

The Preston Trust Chairman's Report - AGM 19 May 2019

The main feature of the last year has been a continuation of building the sense of community, raising awareness of what we have in our parish and looking after it. All of these have been social events, largely fun with some moving and poignant moments. Until the latest planning application from Luton Airport it has been a quiet year on the planning front for the Trust.

Although Village Day wasn't held last summer, the Trust delivered a significant programme of smaller events, all of which have been well received.

Liz started our programme, with 3 walks and talks around properties and sites of significance within the Parish. Mike was our guide for the first of these. We would like to thank: PHC for allowing parishioners to view the house and gardens; Colin Heathcote for giving access to and guiding a tour of Tudor House; Pilkington Farms Partnership for guiding a walk and talk off the footpaths in Wain Wood.

The Preston Trust hosted a talk by Andrew Lambourne of LADACAN regarding Luton Airport (and traffic from other airports), the threat it poses to our tranquillity and how we can each respond to that. Thank you to Andrew for making this an entertaining as well as informative evening.

The Preston Trust is a member of LADACAN and as you will all be aware Andrew has been advising our whole community on current issues.

This was followed a month later by a film showing of a County at War, a film commissioned by the Lord Lieutenancy of Hertfordshire in commemoration of the First World War. Thank you to Dan Hill, for his wonderful introduction of the film, taking questions and telling additional stories of that time afterwards. Dan undertook original research for the film and is an authority on the Herts Regiment. The Trust has copies of the film available to borrow, if any of you would like?

On recommendation of Kim at Highfield Nurseries we chose a smaller Christmas tree which I thought looked very good. Preston's JMI school held a Christmas Competition with the Trust providing prizes for the winners as well as them having the "honour" of switching on the Christmas Tree lights.

These were all free events, funded from the subscriptions and donations by members of the Trust, raising awareness of what we have in the Parish, its history, and how we can help protect it.

Andy created and delivered the concept of combining a Wine Tasting with a quiz about the wines being tasted – The Great Preston Wine Challenge. Both aspects of which went down very well. Thank you to Andy for arranging the evening, and to all of those who came whether to take part or to help. Tickets were priced so as to recover only some of the cost of the evening. Andy was pretty much bang on in ensuring the cost to the Trust was in line with that for the LADACAN Talk and the County at War film showing.

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The cost and hassle of hiring a suitable full HD projector (and large screen) for showing films and presentations was such that the Trust purchased a projector. This has probably paid for itself already across the three indoor events. We are happy to make the projector and screen available for other events, meetings and gatherings in the community – the PVS having already been the first to benefit.

Having delivered a series of events either aimed at or mainly of appeal to adults it was the turn of children and families. A team of over twenty (including committee members, volunteers, their friends and family), put on The Great Easter Egg Hunt.

63 young people aged from 2 to 16 took part along with many more grown-ups who accompanied them. We saw all ages taking part in the activities. Like the other events the Trust subsidised the cost. An indicator of how engrossed everyone was is that no-one I have asked so far got a phone or camera out to take pictures – well I took five of the set-up and Rae took half a dozen of the grandchildren doing the egg and spoon challenge.

We would like once again to thank everyone who helped and everyone who came out to play.

The Preston Trust committee are now in full planning and preparation for this year's Village Day – with Scarecrows - on Saturday 6th July. The committee will discuss ideas for events later in the year when we get to Any Other Business.

Outside of the events we have enhanced and added to the website. Many of the photographs taken at last year's Gardens Open by the semi-official photographer are now available on the website as part of the promotion for this year's event. The new notice board feature on the homepage can accommodate many more notices than we are currently running. If you have an event or news to publicise do remember the PNS, website and printed newsletter (that is also published online) – even if you have your own website or social media presence.

I would like to thank Simon Davies and IDNet for hosting both the Preston website and the Neighbourhood Plan website. This saves both organisations a not insignificant sum as well as providing a far superior service than we had been paying for.

The committee would like to pay tribute to the growing band of litter pickers. Thirty or more came out for the Spring Litter pick. However, it is not just the organised litter pick pickers but also those who pick up rubbish whenever they see it when out walking. This spring we also had a dedicated team clearing up the fallen branches on the Green and raking the grass.

Litter picking is a pro-active initiative helping to preserve our parish – it not only keeps the place tidy but encourages tidiness. I walked the route of the Easter Egg Hunt the morning after and found only 9 pieces of litter – five of which had clearly not been from the day. Thank you everyone.

The Trust has forged links with NHDC for loan of tools and taking away what we collect. NHDC have served two enforcement notices where the culprits could be identified on fly tips that were reported as part of the last litter pick. One of the NHDC team also helped make the bug hotel notice, next to the bug hotel the Parish Council set up, in Church Meadow.

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And Finally to the Trust Committee. We have three new committee members: Adrian Hardy, Caroline Walford and Jo Coombes who joined at the beginning of the year – Welcome!

This year Andy Cole is standing down from the Committee and the role of Treasurer. Please join me in thanking Andy for his hard work and brilliant ideas which include the Scarecrow Competition, Preston News Service and Wine Challenge.

Thank you to all the committee members, they keep the Trust running as well as supporting our more visible activities.

And now over to Andy for the Treasurers Report.

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