least for a while.

Some of us believe in a grander "plan", but distilling how we fit into it is sometimes a struggle.

Alan Hone
June 2018