



Participants (14)

Ann & Trevor Benn (Friends of Eatock Lodge); Chris Buckley (WCN); Val Chadwick (Westhoughton Local History Group); Tim Eden (Travellin' Strings/Howfen Radio); Colin Gradwell (Westhoughton Methodist ADS); Glenys Latham (St. James Church); Susan Missin (Harold Daniels Legacy Fund); Elsa Parker (Co-op Members); Veronica Swinburne (Daisy Hill in Bloom); Jason Taylor (Bethel Crowd); Maureen Taylor (Friends of Westhoughton Station); Ian Templeman (Daisy Hill FC); Mark Webster (Westhoughton High School).

Apologies (5):

Janice Bayliss (WOW); Wilf Dillon (WASP); Steve Harrington (Rotary); Mark Taylor (Hope Centre); Michelle Todd (Senior Solutions).

After a gap of many months, a good number of representatives of community groups managed to see each other through the medium of video app Zoom (23/9/20). It was good to see familiar faces and get some updates from around the community; whilst lacking the warmth and levity of all being in the same room, having an established meeting format helped with the flow.

Westhoughton High School spoke about getting the kids back to school, a new Head, and the enthusiastic work with seniors in the community. We were pleased to hear that our friend Mark Webster (Citizenship/RE) is up for 'Teacher of the Year' – a credit to his and the school's efforts to reach out and in particular bridge the generations working with our senior groups.

Westhoughton Local History Group is clearly missing the bi-monthly historical meetings and occasional trips, but the committee meets via Zoom, and they send out regular newsletters and local history quizzes to their 100+ members. The annual Library exhibition on hold. Fundraising Christmas card sales featuring Tom Newton's seasonal artwork have gone exceptionally well.

Daisy Hill FC told us of the excitement of getting back to football, and the youth team expansion; explaining the elaborate social distancing measures in place in the clubhouse and ground.

Daisy Hill in Bloom, whilst group activities are stopped, and their Flower Fruit & Veg show return not possible, still have individuals active in keeping on top of planters and bedding fauna as the seasons progress.

Whilst activity from both amateur dramatic groups has been somewhat limited – both churches out of bounds – **The Bethel Crowd** and **Westhoughton Methodist ADS** keep in touch with their troupe. It is unlikely we will see any shows for a while. The Bethel Church undergoing remodelling and refurbishment; the Methodist Church Hall itself has had some maintenance issues. It is a pity the Town Centre Regeneration Plans have not addressed a need for a multi-purpose civic and community venue for a town this size.

Friends of Westhoughton Station are back to doing environmental jobs and tidy-ups at the station on Sunday mornings in small groups. Good to hear their efforts getting more substantial work done by rail authorities, such as fence painting, and previously erecting passenger shelters.

St. James Church (Daisy Hill) took part in 'virtual' National Heritage Week events with online activities and events covering the history of the church and its place in the local community. The Grade II* listed church now off the danger list thanks to National Lottery Heritage funding allowing

the repair of the landmark bell tower. They have produced two fascinating and detailed booklets about the Church's roots and history, and also the famed East Window. Booklets available via the church.

Local online radio station, **Howfen Radio**, has been able to continue to broadcast whilst broadening its family of presenters and shows, and building up its audience. Elsewhere within the world of entertainment with nowhere to play or perform, and at best distanced practice, the **Travellin' Strings**, the **Houghton Weavers** and **Wingates Brass Band** have found this time a struggle; the financial impact cannot be underestimated. Weaver singer Jim Berry is posting the odd topical song on his YouTube channel.

At the **John Holt Centre** in Washacre work was completed on the new MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) and outdoor gym, though a grand opening has not been possible.

Friends of Eatock Lodge reported a big upsurge in users during the Lockdown and beyond. Sadly, litter at the Local Nature Reserve has been an issue, but volunteers have done regular sweeps; an incident involving a duck which had got its neck and beak caught on a plastic bottle ring resulted in a successful rescue after a few days of trying. It prompted a Friends fundraiser to purchase a maintenance dinghy and life jackets, and an on-water clear-up was undertaken.

OAP support organisation **Senior Solutions** has continued to operate working from home; lunch clubs and social group suspended. A different sort of busy dealing with referrals, and offering telephone befriending, weekly shopping and prescription pick-ups. Supermarkets have been donating needed items; activity packs have been made up to help OAPs pass the time. They report an influx of new volunteers which is positive. Westhoughton High School delivered strawberries to clients, and pupils also sent letters, cards and bars of chocolate. Carers and volunteers themselves rewarded with an Afternoon Tea treat delivered with thanks.

Groups without venues cannot meet, and although the likes of **Women of Westhoughton (WOW)** have tried Zoom, and looked at options and Covid workarounds, meetings and speakers now cancelled until January.

The **Rotary Club of Westhoughton** is using social media to raise its profile. There are monthly speaker events via Zoom, however, normal activity is curtailed; the all-important Santa Float tours (last year £6,000 went to 21 local organisations) will if possible need to be re-conceived to avoid social gathering.

Rotarians help with Poppy collections, which though diminished with the support of WCN will see a collection at Aldi Westhoughton on Saturday 7 Nov, and business and groups are encouraged to sponsor a lamppost poppy; with no Remembrance Sunday event taking place (8/11) organisers ask that wreaths are left at the cenotaph over the weekend. This fundraising is key to Royal British Legion veteran services.

Traditional end of year Christmas events such as the popular Schools Carols Service and Christmas Lights Switch-on at St. Bart's won't happen. Group Christmas parties hit too, impacting local businesses.

In light of the open-ended Tier 3 announcement and the likelihood that Lockdown measures will continue for some time, we can only hope we all get through this, and that normal life is allowed to return. The measures based on the actual data and impact have been extraordinary. Strange days indeed!