

# ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF GAZELEY PARISH

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**TIME:** 6.30 pm  
**DATE:** Wednesday 14th May 2025  
**VENUE:** Gazeley Village Hall

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## Minutes

### Annual Parish Meeting

Present: Councillor Raithatha (SM), Chapman (LC), Connelly (RC), Jolly (SJ), Grimwood (KG) and Moatt (JM), 3 Members of the public.

- 01 TO RECORD APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.  
Councillor Kinnon.
- 02 TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF:  
a) The Annual Parish Meeting minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024 were APPROVED as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. **Proposed SR Seconded LC**
- 03 TO RECEIVE CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT  
Last year, the Parish Council continued to work and focus on all topics that impact Gazeley Village and its parishioners.

Meetings are held in Gazeley Village Hall at 7pm and members of the public have an opportunity to address the members of the Council during the Public Forum at the beginning of every meeting.

District Councillor Roger Dicker has been present at nearly all of the meetings held during the year. Special thanks to the Jolly's who provide tea and coffee before these meetings.

During the year, various issues were brought to the attention of the Parish Council. The Parish Council has worked hard on ensuring all the streetlights have been repaired and upgraded throughout the village and we are hopeful that this is appreciated, additionally the Parish Council has constantly requested that dog owners clean up their dog's waste but can do no more unless offenders are reported to them or to West Suffolk Council.

The Parish Council would like to thank:

- the village planting volunteers who take the time to make Gazeley bloom, your efforts are appreciated immensely.
- the Speed Watch Volunteers who gave their time and expertise over the years to help make Gazeley safer.
- Everyone involved in the refurbishment of the All Saint Church.
- The village hall committee for their continued hard work
- All village groups and organisers who make Gazeley a wonderful place to live

The Parish Council continues to look for ways of improving communication and openness with all of the other parish and village organisations and the village Parishioners. The Parish Council is looking forward to the coming year and finding ways to try and continue to maintain and improve village life.

03 TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

No report were received.

05 TO RECEIVE VILLAGE GROUPS ANNUAL REPORTS, TO INCLUDE QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

### **Gazeley Village Hall**

Very similar to the previous 2 years the Gazeley Village Hall runs at a loss again this year.

Accounts are still in the process of being audited and information will be available at our AGM later this year (date to be confirmed).

Some of our regular bookings, which were monthly, have now opted for quarterly instead, which of course has an impact.

We retain our usual monthly bookings listed below:

- WI
- History Society
- Coffee Morning
- Community Lunch
- Coffee Caravan
- Table Tennis

We have had many bookings this past year of events and parties.

Like most businesses, our outgoings are increasing. As last year, our running costs are approximately £600.00 per month (£150.00 a week).

We increased our hire prices last year from £10 to £12.50 per hour but will not be looking to increase costs this year, for fear of overpricing us compared to similar village halls nearby.

The parish council kindly made a generous donation of £750.00, as yet we are still deciding on the best options for the money to be spent.

This year we are again hosting our Big Cash Bingo Nights and Quiz Nights as fundraising evenings for the Gazeley Village Hall.

### **All Saints' Church**

Our most important news in the past year has been the successful conclusion of the repairs to the leaking roof over the chancel at the east end of the Church. The work was completed in November, ahead of schedule and under budget. We were greatly helped by a large grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We also received significant contributions from other grant-funding bodies and we were particularly grateful for the generosity of the dozens of local people who supported our "Sponsor a Tile" campaign and various other fundraising initiatives.

Now that the roof is watertight once more, we have commissioned a specialist to inspect the precious carvings on the chancel ceiling and to advise us what we can do to preserve them for the benefit of future generations. We have also revived our previous plans to instal a WC and kitchen in the Church. These had to be shelved while we dealt with the problems with the roof.

We continue to enjoy the enthusiastic leadership of our Rector, the Revd Canon Chris Childs. A reorganisation of the clergy in this area following two recent retirements has meant that, in addition to the parishes of Gazeley, Dalham, Higham, Kentford and Moulton, he is now also responsible for Cavenham, Herringswell and Tuddenham. The new grouping is called "*The Kennett Valley and South Brecks Group*".

During the year, we were delighted to be joined by the Revd Raul Arkaia, who will be serving the 3 years of his curacy with Chris as his supervisor. Raul is from Navarre and, as anyone who has met him will testify, his unfailing cheerfulness has brought a ray of Iberian sunshine to our parishes.

At All Saints', we have expanded our normal pattern of worship by adding new, weekday services on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays and also an extra Sunday service every month. Moreover, we have again hosted a number of one-off services for special occasions. Under Chris's influence, our congregations are steadily increasing and the average attendance for our principal Sunday services is now well over 30. Of course, we would always love to welcome more of you, so please do come along and see what you have been missing!

As ever, our focus has been on ensuring that All Saints' remains central to the life of the village and that its significance extends far beyond its core purpose as a place of worship. To this end, we have held a variety of events in the Church and elsewhere, such as concerts, the very popular Affordable Art Show, a Garden Party at Bovills Hall and a Quiz Night and fish & chip supper.

Admittedly, one purpose of these events has been to raise funds to help us to meet the running expenses of the building and the substantial contribution that we are required to make each year to Diocesan funds. However, more importantly, although some of them have only broken even or have actually made a loss, we regard all of them as an opportunity to reach out to the wider community and to engage with people who might not normally come to the Church.

In the same vein, as part of our community involvement, members of our congregation have helped to organise other activities which are not directly church-related. For example, at Harvest and Christmas we collected large quantities of goods on behalf of the Open-Door foodbank in Newmarket and we have also supported and assisted with the monthly village coffee mornings, the visits of the Rural Coffee Caravan and the community lunches in the Village Hall.

Happily, our financial situation in 2024/25 was relatively sound but we are likely to face significant challenges going forward, not least because this year we will not be able to hold the Affordable Art Show or another display by the owls of the Hawkeye Falconry and our income from events will therefore be significantly lower. Unlike some other churches, we do not have large reserves in our unrestricted Current Account and, like everyone else, we are subject to strong inflationary pressures. The sums in our restricted Restoration and Roof Accounts will be essential if we are to carry out our plans for future works, which will again require a major fund-raising campaign.

We are grateful for the grant that we received from the Parish Council towards the costs of maintaining the churchyard, where we are 2 years into our long-term project to rewild parts of it and to manage it in more environmentally friendly ways. Initially, this met with some resistance, but we believe that we have now achieved just about the right balance between the mown and unmown areas and that the results are very attractive.

In the light of the scandals that have recently engulfed the national Church, we feel that we should say something about the issue of safeguarding, which has inevitably caused some concerns. In this Diocese, and in Gazeley in particular, good safeguarding practice is at the heart of all that we do and we have made every effort to ensure that our policies are fully up to date and are strictly adhered to. In the coming year, the Diocese, like many others, will be subject to an in-depth safeguarding audit by an external body and compliance at every level will be closely scrutinised.

Last but by no means least, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has attended our various events or who has contributed either financially or in practical ways to keeping the Church going. We are very conscious, firstly, that there are limits to what can be achieved by the same, small band of volunteers and, secondly, that we cannot and should not take for granted the continued generosity of our supporters. To all of them, we are truly grateful.

### **Gazeley History Society Report**

We have had another successful year, with a range of interesting talks by external speakers and members of the society. Attendance numbers have risen slightly, including an increase of visitors from surrounding villages.

We had a very interesting trip in July, visiting Ashley Cooper's farm and site of a Roman Villa at Gestingthorpe. Quite magical walking round the site and imagining what it was like in Roman times.

As some key members have needed to step back, we have been under some pressure running the society but are grateful for positive responses to our appeals for extra support. A big thank you to all those who have helped over the years as well as more recently.

A major venture this past year has been the successful compilation and publication of our book; *Some Memories of Gazeley: An illustrated collection of written and spoken memories of local residents of Gazeley (and Higham and Moulton)*. We have also drawn on the sizeable archive of documents, photographs, and other artefacts donated to the Hist Soc over the years.

Our finances have remained healthy. This has been a great help towards the publication costs of the book.

The Book Launch will be on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2.00 – 4.00 pm in the Village Hall. Everybody is very welcome. Refreshments. Meet the contributors. Buy your copy.

Meeting closes at 6.47pm

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**Chairman**

Chairman  
Gazeley Parish Council

*To be signed at the Annual General Meeting in May 2026*