

Introduction

Those amongst us who are older, will understand the feeling that time fly's and indeed the sands of time seem to run quicker. It would be nice to think they ran smoothly but sadly life does not work that way and this year like every other has had its challenges.

Snapshot so much has happened

- Plant Fair
 - Mollie fund raising breakfasts
 - Village Hall Grand Opening with a range of events put on by the committee including the natter and BBQ's
 - Mollie goes to Kenya
 - Emily Estates Planning Application: Manor Farm, Yarlington
 - Yarlington Fair
 - Shocking National News: the tragedy of a murder victim in our community
 - Harvest Festival and supper
 - Concerts in the church
 - Save the Stag's Head Inn
 - Remembrance Service
 - Working Party: Stag's Head Inn
 - Poultry registration
 - Major Power Outage
 - Carol Service and the formation of the Camelot Choir
 - Christmas Dinner
 - Emily Estates completes the refurbishment of the Wheelwright's on time!
 - Digital Voice updates
 - Easter celebrations
- To name but a few

Many thanks to residents and businesses who have supported these events and a particular thank you to Hilary Parry for all her hard work communicating with the residents across this amazing community.

As we reflect on the year that has passed, we remember those who are no longer with us, Marlene Masters lived a full life and will be remembered for her work as a Parish Councillor, a leading authority on Public Rights of Way at a national level. But equally as a mother, a wife a grandmother and great grandmother to her family and a friend and valued member of our community. Those who were able to attend her funeral will recount for years to come the service that brought a little bit of Christmas to our Easter and a lot of humour to her day

Infrastructure

• Roads

The village has once again endured considerable traffic flow, far more than a village this size could reasonably expect. With so many building projects taking place along its roads; Yarlington Lodge, Wheelwrights, Stag's Head Inn, the construction of the Trout Ponds, Yarlington Mill Farm development, Woolston Farm residential development, the intermittent use of the lanes as a cut through for Hopkins traffic leading to the completion of the A303 improvements and the agricultural farm traffic that has monopolised the village lanes in recent years.

Such traffic flow creates additional problems:

- Speed of the vehicles showing little or no regard for the width of the land or the residents and animals in the village
- The breakdown of the verges and in turn impacting on the hedgerows and wildlife
- The fabric of the roads is unable to cope with the volume, width and weight of the vehicles
- The increase in the number of significant potholes this year.
- This is exacerbated by the breakdown of the verges, water flows in these gullies which no longer align with the many of the drains and the Unitary Authority has neither the money or a willingness to prioritise village lanes over major routes at this time. Emily Estates while being a major contributory factor to the problem has once again been integral to some of the road maintenance on the entry to Lodge Hill.

However, the village does not accept the creation of wider roads and pull-ins as long-term solutions to the problems. We await the completion of the outstanding building work and seek the reinstatement of the verges that are part of village life.

- As the major landowner to the surrounding land of Yarlington Emily Estates has played a significant role in keeping the ditches clear and widening as appropriate to try and reduce the surface runoff on the roads. It is also up to us the residents to play our part, just as I requested last year, please can home owners take responsibility for the storm drains near your homes.

Once again it is only right to highlight the on-going problems and their impact on the residents and wildlife of the village. The lanes are lined by a mix of hedgerows and old walls, in each case they are fragile and struggle to cope with this level of usage and the move towards metal and electric fences that now glisten across the skyline and pose a danger to people, and animals alike is a grave concern. It is worth reminding all members of our community that coppicing, clearing and cutting hedgerows and brambles is prohibited between 1 March and 31 August with no exceptions.

- **River Cam and Flood Prevention**

The second anniversary looms since the Storm of May 2023. The Section 19 Report was published this year. Many believe the report failed these communities, it was full of inaccuracies and it failed to reflect the information that so many people had presented. In many cases the process was distressing on top of the losses they had experienced. We still count the cost in terms of the loss of confidence and the ongoing dialogue about the causes of flooding and the range of approaches to flood prevention schemes and storm damage.

There is no room for complacency now or moving forward, in a world of climate change and the uncertainties that accompany it. We are very aware that flooding is more complicated than just river levels, additional contributing factors here include change in land use; building, tracks and hard standing and the broad problems of surface runoff on all terrain.

It is everyone's responsibility to play their part however big or small, not least thinking about the need for permeable surfaces where possible surrounding properties and being vigilant and active in keeping the roadside drains and gutters clear by checking and clearing them weekly. Everyone needs to get on board, the Unitary Authority has its role and so do we.

From now on Flood Prevention will be an on-going subject, Yarlington has two Flood Gauges in place at the Eastwood farm Bridge and the triangle at the junction of God's Lane and Crocker's Hill. At times of heavy rain, the gauges generate traffic light warnings and the data can then assist in determining if action is required if life or property are deemed to be at risk. As the Emily Estates have been proactive about the water flow from Cattle Hill, Shatwell and God's Farm, to date a number of measures have been put in place on their land. In the coming year it is hoped that other land owners will come on board and explore options that could make a difference to the locality and parish as a whole. In turn this may lead to the relocation of the gauges to take account of further sources of water flow once Yarlington Lodge and Manor Farm Yarlington are operational and again in the event Shatwell Yard is granted planning permission.

The Storm of 2023 continues to shape our community, Village Halls are now listed as Community Emergency Hubs that might be used by ours or other communities in times of adverse situations. While our focus has been on flooding, this year has broadened our mindset to the types of emergencies that can occur from the extreme Murder Incident to the Power outages and we should be mindful about Avian flu and Foot and Mouth disease.

Power Outages

This year the locality seems to have more than its fair share of power outages for reasons that have never been disclosed. The duration of these outages has been long on occasions and with an ageing community and a number of residents who suffer from severe medical issues, transparency is required and a plan provided to ensure the provision of a regular, uninterrupted supply in the future.

Digital Voice

In March the Neighbourhood Watch volunteers who do so much for our community ran a free information session for residents about the BT landline switchover. The dates for the switch over appear to be 2026-2027 but it is important to note that until BT can ensure the broadband speed is sufficient to support the changeover it cannot happen so we might be a while!

With particular reference to the elderly or those with health issues, note it is worth keeping in touch with BT as they have additional support for you.

Voluntary Registration of keeper of less than 50 poultry or other captive birds was updated in December 2024 and could be undertaken online and should be completed within the first month of ownership. The system for registration has been flawed and not operational, this has been the case since October. However, it seems advisable to monitor the system and complete your details, when possible, in case of an outbreak of avian disease.

It is our belief that most Parish Councils spend their time dealing with a spectrum of residents, each with their unique needs and requests over the year. In the short time I have been on the Parish Council that no longer seems to be the role for a Yarlington Parish Councillor. With the change in land, housing and business ownership over the last ten years we find the majority of our work is with the Emily Estates. Therefore, the relationship between Emily Estates and the village is even more important.

The Floods of 2023 showed us that we are all at our best and strongest when we all work together. This resilience remains true and while we may not always agree about a subject or a situation it is important to be mindful of the power and need for communication, transparency and consultation every step of the way.

On behalf of the Yarlington Community I would like to thank Zoe Young for all the time and effort she has put into the year. It cannot be an easy job, we appreciate her professionalism and her integrity when dealing with such an array of situations, communities and individuals. Her commitment is evident and she is making a difference, small acorns and big oak trees spring to mind. Emily Estates have a valuable asset and we hope that in the coming year communication and transparency at every level will lead to a stronger working partnership. We look forward to Zoe's initiative the Community Engagement Plan which will be a vehicle for this to grow

Emily Estates

1. Flood Prevention

Zoe Young and Ed White in conjunction with FWAG have identified target areas to put in place natural flood defences throughout the Cam valley as it passes through the Yarlington Parish. In many instances, the measures are adaptations of the existing landscape, the aim to slow down the flow of extreme water levels examples can be seen:

- Attenuation scheme behind God's Farm
- Drains and ditches along the roadsides around the village
- Additional height given to the Trout Ponds to reduce flood risk and the creation of tributaries to support the flow coming from Shatwell and Gods Lane

We are grateful for the work that has taken place and hope that future plans may include further work on:

- God's Lane Culvert/Sticklepark
- Tributaries to the Trout Ponds and the role of attenuation areas

2. Yarlington Lodge

The work continues and while the works take shape the size and scale appear to grow, this year we have seen the use of a crane to facilitate the building work, the repetition of jobs and throughout last Summer and the Autumn noise and traffic, from this site, the Trout Ponds and the Wheelwrights. In the absence of information, the latest end date is now the New Year 2026.

3. Trout Ponds

The Trout Ponds have proved to be a bigger project than the village and possibly Emily Estates imagined! While we were led to believe the Ponds were completed in the Autumn 2024 except for some planting that needed to take place with the seasons. The last three weeks have seen further work with the creation of the customary Emily Estate paths around the ponds and connecting to the Church Pond. The loss of meadow land and associated plants seems regrettable for a country idle and the dialogue over time that has taken place about such pathways but never say never! We thank Emily Estates for reinstating the access from the top of Crocker's Hill to the ponds, it enables access to and from the Gallop which will be an asset to the visitors to Yarlington Lodge in time.

4. Wheelwrights

The Wheelwrights refurbishment was completed last year following the Storms 2023. It was completed on schedule and the design took account of the flooding issue. Earlier in March we were pleased to welcome The Timber Frame Company, Shatwell Yards loss is our gain and we look forward to Jim and his team becoming involved in village life, the tea and cake was a great start!

5. Stag's Head Inn

Perhaps we should be brave and say that this is a success story with Emily Estates and the village working together to secure the future of the historic and much-loved pub. Following the sporadic opening pattern post covid the future of the pub was in doubt and even on an open market there was little appetite for 'want to be' publicans. The process included a meeting to agree the village support of the Emily Estates offer to purchase and respected their view that they did not wish to run a pub in the village. Fast track and the village collated ideas about the pub and a Working Party was formed, all ideas presented to Zoe who represented the views of the village at the interview stage.

We are pleased to say that David and Louise have signed to take the lease of the pub, so watch this space and come to enjoy a drink, a bite and a laugh in due course.

6. Manor Farm

We cannot attempt to cover a year in the life of Manor Farm, Yarlington or indeed the lead up. The application split the communities from the offset and that in effect remains true today. Consultation played a valuable part initially but regrettably this avenue was curtailed by Emily Estates. The Planning Application was heard by the Parish Council in July 2024 and the details of its refusal well documented. The Planning Application was then heard again by the Parish Council in January 2025 who passed it. Emily Estates submitted the application in December 2024 just before the Christmas break making comment difficult and an extension was required. The application went to committee in Yeovil on 25th March 2025 and was passed.

The application will proceed unless a judicial review is granted and we understand the work would commence with the road connecting Manor Farm to Avalon.

It is also our understanding that a further consultation will take place about the residential dwellings that in due course will be built on the old Manor Farm Site, this was linked to the loss of dwellings that occurred when Yarlington Lodge was granted permission to become Holiday Lets.

7. Shatwell Yard

While technically not in our Parish, Shatwell Yard and the houses in the vicinity identify with Yarlington as they are in close proximity. Once again it was good to be involved in the consultation and while the plans were generally well received concerns were expressed about the loss of The Dairy Cottage as a residential dwelling, flooding understandably was a concern and further clarification sought. The request was made for Emily Estates to resolve the ongoing problems with the septic tank provision and to ensure a robust system is in place for the new proposal and attention given to its proximity to the drainage flowing to the River Cam and the Trout Ponds.

It was noted that it was unfortunate that this valuable opportunity was in the same timeframe as the Manor Farm planning application and trust that in the event the application proceeds the two projects will not run concurrently.

8. Emily Estate Steward Saul Kitten

Thank you to the Emily Estates for the skill and hard work undertaken by Saul across the parish. His presence like Zoe has been a positive move and made a difference sometimes large sometimes small but, on each occasion, valued.

Future Year Ahead 2025/2026

1. Power supply security
2. Traffic Speed
3. Size and weight limits for vehicles
4. Protection of the verges, hedgerows, gorse and coppices
5. Mobility of indigenous species and the height and nature of the fencing
6. Pollution: visual, noise and light in the area
7. Building relations with our neighbours