

## WALDRINGFIELD CHURCH FIELD TRUST

### **REPORT to the Parish 2024 April 17th**

The Church Field is an area of approximately 5.28 acres (2.14ha.) located on Mill Road, which was given to the people of Waldringfield in 2003 by Dr Tom Waller. It was formerly an arable field and cultivated with the adjoining field cultivated as one piece. The last crop was of potatoes. The field is administrated by a group of Trustees to include 2 from the parish council, three elected by the village and further members appointed by village organisations originally suggesting the school , the WI (now defunct) and the playing field committee. The current membership has 2 from the pc and three elected and further members from the wildlife group and the tennis club (formerly playing field).

Following Dr Waller's gift there were several open meetings to discuss how the field should be developed and suggestions were put forward which were considered carefully before the present layout was decided on. There was much discussion about a bowling green although in fact as most of the field slopes there was not enough flat ground and a bowling green would not fit onto the area. Nevertheless there were strong feelings about this and also about the proposed use of the field for football and games which some residents thought would be too noisy. It was a bit of a battle to be able to put up the one goal post for football practice and a basketball practice area. However over the years funds were raised and due to various grants these facilities were provided and were welcomed. I mention these to show we are not strangers to controversy.

This year 2023-2024 has been challenging as the mower donated by Martin Lloyd, who was an early Trustee and Treasurer, was declared past repair. The East Suffolk team were asked to cut the grass. However the excessive rain meant they were very busy and the grass became rather long. In fact the rain was three times the usual in East Anglia whereas the previous year it was a record breaking low. Unfortunately although the reasons for the long growth of grass were explained this resulted in a flurry of complaints on the Waldringfielders website.

The committee were naturally considering replacing the mower and a fund raising exercise was put in place devised by treasurer Janet Elliot. This was extremely successful leading to a very large sum being raised. Following the sourcing of a suitable re-conditioned mower in the winter I can report that Martin has actually cut the grass with the new mower this spring. It worked very well (touch wood) and so we are back on track. Huge thanks to all who supported the appeal which had many individual supporters throughout the village.

Church Field is maintained by volunteers and a number of work parties have been held to keep brambles and gorse in check and carry out such pruning as needed . In January volunteers from the National Landscapes (formerly AONB) lent useful assistance. Mr Allan Parkin has cut the entire grass area during winter as usual which maintains it as an open grassland favouring a wide variety of herbaceous plants and the wildlife which live among them such as nesting skylarks, field voles and hunting ground for raptors such as kestrel and barn owl. In the summer the wildlife group carried out a butterfly survey and found 12 species including the scarce Grayling.

Church Field supports a range of recreational opportunities from ball games to bird watching, jogging, dog walking, meeting friends, observing nature and quiet contemplation. As well as open

meadow grassland and short mown grass for games there are different types of woodland featuring pine trees, larch, chestnut and hornbeam, lots of gorse scrub which is popular with red listed linnets, shady paths and tucked away seating areas, hedges full of blackberries and sloes in season, spacious accommodation for badgers, giant ant hills and on a windy day great kite flying opportunities.

A well advertised Annual General Meeting is always held at around the end of November when everyone is welcome to join us for mulled wine and mince pies and pictures of the field as it changes through the seasons plus whatever else has been happening.

The Trustees are grateful for funding from the Parish Council of £400 this year which goes towards the insurance costs for the field.

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Christine Fisher Kay , April 2024