

ST MARTHA PARISH COUNCIL

www.stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

Leap Year Day, 29th February 2020, saw three of your St Martha Parish Councillors joining a special Great Western Railway train at Chilworth station and taking a trip to visit 'Jessie's Seat'. Jessie's Seat is a lineside memorial, known as the 'Chilworth Chicken', that commemorates a rail accident that happened on 29th February 1892, when a goods train of 49 trucks, 2 brake vans and 2 steam locomotives crashed on the North Downs Line just outside Chilworth.

The crash threw guard Henry Wicks to his death, as the train came apart due to a broken wagon coupling.

Henry's daughter in law, Jessie Wicks, was instrumental in the planting of his lineside memorial and for asking railway workers to care for it in her father in law's memory.

The memorial is, in reality, not a chicken, but a Victorian pheasant-shaped topiary and 128 years later, railway workers still maintain and care for this memorial.

Paul Kemp, a shift regulation manager at Network Rail and one of the volunteers who continue to look after Henry's memorial said, "We are railway people doing what railway people have always done – look after railway people."

Cllr Patricia Allen brought flowers that were laid on the memorial whilst the train was stationary alongside it for 5 minutes to allow people to pay their respects.

In other news, 2020 is a particularly significant year for the Gunpowder Mills Conservation Site, as it marks 100 years since the closure of the Gunpowder Mills. Various celebratory community events are being proposed, including a Duck Race at Guildford Heritage weekend and a Light Up event at St Martha's Church in November.

Also, under consideration at the moment, is a plan for the Parish Council to lease West Lodge from the Borough Council and, with the support of Chilworth2gether and others, to retain West Lodge for community use, thereby maintaining the integrity of the Gunpowder Mills site.

S.Sokolowski Chairman

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 20th May 2020, which is The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council at Chilworth Infant School at 7.30pm. Members of the public are welcome to attend. Information on the website: www.stmarthaparishcouncil.co.uk

Councillors:

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