

GOODBYE AND THANK YOU

As we make our final preparations to leave Whilton, we are taking some time to savour all that this small parish has offered to us over 37 years.

As soon as we arrived we were struck by the open welcome and acceptance of our presence. We have never experienced a division between newcomers and those whose families stretch back over generations in the parish. That is something special about this place. Because of that it is easy to meet others and to join in activities, although there has not been pressure.

Those activities have changed and developed over the years. I had a very ill-informed view of the Women's Institute until I was taken to a meeting by Roy Haynes' mother. It opened new friendships for me. In those early days there were safari suppers and the village fete to bring people together. Competition was very fierce for the flower and produce show which accompanied the fete, but even the poor offerings of a newcomer were displayed with the rest.

Betty Pride welcomed new voices to her choir in the "music room" and the arrival of our baby daughter led to involvement in the Whilton and Brington Playgroup. There were lots of children here in the 1980s and meeting the school bus was a communal event.

As our three daughters grew up we seem to have had fingers in many pies, perhaps too many, but being part of the community has always been important to us.

We are now moving on to a fresh start in Somerset near two of our daughters. We carry with us memories of so much, but mostly of willing volunteers, skills offered, kindness, tolerance and patience. There was the arrival of Joan Davies as a witch in the midst of the Hallowe'en party, cooking the potato cress heads accidentally on Freda Thomas's AGA, singing for joy in the Whilton Warblers, group walks with the WI, Tuesday Chat, Social Lunches and history meals. We have both had involvement with Roughmoor Spinney and the Parish Council. Working together has created friendship and mutual understanding.

Following the production of the Parish Appraisal in 1994 I increased my study of local history, which has led to the Whilton Local History Society, the creation of the Millennium Map and some exciting events in the parish. In retirement Keith has been involved in the Parish Council, the Spinney and has been one of the Whilton in Need Charity trustees. Collecting for Christian Aid and the 200 Club meant he has knocked on many doors.

None of this would have happened if there was not already an active and caring community here, ready to join in and help. Events around Harry Reynolds, winner of the VC, those who died in World War II and the Mystery of the Whilton Stone have all celebrated the wonderful, contributing society here. These were all community efforts with a variety of talents coming to the fore.

We have been touched by the wonderful gathering to say goodbye. There were just so many of you, yet another example of Whilton's ability to pull together and share resources and gifts - the provision of the barn, the decoration with bunting, the flower arrangements and the table preparations, the lovely food, the cleaning and furniture moving, your very kind words and most generous gifts. But it all worked because there was a willing team.

We can only say thank you to all who live here, for being such a vital part of our lives. We wish Whilton well. May the parish and community prosper and develop in new ways, but keep the special quality which is "Whilton"

Anthea and Keith