

Whittington and Fisherwick  
Parish Council



# ***Whittington and Fisherwick in Bloom***

## ***Our Portfolio 2018***

**Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Entry  
for Heart of England in Bloom  
July 2018**

***Submitted by***

***Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Council  
and  
Whittington and Fisherwick Environment Group***

***With support from:***

***St Giles Church***

***Whittington Primary School***

***Whittington Guides, Scouts, Brownies and Cubs***

***Whittington Village Hall***

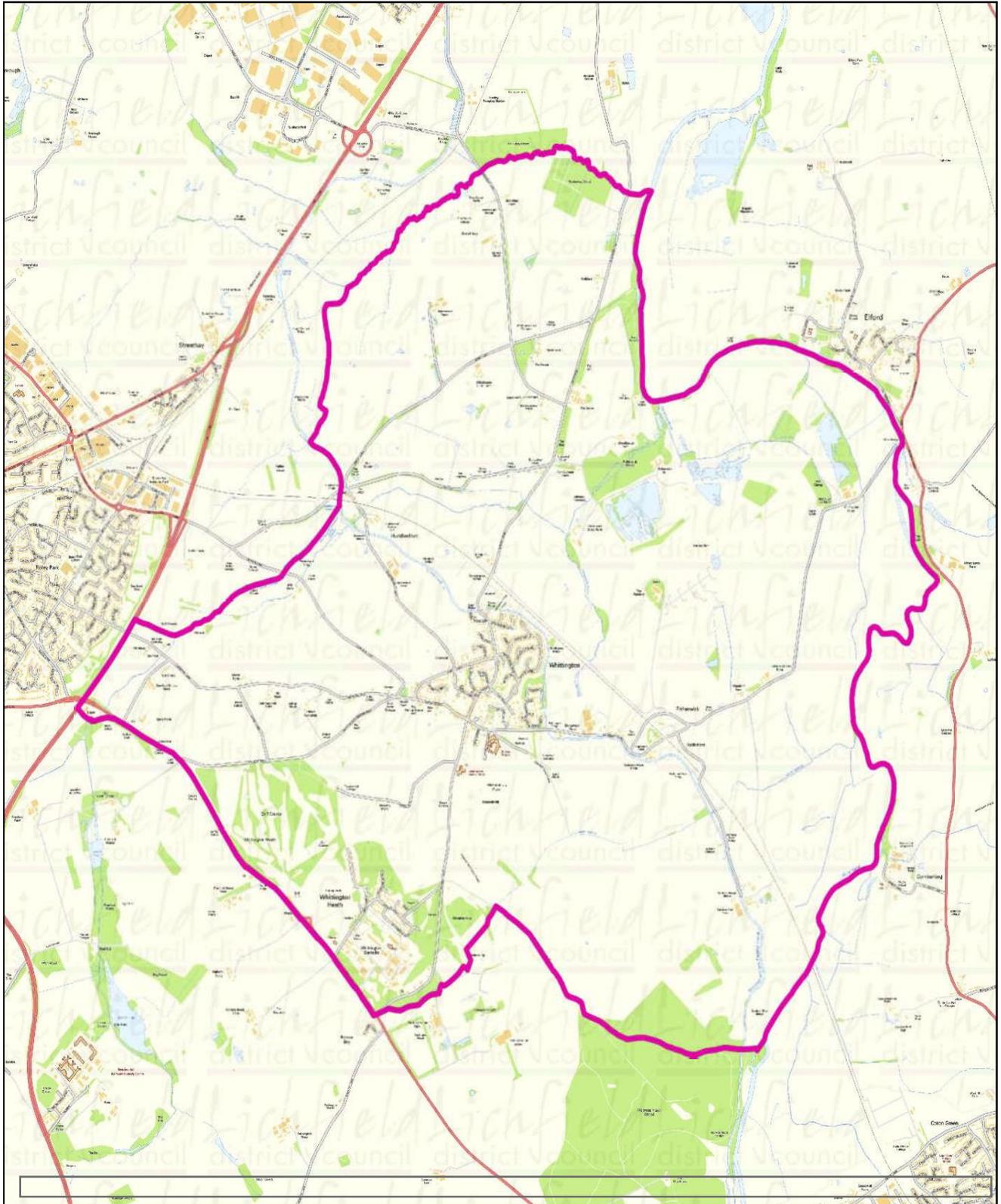
***St Giles Hospice***

***The Bell Inn, The Dog Inn and other local businesses***





# Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Map



## Whittington and Fisherwick Parish

Whittington and Fisherwick is a combined parish of around 2600 souls, c. 2300 in Whittington and c. 300 in Fisherwick. It lies 3 miles east of Lichfield and is under the political jurisdiction of Lichfield District Council and Staffordshire County Council. It also has an active Parish Council with 10 members.

The Village has recently approved a Neighbourhood Plan, whose production was led by the Parish Council with input from other residents. The plan includes policies which place a strong emphasis on preserving and improving wildlife and the parish environment generally including its built environment heritage.



The Parish is delighted to be entering Heart of England in Bloom for the first time. We do this with some trepidation because much of our environmental work has not been of the conventional kind! The central core of our entry is linked to the River of Flowers (RoF) project. This began in 2014, initiated by Whittington and Fisherwick Environment Group, However it would not have happened without the support of, above all, the Parish Council and also many other village groups including our Parish Church, the Village Hall Committee, Whittington School, St Giles Hospice, our Youth Organisations, WI and History Society plus local businesses.

The partnership between the Parish Council and WFEG has been central to what has been achieved under RoF. The Council are the landowners in both instances and have given boundless support and encouragement to the project as well as a great deal of financial support through the Parish Community Grant Scheme and the Solar Fund.

## Our Green Agenda

The Parish has a track record in promoting 'green initiatives' dating back over many years. It won a number of awards for its environmental action and in January 2016 was featured in the Sunday times in an article on the Greenest Places to Live in Britain. Much of its profile is due to the leadership of the Whittington and Fisherwick Environment Group (WFEG). WFEG was established in the summer of 2007 by a group of individuals concerned about the threat of climate change and its potential impact on our civilization and the wildlife of the planet with the strapline 'on a journey to low carbon future'. For the first few years of its history it focused on energy issues – campaigning to encourage residents, organisations and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and shrink the parish's carbon footprint.



Having made a significant impact on the energy front and feeling that the 80:20 rule was beginning to kick in the Group turned to action to protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and particularly to action to support bees and other pollinators. This was a logical evolution of the early concerns about climate change and way of mitigating its effects and addressing other negative factors affecting wildlife and nature. It launched an initiative called River of Flowers, described below. But first an outline of the early energy days as background.

## Energy Saving Projects



WFEG first entered the parish's consciousness with a stall at the Whittington Countryside and Craft Fair in September 2007. Winning a grant of £30,000 from the Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Grant Scheme (SALGS) WFEG hit the decks running with a display of a range of low energy light bulbs, information on insulation, a polar bear costume and a large footprint asking the vital question 'how big is yours?'

The Group ran an event in February 2008 with national speakers on climate issues and followed up with a Big Green Fair the following day where free low energy light bulbs were given away, members recruited and residents signed up for free home energy and carbon footprint audits provided by Shropshire-based energy experts, Marches Energy Agency.

The energy audits proved a popular success with households and organisations alike and over one hundred were eventually completed with the SALGS funding. Many households later reported a variety of actions they had taken to reduce energy consumption. The audits revealed that a large number of properties in the village had inadequate roof insulation or lacked cavity wall insulation, so WFEG launched a campaign to 'Ban the Unfilled Cavity Wall' working with an insulation company who gave a discount to householders taking up the offer. Over 80 households took up the offer for either cavity wall or roof insulation or both.



From insulation WFEG moved on to solar panels, with the introduction of the Feed-in Tariff for households generating solar energy. After a lot of research and consultation they teamed up with a Birmingham-based solar installer who again offered a discount to local residents – and 100 households in Whittington and across Lichfield district (and a few further afield) installed solar panels on their homes. WFEG also helped our school and Church Hall to obtain grants to install solar panels on their roofs and the school to install a woodchip boiler.

WFEG then combined with Low Carbon Lichfield to create Southern Staffordshire Community Energy Limited, a Community Benefit Society which raised £54,000 via a share issue from residents in Whittington and Lichfield. Two solar arrays were installed on community buildings in Whittington: St. Giles Hospice (18 kW) and Whittington Village Hall (8kW) providing the building owners with free solar electricity while utilizing the Feed-in Tariff to pay a modest rate of interest to shareholders and establish a community fund to support local energy and environmental projects.



To round off we should mention that much of Whittington's power is supported by 2 one megawatt solar farms which were instigated by a local solar developer. WFEG gave considerable support to the project at the planning stage and persuaded the developers to gift £10,000 to the Parish Council to support environmental projects in the parish. In addition a 500 kW wind turbine has been installed on the edge of the village by a local farmer. Again this received active support from WFEG though against some heated local opposition. It was turned down at planning stage by the District Council but approved on appeal by the Planning Inspector.

## River of Flowers



River of Flowers (RoF) has been an umbrella for improving the horticultural and natural environment of the village over the last four years. Instigated by WFEG, RoF aims to increase biodiversity and environmental quality across the Parish by improving the quality of existing spaces and public areas, developing new ones and linking them together through green corridors. It seeks to raise consciousness of how to support and encourage wildlife, particularly pollinators, by engaging residents in relevant activities.

So while visual impact is important because it helps build local support, maybe we are less concerned with that aspect than many other communities. What is commonly called a weed may be a source of food or resting place for wildlife.

This visionary project was launched in September 2015. With a visit from 'Wildlife Kate' from neighbouring Lichfield whose blog and livestreaming of bird and other wildlife activity from her garden has become well known via appearances on Spring and Autumnwatch. Kate led an assembly at the primary school, then worked with schoolchildren to plant bulbs supplied by WFEG, along part of Common Lane verge, an untidy stretch on the southern edge of the village adjacent to the school. That evening she gave a presentation of her fascinating trail camera highlights to residents in the Village Hall.



Subsequently volunteers rotovated the Common Lane verge and sowed a wildflower mix which follows the spring bulbs annually with a predominance of red campion and oxeye daisy. This autumn will see planting of additional plug wildflowers to diversify and lengthen the season including scabious and knapweed.

## Community Orchard and Our Love Affair with the Apple

Fisherwick, Whittington's little sister, has had a nursery for longer than anyone can remember. It still exists today on a small scale. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the owner produced a crab apple which he named after a Scottish friend 'John Downie' which subsequently became one of the best know varieties of the species. A specimen is today planted outside the Village Hall.



In 2009 the Parish Council purchased approximately 2 acres of surplus former Glebe land from St Giles Hospice and sought input from the community on its future use. WFEG came forward with the idea of a community orchard which was accepted, along with a proposal to construct a BMX track which had been put forward by youth groups in the village. The concept of the orchard was to plant heritage fruit trees, mainly with a connection to southern Staffordshire or surrounding Midlands areas and to complement the trees with a meadow and other wildlife-friendly vegetation.

WFEG was fortunate in stumbling on fruit expert Paul Hand of 'Bees and Trees', based in Shropshire, who had singlehandedly rescued the Tettenhall Dick pear from near extinction, grafting 2000 of them at the turn of the millennium. The fruit was first grown in the Wolverhampton suburb of Perton – Pear-town – after the Norman Conquest and established itself as a Black Country favourite. To the Black Country cry of "Tettenhall Dicks are hard as bricks," they were sold on street corners for two pence, or sixpence per flat capful. Paul introduced us

also to the only (then) two Staffordshire apples – both eaters - the delicious Roland Smith from Weston Park (Roland was head gardener there from 1922-57) and Betsy Baker, which was introduced by Baker's Nurseries of Codsall. Paul grafted both these varieties for us from his collection and they are in the orchard.

The bulk of the orchard was planted in the autumn of 2013 with about 50 varieties, predominantly apple but also a number of plums, pears, damsons, a black mulberry, and a medlar. Special efforts were made to include Midlands varieties including the Warwickshire Drooper plum, Shropshire Blue damson and apples Annie Elizabeth (Leicestershire), Bakers Delicious (Shropshire), and Yellow Ingestre (Shropshire) in addition to the Staffordshire varieties mentioned above. Further additions have been made since including two apple varieties grafted from unknown trees found in old village orchards. And the collection also, of course, includes the John Downie crab apple.

Building on the interest in apples WFEG instigated a village apple day in 2013, inviting the aforesaid Paul Hand to display apple varieties and organise apple day entertainment. A local amateur apple presser was tracked down and invited, toffee apples and other apple delicacies were produced. The event was a great success and, inspired, WFEG successfully applied to their County Councillor for a grant to purchase an apple press and crusher and from 2014 have provided a juicing service at the Apple Day event and produced their own apple juice using local fruit. Paul Hand has become a regular attender, bringing fruit varieties, fruit leathers, making fruit pies with children, and various other activities.



In 2014 a WFEG member out walking their dog noticed an apple tree on the Whittington Firing Ranges and tried the apple which she found to be delicious. Samples were sent to the Brogdale Trust for examination. They replied saying 'A very attractive apple. If it has arisen from a discarded core then it is a **New Variety** and it is up to you to give it a name'. So a competition for a name was organised, and thus was born the 'Whittington Hero' apple, referring of course to the military connection. Since then around 30 trees of this variety have been grafted up, with 3 planted in the community orchard, one at the school and the rest sold at local events to villagers and other local people.

## Orchard Renovation

Like much of Whittington the ground on which the orchard was planted was sandy and stony. To help counter this and to add humus to enrich the soil large quantities of cow dung were put round the trees. But much watering was needed to keep the trees happy, which was possible courtesy of the neighbouring cricket club which allowed WFEG volunteers access to one of their outside taps in return for a modest contribution. Despite the care and attention lavished on the trees a significant number were growing at a very slow rate or in a few instances barely at all.

After much debate and research the WFEG Committee concluded that the ground conditions were so poor and devoid of humus and minerals that the only solution was to dig up the most poorly performing trees and enrich the soil with a significant quantity of compost to increase the holding capacity and fertility. A local expert was engaged to carry out an analysis of the soil to identify the mineral deficiencies and to recommend what should be added.

A large quantity of compost was obtained (from the same source used for Swan Meadow – see below) and a JCB with driver hired. And on several dry February and March days this year working parties were organised to dig up and replant 28 trees while the JCB dug out a large hole to be refilled with a mixture of compost and the original soil. The requisite minerals were added to remedy the deficiencies – including magnesium, phosphorous and potassium - and a thick mulch of wood chip a metre wide was piled round each tree. Minerals and mulch were added to all 70 trees in the orchard, not just those that were replanted.



This was a major undertaking requiring several day long working parties in February/March this year but one which seems to have paid dividends in that the trees do seem to be doing much better despite the difficult weather conditions particularly drought. Regular watering by a rota of volunteers is taking place using outside taps at either the Cricket Club or Hospice, both of which adjoin Jubilee Park.

## Main Street Troughs

In early 2017 WFEG applied for funds from Tesco's Bag for Life scheme. Following a public vote in Tesco stores in surrounding areas, WFEG was awarded the top grant of £12,000. This has been used for a variety of different projects across the village, the most prominent of which was the installation of 5 stone troughs along Main Street which volunteers then filled with compost and planted with pollinator-friendly flowering plants. Management of each trough is undertaken by a different household in the village. They have discretion to choose the plants within the overall philosophy of the scheme.



## Bulb Planting



A variety of spring bulbs have been planted by River of Flowers volunteers on prominent roadside sites around the village, a predominance of colourful crocuses, supplemented by snowdrops, daffodils, camassia and allium in appropriate locations. It is intended to continue to plant further bulbs in the future. The Parish Council has instructed its contractors to make sure that grass-cutting of the areas with bulbs is delayed until they have died back.

## Encouraging Gardeners

WFEG and our partners see private gardens as crucial pieces in supporting biodiversity and so initiated a Wildlife Gardening Competition in the spring of 2014. 12 gardens were entered for the competition (WFEG Committee members were excluded from participation). Alys Fowler was secured to visit the parish and to judge the entries. The entrants were all visited by WFEG Committee members and were shortlisted down to 4 for Alys to visit and assess with the result announced at a packed evening event.

In addition two competitions for Brownies were organised. One by teams to produce plans for a garden to be created next to the Community Orchard at Jubilee Park. And the other for individuals to enter single pots of bee friendly flowers.





Talking to the competition participants it was evident that there was considerable interest in participating in an Open Gardens event the following summer and so it was that WFEG took the lead on organizing an event. So Whittington Open Gardens came into being with the first event taking place in June 2015 over one day with 15 gardens including most of the Wildlife Garden competition entrants. The event was a great success and was repeated in 2017 as a joint event with St Giles Church, this time over 2 days, with around 450 programmes sold, raising funds for both organisations. A further event is planned for 2019.

## Swan Meadow

This area of a little over ½ acre is a piece of land ‘left over’ from a housing development which replaced a former special school around 10 years ago. As part of a Section 106 agreement the developers were to turn the site into a wildflower meadow and pass it to Lichfield District Council (LDC) with a ‘dowry’ for ongoing management. LDC had agreed to then pass it to Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Council for ongoing management and community use. By late 2016 little appeared to have happened: the developer was still in charge of the site which looked neglected with occasional mowing and very occasional hedge trimming and a history of resident complaints about its state, and uncertainty about its future.

WFEG approached all three parties – developer, LDC and WFPC with an offer to take on the management and create a ‘meadow’, a proposal which was greeted positively by all concerned and agreement obtained, so that the site was included as part of the Bags of Help funding bid to Tesco.

Having created a native wildflower meadow at the community orchard in Jubilee Park it was decided to do something a little different with this site and to use some of the Pictorial Meadow’s mixes that had been used at the Olympic site, Trentham Gardens and elsewhere. Two members of the WFEG Committee attended a PM ‘masterclass’ in June 2017 and saw the splendid displays of their mixes on a number of sites near to their HQ in Sheffield and came back fired with enthusiasm.



To reproduce this in Whittington was no mean feat which involved killing off the existing sward, heavily dominated by aggressive grasses like couch and also creeping buttercup, with glyphosate. There was some debate about use of this herbicide which has been the subject of campaigns by some ‘green’ groups but the evidence of undesirable effects was felt to be unproven and its use justifiable if used on a limited basis in a careful manner. A known local contractor was brought in to administer a first spraying and a WFEG volunteer followed up on areas which required further treatment, with the contractor then rotavating the site.

A design for the site was agreed by the WFEG Committee and by the local authorities in September. It was however decided to seek funding to enable us to lay one area with Pictorial Meadows (PM) turf which would, it was believed, provide a great display at an early stage while other areas were still developing. A bid for £2000 was submitted to the South Staffs Water (SSW) ‘PEBBLE Fund’ in September and was successful, enabling us to

order around 100 sq m of PM's 'Patchwork Quilt' turf and to lay this in late November with WFEG volunteers and staff from SSV as part of their corporate responsibility initiative.

Implementation of the remaining areas was more challenging. PM strongly advise laying a 75mm layer of sterile compost before sowing. Careful research, visits to potential suppliers and liaison with PM were undertaken before a choice of supplier was made. Fortunately we were able to find a supplier who was relatively local – around 20 miles away – Mill Farm Composting, the company that process Stafford Borough Council's green waste, which provided the basis of the compost for our site.



Calculations suggested that around 40 tonnes of compost would be required for the area we were planning to sow and access was felt to be good enough to have this delivered on a 20 tonne lorry. At this point it was becoming a race against time to spread the compost on the defined areas and sow 4 mixes before the weather broke. A local farmer was called in to help move piles of compost around the site with his digger and work parties then barrowed and spread into position to enable sowing to take place. All this in an intensive two weeks in late November and early December 2017.

Then the anxious waiting during a wet winter for germination when some areas of the site looked saturated and couch grass was the first vegetation to appear. Then we began to see the gradual growth of the turfed area and the tantalizingly slow emergence of the seedlings in the sown areas. Alongside the seedlings of the PM mixes however a range of less desirable species started to emerge: our old friend creeping buttercup, plantain, some dock, a few coarser grasses and the usual assortment of annual weeds such as groundsel, fat hen and willowherb.

Thus from mid-May a deluge of volunteer weeders converged on the site and did battle with the enemy, the main problem being to distinguish the wanted seedlings from the unwanted. But with a list of the species in the mixes and some online research distinctions were arrived at – it is very hard to find photos of seedlings of particular plants as opposed to fully developed plants.

No sooner had the 'weeds' been largely conquered than the next challenge arrived – drought! Fortunately this had been anticipated and a friendly neighbour had been approached about use of their outside tap and hoses and sprinkler purchased. As with the orchard it is a fairly large site so quite challenging to tackle – and needing regular watering on a virtually daily basis up to the date of writing. **BUT THE RESULTS ARE SPECTACULAR!!**



There is much more to be done at Swan Meadow as many areas remain unimproved, paths are not yet sown and some furniture, bee and insect and bird boxes to be installed, bulbs to be planted and maybe even a pond to be created. But a spectacular wildlife friendly area is well on the way to creation.

## Hospice Garden

The gardens are designed to provide an area for patients relaxing environment for both patients, relatives and visitors. They have a mixture of different plants and flowers which provide a lot of colours, smells and sounds. The garden is managed by Dawn who has been employed by the Hospice for 16 years so has established and maintained the gardens with help from several volunteers who give up an hour or two each week.



The inner garden which is a mixture of raised beds, vegetable garden and potted plants backs onto the day hospice and allows the visitors to relax in a tranquil environment with plenty of wildlife with colours and sound and smells.

The roof top garden is an area which enables patients to be wheeled onto in their beds to enjoy the outside with a calming and relaxing environment. The tall grass along with attractive flowers provides a mixture of sounds and colours.

The NEC garden has been supplied and installed by a group of 30 NEC employees following the 2016 Gardeners World show. They

have recreated an exhibition stand in the Hospice grounds which provides a patio and seated area surrounded by a variety of shrubs.

## **Middleton Bridge Garden**

The 'garden' at Middleton Bridge is on the fringe of the largest housing estate in the parish built in the 1960s. The bridge leads onto an area of uncultivated land popular with dog walkers and was in a sorry state in the early 2000s. A group of neighbours got together and contacted the local authorities, local farmers and British Waterways (as was). No one, however, would acknowledge responsibility so the residents took into their own hands to create a garden along the bridge and approach. This was started in 2006 . Some of the original creators are now too elderly to continue to look after it but one remains very active and has received regular support with weeding and other tasks from the River of Flowers/WFEG team.



## **Allotments**

In 2009 the Parish Council opened allotments which now have 31 working plots on land leased by a local landowner for 10 years. It has been agreed that the lease will be renewed for a further 10 years from this October. The Council rents the plots to local residents as single, half or even quarter plots to enable even the those with very limited time to grow their own produce.

## **Parish Trees and Whittington Wood**

The Parish Council owns some 225 trees and has a regular programme of inspection and maintenance. Every 4 years or so, the PC invites quotes from specialist arboricultural experts to develop a programme of tree maintenance work, and for this work to be divided into 3 "priority" categories; urgent, year 1 and year 2. The PC then undertakes a separate exercise to invite quotes for the required surgery work in accordance with the agreed programme. In addition to this Councillors and members of the public may make suggestions during the course of the year and ad hoc tree work will be carried out as required.

Whittington Wood, formally known as Kestrels Wood, consists of approximately two acres of land bounded by the rear of Spring Lane, Peregrine Close and the canal. The majority of the land consists of a mixture of mature trees with a meadow area running along the Spring Lane boundary.

In 2000 the Parish Council established an advisory sub-committee composed of councillors and residents to assist in achieving the Councils aims, these are to:

- Ensure that the wood is safe for users and nearby residents

- Safeguard the long-term future of the wood as an amenity for the Parish
- Develop the richness and diversity of its plants and animal life
- Establish a sustainable, balanced ecology in the wood.

The sub-committee periodically undertakes surveys, prepares management plans, recommends necessary work, organises working parties and involves and informs residents through various media.

The most significant activities completed in recent years are: thinning trees from densely planted areas to encourage varied ground growth; clearing the area bordering Spring Lane and seeding to create a meadow area; planting a hedge along the Spring Lane boundary and mixed native bulb planting throughout the wood. Working parties meet on the first Saturday of each month from March, starting at 10:00 for a couple of hours

## Churchyard



There has been a church on the present site in Whittington since the 13th century, when worship was taken by the monks who walked over from the Friary at Lichfield. St. Giles is the patron saint of beggars and lepers. It is believed that the church was originally built in the 13th century of red sandstone quarried in Hopwas Woods. The nave was rebuilt in 1761 following a fire, with the chancel being added in 1880/1881.

The large and historic churchyard is looked after by two very hard-working volunteer members of the congregation. There is a great display of the native British daffodil *narcissus pseudonarcissus* in the spring across much of the churchyard which is a prominent and much-loved feature of village life. Smaller areas of bluebell and oxeye daisy follow on later. Most of the churchyard is mown once the daffodils have died back. Future plans include planting of appropriate wild-flowers in some areas, turfing or seeding untidy kerbed graves, possibly planting with small, early flowering bulbs, removal of ant hills in the newer sections, edging and weeding of paths, and increasing the density of the daffodils in a few areas where there are gaps.

## Youth Activities

**Whittington Primary School** - Outdoor learning is a key part of the school curriculum, making best use of school grounds and the local area of Whittington.

The Eco-group are a group of enthusiastic pupils with a keen interest in environmental issues, on both a large scale and locally in the Whittington area. During the Autumn term, they planted daffodil bulbs and then wildflowers were planted in the Spring. They felt passionately about maintaining a clean and tidy village and worked to create 'Keep Whittington tidy' posters which were displayed in the local area.

In school, there is a nature area with a pond. The eco-group were challenged with attempting to encourage wildlife into the pond. They planted a variety of wild flowers and now enjoy pond dipping and bug hunting in the summer months. With the help of Wildlife Kate and WFEG volunteers, the children also planted a wildflower meadow and lots of bulbs in the nature area opposite school which they walk past with their parents on their way in every day. They have also planted a Whittington Hero apple tree within the school boundary which the children will enjoy eating from in the years to come!

Every Monday this summer, an extracurricular after school club, has been held, led by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. They use the philosophies and practices of Forest Schools and cover issues such as biodiversity. The children were very excited to go pond dipping and discover frogs in various stages of development and use sweep nets to hunt for bugs and crickets.

Tackling the issue of one-use plastic is a new goal for the eco-group. They have plans to talk to the catering staff and the PTA about changing to paper cups to support the environment message.

**Brownies** – Early this year the Brownies invited WFEG to come to a number of sessions where they girls learnt



about the importance of bees and got to try some local honey and wear bee suits. Then they learnt all about the food bees need and got hands-on learning to plant pollinator-friendly seeds and plants. They developed their skills further by entering a village competition to planting a bee friendly pot, and, in groups, designed a bee friendly garden area to be planted at the Orchard. Alys Fowler judged the competition entries and awarded the prizes to the girls, and the winning design has been planted at the community orchard and continues to look stunning! The Brownies hold regular sessions there at different times of year when they add more bulbs

and enjoy activities in this lovely area.

**Beavers** - Over the last few years, Beavers have planted approximately 300-400 spring bulbs, mostly on Swan Park, close to the canal. Also, at the park, with the help of WFEG members, they have planted around 50-70 flowering hedgerow plants. This year some bedding plants were also planted at the Scout Hut and around the tree opposite the entrance to the church hall. The Beavers have enjoyed making bug hotels and love the summer term when they spend as much time out and about as possible.

**Scouts** - This year the Scouts have hand-cut and built a bird house each, these have been put up at various locations around the village. They are also planning with WFEG to run some planting sessions in the autumn, along with some wildlife spotting and identification sessions in the orchard and, when the dark nights close in, in the woods to see how wild Whittington is at night. Other activities include service to the community where they have helped weed the pavements around the village.



**Guides** - The guides have been busy making the village an even nicer place to live. They very recently spent an evening walking the village doing a litter pick and have also been doing craft activities with an environmental theme.

## Woodhouse Farm

The holding is a traditional small farm created from the historic walled garden, a seven acre field (former cherry orchard) and other bits of land which had once been part of the grand Fisherwick Estate. The Estate was



landscaped by Capability Brown who also designed nearby Fisherwick Hall, unfortunately demolished around 1815. The land passed to F. E. H. Paget, who in 1936 gave the manor of Fisherwick and other property in the area to Birmingham City Council. The gift was made to promote 'the healthful recreation of the citizens of Birmingham' and to preserve the rural character of the property. It was let as a smallholding and for the last 8 years has been run as a social enterprise – Woodhouse Farm and Garden Community Interest Company – which is aiming to reconnect the community with local food and farming. It produces veg, fruit, eggs as well

as its own pork and beef from rare breed cows and pigs, and is looking to help people learn how to cook seasonally.

Woodhouse is home to a small herd of Irish Moiled Cattle, Gloucester Old Spot and Black Pigs and 150 chickens for eggs. Once again fruit and vegetables are grown in the 3.5 acre walled garden, produce is sold through a farm shop and people are encouraged to join the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project which has been offering vegetable shares since 2011.



CSAs allow the community to support the farmer by signing up to the vegetable share for the season. Members guarantee the farm income, help with work days and receive a weekly/fortnightly share of fresh seasonal produce. The farm produces fresh fruit, vegetables, and eggs, together with rare breed pork, bacon, gammon and sausages while having a secondary aim to use the farm for community good.

The farm has a strong community theme and is regularly host to local Brownies, Guides, Cubs, school parties as well as WIs, Gardening Guilds and walking groups. It has formed a strong association with the care farming movement and regularly hosts groups of people recovering from mental health issues as part of a project called WELLIES run by Staffordshire Care and Farming Development CIC.

Over the past few years huge effort has been devoted to raising funds and carried out works to transform a former pigsty into a café providing a multi-functional space with a kitchen area, toilet and shower block including a disabled wet room. The project has involved several years hard graft of fund-raising and a great deal of volunteer labour, but will provide a space for a café, education room and the scope to develop a wide range of activities with local and special needs groups. Funds have come from a wide range of sources: Enover Community Trust, HS2 Community Fund, The Big Lottery, Southern Staffordshire Community Energy, and Whittington and Fisherwick Parish Council, the We Love Lichfield Fund, Midlands Co-op and Severn Trent Water.



Over the coming year Woodhouse is looking forward to working with St Giles Hospice to develop a project working with youngsters who have lost family members to cancer, offering seasonal produce workshops and having a cafe to enhance visitor experiences. In the longer-term it is intended to seek funding from the Heritage Lottery to carry out restoration of the Walled Garden and develop interest in the history of the site and its surroundings.

## Village Market



In 2010 WFEG allied with St Giles Church to start a food market to provide an outlet for local horticultural and other produce and to help reduce food miles. The market operates on the third Saturday of every month from April to November with a Christmas special in early December. The number of stalls varies from time to time as producers can move on, but the Church and Woodhouse Farm (q.v.) have been constants selling local veg and fruit and a variety of other produce. The market has also had stalls selling plants and local Scouts and Guides running stalls to raise funds for trips.

## Historic and Wider Environment

War Memorial - During the last year the Parish Council (PC) has taken legal ownership of the War Memorial site located in the heart of the Village. The site has always been maintained by the PC in any case, as it attracts hundreds of visitors every year, and in particular on the 11<sup>th</sup> November a large gathering attends every year to pay their respects to those that lived in the Parish. The Parish Caretaker regularly maintains the War Memorial site and local people always ensure that there is a wonderful flower display present.



Old School - In 1741 Sarah Neal left her house and croft in Whittington to start a school for poor children of the village. Funds were augmented when the Reverend Richard Levett died in 1802 leaving a legacy and in 1864 a handsome gothic building for a girls' and infants' school was built by Lieut.-Col. Dyott. Village children continued to be educated here until 1968 when a new school was built in Common Lane. The County Council intend, shortly, to sell the site on which the buildings currently sit for housing development and have applied for planning permission for six dwellings. As a result of

a campaign by the Village History group and Parish Council the main building was awarded Grade 2 Listed status in 2013 and this, and other historic buildings on the site will be retained as part of the development.

Grass Cutting and Verge Management - the PC retenders the grass cutting contract every 3 years with the current contract ending in 2020. Whereas most public sector organisations will specify 8 to 10 cuts per annum, the PC has retained 14 cuts per annum. The specification was adjusted before the current contract was let to take into account the requirements entailed by the bulb, meadow and perennial planting undertaken by WFEG.

Village Signs - The PC installed new Village Signs a year or so ago. These new signs have received many favourable comments from the community at large as the old signs had faded and didn't give the greatest impression of the Parish. The PC agreed to install high quality cast signs as opposed to the cheaper digital printed versions, both for longevity and aesthetic reasons. There are 7 such signs placed on all the key traffic routes into the Parish (including Fisherwick).

Litter Picks – as part of its commitment to looking after the parish environment the Parish Council organises regular litter picks – roughly once a quarter. The second of this year's events has just taken place (Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July), just ahead of the HEiB judges visit. What a coincidence!!

## Funding

From its inception WFEG has been extremely good at raising funds for village environmental activities and has had invaluable support for its bids and in direct funding from the Parish Council.

- In its first year of activity it received £30,000 from the Staffordshire Aggregates Levy Fund and in the following year a further £20,000.
- The Solar 500 scheme it set up in 2010 - where participants were asked to make a small donation to WFEG in recognition of the benefits of the scheme – raised £15,000.
- Successfully applications to the Parish Council for monies from its community grant scheme on numerous occasions (amounts have ranged from £500 to £750)
- Several grants from Staffordshire County Council's Community grant scheme including a. apple juicing equipment b. towards the first Open Gardens event
- £12,000 from Tesco's Bags of Help Scheme towards River of Flowers



- £4,000 received from the Solar Fund administered by the Parish Council, having been gifted for environmental projects by a local solar developer following installation of two 1 MW solar schemes in the Parish.
- A total of £6500 received from Lendlease over the last 6 years via a grant scheme to voluntary groups to which employees have been actively involved
- £2000 received from the South Staffs Water PEBBLE fund which supports biodiversity projects in the SSW supply area
- £3000 'profit' from the most recent (2017) Open Gardens event

In terms of funds available for further horticultural and environmental improvement work in the parish WFEG currently has a bank balance of c.£6000 and has sole access to a further c.£6000 in the aforementioned Solar Fund. If and when these funds are exhausted there are several sources of funding which the Group would be confident of being able to access to support its work.

The Parish does not have a large number of businesses. But the environmental work has had support in a number of ways:

- The £10,000 aforementioned Solar Fund gifted by Green Energy Networks, a local solar developer, for environmental projects provided to the Parish Council
- £2000 from South Staffs Water plc (see above)
- £6500 from Lendlease (see above)
- Sponsorship and advertising in the Open Gardens Newsletter from several local businesses, including £300 sponsorship from village-based recycling business Fortress
- Contributions from village shops towards installation and planting in the Main Street Troughs and flower baskets outside the shops
- Construction and management of the WFEG website and mailings (eg of monthly enews) by Perceptis Ltd

## Communication and Education

WFEG communicates regularly with members and supporters. Early in its life it produced a 'glossy' newsletter 3 or 4 times a year delivered to every household. While high profile it was costly and time-consuming and has now been replaced by:

- a monthly Enewsletter currently going out to around 700 members and supporters
- Facebook sites for WFEG and for River of Flowers regularly updated with information about events, activities and information on environmental issues
- Coverage of key events and activities on the Parish Council Facebook site
- A regularly updated WFEG website maintained and updated by a local IT business, Perceptis Ltd.
- Regular news contributions to the weekly Whittington village section of the local Lichfield Mercury paper
- Articles in every edition of Connect magazine published by the Parish Council three times a year



In addition to the above WFEG have run many events and talks to raise awareness of environmental issues. Initially the focus was very much on energy matters but this has slowly shifted to highlight horticultural and biodiversity issues. In the last few years there have been talks from Alys Fowler (2015), Chris Baines (2017), the Chief Executive of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (2016) and 'Wildlife' Kate Macrae (this year and 2016). In October we are organizing an event with speakers on how to live without single use plastics.

For five years we ran a 'Big Green Fair' event in the Village Hall with stalls on wildlife, energy, recycling and related issues along with entertainment like puppet shows, juggling, facepainting.

We have also organised two workshops each on fruit pruning and on grafting, including a successful one on the latter this March on which we have received very positive feedback.

## **Conclusion**

The intensity of environmental action in Whittington and Fisherwick across a variety of fronts in the last ten years has been remarkable by any standards. This is unlikely to be obvious to the casual observer as much of the work does not impact main routes, although some does. WFEG's aims have been less focused on aesthetics and more on longer-term goals of reducing carbon and enhancing biodiversity and stimulating community engagement, although improving the look of the village and promoting civic pride are also important.

Work over the next year is expected to include the following:

- Further work at Swan Meadow including: creation of grass paths; planting a wildflower meadow to complement the current perennial beds; installing seating; provision of insect homes and bird boxes; planting bulbs under the trees,
- Consolidation of the renovated orchard with additional mulch and summer watering; enhancement of the wildflower meadow with plugs; ongoing management (pruning, replacement of any losses etc)
- Consideration of constructing a pond either at Swan Meadow or the Jubilee Orchard or other suitable location
- Further bulb planting in verges
- Creation of a wild flower meadow area along Fisherwick Road
- Floral enhancement of gateways to the village
- Continued engagement with and support of youth activities
- A feasibility study into replacing the hard tarmac turning circle near the junction of Main Street and Rock Farm Road with a richly planted area and seating.
- Further events including talks on alternatives to plastic (October); apple day (October); Christmas market (December); grafting workshop (March); speaker event/AGM (June)

## Events 2017-18



### Wildlife Kate

**'A World of Wildlife in My Patch'**  
- Attracting, Watching and Filming British Wildlife...

**Friday 25th May 2018**  
at Whittington Village Hall

6.45pm - Doors open and refreshments available  
7.00pm - WFEF AGM  
7.30pm - Wildlife Kate talk



**Free of Charge - All welcome - Suitable for children**



Lichfield's very own Kate MacRae, better known as 'WildlifeKate' will share with us how she attracts and films the wildlife in her Lichfield garden and the 7 acre site she manages in Worcestershire.

A frequent contributor on BBC Springwatch, Autumnwatch, Countryfile and Midlands Today, Kate will show us how she has built boxes, ponds, and even a badger sett to film and encourage our wonderful British wildlife.

Bar and refreshments available. No booking required.

Visit [www.wfeg.org.uk](http://www.wfeg.org.uk) for more information or find us on Facebook

## Apple Day Market

Saturday 21st October, 9.30am-1pm  
The Bell Inn Car Park, Main Street, Whittington  
(Now in its sixth year!)

### Celebrating our favourite national fruit and its local harvest...

- **Star Attraction** - Paul Hand of Bees and Trees with lots of children's activities and fun
- An abundant array of apple produce & displays of varieties grown in the village.
- **Splat the Apple Game & Best Dressed Apple Competition** (for kids up to 11 years)
- **Ryknild Rabble Morris**
- **Apple Press** - bring your own apples for juicing (& containers to take it away in!)
- **Plus fabulous food** from our local producers & spring bulbs at amazing prices!



Visit [www.wfeg.org.uk](http://www.wfeg.org.uk) for more information or find us on Facebook

## Whittington & Fisherwick Village Produce Market 2018

The Bell Inn Car Park, Main Street, Whittington

Our regular produce market usually takes place on the third Saturday of every month from April onwards at The Bell Inn Car Park, Whittington from 9.30 am - 1 pm.

We look forward to seeing you at our next market on:

**SAT 21st APRIL**

Every month will see a delicious array of yummy LOCAL food producers, lining up with a great selection of goodies, together with stalls selling crafts, gifts and cosmetics.

Just a taste of our regular offerings includes:

- Fresh sausage, bacon, pork, gammon & preserves
- Smoked cheeses, jams & chutneys
- Breakfast sandwiches
- Fresh vegetables
- Bread, cakes and baked goodies
- Crafts & Gifts
- Cosmetics & skin care
- Ethnic & street foods

This month's special attraction:

The Hotspots Clog Dancers!

The Whittington & Fisherwick Village Produce Market is run by St. Giles' Church.  
For stall booking enquiries please contact Julia Spencer at [julia\\_spencer@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:julia_spencer@hotmail.co.uk)

Free parking in Back Lane WS14 9NL  
Tickets from Thomas Spencer Hall

Whittington

# OPEN GARDENS & Flower Festival

11am - 4pm  
Sat 8th & Sun 9th July

15 gardens to explore

entry **£5** per adult

Sponsored by **FORTRESS**  
15 Cross Street, Whittington  
For more details visit [www.wfeg.org.uk](http://www.wfeg.org.uk) or ring 0782 322 4005

plant sales - cream teas - home-cooked food  
local produce - crafts - art exhibition - live music  
FREE PARKING

WFEF  
St Giles Church

# Swan Meadow 2017-18

Turf packs arrived Swan Meadow – Nov



Flower turf being laid – Nov



Compost just arrived (steaming!) – Nov



Compost dispersal working party – Nov



Compost spread into piles – Nov



Well-earned refreshment break



Spreading the compost into 3" layer



Watering the meadow



'Treasure Chest' mix in full bloom



'Tuscan Hills' mix in full bloom



# Jubilee Orchard 2018

Mulch and compost ready for use



Digging holes for replanting



Replanting under existing orchard trees



Replanting team having a well-earned rest!



Back to work.....



Replanted apple tree blossom 2018



Cowslips in Jubilee meadow



More blossom this spring



## Main Street Troughs 2017-18

Filling the troughs ..... November



Planted up - December



Watering and tidying up – May



## Brownie Garden at Jubilee Orchard 2018

Weeding the Brownie garden – March



Seeing the dividend – June



And there were hyacinths in April



## Apple Day 2016 & 2017

Apple Dressing Comp Winners 2017



Juicing local apples 2016



Baking apple pies with Paul Hand 2016



Note: Apple Day 2017 had to be held indoors in the local pub because of very high winds so some of pictures are 2016 which was more typical.

# Bulb Planting 2018

Common Lane.....



Fisherwick Road .....



Swan Meadow 'in the green' .....



## And the results (from previous years).....



## St Giles Churchyard – Daffodils, Bluebells – and Solar Panels!



## Woodhouse Farm and Garden

Old roof of pigsty off – Feb



New floor going down – April



All done – June



Woodhouse Farm – Aerial view



A party visit the Walled Garden



Potato planting time with volunteers



## We Have A Lot of Fun Too!

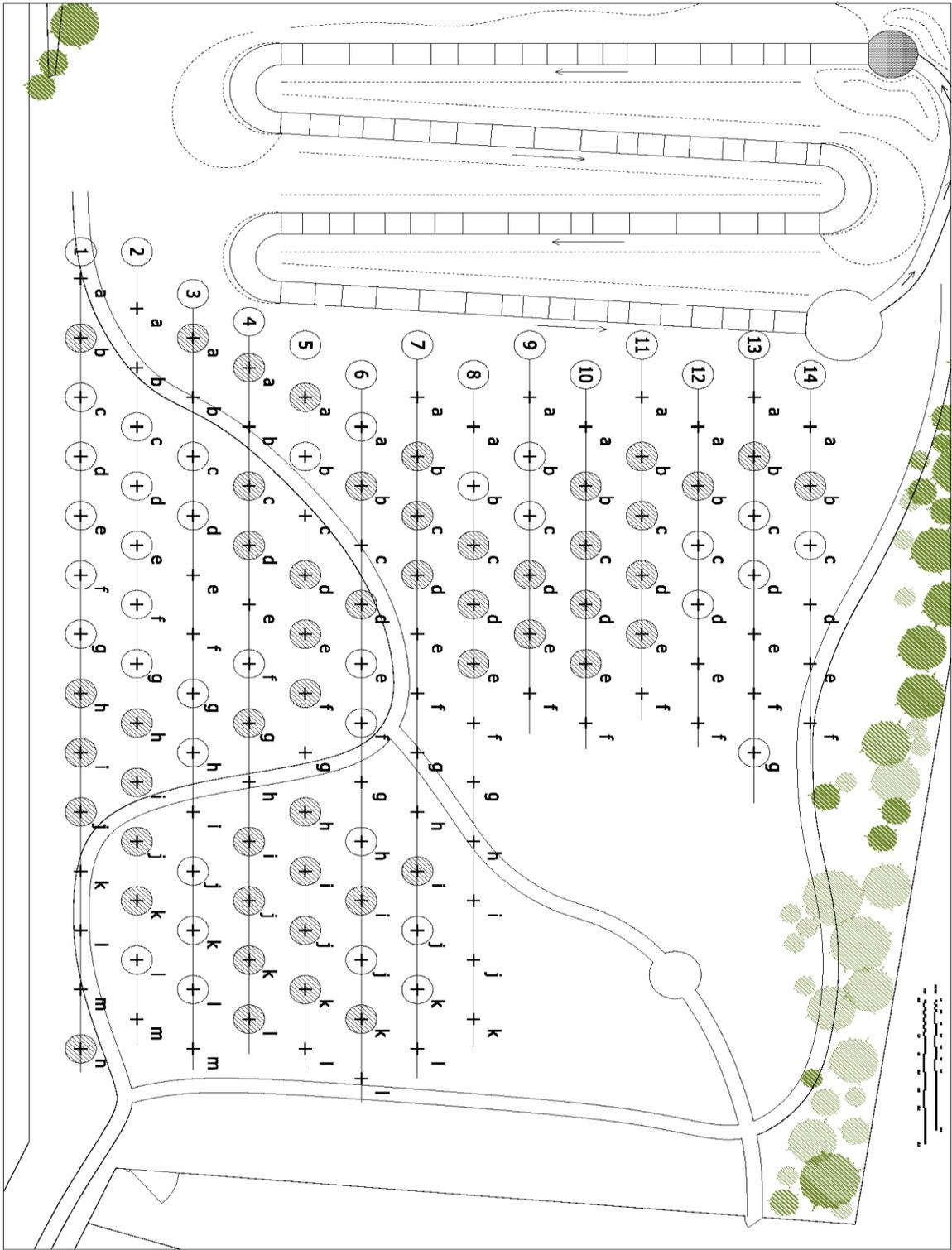


## Jubilee Park Orchard – Fruit Tree Schedule

		Fruit	Variety	Date of Planting	Supplier
1	a	x	x	x	
1	b	Medlar	Nottingham	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
1	c	Apple	King Coffee	17/03/2018	Walcott Organic
1	d	Plum	Kirkes Blue	17/11/2013	Chris Bowers
1	e	Apple	Elswick House Orchard - tree unknown	Autumn '14	Grafted by MK
1		Apple	Whittington Ranges Apple	17/11/2013	Grafted by DM
1	g	Damson	<i>Farleigh damson to be planted Oct 2018</i>	Autumn 2018	Byrkley Garden Centre
1	h	Apple	James Grieve	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
1	i	Apple	Blenheim Orange	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
1	j	Apple	Blenheim Orange	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
1	k	x	x	x	x
1	l	x	x	x	x
1	m	x	x	x	x
1	n	Lime	Tilia cordata Greenspire Small leaved Lime Tree	09/04/2017	King & Co
2	a		Unplanted	N/A	N/A
2	b	x	x	x	
2	c	Apple	Edward VII	10/03/2018	Walcot Organic
2	d	Apple	Leintwardine / Downton Pippin	??	Paul Hand
2	e	Apple	Gascoyne's Scarlett	17/11/2013	RV Roger
2	f	Pear	Tettenhall Dick	17/11/2013	Paul Hand
2	g	Apple	Downton Pippin	Autumn '14	N/A
2	h	Apple	Downton Pippin	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
2	i	Apple	Blenheim Orange	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
2	j	Apple	Catshead	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
2	k	Apple	Keswick Codlin	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
2	l		Unplanted	N/A	N/A

<b>Position</b>			<b>Variety</b>	<b>Date of Planting</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
3	a	Plum	Purple Pershore	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
3	x	x	x	x	x
3	c	Apple	Leintwardine / Downton Pippin	??	Paul Hand
3	d	Apple	Edward vii	17/11/2013	RV Roger
3	e	Apple	Gascoyne's Scarlett	20/12/2014	Keepers Nursery
3	f	Pear	Tettenhall Dick	09/03/2013	Paul Hand
3	g	Apple	Betsy Baker	09/03/2013	Paul Hand
3	h	Apple	John Downey Crab Apple	01/12/2013	Buckingham Nurseries
3	i	x	x	x	x
3	j	Apple	Beeley Pippin	17/11/2013	N/A
3	k		Unplanted	N/A	N/A
<b>Position</b>			<b>Variety</b>	<b>Date of Planting</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
4	a	Plum	Yellow Pershore	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
4	b	x	x	x	
4	c	Apple	Winston	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
4	d	Apple	Ellison's Orange	Spring '14	N/A
4	e	Apple	Betsy Baker	09/03/2013	Paul Hand
4	f	Apple	Betsy Baker	09/03/2013	Paul Hand
4	g	Pear	Williams Bon Chretien	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
4	h	x	x	x	
4	i	Apple	Annie Elizabeth	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
4	j	Apple	Annie Elizabeth	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
4	k	Apple	Yellow Ingestre	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers
4	l	Apple	Yellow Ingestre	25/11/2012	Chris Bowers

# Jubilee Orchard Plan





## Village Grass Cutting Contract Areas



