

Neighbourhood Watch Community News

AUTUMN
ISSUE

*

September 2025
to
November 2025

For the 2,300 members in the Ferndown South and West Parley Neighbourhood Watch

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*

Police Updates

*

PCC on 'Wild West' in
Bournemouth

*

Community Speedwatch

*

Online Safety and VPNs

*

Action on e-scooters
and e-bikes

*

Gambling Addiction

*

West Parley Parish
Council

Chairman's Update

*

Be Part of the Team
Volunteers

*



**Ferndown South and
West Parley Watch**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT, SEPTEMBER 2025

The Watch has been active since 1982, but maintaining the current format of producing and distributing the quarterly Community News to nearly every household in the Watch area has become increasingly difficult.

Our efforts rely on some 140 Volunteers who deliver the Newsletter and collect annual donations (we ask for just £1, unchanged since the formation of the Watch). These contacts are supported by 11 Coordinators who meet quarterly with the management committee.

Over the past few years we have lost contacts in a number of Watch sectors in large areas of Ferndown South. Leavers are seldom replaced. In a recent Newsletter we listed 16 locations needing volunteers as street Contacts – we had no responses. Only a handful of residents attend our AGM.

Our volunteers give significant time to support the Watch. The motivation is clear: we are committed to keeping our area safe, comfortable, and rich in community spirit.

We get mixed feedback from residents. Most say they like the Newsletter and appreciate the 'neighbourly' aspects of the Watch. They enjoy and value the opportunity to keep in touch with neighbours through regular contact and sharing a chat.

There are also negative responses – 'What's in it for me?', 'I don't have any cash', 'What do I get for a pound?'. Increasingly residents say that they get all they need from social media, TV and local free magazines – *New Stour & Avon*, *Dorset Review* etc. The withdrawal of advertisers from the Community News attests to this trend.

The police websites, www.dorsetalert.co.uk and www.mysaferdorset.co.uk, and www.facebook.com/EastDorsetPolice all give accessible, timely and relevant information on crime, crime prevention and social interest matters. West Parley Parish Council is another source of local, timely information, www.westparley-pc.gov.uk.

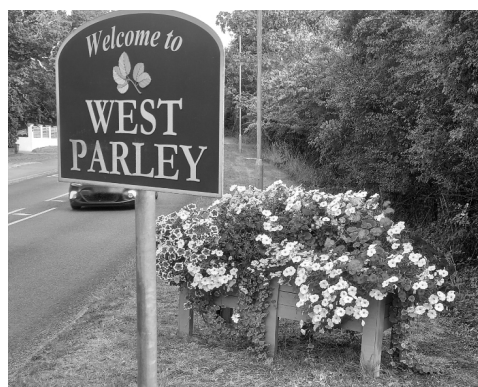
Almost all Neighbourhood Watches around us have disbanded, not least the Ferndown North Watch. Our Watch is the last in East Dorset to produce and distribute a newsletter.

The Committee is concerned that it may become untenable to continue as we are. Over the next few weeks we will be asking our Coordinators and Contacts for their views. We need to be sure that the role and organisation reflects the needs of residents.

Take care and stay safe

John Cullen at johncullen.nhw@hotmail.com; phone 01202 582662

The village has maintained a spectacular display of flowers, despite the lack of rain. Some 11 barrier baskets at Parley Cross and 10 large planters around the village are paid for by WPPC and are watered three times a week by the amazing Parley Volunteers. A big thank you to them all!



POLICE & CRIME UPDATES

Violence and ASB continue to predominate in crimes reported to the police

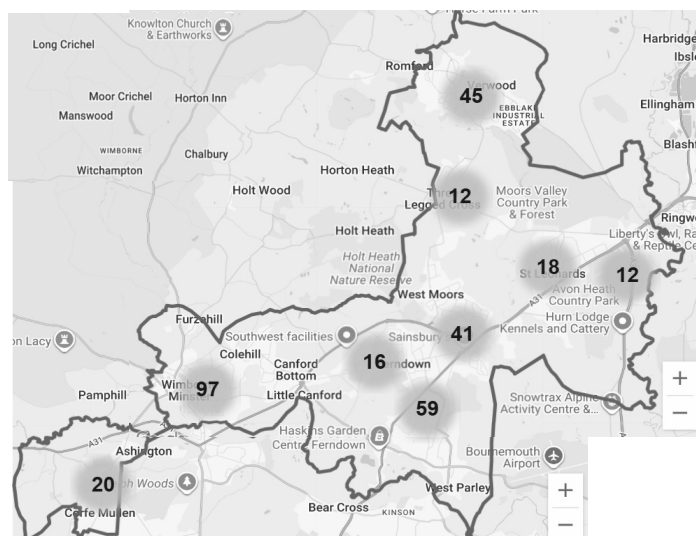
Our Dorset (Urban) area stretches from Corfe Mullen to Verwood. The table shows the most commonly reported and logged crimes:

The distribution map of incidents within our Ferndown and West Parley areas show concentrations of the crime:

Offences	Jun 2025	May 2025	Jun 2024
Violence, Sexual Offences	108	121	122
Anti-social Behaviour	94	83	76
Shoplifting	26	30	20
Criminal Damage, Theft, Arson	25	24	30
Other Crimes	67	96	87
Total all Crimes	320	354	335

Readers will recognise that the usual caveats apply to the data. The quarterly figures are derived from reports made by the local Neighbourhood Police Team (NPT). The numbers reflect all reports and incidents. Many of these will be for low level transgressions.

Our area remains a peaceful, safe place to live and



visit. Our NHW has played an important part in that achievement. From the earliest days of its creation in 1982, the Watch has promoted crime prevention and a close working relationship with the police.

However, the regular listing of anti-social behaviour as a persistent category of crime remains a high priority for police action.

It must be said again that our locality is peaceful, safe and relatively crime free and that perceptions of Bournemouth town, our close neighbour, as a 'Wild West' of ASB and violent crime are simply untrue.

Your NHW team welcomes the firm response from our PCC, David Sidwick.

PCC STATEMENT FOLLOWING RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH

Many local residents will have been disturbed by recent press and media describing Bournemouth as a 'Wild West plagued by a spate of murders, stabbings and sexual assaults'.

Here is a summary of our PCC's response.

David Sidwick wrote on 18 August to say that compared to 2021, violent crime, sexual assaults, knife crime and anti-social behaviour are down in Bournemouth town centre.

"That is a fact. It may not fit the current narrative which describes these offences as 'soaring', it may not feel like it when you're scrolling comments and posts on social media, but it is.

"Irresponsible and inaccurate headlines which scream that the town centre has become 'overrun by feral yobs, sex predators and murders' are wrong, and they only want one thing – your clicks."

These headlines and articles describing Bournemouth as 'the Wild West', are falsehoods, echoed and perpetuated by social media users trying to build a platform for their own means. Our town is not 'plagued by a spate of murders, stabbings and sexual assaults'; this is a wilful misrepresentation to create

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harm and fear.

These reports ignore the reality on the ground and the tireless work of Dorset Police and partners to keep people safe. However, Bournemouth sees a significant increase in visitors during the summer months, placing added strain on local policing.”

Dorset Police receives no additional funding to manage this seasonal demand, despite being the second lowest funded force in England and Wales. The PCC continues to lobby for surge funding.

The Force has launched several targeted operations, including:

- Beach Beat – boosting visibility and engagement along the seafront.
- Op Track – tackling anti-social behaviour and violent crime.
- Op Fireglow – addressing youth-related issues in key areas.
- Op Nightjar – supporting the night-time economy.
- Op Vigilant – using covert officers to identify suspicious behaviour, particularly around potential predators.

There have been positive results. Since 2021, the BCP has seen measurable reductions in violent crime, sexual assaults, knife-related incidents, anti-social behaviour, increased installation of CCTV in busy areas.

What does this mean for our Watch area?

We’d like to see ‘more bobbies on the beat’; we are concerned about shoplifting; we detest acts of ASB; and more – all issues that we have featured in the Newsletter.

The answers must acknowledge the fact that police resources will always be inadequate and targeted on problem areas. Ferndown and West Parley are largely peaceful and recorded crime is relatively low. Some of our Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) will occasionally be deployed to operations elsewhere, but rarely



for our PCSOs, who will continue to provide a visible presence.

If local policing is to be effective, the NPT must know where to focus on local problems. We, the public must report crimes and concerns. The creation

of Community Contact Points provides a local place for contact, publicised well in advance and listed on the Dorset Police East Dorset Urban website, for example

10:00AM - 11:00AM, Wed 24 September 2025

Nationwide Building Society, 78-80 Victoria Rd, Ferndown

Intense policing in vulnerable areas within BCP

serves to create and support the principal goal for Dorset Police across the county: *to make Dorset the safest county in England*. That includes us!

WATCH YOUR SPEED IN FERNDOWN

Update from the Community Speedwatch

Our local Community Speedwatch (CSW) group has maintained its focus on the local speeding hotspots, where for reasons of drivers’ inattention or disregard remain a problem. CSW want to promote awareness of local speed limits and to encourage speeding motorists to slow down.

So far this year they have completed 40 roadside checks, been seen by over 31,000 motorists and reported 1,596 speeding motorists to Dorset Police. – about 5% of the total, although at sometimes they have recorded up to 15% speeding.



communityspeedwatch

Ron Cross, our CSW Coordinator said, “This year we’ve generally seen a reduction in the number of speeding motorists, with the majority keeping within local speed limits and more drivers slowing down when they see us. We’ve also welcomed the support and encouragement we’ve received on the roadside from passing motorists and pedestrians – thank you.”
Police Speed Enforcement Officers Deployed

The Dorset Police authorities are aware that Ferndown is one of the worst areas in Dorset for speeding motorists and has responded by more frequent deployment of Speed Enforcement Officers to our area.

Ron cautions local drivers to be especially careful as unlike our CSW reports by volunteers, these police enforcement officers issue fixed penalty notices that can result in a court summons, sizeable fines and points on offenders’ driving licences.

More Speedwatch Teams in Dorset

Community Speedwatch is gaining recognition and increasing support across the county. Local CSW groups now exist at Ferndown, Stapehill, West Moors, Wimborne and Corfe Mullen, and at other surrounding locations including St Leonards & St Ives, Holt, Hinton Martell and Shapwick.

Join the Team!

The team welcomes new members. If you can spare a few hours for this vital service, or have Speedwatch enquiries, please phone Ron on 07592 790199.



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THE ONLINE SAFETY ACT AND VPNs

New 'age verification' checks aim to hide potentially harmful content from children.

The new Online Safety Act regulations tackle the dangers of websites hosting content that under-18s should never see. That includes pornography, self-harm, suicide and eating disorders. Platforms must now carry out robust age verification checks.

This has led to a spike in internet users downloading virtual private networks (VPNs) to bypass checks. There are also reports of scam websites offering services to dodge the new checks. As always, users must be constantly vigilant in their use of VPN services and cautious around data sharing.

VPNs: What They Do and Don't Do

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) is a type of software that encrypts your internet traffic and routes it through a secure server. The process masks your online activity from your internet service provider (ISP) and the websites you visit.

VPNs are legal in the UK and Online Safety laws do not ban any legal adult content, but platforms now have a clear responsibility to prevent children from bypassing safety protections.

VPNs can be installed across a range of devices, including desktops, laptops, smartphones, and tablets. In theory, this means your internet activity is hidden from everyone except the VPN provider.

Many VPN companies claim to operate with strict privacy protocols that prevent them from identifying individual users. Additionally, VPNs allow you to route your traffic through servers in different countries, useful for accessing region-specific content.

How VPNs Work

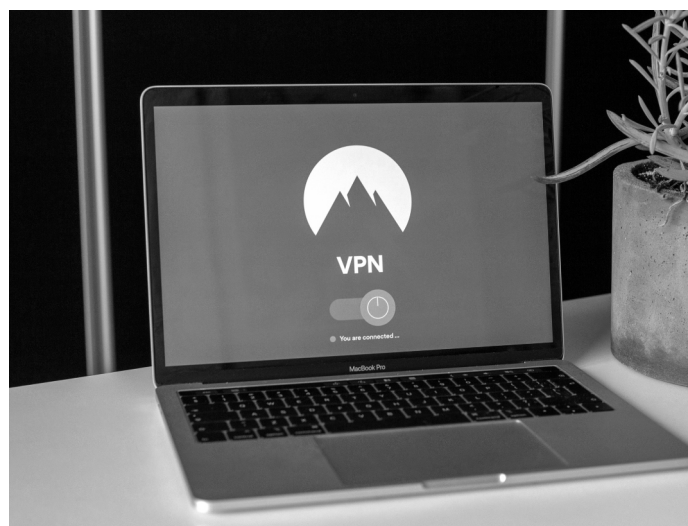
When you visit a website, your device sends a request through your router to your ISP, which then forwards it to the website's server. The response travels back through the same route to your device. A VPN changes this process by encrypting your request and sending it through a secure server before it reaches the website. This adds a layer of privacy and

security, especially on public networks.

Privacy: What a VPN Can and Can't Do

VPNs are particularly useful when connecting to public WiFi, where they help shield your data from hackers and poorly secured networks. However, they're not a catch-all solution for online privacy. Here's what VPNs don't protect you from:

- Websites can still track you using cookies and other tools.
- VPNs don't prevent viruses or malware already present on your device.
- They won't stop phishing scams – antivirus software is essential for that.
- If you're logged into services like Google or Facebook, those platforms can still monitor your activity.



Ultimately, using a VPN means placing trust in the provider. You're shifting control of your data from your ISP to the VPN company, so it's vital to choose one with strong encryption and a solid reputation for security. Many providers make bold claims, but your privacy depends on their integrity and infrastructure.

Free vs Paid VPNs

Using a VPN isn't just about flipping a switch, it's about choosing a provider you trust. Paid VPN services from reputable companies often undergo inde-

pendent audits to verify their privacy practices. Free VPNs, on the other hand, can be risky. Some have been found to contain malware or sell user data. They also tend to offer fewer server options and impose strict data limits.

VPNs and Age Verification

Under the Online Safety Act from 25 July 2025 platforms must implement age verification to prevent minors from accessing harmful content. This applies not only to adult sites but also to social media and streaming platforms with age-restricted content.

As a result, many users have turned to VPNs to bypass these checks. However, not all VPNs are secure, and using an unreliable service can expose users to additional risks. Parents should be especially cautious if children have access to VPNs, as without oversight they may circumvent age restrictions.

Speed and Performance

VPNs often advertise fast, unlimited connections. However, your internet speed is still subject to the limits of your ISP. Routing traffic through a VPN can slow down your connection, especially if your VPN server is far away or overloaded. Even with a high-speed broadband connection, you may notice a drop in performance.

Legal Considerations

VPNs are legal in the UK, but laws vary internationally. If you're travelling, it's wise to check local regulations. While VPNs can help access geo-restricted content, streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Video actively block VPN traffic to comply with licensing agreements. In some cases, they may even suspend accounts, though this is rare.

Popular Paid VPNs

Which? lists some of the most popular reviewed VPNs that are widely available, including *Surfshark*, *NordVPN*, *ExpressVPN*. All offer two year contracts at rates from around £2.60 to £4.00 per month.

You may also find that your existing internet firewall and security package includes VPN protection at no further cost. The widely used Norton Security app provides a VPN tool.

Editor's Note: We are indebted to HMG at gov.uk and the Consumers' Association and *Which?* magazine for the advice offered in this article. Further information and advice can be found at which.co.uk.

In the new world of daily threats from scammers, fraudsters and impersonators, knowledge keeps us safe. An excellent source is in a subscription to *Which?*

Which? Magazine. It comes as five separate magazines in five subject areas, The parent publication *Which?* plus four parts covering *Money*, *Tech*, *Travel*, *Gardening*. It is currently on a first year 50% offer of £39.50.

ACTION ON E-SCOOTERS AND E-BIKES ***Dangerous to themselves and others, illegal and seemingly outside the law, what can be done?***

We seek answers from the PCC.

Q: Nothing seems to be done about e-scooters and illegal e-bikes. Why?

"I've consistently recognised the frustration and anxiety these e-bikes cause. These vehicles, while increasingly popular, are often linked to anti-social behaviour and, in some cases, criminal activity.



"I've spoken with many residents who feel unsafe due to reckless and irresponsible riding. I want to reassure you that these concerns are taken seriously."

Q: Who is responsible, where does 'the buck lie'?

"Since taking office, I've raised this issue with Dorset Police, local authorities and hire scheme operators to ensure your voices are heard. This includes direct engagement with Beryl UK, whose hire scheme operates in the BCP area."

Q: Results?

"Improving road safety is a key priority in my Police and Crime Plan. Dorset Police is responding robustly: so far this year, over 50 illegal e-scooters and 33 e-bikes have been seized, crushed and recycled.

"A targeted operation is now underway to tackle illegally modified vehicles, to increase patrols in hotspot areas, and to reassure the public.

"Innovation is playing a role. Dorset Police has invested in SmartTag forensic marking spray, partnering with Bournemouth University to analyse data and strengthen future tactical planning."

Q: Where do you stand on changes to the law?

"Under current law, privately owned e-scooters can only be used on private land with the landowner's permission. Use on public roads, pavements, cycle lanes or pedestrian areas is illegal. I believe the law must go further. We need clear national regulations that include mandatory licence plates, insurance, age limits, speed caps, and road safety tests.

"Hire schemes must also be held accountable. I support visible number plates and stronger enforcement, with penalties for companies that fail to act. Illegal and dangerous behaviour must not be tolerated. Offenders and those who enable them must face serious consequences.

"Dorset Police is taking firm action but we need national legislation that reflects public concern. I continue to press for that."

GAMBLING ADDICTION: A GROWING CONCERN

TV and social media is swamped with advertisements for gambling – 24 hours a day, easy, 'fun'. They don't mention addiction, debt, family breakdown and more. But help is at hand.

Across Dorset's coastlines, market towns, and quiet cul-de-sacs, most of us feel fortunate to live in communities where people look out for one another. Whether it's a neighbour checking in, a local volunteer group offering support, or a Neighbourhood Watch team keeping an eye on safety, there's a strong sense of shared responsibility.

But some harms are harder to spot, and gambling addiction is one of them.

Often dismissed as a personal choice gone wrong, gambling addiction is now recognised as a serious public health issue. A recent Government review revealed just how widespread and damaging it can be, not only to individuals, but to families, communities, and public services.

Gambling is everywhere. From betting shops and scratch cards to online casinos and sports apps, it's never been easier to place a wager. For many, it's a bit of fun. But for others, it becomes a compulsion – one that can lead to financial ruin, emotional distress, and even suicide.

The government estimates that gambling-related harm costs England over £1.2 billion a year. That figure includes lost productivity, increased demand on health and social care, and the impact on housing, relationships, and mental wellbeing.

Locally, these harms may be less visible, but they're no less real. While localised statistics are limited, national data offers insight into the scale of the issue. Between 2023-24, nearly 11,000 people received support or treatment for gambling-related harm through the National Gambling Support Network, a 12% increase on the previous year.

Among those who completed treatment, 95% saw improvement, and the rate of problem gambling dropped from 87% to just 10%.

Here's what the evidence reveals who is most at risk:

- Young people and men are disproportionately affected, with a 2023 Gambling Commission survey showing that 26% of 11–17-year-olds had spent their own money on gambling in the past year.
- Online platforms have dramatically increased accessibility, with 24/7 betting apps and targeted advertising making it harder for vulnerable users to avoid temptation.

- Mental health and economic hardship are key drivers, with addiction often linked to stress, trauma, or social isolation.

The signs of anxiety, secrecy, sudden debt can be subtle. And because stigma still surrounds the issue, many people suffer in silence, reluctant to seek help or even admit there's a problem.

But there is hope. The National Gambling Support Network, which includes NHS services and specialist charities, reports strong outcomes for those who seek help. Early intervention is key, and that's where community awareness plays a vital role.

If you're concerned about someone in your community, here are practical steps you can take:

- Start a conversation, gently and without judgement. Many people don't realise their gambling has become harmful.
- Share resources, organisations like GambleAware and GamCare offer free, confidential help. GPs can refer patients to specialist services.

Policy is also shifting. The government's review calls

for stronger regulation of gambling advertising, better data collection, prevention and treating gambling harm – like we do for smoking or obesity, not as a niche issue, but as a mainstream health concern.

Gambling addiction may be hidden, but it's not untouchable. With compassion, awareness, and a bit of local vigilance, we can help those affected find their way back and make our communities stronger in the process.

The UK's leading addiction charity GamCare is open 24 hours, 7 days a week. They have seen a huge rise in calls from desperate addicts.

The free National Gambling Helpline number is 0808 8020133 – www.gamcare.org.uk The NHS web site is also excellent for addicts seeking support www.nhs.uk/live-well/addiction-support.

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WEST PARLEY PARISH COUNCIL

As residents of West Parley, we are immensely fortunate in having a parish council that is proactive, community-focused and with a clear sense of purpose and local identity.

With just eight volunteer, unpaid, councillors, guided by the Chairman, Mark Barber, and supported by the excellent Parish Clerk, Linda Leeding, the Council manages ever-increasing responsibilities, legislation and regulations.

Largely unremarked, the WPPC managed the old clubhouse reverting back to Parish Council ownership and against all odds, funding was eventually secured for the rebuilding of the Hub.

Major challenges lie ahead with the impending 22% population increase as a result of the large scale developments.

Against that background, we welcome the following update on Parish affairs, where the Chairman comments, "There does not seem to be a thing called a Summer Holiday for the Parish Council, as life in the Parish continues at pace."

Local Plan

The much anticipated Dorset Local Plan has just been published, and although there were no new development sites within West Parley, just over the border in Ferndown significant development areas have been highlighted.

Although not due to start soon, in time they will affect West Parley. Details and documents can be found at www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorset-is-changing

The Hub

The building works at the Community Hub are progressing well, with a completion due at the end of September. The new roof is nearly complete with solar panels and new roof lights. The building will be bright, airy and sustainable.



The Pre-school has managed to gain significant funding to help its refurbishment and plans for expansion. The rest of the building has two dedicated function areas, one to support the sports users, and the other for hire, although both can be hired together.

The main function room can host 120 people, with

air-conditioning and seating for 100. It will truly be a multi-use function room and with the addition of a kitchen area, air-conditioning and refurbished toilets it really will be an excellent community facility.

In time we will have an online booking system, but for now if you have any interest in hiring the Hub please email enquiries@westparley-pc.gov.uk.

Regretfully though, the Hub has also seen its share of

crime, with both the garage areas, and the temporary changing rooms being the target of theft. As a result we have increased our CCTV coverage of the Hub following advice from the Police.

Mark's update concludes with "Good wishes for an enjoyable and safe rest of the Summer, and I

hope to see you at the 'Grand opening' of the Hub in the Autumn."

BE PART OF THE TEAM!

Volunteers make a Difference

Become a Parish Councillor

This is going to be an exciting and challenging few years for West Parley, so why not join us as we currently have vacancies. If you have some time to spare and are interested in helping the Parish Council represent the views of the local residents and enhance the community, get in touch.

We would particularly welcome people with skills in finance, building work appraisals and developing social activities. If you would like an informal chat about what is entailed, please speak to the Parish Clerk or any of our Councillors.

The West Parley Volunteers

The Volunteers are the reason that we, residents of West Parley, can enjoy our seasonal flower boxes, our litter-free roads, our neat verges, our parks and woodlands and safe places for children to play... and much more.

It is a huge gift to the village and a volunteering activity that many enjoy, doing their bit to give back to the community.

They always need volunteers. No previous experience is needed, just your enthusiasm. If you can spare two hours per week and would like to get involved, please contact John Dinsdale 07930-854849.

As one volunteering group, NHW, to another, we applaud your work and the vitality of our community.



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YOUR COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Family histories revealed at West Parley Church

Our superb Parley Volunteers have finished a project to clean and record the inscriptions on almost 90 old headstones at the historic All Saints Church in West Parley.

Rector Charles Booth said 'I am most grateful for the immense amount of work the Volunteers have done for the Church and Community. We had a record of the newer headstones as they were easier to read but we now have a complete record of all the headstones, some dating back to the late 1600s.

An index of all the family names is now available so family members are easy to find. If anyone has a relative buried at All Saints church it is worth coming along to have a look. There is an index of all the names identified and a map of their location.

This information will soon be on the church web site: www.stmarks-allsaints-westparley.org.uk/

Volunteer Team Leader John Dinsdale said, "We were happy to support this project as it made an interesting change from the usual work that we do each week to improve the look of the village – keeping it clean and tidy, repairing and renovating any parish

items identified by the Parish Council.

"Charles and his team are always working to promote the sense of community that is so vital to our lives as residents.

"The Parley Volunteers enjoyed being able to play a part in this project. It was one of the most interesting and rewarding things we have done"

Reflecting on the extent of the task, John said, "Before we started the work you could not read much of the inscriptions on most of the old headstones but

with a lot of careful cleaning we were able to see all the hidden details of our local history open up in front of us.

"There are some local family names whose history is now revealed over many generations. The record now includes some sad stories revealed by the headstones.

"It was a privilege to be involved in the

project, revealing over 800 years of local history."

There is super camaraderie amongst the volunteers at their twice weekly meets; which is great for social and physical wellbeing as well as keeping the village looking good. They meet on Tuesday and Thursday mornings between 9-11am. If you would like to join them please call John Dinsdale 07930-854849.

