

Houndwood Community Group

Newsletter

Autumn 2020



Houndwood Community Litter Pickers

An increasing band of volunteers have been carrying out litter picking around the estate on a monthly basis with the aid of equipment supplied by McDonald's.

Unfortunately the COVID lockdown interrupted this group activity.

In August we were all set to resume our monthly litter picking efforts (socially distanced, of course) however, rain soon

17th October

14th November

12th December

9:30 onwards - Meet at rear gate of 20 Couture Grove



Houndwood in lockdown!



From the Thursday evening tumult of applause and fireworks for our NHS to the generous free donations that took place across the estate during lockdown,

Houndwood has seen some amazing community heroes over the last few months. Heroes that include none other than Rob Mitchell, who kept us all away from the ledge of cabin fever with his weekly estate virtual quiz. I caught up with Rob who told us a bit more about the experience:

"As teachers we're pretty used to asking questions and attempting to organise events that bring people together. This was always the aim - to bring families and households together for a couple of hours each week. We feel really blessed to live on the Houndwood Estate, especially Moccasin Way where we've got amazing neighbours and Ashley. We couldn't believe how many people were tuning in in the first few weeks! We were genuinely humbled by the messages we got from

teams telling us "it was the highlight of their week" or that "their families were locked in debates over which awful 90s band sang "Doctor Jones".

Truth be told writing the quiz each week kept me sane and it was a welcome break from trying to teach online and build a giant patio. I probably learnt more doing this than my entire 4 years at university!

I cannot believe how many people I've got to know through hosting the quiz. Not being from Street our social group was pretty limited! We've connected with fantastic families like the Tozers (who rescued our cat who was attempting the great escape under the floorboards), the Wigmores who became our main rivals, IT checkers, patio fitters and now great friends, the Burrages who played every quiz (even on spin bikes) and the Feyes who heroically stepped in to run quizzes too! As painful as it is for me to say it (mostly as she's my wife's line manager) congratulations to the Lowis / Alexa family who established themselves as supreme

quizzers most weeks.

I'd like to apologise to those who can't stand my excellent music library - round 5 became pretty legendary in the quiz. You could probably tell I'm into classics from the 60s up to 2010. Everything after that is just Ed Sheeran or something featuring Ed Sheeran.

*We really hope that our little 2-hour session broke the monotony of lockdown for people - **we are planning to host Halloween and Christmas special quizzes (bonus points for best dressed!!) and we'll post the details for these closer to the time!***

Finally, Reggie made several quiz and lockdown appearances, when asked whether he has staged any more floor board escapes, Rob replied: **"Reggie is doing well, still spends his days searching for Dreamies but very much above board (floor boards)."**



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Gardening group



As summer floral colours start to shift into autumnal reds, we have a lot to thank our volunteer gardeners' group for, who have worked hard to maintain the estate's natural areas. From planting the raised beds to removing the shrubbery near the public car park, there is never a dull moment for the team. You may have noticed our planters springing to life, and some severe haircuts (no not COVID ones) as our Volunteer Gardeners are working their magic. Most recently the team have planted and replaced some naturalised bulbs in and native spring flowers on the approach to the estate from the Cranhill car park and at the end of Serenity Rise, which has recently been trimmed back.

The group have

established a positive working relationship with our site contractor, Martin Avery, who has taken over the maintenance of the whole estate, including ICON's wildlife areas. His spirit and enthusiasm in the face of endless horticultural challenges has been admirable. While Avery Landscape wages war on the biggest and broadest plant life, the volunteer gardening group are vital to upkeeping the more detailed areas of gardening.

So what next? The group have recently ordered some bulbs using community funds, generously donated by Cox's Charity, and look forward to investing in some more plants shortly. Beyond this, the group

intend to develop a longer-term plan to maintain the wildlife areas, integrate pollinators, and Premier Estates are currently tendering quotes to clear the pond and swales this autumn.

The group has been vital to the upkeep of the spaces that we know and love, pioneering the way in Somerset sustainability and biodiversity in practice and creating a space for our furry friends and socialising. If you would like to help, we are always seeking more members so please get in touch - via Facebook or the committee email.

When asked why they do what they do, our volunteer gardeners' response was simple – enjoyment!

TELL US WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE NEXT NEWSLETTER

committee@houndwoodcommunity.org

Houndwood Community Group



"I think we were all really looking forward to a sunnier Summer Fete this year," said Committee Chair, Peter Goater. "But COVID means we could not go ahead, and sadly our Halloween event is also looking less likely.

We will be holding our AGM later in the year, probably on Zoom, so we hope many residents will attend. We want to hear what matters to you and hope you will get involved."

Houndwood Committee ~ *we're here for you!*

The Houndwood committee - many of you may know that we're here, beavering away in the background, but *what do we actually do?*

The committee is made up of a dedicated team of volunteer residents who meet every month. Our purpose is to address any community issues facing the estate and improve the daily living for all residents. Umbrellaed under this are a wide range of responsibilities, from keeping an eye on the transition of the estate from the developers to Premier Estates, to maintaining the communal areas, and answering residents' questions. We have worked with local charities and the neighbourhood Police team to address anti-social behaviour and protect vulnerable people. We also administer the Facebook page and website. Aside from the day-to-day duties, the committee is also committed to providing fun opportunities for people to come together, organising the summer fete every June and the increasingly popular Creepy Cavern on Halloween.



We are a group of Houndwood residents, for Houndwood residents.

If there are any issues you'd like help with or if you're interested in supporting your local community by becoming a member, then please do get in touch.



Premier estates update

~ introducing our very own estates manager, Ed Llewellyn

Ed has been looking after Houndwood now for just under a year and has really taken to our community, visiting every month. We are one of 21 developments he manages. No two days are the same for Ed. His role includes dealing with resident queries, setting service charge estimates, reviewing year end accounts, carrying out site visits and managing major projects. He also has to attend regular training to remain up to date with laws and legislation within the sector.



"I currently have a portfolio of 21 developments, however one of those developments is actually 13 smaller developments so the grand total is 33. You will see me on site usually once a month."

"Premier have a huge wealth of experience as managing agents," says Ed, "with managers, coordinators, admin staff accountants and more, from all walks of life. Between us there is a huge amount of knowledge."

Ed also brings excellent experience to the job too, including an RHS Diploma in Horticulture as well as property management qualifications. "When I am not at work I love to spend time with my two beautiful daughters, I also play semi-professional rugby every week.

"My next big project on the development now that we have worked at getting the grounds management in good order, is to tackle the waterways and nature ponds. I am hoping we can have them looking great for spring 2021."



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Houndwood Orchard Wassail



A wassail is a traditional ceremony that involves singing and drinking to the health of apple trees, in a hope that they thrive within the orchard and produce a good harvest.

This year Houndwood held its first wassail in the community orchard on the 13th February. It was my first wassail too, so I was unsure what to expect!

In a stout pair of boots (much needed due to the very wet start to the year), and armed with a saucepan and wooden spoon (as requested), I arrived at the orchard. There I found that one of the apple trees

had been beautifully decorated with a host of ribbons in a myriad of colours.

I was soon to find out why I needed my saucepan and spoon - the purpose of a wassail is to awaken the apple trees and to scare away the evil spirits to ensure a good autumn harvest. We soon made a cacophony as we beat our pots and pans, (it may not have been just the evil spirits that we drove away!).

Les Davies, 'Westcountryman', a professional countryman and orchard specialist, as well as seasoned wassailer, led the



ceremony. Len taught us the wassail song, luckily there were some excellent singing voices to drown out my inadequate and off key notes.

The ceremony concluded with toast soaked in cider being placed on the boughs of the tree by the Wassail Queens, Lola & Maya, as a gift to the tree spirits.

We concluded the evening with cider (apple juice for the younger participants) and Michaela's scrumptious apple cake.

"I certainly enjoyed the event, and the opportunity to get to know more of my neighbours." Sarah



Wassail - is derived from the middle English wæs hæil, which means to be in good health.

CONTACT US VIA

email: committee@houndwoodcommunity.org

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