

Kidlington Parish Council Chair's report October 2021

The return to normal activities has continued in the form of a successful Guy Fawkes Night on November 5th, after last year's cancellation, with the usual fireworks display at Stratfield Brake. On a lovely clear night attendance, judging by the ticket receipts, was at or near record levels. Nevertheless times are changing, and with current prospects for the environment the Council will have to consider whether celebrations should continue in the traditional form, or whether some alternatives need to be found.

Last year the usual Remembrance Day ceremonies could only take place in a very restricted form, with a closed wreath-laying by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and myself at the St Mary's Memorial on November 11th, and a separately recorded version of the full ceremony on YouTube. This year, I'm pleased to say, the normal service and ceremony will be taking place at St Mary's Church on Remembrance Sunday, followed by the traditional parade. We shall also have once again the usual switch-on event for the Christmas lights on December 2nd.

October saw the Kidlington Eco Festival, the series of community events planned jointly, under the title "Revival for Survival", with the churches and other groups in the run-up to the COP26 conference in Glasgow. Activities included eco-themed workshops, community action projects, and a speaker series: the programme can be seen at http://www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk/Eco_Festival_40882.aspx. It culminated in a successful Community Day at Lyne Road Green on 30 October with stands for local organizations, apple-pressing, and a visit by our MP Layla Moran. A number of trees have been planted along the road side of the Green, between the concrete blocks which were placed there after the traveller incursion last year, and which will be removed once a sufficient natural barrier has been formed. More tree- and hedge-planting is planned, there and elsewhere in the Village.

Let me however turn to the less pleasant subject of Covid cases. These reached a peak in Kidlington North and South in mid-July, dropped thereafter, and have been going up and down since then, at points in September and October to a level higher than July. Levels have generally been higher in Kidlington South, for whatever reason. Overall the numbers in the two areas roughly track each other, and also track the corresponding numbers for Oxfordshire and England as a whole--though since the populations of our two units are relatively small, they are likely to have seen more random variations.

At the time of writing, I am lucky enough to be in Italy, where it is interesting to see how national stereotypes have apparently been reversed. Mask-wearing is obligatory in indoor spaces open to the public and on public transport, and is very widely observed, far more so than in England. Vaccination passes are required for restaurants and for trains, and seem to be shown and checked with minimum inconvenience and fuss. Whatever one may think of these measures (but I am speaking here for myself, not the Council), they do seem to work.

DAVID ROBEY