

## Environmental report March 2011

Last year was a very productive year as far as environmental projects were concerned and we have been very active in enhancing many features of the village to make it more beautiful.

I must first say that since we are experiencing cutbacks as a result of the economic climate it has become very difficult if not impossible to get the local or county councils to carry out simple jobs such as clearance of weeds and vegetation from the roads or maintenance of street furniture such as seats, street signs and railings.

In order to compensate for this loss it is essential that residents of the village become more proactive in keeping the areas in front of their houses free from weeds and overhanging vegetation as one resident has pointed out 'Everyone has to make a special effort to keep the verges outside their houses clean and weeded, especially in the High Street, recognising that some do this anyway. I walked the length of the High St this week and was also reminded of the need to cut back the overhanging hedges regularly. The pavements are narrow and dangerous enough without having to duck or leave them altogether to get past the hedges'.

If we are to keep our village looking smart and tidy and so enhance its obvious natural beauty then we must all make a real effort. Last year bands of villagers were out and about and carried out various projects.

The first was to clear vegetation from around the speed restriction signs and the village sign coming from the chalk hills along Hardwick Road, very important for ensuring greater safety for school children and parents when dropping off/ picking up mornings and afternoons.

The Jubilee walk had much needed work to it during the year to remove overgrown vegetation which was impeding progress along the path and also interfering with traffic driving along the Hardwick Road.

Some curbstones were missing in Hardwick Road following work carried out by Thames Water but after a letter to them pointing this out they were replaced.

The light at the top of Muddy Lane was very over grown and actually not working now it is free from vegetation, functioning and has been adopted by OCC – these are all essential from a safety aspect.

During the year we have been refurbishing the seats around the village staining the wood painting the ironwork and replacing panels where necessary.

We also have new lights in the High Street and new road signs, new refuse bins which are much more esthetically pleasing to the eye and dog waste bins which are designed to encourage dog owners to be more responsible.

One weekend saw a band of caring Whitchurchians descend on the cut and transform it from a scruffy weed infested mess to a smart path which is a joy to walk on and much more safe for mothers with children and prams and buggies or our more senior citizens. There have been so many people involved in these projects and they know who they are and should all be commended. Look out for more projects and come and make a real difference to your environment!

Dr Keith Brooks