

30 YEARS OF THE WHIMPLE NEWS

Rummaging in the loft recently, I came across my old copies of the Whimple News. These are all the early editions which were printed on an old photocopier in our garage in Rectory Close. They cover the period from 1990 to March 1998. This magazine will be 30 next month as the first edition was published in May 1990, which gives me the excuse to look back at those early years.

Today we are so used to receiving instant news on our phones or computers. Back then things were very different. Most information was passed on through word of mouth and the only other way to publicise events was through posters or notices in the shop or post office. The newsletter was a welcome boost for village organisations.

It all started with a meeting held in the Victory Hall. Just how this was publicised I can't remember, but as Sarah Smith has told me "in any event a number of us, including Edith Grout, were keen to produce a newsletter free to every home in the parish - and it was to be independent of the Parish Council." At that meeting it was agreed to produce the village magazine every other month and we wanted to provide it free to every household in the parish. We hoped to fund it through advertising and donations. John Mackie took on the task of managing the finances and selling the advertising, and my husband Andrew managed to get hold of an old photocopier from one of his customers – Devon Commercial Stationers- and this was installed in our garage.

David Smith and Edith Grout took in the articles from village organisations or individuals, and David wrote an editorial for each edition. No doubt most of the contributions in those early years were handwritten, so they had to be typed up. Sarah did this at first but quite soon Derek Browning volunteered to take on this task and from then on produced the newsletter on his computer. Back in 1990 we only had an old fashioned photocopier which copied just a few sheets one side at a time, so the paper needed to be turned over and reloaded the correct way round. There were quite a few batches which had to be redone when we got this wrong! The quality was not up to today's standards – often faint or a bit smudgy.

Sarah Smith organized the delivery rounds and got together the team of volunteers to collate the magazine by hand. Usually this took place in the Billiard Room of Victory Hall where the double sided sheets of A4 were all laid out in a row. No staples were used in this process to keep the work involved to a minimum.

The first edition included contributions from just about every village organization. The front cover was a drawing of the cottages in Church Road with the church behind and this stayed the same each time. Edith Grout's article entitled "From my Garden in the Square" first appeared in January 1991 to be followed by "From my Window in the Square" in May 1991. The list of organisations first appeared in September 1990 and the diary of events in November 1992.

During this period new organisations got off the ground like the football club. The cricket club moved up to the new field. Village day was appealing every year for more helpers and then became a village week for the first time. Wassailing was revived by the History Society in January 1993, and the newsletter

includes an interesting account of wassailing in the early 1900s. There was also considerable dismay at the apparently endless string of planning applications.

The policy was to print anything submitted so long as it was not defamatory or personally offensive. Generally controversy was avoided although a letter from Adam Smith about foxhunting did create quite a stir. David was at pains to point out that he didn't necessarily agree with everything that was printed.

The photocopier in our garage was replaced 4 times in all. It looks as though the last one finally gave up after the March 1998 edition. After that Ken Larcombe helped out by copying in the Parish Office for a while. By then we were producing 700 copies each time, a considerable increase from the 475 with which we started out. I do also have the January 1999 edition in which David announced that the production team wanted to stand down that May after 9 years.

I shall pass on my collection to the History Society where I hope they will always be made available for anyone interested to take a look.

Jane Hughes

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