

## **News from Wolston Parish Council – April 2017**

"The beautiful village of Wolston, nestling between Coventry, Rugby and Leamington Spa in leafy Warwickshire" featured on breakfast television in May 2004, in a campaign to establish what people really knew about the various tiers of Government prior to the European and local elections on June 10<sup>th</sup> 2004.

The programme presenter, who was making her way through Warwickshire on a canal barge, drew viewers' attention to the green hills with sheep on surrounding Wolston, the beautifully kept houses and the litter-free lanes. Two members of the village environment team, Geoff Ollis and Rex Blood, both sadly no longer with us, were shown working in the vicinity of the War Memorial weeding the brook. Freda Blood, a volunteer helper, was weeding the flowerbeds around the War Memorial and Phyllis Lickorish, the school crossing lady, at the time, were both seen being interviewed. Laurie Wright, who was Mayor of Rugby at the time, was seen in the programme walking and talking with Local Labour MP, Andy King. Those people who managed to catch the show in 2004 commented on how attractively the village was presented, highlighting those aspects that we value so much.

Going back 60 years to 1957 the Best Kept Village Competition was put into operation by the Warwickshire Rural Community Council, and 46 villages, including Wolston, accepted the challenge to take part in the competition. The September issue of the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Magazine, a publication described as the County Magazine for Birmingham and the Midlands, featured a fascinating black and white cover photograph of Main Street looking down towards the War Memorial and The Beeches. There were narrow flower borders along both sides of the brook with a profusion of bedding plants, no weeds in the brook, a proliferation of window boxes and flower beds, and virtually no evidence of any traffic - a far cry from the Wolston of today. The cover also had a title under the photograph showing Wolston as the Winner of the Warwickshire Best Kept Village Competition.

Inside the magazine is quite a long article explaining what the competition was seeking to achieve by getting individual villages to look at their own villages with a more penetrating eye; to note the appearance of other villages; to come up with ideas to minimise the ugliness of black spots and to take advantage of beautiful areas. The individual features of a particular village require individual treatment.

The next time you are in the village hall, as well as admiring the handiwork of the Millstone Stitchers and the Brandon Broiderers, look out for the framed certificates on the front wall of the hall which chart the outcome of the years in which the village took part in the Best Kept Village competition. In 2004 the village was a Gold Award winner in the large village category and among the comments made by the judges, two stand out: "Vastly improved on last year. Last year the area around the shop was strewn with litter, this year it was spotless"; and "A very well kept large village with excellent effort and support by all concerned."

The competition no longer exists but we are so lucky to have volunteers who work so hard to maintain the Millstone flower beds alongside the brook, and to maintain the War Memorial flowerbeds. We have the planters at the entrances to the village maintained by volunteers and we have seen an improvement in the planting on the Derry Island. Now would be a good time to identify any areas where the daffodils are sparse so that steps can be taken to improve the overall show from Warwick Road down into the village by planting more spring bulbs in the autumn. One of the verges adjacent to the brook used to be smothered in beautiful crocus flowers but now does not seem to be. We need to cherish our village, and decide what sort of environment we all want to live in and then work together as a team to achieve that. What do the people who look out of the bus window think of the village they see as they pass through Wolston? Is it a village that they would like to be a part of, or not? We are in it for the 'long-haul' not just to achieve something for one day. It has to be a joint effort and I'm sure that together we can get there. Aren't you?

**Tim Harvey-Smith**

**Chairman, Wolston Parish Council**