

**Early Days 1995 – December 1997 (including notes on Constitutions and Bank Accounts during the whole period until 2006)**

Plans for the redevelopment of the Council estate in Doxey were implemented in the late nineteen eighties and early nineties. These involved the demolition of about 140 prefabricated semi-detached houses which were put up in 1946, after the second world war, and their replacement with over twice the number of dwellings, including several different housing types. About 150 of these were erected by the Borough Council, as the housing authority, but the remainder were built and administered by Housing Associations, the William Sutton Trust (now the William Sutton Housing Association) and Touchstone. William Sutton was the major landlord, and it has always been closely associated with the Doxey Community Association, though it is a residents association, not a tenants association, so open to all who live in the area.

As an integral part of the redevelopment of the area, the new housing association provided a brand-new building, which is used as a community hall, and staff to look after the needs of its tenants. William Sutton Trust also encouraged the formation of residents' associations, which it was hoped would provide a forum for its tenants and the rest of the community. The DCA was thus the responsibility of its first Estate manager, Nigel Ashfield, and he worked very hard to get it established, with very good results. Sadly Nigel, who took up his appointment in April 1994, died of cancer on June 30th 2001. Anne Bermingham, a colleague, friend and Doxey resident wrote the following appreciation for the July 2001 edition of the "Doxey Times"

"In April 1994, Nigel Ashfield commenced work with William Sutton Trust as manager for the Doxey estate. Although the estate was not completed at that time, he spent the first six months in training at the Trust's office in Foregate Street and partly with the Borough Council, learning about services for its tenants that would be provided to the Broad Meadow Estate Office.

Nigel played an active role in various groups and committees for the benefit of both the Doxey estate and the community as a whole. In particular, his support for the Doxey Community Association was vital.

There was a lighter side to Nigel, too. He joined the Universal football team at the age of 52, along with other Trust tenants and was partial to a beer after the games. He also enjoyed the country walks arranged by a group from the local church.

Nigel was very highly thought of by his colleagues, friends and tenants. If he could help anyone in any way, he would make time to do so. He will be sadly missed by us all"

The inaugural meeting of the newly formed Doxey Community Association was in early 1995 and a Newsletter to publicise this was sent out, though I do not have a copy of this. However, I do have a copy of the second Newsletter, called the "Doxey Times", thanks to the files preserved by Stephen and Joan Moore, two people who have also worked extremely hard for the DCA over the last few years. Without them it might well have collapsed despite the promising start, and the community is grateful for their efforts.

This second edition of the "Doxey Times" is dated Sept/October 1995 and states that twelve people had been meeting regularly on Monday evenings at the Meeting Room in

Sutton Drive for a couple of hours and that these meetings were open to all Doxey residents. The double-paged spread also reports that the Summer Play schemes were both successful (one was run by St Thomas Church and the other by the Borough Council). Other topics include the newly-formed dance troupe (The Doxey Diamonds), play activities, the newly-formed Baby Clinic and details of services available at the Sutton Centre. It reports also that the Doxey Community Association kicked off with a Jumble Sale which raised £77 and that another was planned for Friday 27th October. The back of the Newsletter included a map showing the location of the Sutton Centre.

The Newsletter was accompanied by a questionnaire asking people for their views on Doxey, what they liked and disliked about the area and what local issues they thought were important. It collected information about age and length of time lived in the area, and included a tear-off slip in which respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they would join the DCA. The subscription was set at 50p, (the same as it is in 2006) and the accounts show that £13 was paid into the bank, so presumably at least 26 people indicated that they would join. The payment of subscriptions was dropped later, and only re-instated in 2005 when the new charity status of the association meant that we needed to have a membership list. In 2005 the sum collected was £17 from 34 members, so some slight increase there, though many more people were involved with DCA activities including the Mikron/Village Voices project and other ventures so it does not truly represent the number of people involved with the organisation.

A bank account was opened at Barclays on 16th November 1995 and continues to be in use. In the early days interest was credited to this account, but the bank's conditions for the account changed so an additional account, an interest-paying deposit or "Premium" account, was opened in April 2001. In 2006 this was still in (rather infrequent) use. The DCA had a third account for a few months in 2005 when a high-interest Tracker account was opened in March and closed in November. This was needed because the grants for the Mikron project had been received but payments were not due immediately. However, since this account required a balance of five thousand pounds to attract any interest, it had to be closed when the invoices became due. Nearly £70 in interest was gained during the period March to November so that was a useful addition to funds.

An Annual General Meeting was held on **29th January 1996** during which a Constitution was discussed, line by line, and adopted. This constitution was replaced in 2001, also at a January meeting, and I have a copy of the 2001 Constitution (again thanks to the Moores, as all the sources came from their files) which was in use until 2005. However, increased levels of income and expenditure, especially for the Mikron Theatre projects, meant that we needed to apply for charity status in 2005 so there was yet another January meeting spent largely in discussing a third constitution, this one modelled on the Charity Commissioners' recommendations as befits the new DCA status. All the DCA Constitutions have had similar aims, to benefit the people of Doxey.

At the Annual Meeting in 1996, elections were held. Elected were John Lyons (Chairperson) Lesley Gault (Vice-Chair), Sally Crisp (Secretary); and Caron Hughes; (Treasurer). I don't have Caron's financial report but Sally Crisp's Secretarial report details a number of matters tackled in 1995 including attempts to secure the provision of more post boxes, telephones and bus service routes. The question of possible speed ramps in Greensome Lane and Bradbury Rise was raised and there was information about the Toddler Group and Newsletters.

Joan and Stephen had also kept the third Newsletter, **dated February 1996**, when similar issues to those included in the 1995 Newsletter were raised and there are also reports of a wide range of play activities for young people in the area and attempts to get Neighbourhood Watch schemes set up. This was proving difficult due to lack of volunteers. Not much change there really though by 2006 some schemes were operating in the area, and there was a new system for police access. This has been a constant concern over the years, for Doxey and for other communities, and no doubt we will see more changes in the years ahead as we struggle to get the level of provision we want at a price we are prepared to pay. Community Police have attended many of the Annual General meetings of the DCA and have generally been very supportive and continue to do a difficult job to the best of their ability.

I don't have much direct information on the following year's AGM, held in **January 1997**. Caron presented a financial report for the year from November 1st 1995 to 31st October 1996 at this meeting having had the books audited by Councillor Bob Mole, of Eccleshall Road, Stafford. Bob continued to examine the books for the DCA for many years, ending with those for 2004. The DCA would like to thank him for his unfailing support and all the hard work he has put in our behalf over the years. From Caron's Receipt and Payments Account we discover that, at the end of October 1996, the DCA had a healthy bank balance of £509, due to fundraising and generous support from donations, principally from the William Sutton Trust.

To supplement our information about this period, there is a copy of another Newsletter, which is undated but was obviously produced in early 1997 from internal evidence. One of the services it advertises is a bike postcode marking day by the police arranged for Sunday 23rd March. This newsletter includes names of officers elected at the 1997 AGM and names of committee members also. It states that the officers were Chris Barr, (Chairperson) Peter Daley, (Vice-Chairman), Anita English, (Secretary) and Caron Hughes (Treasurer). Caron served from the beginning until 2001 when John Perks took over as Treasurer. Members of the DCA included Alice Holt, Carol Allen, Linda Smith, Lesley Gault, Michael Saxton, Norman Sutton, Angie Mackenzie-Smith, Sandra Hopkins and Tom Beach. Tom was involved with many activities in Doxey, especially church committees, but he also made time to help the DCA, where he and Joyce played active roles over many years, until Tom's death in January 2006. We are grateful to both of them, and appreciate their help and support, an appreciation which is shared by many others in our community. Community Development Officer in 1997 was Yvonne Crowe, who also put in a lot of work on behalf of the DCA and the Doxey estate tenants.

Another Newsletter, again undated but sent out later in 1997, thanks people for attendance at a protest meeting re new housing in April and for attendance at the "Expo Day" when Doxey Community Groups had "Stalls" outlining their activities. Doxey WI was among these, with Mary and Ivan Pickard providing a lot of help. (Sadly Doxey WI, which had its first meeting in January 1970 had to close in January 2000, due to lack of officers, a fate which also overtook the "Good Companions". However, the Doxey Friendship Group began in October 2000 and this has provided a meeting place, with speakers, for the community and is well supported). This 1997 Newsletter also includes information about a Fun Day at the Church on 7th June, to be opened by the Mayor and including a range of activities so must have been in the nature of a fete, and a trip to Blackpool on 21st August. Services available included "Stepping Stones", (a course for would-be returners to work, run by Stafford College), The Citizens Advice Bureau, Baby Clinic and Homestart. A Competition for a DCA logo had been won by

Aden Bailey, aged ten. There was also an appeal for more volunteers to join the DCA, with committee places needing to be filled, not an unusual situation over the years!

### **January to December 1998**

In 1998 the Doxey Community Association held its Annual General Meeting on 26th January. The Agenda included reports by officers and a talk by a local community policeman about community policing in Doxey. The future of the Baby Clinic was up for discussion, and there were reports from local Borough and County Councillors. I don't have any information about the officers and committee for that year, but know that there was difficulty in filling the post of Secretary and the Minutes were handwritten until June 1998 when Stephen Moore agreed to do the Minutes of the next meeting – and soon found himself a permanent role, which he filled in an excellent manner. Those present at the meeting held on 8th June 1998 were Tom Beach, Peter Daley, Pam Gray, Caron Hughes, Stephen Moore, Norman Sutton, Brenda Wheatley, Nigel Ashfield, Nick Atkin, Bob Mole and Clare Poskitt. Bob and June Gillan and Gill Smith also attended meetings, in fact Gill has continued to be a stalwart supporter of the DCA throughout most of its existence. Minutes of Meetings were typed from June 1998 onwards, as was the detailed report at the end of the year, due to be presented at the next AGM on 27th January 1999.

Headings for this report on the year 1998 include the Basketball Hoop, which had been successfully installed on the play area at the end of Greensome Close, negotiations with Arriva re bus services, request for the provision of a clock at Sainsbury's, problems of vandalism at the public call box in Greensome Lane, the possibility of arranging a local transport scheme to the hospital etc and congestion on Doxey Road. It was noted that a decision had been made to turn the Sainsbury's Doxey Road car park into a "pay and display" one, after problems with delays while drivers collected their tickets at the barrier under the old system, resulting in long tailbacks along the Doxey roads at busy times, especially around the Christmas period. The situation improved after that so there was some dismay in 2006 when proposals were made for changes to the system.

Special events planned for 1998 included a plant sale, which made over £100 profit despite bad weather, a visit to Walsall Illuminations (which had to be cancelled due to flooding there on the night of the outing), and a more successful visit to the pantomime "Cinderella" at the Gatehouse Theatre.

Other matters raised during the year included problems of traffic speed in Doxey, generally fruitful landlord liaison meetings and the possibility of having a Parish Council for Doxey. This came to fruition in May 2005 after an enormous amount of effort over the years, especially by some individuals including Pat and John Perks, and Stephen Moore, aided by County Councillor Robert Simpson (who was a stalwart supporter of the Association from its early days and throughout his time as County Councillor for the area) and David Kidney, elected as MP in May 1997. Later support was also given by County Councillor Mark Winnington (elected in 2005 for the newly reorganised Gnosall Area which included Doxey for the first time) and Borough Councillors Adam Tedstone and Peter Goodland after their election to office in May 2003. A special edition of the Doxey Times was produced in September dealing with the Parish Council Issue, following on from a May/June letter delivered to every house in Doxey in which the advantages and disadvantages of having a Parish Council were put forward and residents were asked to say whether they supported the idea or were opposed to it.

Other "Doxey Times" (filed by Joan and Stephen Moore) featured organisations in or serving the area, including the mobile library visits on alternate Tuesdays, Doxey WI, "Good Companions" and Youth Clubs. David Kidney, elected as MP in May 1997, has contributed articles to the "Doxey Times" as and when necessary, detailing some of the follow-ups to problems raised. News of a free collection and delivery from a Stafford Pharmacist was useful, after it became apparent that it would be difficult to get a Doctor's Surgery and/or pharmacy locally as had been requested. The DCA had a balance of £569 on 31st October 1998, (rising to £790 by 31st December). Details are in the Receipts and Payments accounts carefully set out by Caron and audited by Bob.

### **January to December 1999**

**In 1999** the Annual General Meeting of the DCA was again held in January, on the 27th of the month. The Minutes of the meeting report that 30 residents of Doxey attended, together with representatives from the following organisations – ARRIVA Bus Company, Health Visitors, Stafford Housing Department, Staffs Youth and Community Education Service, Borough Councillors, Stafford College and Staffs Police. There were no nominations for Chair of the Association, Stephen Moore agreed to serve as Secretary and Caron Hughes was re-elected as Treasurer. All members of the previous year's committee were re-elected but it was pointed out that meetings were general and open to everyone, so it was hoped that others would attend. There were reports from all the organisations represented, and it was agreed to affiliate to the Staffordshire District Voluntary Services (SDVS) who could provide a lot of help and support to the Association. There was a discussion of the Draft Structure Plan for Stoke and Staffordshire, which had implications for housing and traffic in Doxey, and the possibility of having a paid worker for the DCA funded by a Millennium Festival Award.

The Secretary's report on the year **1999** (presented to the AGM in January 2000), is another comprehensive account containing a lot of useful information. Stephen said that he saw 1999 as a plateau year for the DCA – it did not widen its horizons or increase its programme substantially, but held regular meetings and kept a steady pace of activities.

These included the impressive **Planning for Real – Doxey Model**. The aim of the project was to find out what the people of Doxey saw as important issues to be faced as the locality developed (and a very substantial number of extra dwellings had been built by 1999, with more possibly still on the way). It used a three-dimensional model of Doxey, made by children at Doxey Primary School, as a focus. Residents were invited to attend Open Meetings to give their views on what should happen next in Doxey and the information was collated (Broadly similar information will be sought for "Parish Plans" which are being prepared throughout the County at the present time,(2006) including one for Doxey under the auspices of the Parish Council). Even people who had little interest in the development of the area were intrigued by the models and enjoyed seeing them at the various exhibitions.

**Coffee Mornings** had been started by Pat and John Perks in September 1999 and were very much appreciated by those who attended. A garden plant sale was held, and there were trips to Walsall Illuminations and the Stafford Pantomime, (both organised very ably by Jane Essex). Eleven issues of "Doxey Times" were produced and distributed during the year.

Meetings (Committee/General Meetings) were held at monthly intervals during 1999, but it had proved to be impossible to recruit a full "set" of officers (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) so William Sutton Trust had not been prepared to offer a grant of £250 which had been made in previous years. Stephen felt strongly that he had devoted a great deal of time to the DCA during 1999, but could not continue to do so, nor did he want it to become a "one-man band". A list of possible projects which could be undertaken if more volunteers came forward was appended.

Caron Hughes gave notice that she would be not be able to continue as treasurer beyond August 2000 due to personal circumstances. She again produced a Receipts and Payments account in which she noted that the bank balances were down to £292 on 31st December 1999 (compared to £790 on the same date in December 1998). The need to raise additional revenue was therefore important for 2000 (and accomplished).

### **January to December 2000**

**In 2000, the AGM was held on 11th January.** The Minutes tell us that 25 residents of Doxey were present, together with representatives from a wide variety of organisations. The Secretary's report was discussed and other matters raised, including proposals for new ward boundaries, (to come in force in 2003 when the boundary of Seighford Parish would be the motorway so Doxeyfields etc would no longer be included), allotments, a footpath over the Doxey Brook, railway safety generally in Doxey and access to the Doxey Marshes over the railway line. It was hoped to establish that there was a right of way over the rail track (near where the Ridgeway is now) but that could not be proved and in time the footpath over the rail track was closed despite local objections. The alternative, to build a footbridge over the rail track, did not appeal to the railway authorities!

Reports were heard from the Treasurer, from Stafford College, (Sandra Grosvenor), Health Visitor (Di Cooper) the pre-school Playgroup (Claire Turner), County Councillor Robert Simpson and Sue Fox from the Youth Advisory Service. Sue has worked with the DCA over many years, attending meetings on a regular basis despite a heavy work load and her input has been very much appreciated.

A "full set" of officers was elected, even though Caron Hughes (Treasurer) said she would only be able to serve until August. Norman Sutton was elected as Chair, Stephen Moore was re-elected as Secretary, with Joan Harvey as Assistant Secretary. The committee included Tom Beach, Nigel and Eva Barnett, John and Pat Perks, Melanie Smith, Peter Daley and Gill Smith. Jane Essex agreed to continue to organise trips though she would not be able to attend committee/general meetings. Some amendments to the constitution were made and it was agreed to affiliate to the Community Council of Staffordshire. The proposed programme, meeting on the second Wednesday of the month, was also agreed.

Again the Secretary's report at the end of the year (for presentation to the 2001 AGM) is a fruitful source of information about the DCA activities during the year 2000. It states that nine issues of the "Doxey Times" were published during the year, plus a special issue in March about the Parish Council campaign. This went to the newest properties in Doxey only and was also given to people requesting information before deciding whether to sign the petition. "Planning for Real – the Doxey model" had been taken to different locations in Doxey and, though interest was shown, few people came

forward to volunteer to organise projects identified as desirable for the area, so most had to be shelved until a future occasion.

Traffic calming was due to be installed by the Borough Council on the main road in Doxey during 2001 and newer fencing, it was hoped, would keep people off the railway track, with its obvious dangers. A hearing about a possible footbridge over the railway track near the Ridgeway was due to be held later in 2001 and the DCA planned to send representations.

Adult Education Classes in water-colour painting, and local history were being provided in Doxey. There was more concern about play areas and the school bus service. The possibility of a free bus to supermarkets (a definite no from the potential providers) was also mentioned. There was also news of the successful garden plant sale, regular coffee mornings, and another trip to the Walsall Illuminations and to the Stafford Pantomime. The request for a road or footbridge over the Doxey Brook was being actively pursued by Seighford Parish Council and the DCA lent its support. The newly appointed Community Warden for Doxey Marshes, Rachel Wheatcroft, had given a very informative talk at a meeting of the DCA, which was appreciated. Progress in applying for a paid community worker was outlined. This bid was ultimately unsuccessful, but the DCA did appreciate the help they had in its preparation from the SDVS and Community Council of Staffordshire.

Regular monthly meetings had been held throughout the year. The balance in the account as at 31st October 2000 was £443 (which had risen to £508 by December as opposed to £292 the previous year). This was partly accounted for by the receipt of the £250 grant from the William Sutton trust and partly by successful fund-raising. There was a balance of £1.73 in the deposit account at that stage.

The report also included a comprehensive update on the Parish Council campaign, which was a major concern of the year 2000. Every dwelling in Doxey was visited at least once, some two or three times and some could still not be contacted. However, 683 (out of 1785 on the electoral roll) did sign the petition and only 279 said that they did not want a Parish Council or were not interested in the matter. Stephen Moore pointed out that that could have been an over-estimate because if the person answering the door said that they were not interested, everyone in that household was counted as also uninterested. The petition was submitted in November and an answer awaited. It had to go to the Secretary of State via Stafford Borough Council who had three months to do this and add their own comments.

### **January 2001 to May 2002**

**In 2001** the AGM was held on 24th January – it was the last AGM held in the month of January as those following, from 2002 onwards, have been held in May when weather conditions are usually more pleasant and it was hoped that there would therefore be a larger number of residents who would attend. In 2001 Stephen was still very concerned about the level of community participation in the DCA and this was discussed at the meeting. The Minutes state that 20 residents were present, with Borough Councillors, and representatives from Staffordshire Police, Staffs Youth Service, Health Visitors, Pre-School Playgroup and the William Sutton Trust, all of whom gave reports.

Stephen Moore was elected as Chair, and Joan Harvey agreed to serve as Assistant Secretary but there were no nominations for the position as Secretary. John Perks was elected as Treasurer and Bob Mole agreed to continue as auditor. The following were elected to the committee: Tom Beach, Gill Smith, Melanie Cooke, Pat Perks and Hilary Chalmers. Jane Essex agreed to again organise trips but would not be able to attend committee/general meetings.

The meeting then went through the proposed new constitution which was adopted. This remained in force until January 12th 2005 when a different model was necessary as the DCA was seeking charitable status (confirmed April 2005).

Stephen and Joan have filed copies of the Minutes of other meetings held during the year 2001 and I have copied one of the meeting held on 11th April when the thoughts of Joan Harvey and Jane Essex on the planned "Celebration of Doxey" were being discussed. Among those present for that meeting were Robert Simpson, Isabella Davies, John and Pat Perks (who rarely miss a meeting) Tom Beach, Sue Fox, Gill Smith, Hilary Chalmers, John Webbe, Joan Harvey and both Stephen and Joan Moore. Apart from the plans for the celebration, there was a discussion about play area provision in Doxey (always inadequate) litter and vandalism. Sadly the meeting agreed to send their best wishes to Nigel Ashfield, who had been unwell for some time. He died on June 30th, much missed by all who knew him.

"Doxey Day" held on 7th July 2001 was well supported by Doxey residents and was enjoyed by those who took part. It was held at Doxey House, with competitions (painting etc) being housed indoors, together with the all-important tea and cakes, and lots of activities outside. The Mayor came to open it and there was an impressive array of VIPs as well, and people enjoyed listening to the band playing on the front lawn of Doxey House. Income from the various stalls is detailed on a special sheet which shows (rounded) that the Tombola made £107, Post Office Stall £31, Strawberries £60, White Elephant Stall £80 and the Lottery £22. There were donations from the Ice-cream providers of £15 and £16 from "Crazy Bikes". The combined income from teas, programmes and the fruit machine (John Smith at his most diabolical) amounted to £126. Expenses included materials, programmes, payment for the band, a posy for the Mayoress, hire of the Bouncy Castle, stationery and certificates for winners of the various competitions etc. Altogether it was a well-organised and well-patronised event, with the added bonus of good weather and it was good to see a lot of Doxey people out enjoying themselves. Eileen Skelton brought along her Doxey archives and people marvelled at her extensive collection of material about Doxey – and hopefully added more items to it. The number of arch-lever files with material meticulously mounted in plastic sleeves continues to grow and there is always a lot of enthusiasm when she brings her records to such events. It's wonderful that someone keeps all the material, so that the rest of us can remember people and events from our shared past in the locality.

A bye-election for the Tillington Ward was held in October 2001, following the resignation of Kevin Mole who had left the area, and Stephen Moore was elected as Borough Councillor, to serve with Tony Nixon. Stephen served on the Borough Council for approximately eighteen months until he and Tony were defeated at the elections in May 1st 2003 when Conservatives won many unexpected victories locally. When selected as a candidate for the bye-election, Stephen resigned as Chair of the DCA but still went along to meetings when he could and continued to support the work of the organisation. Gill Smith acted as Chair for the DCA meeting held in November 2001,

when concerns over traffic calming were raised as there was a petition asking for its removal. For later meetings Stephen's wife, Joan, soon found herself pressed into service as "temporary chair until the next AGM." when the position was formalised. She provided outstanding service throughout her term as Chair, and the DCA vastly expanded its activities under her leadership.

There was a change to the date of the AGM in 2002 as it was felt that the January weather might be a detrimental to attendance so the DCA experimented with an AGM in May, when the weather is kinder, and has never looked back. The 2005 constitution now states that the AGM should be in May or "as soon as practicable after". The financial year continued to run from 1st November of one year until the 31st October of the following year until 2004 when this was also changed. The financial year now starts on 1st January and ends on 31st December of the same year.

The Chair's report to the AGM held on 8th May 2002 therefore tells us more about the main concerns of 2001 and the first few months of 2002. During that period twelve issues of the "Doxey Times" were published, and the Monday morning coffee sessions continued to flourish. A plant sale was held in April 2001 and another was planned for May 2002. Garden plant sales provide a good way of helping people with new gardens to stock up (and the rest of us to find plants we fancied but hadn't grown ourselves) and to raise money which helps finances, including the printing costs of the "Doxey Times".

The Chairman's report also gave out information about "Connexions", an organisation set up which aimed to provide everyone in the age range 13-16 with support in making important decisions in their lives. Connexions invited voluntary bodies to bid for grants and the DCA was successful in bidding for some money to ascertain the needs of Doxey youngsters in that age range. The Youth Advisory Service was also involved in a project with the DCA and it resulted in a short course in sign language which ran for the first three months of 2002 and led to a public meeting and the setting up of the Doxey Youth Forum in August (see next section).

Litter and the bus service were also mentioned as both were causing a lot of concern locally. Concern over litter has been a recurrent theme over the years and organised litter-picks have taken place at regular intervals.

A regular committee member, Sally Hems, started attending meetings in January 2002 and has been a stalwart supporter ever since. Others at that meeting included Tom Beach, Isabella Davies, Michele Elliott (Estate Manager William Sutton Trust) Joan and Stephen Moore, Pat and John Perks, Tony Nixon, Gill Smith and John Walters. Plans for the celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee were being discussed for implementation in August 2002 at the William Sutton Centre when proceedings would be opened by local postman Mike Marsh.

Other matters discussed were the "Connexions" project, Business and Community Partnerships and litter. A letter from Mark Smith, thanking the DCA for its donation towards the costs of materials for the Senior Citizens Christmas party, was read to the meeting.

### **May 2002 to May 2003**

The Doxey Community Association AGM was held on 8th May 2002. Residents and guests were welcomed by Stephen Moore as the Chairman, Joan, was unwell. There were written reports from the Chairman, the Treasurer, (balance at the bank was £290)

and Doxey Preschool Playgroup. There was also information from Sue Fox of the Youth Advisory Service on the play provision for young people in Doxey, and Dennis Ecclestone reported on Community Policing. Diane Cooper informed the meeting that the Baby Clinic was very successful, and almost ran itself! County Councillor Robert Simpson reported on his work for the area and welcomed Stephen Moore as a newly-elected Borough Councillor for the Tillington Ward, which includes Doxey. Joan Moore was elected as chairman, with Rachel Moore (no relation) as Secretary. Joan Harvey agreed to do the Minutes and John Perks was re-elected as Treasurer

The guest speaker was Karen Davies, Stafford Borough Council Agenda 21 Officer. She gave a talk about having a **Clear-out Day** as a way of recycling items in ways which are "friendly to our environment, our neighbours and ourselves". The idea was enthusiastically embraced, though working out how it was to be accomplished took many hours of hard thinking, with much of the responsibility initially resting on the shoulders of Joan Moore, Richard Essex and Michele Elliott, William Sutton Estate Manager, who has always been very helpful to the DCA. Clear-out Days are now a regular feature of the DCA programme for the year, with much of the work being undertaken by Mike Turner who became a regular attender at DCA meetings after his first meeting in March 2003.

Other matters raised in 2002 included problems with the speed humps of the traffic calming scheme, where opinion at the meeting (and in Doxey itself) was sharply divided. Robert Simpson indicated that independent assessors would be looking at the measures soon, and that the County Council were making an area by area survey to address problems.

Activities which took place during 2002 included Table Top Sales, a Garden Plant Sale, litter-picks (including one before the Open Day at Doxey Marshes on 21st July) and a celebration to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee, which was held in August 2002 at the William Sutton Trust when proceedings were opened by local postman Mike Marsh. Highlights of Doxey's Jubilee celebrations included competitions, street entertainment, music, African and American cooking, wine tasting (courtesy of Richard Essex) and beauty make-overs. The Stafford Post had a good picture of Mike Marsh with the megaphone, while Joan Harvey, Hilary Chalmers and Joan Marsh looked on, with ears covered. The event was combined with the School PTA's Summer Fete. Despite clashing with an important England soccer game against Denmark in the World Cup it was a well-attended occasion and participants enjoyed themselves, especially enjoying tasting the foods from a number of different countries which were on offer.

In October 2002 the DCA were able to purchase a Party Tent from Stafford Outdoor Leisure Centre which could (and would) be used for a variety of activities in the following years. This was made possible through a grant made from Robert Simpson's County Council Allowance for which the DCA is grateful. The tent, including fittings, cost £400 and was purchased in October 10th and officially handed over before the monthly meeting on 11th December. Now stored at the William Sutton Centre, it has proved to be very useful on numerous occasions.

The DCA were somewhat dismayed when they were informed that the application for a Doxey Parish Council had to fail on a technicality since some of the area was already part of another Parish Council area – in this case the Parish of Seighford. This ruling was in spite of the fact that the new boundaries were due to come into effect in May 2003 so the area in question would then no longer be part of Seighford PC. It was

decided to resubmit the application, but a lot of work was necessary to check that the signatures were up to date and the electoral numbers were correct. Again, a few people did a tremendous amount of work, and were duly rewarded when Parish Council status was granted, and came into effect in May 2005.

There were a lot of changes on the youth front in 2002, building on the work undertaken with "Connexions" in the previous year. The needs of young people in Doxey had been identified during that project, a public meeting was held to address the various issues, and the Doxey Youth Forum came into being in August 2002. They held their own regular meetings and have plans for a "Leisure Barn" for Doxey if the various obstacles, including location and finance, can be overcome. Sue Fox of Staffs Youth Advisory Service and the Youth Forum members (especially Adrian Venables, Michael Webber, Hannah Burgess and Claire Gaisford) have been regular attenders at DCA meetings, where their input is very valuable. Unfortunately new responsibilities for Sue Fox in 2006 mean that Doxey will no longer be her responsibility, which is a sad loss to the area. The DCA would like to thank her for all her hard work and hope that her successor will be equally diligent in working for our young people. It will certainly be a hard act to follow though groundwork which she has put in should, hopefully, mean that it might be easier than it would have been otherwise to provide for the needs of young people in Doxey.

April 2002 saw the opening of a new Doxey Youth Club, which sadly was disbanded the following year, as the Youth Workers involved came to the end of their contracts, and the SCC cut back on the service. Some replacements were offered – see year 2003 – but the replacements could not offer such a comprehensive service as that of the "proper" youth club.

In early 2003 a lot of thought went into the implementation of "Clear Out" days and regular meetings were held from January onwards. It was decided to limit the area for the first Clear-out Day to residents who lived in roads off Greensome Lane, and publicity was focussed on this area. The actual first Clear-out Day, organised by Michele Elliott and Richard Essex, was held on Sunday **6th April 2003** at the Sutton Centre. DCA officers held their breath and hoped all would go well – which it did. It was so successful that another was held in November that year for the whole of Doxey, organised by Mike Turner, with a change of venue to the "Three Tuns". This was not judged to be quite so convenient and later Clear-out days have all been held at the Sutton Centre. Mike Turner now does nearly all of the organisation for Clear-out Days and it is to his credit that they continue to be so successful. Clear-out Days, which have been held twice a year since then (9th May and 7th Nov in 2004, 8th May and 9th October in 2005, 23rd April and one planned for autumn 2006) have been one of the major factors (along with litter-picks and garden plant sales) in gaining the Stafford Borough Council Green Awards won by the DCA. These awards are commemorated in plaques painted by Sally Hems which can be seen in the main hall at the Sutton Centre and also in a tree planted in the grounds of Doxey School in June 2004, before the recent extensive tree planting was undertaken.

#### **May 2003 to May 2004**

**The AGM for 2003** was held on 7th May, again at the Church Hall. Residents were welcomed to the meeting and reports were read, including that from the Treasurer, John Perks, in which he reported that the DCA had a balance of £307 at the end of October 2002. Joan Moore was re-elected as Chair, with John Perks as Treasurer.

Rachel Moore continued as Secretary until she left the area, when various other members of the committee undertook secretarial tasks. Newly-elected Borough Councillors, Adam Tedstone and Peter Goodland, were also welcomed to the meeting.

During the year from May 2003 until the next AGM in May 2004, the "Doxey Times" was published eleven times, with one edition being a double-pager. The Coffee mornings, organised by Pat and John Perks, continued to do well. There were between 20 and 30 regular attenders each week who met on Monday mornings, starting at 10.30, for coffee, biscuits and a chance to chat at the Sutton Centre, which they enjoyed.

The Youth Club had to close in 2003, but four members of the DCA committee ran a "**Drop-in**" Centre at the William Sutton Building for young people to meet, chat, play board games etc. which was much appreciated. The "**Youth Bus**", provided by the County Council Youth Programme, called at Doxey every Thursday evening, parking near the Church and welcoming youngsters who wanted to spend some time there, but provision was somewhat limited because of space and time constraints. The Youth Forum continued to function well.

Joan Harvey and her team at Doxey House organised a successful Doxey Day on July 12th 2003. Highlights of the event included the opening by the Mayor, the competition led by the Town Crier and the crowds of Doxey people who supported the event.

A new event – **Fun Day** - was held in August on the grassed area around the Sutton Centre. This was a games afternoon for children and young people. Good organisation by Pat and John Perks enabled the children of Doxey to enjoy an exciting afternoon, with races and competitions and plenty of prizes.

There were trips out to Walsall Illuminations in November and a trip to the Pantomime in December, again ably organised by Jane Essex

In June 2003 the DCA arranged for the Mikron Theatre Company to visit Doxey and conduct theatre workshops and perform their play "All Steamed Up" about the steam pioneer Richard Trevithick. Both workshops and performances went so well that it was decided to try to work with the theatre on a major project which would involve Doxey people. To do this the DCA would have to successfully apply for a lot of grants, and it was agreed to undertake this, with Jane Essex as Arts Officer, and Joan Moore as chief applicant for money. Jane arranged an outing to see the other Mikron play "A Woman's Place" about suffragettes. Mikron are a touring company and normally have two plays which they perform at canalside and other venues, each season.

It was explained that the initial phase of the project was to be able to raise enough money to have performances of both Mikron plays for 2004 in Doxey during one weekend, and, if the DCA were successful in its more ambitious application to the Arts Council, to commission a play about Doxey to be performed by local actors with back-up from Mikron's own professionals. Residents began thinking about the past in Doxey and collecting information, providing a bank of knowledge which would be useful in the future.

Other Arts projects during 2003 included the exhibition of Doxey photographs by Dan Yates, a student photographer from Greensome Lane, which was held in September at

the Church Hall. Attendance was good, and people enjoyed identifying places in their neighbourhood.

The Youth Forum suggested that Doxey might have a Community **Christmas Tree** for the first time and this was sited at the Doxey Arms, with kind permission from Lawrence the landlord in December 2003. Lights were purchased by Joan Moore and Pat Perks

Stafford Arts Council requested that Doxey host the launch of their Film Festival Show which DCA members were happy to do. The launch took place in early March 2004 in the Church Hall and was attended by many Doxey people as well as the Mayor, his entourage and other Staffordians. Throughout the day films and videos of Stafford, and notably of Doxey, (including the building of the "new" Church and Church Hall opened in March 1975) were shown. As an outcome of the launch, three student film makers made a short film about Doxey and its people (including the closure of the Post Office). A group of people from Doxey, and other villages featured, saw the results on a visit to the Gatehouse Theatre on 8th October 2004

Garden Plant Sales have been held every year, including 2003 and 2004, and people enjoy taking along their offerings and going away with different plants to try out. They also provide a source of revenue for the DCA. The hard work put in by Stephen and Joan Moore, in growing much of the material and organising the rest, is greatly appreciated and their input will be greatly missed when they leave Doxey, as is likely to happen in the near future, as they have plans to relocate nearer their families.

#### **May 2004 – December 2004**

The AGM of Doxey Community Association (the last year before it became a charity) was held on May 12th **2004** and included the chairman's report on the work of the Association during 2003-4, a treasurers report (balance at 31st October 2003 of £729), a report from the Arts Officer and election of officers. Joan Moore and Jane Essex were re-elected as Chairman and Arts Officer, Sarah Jessop was elected as Secretary and Barbara Simpson as Treasurer after John Perks had expressed a desire to retire from the post. Sarah was an excellent Secretary and had a fund of very useful knowledge from her work for the Community Council of Staffordshire. She remained in the position until she left the area for another post in Lincolnshire in December 2005. Barbara Simpson stood down as Treasurer in May 2006.

Written reports were received from the Pre-School Playgroup, who were facing the challenges of the newly-opened nursery at Doxey School, a County Councillor's report, and a report from the Doxey Friendship Group. Sue Fox provided a very detailed report about the provision for youth in Doxey including the Youth Forum, which had six committed young members.

Community Police Officers, John Cassie and Steve Croft spoke about ASBOs (antisocial behaviour orders) and explained some of the new powers which the police now have to tackle anti-social behaviour in the community. This proved to be very enlightening and they were warmly thanked for their attendance

The campaign to keep post office facilities at Doxey was co-ordinated by the DCA and well supported, but proved ultimately unsuccessful as the post office section of Bradbury Rise Stores closed in May 2004. Other continuing problems which gave rise to concern were heavy lorries along the Doxey road and proposals to develop land

behind the church in Doxey, which was subject to planning appeals by Universal. In the event these were withdrawn in June 2005, but the possibility of alternative planning proposals remains open

The Chairman's report on the year 2004 (presented to the AGM in May 2005) says that during the period from May 2003 to May 2004 the Community Association had built substantially on progress made in previous years. The association's monthly meetings were very well attended, with some 20-30 people at each meeting. Overall 47 people attended one or more of the Association's monthly meetings during the year. The time of meetings had been changed so that they began at 7pm instead of 7.30pm, which suited most people. During the year there had been a talk by Kate Lee from Stafford College, who had attended a meeting and discussed Further Education provision in Doxey and by Mr John Solly, who retired in July 2004 after twenty years as headmaster of Doxey School. Members of the DCA were pleased to take up Mr Solly's offer of a chance to visit the new nursery facilities at Doxey school, which were very impressive. Mark Gates of the Parish Councils Association also came to a meeting and talked about the responsibilities of being a Parish Councillor.

Twelve editions of the "Doxey Times" were published and distributed during the year, including one double-pager. These carried information about the "Village Voices" project and were a crucial means, along with the DCA website, of spreading information locally. In the autumn the "Doxey Times" was also pleased to publicise the times of the new **Sunday Bus Service**, started in **September** a service that had never previously been offered in Doxey. It also kept local residents informed about the various proposals for widening the M6, which were of some concern locally, as well as information about other events in the area.

Between twenty and thirty people went to the Coffee Mornings held each Monday morning. There was also a Christmas lunch which was enjoyed by all who participated. The Youth Forum continued with their activities and took an active part in DCA meetings.

New for 2004 was the **Doxey website**, set up and maintained by Iain Simpson, which became operational on June 20th. It included (and continues to include) information on everything about Doxey, from its early days when there were less than a dozen dwellings in the hamlet, to the present day. There are a number of maps of the area, from early days to the present, an extensive and ever-growing number of photographs of Doxey and information about as many of the organisations which operate in the area as possible. Each month copies of the DCA Minutes are available for residents to download and the site also has copies of the "Doxey Times" distributed to residents and an special extended version with some additional information. The website provides a "Shop Window" for Doxey on the Internet and the webmaster, Iain Simpson, has received responses from as far away as Australia and Florida in the USA. It is being used by other organisations who want to communicate with Doxey, including Stafford College with news of Further Education Classes and also provides a useful reference point when applying for grants, as it is a quick way of learning about the area. More information is always required but it is hoped that this service will be one which is used increasingly in the future as more and more people have access to the Internet.

First sponsors of the site were local businesses. These were the "Bradbury Rise Stores", "Three Tuns" Public House, "Happy" (Hot Chinese and English Food to take away) and the William Sutton Housing Association Ltd. Sponsors were not sought in

2005, when costs were borne by the Mikron "Village Voices" project, but it is hoped that local businesses will again pay a small amount for sponsorship in 2006.

The Mikron Theatre Company visited Doxey in June 2004 to perform the two plays in their 2004 repertoire ("On the Line" and "Pedal Power"). The Community Association obtained funding for this from Staffordshire County Council Arts Fund and from Robert Simpson's Local Member's Initiative fund. This enabled the association to offer tickets at low prices. After each performance members of the audience were able to talk to members of the theatre company about the play and the work involved in producing it. On the following day Mikron actors held drama workshops in the Doxey Primary School.

It had been hoped that this would be the "launch" for an ambitious project which was to include the commissioning of a play about Doxey, to be written and directed by the Mikron Theatre Company (Mike Lucas and Richard Povall principally). Hopes were high that the DCA would succeed in obtaining the necessary large grant from the Arts Council by the end of May, but the Chairman, Joan Moore, heard the day after the weekend of 5th/6th June that the initial bid had not been successful. However she was encouraged to try again, and, after a great deal of work, a revised and expanded bid was sent in – and she heard at the end of October 2004 that that had been successful. So it was all systems go after that!

Doxey Day was held in July 2004. Instead of a fête we had an afternoon when the many Doxey groups and organisations came together to display what they had to offer in the church hall. Dave Marston of Bradbury Rise Stores opened the event which was visited by about 80 residents. There was an interesting mix of activities, Guides, the Walking Group, Heraldry and the National Childbirth Trust together with the Friendship Group, the Coffee Morning, the Whist Drive, the Youth Forum, the Pre-school Playgroup, the Community Association and the Church.

The environment was again high on the agenda of the Community Association in 2004. A squad of Doxey litter pickers helped with the clear up in Stafford in preparation for the judging of Britain in Bloom. The association was represented on the Local Environmental Quality Group which, as well as improving the environment, seeks to improve responsible public access to wildlife sites. In October the association received a Green Award from the Borough Council in recognition of members' work in litter picking, Clear Out days and the Garden Sale. Clear Out days in 2004 were held on Sundays 9th May and 7th October, organised by Mike Turner and a Garden Plant Sale, organised by Joan and Stephen Moore, was held on 24th April.

Pat and John Perks organised a second annual Fun day in August 2004. Many local children took part in the activities and it proved to be a social occasion for parents, children and the DCA members who attended. Prizes were provided by the William Sutton Housing Association.

### **January- May 2005**

It became necessary for the DCA to apply for charity status since its income for the year 2005 was likely to be large, following the notice that the Arts Council for England were giving a grant of £27,600 towards the Mikron Project (a play called "Village Voices") which would have to be augmented with other funding so the likely (and actual) receipts for the year were in excess of £35,000. So January 2005 started with

an important business meeting on Wednesday 12th January when Doxey Community Association again adopted a new constitution. The DCA wished to apply for charitable status, and having an approved constitution was an essential pre-requisite. Barbara Simpson, helped by Sarah Jessop and Joan Moore, collected the information for the application forms. The DCA also had useful advice from the Staffordshire District Voluntary Services, the Community Council of Staffordshire and "Community Matters" which is an organisation providing general information and practical help to community associations like the DCA and other similar bodies. Initially three people signed the constitution, Joan Moore (Chair), Sarah Jessop, (Secretary), and Barbara Simpson, (Treasurer) but the constitution stipulated a minimum of seven trustees so the Charity Commission required that four more trustees should agree to serve until the first AGM of the Charity. The four additional trustees were Jane Essex, Stephen Moore, Sue Fox and Michele Elliott. These served until the AGM held on 11th May 2005, when a new election was held. In fact all seven were re-elected or appointed, and four more trustees joined the Committee, to serve until the 2006 AGM. Their names are included in the report of the AGM.

Barbara Simpson was the first Charity contact and she heard in April that the DCA had gained its charitable status, and was number 1109032 on the annual register. Charitable status brings some benefits, chiefly in raising funds, but also some added responsibilities, particularly with accounts when the charity has an income of over ten thousand pounds, as it did in the financial year Jan 1st – December 31st 2005.

Joan Moore (and other members of the DCA) had been delighted to hear at the end of October 2004 that the Arts Council were prepared to give the DCA a large grant to commission Mikron to write a Community Play, based on Doxey, to be performed by local actors. There would also be associated workshops for Doxey residents, led by local paid artists, so that all aspects of theatre could be included,. The play would then be rewritten and adapted for their Mikron's own professionals to tour the country.

It was still not all plain sailing on the financial front, as partnership funding had also to be sought, but this was achieved and the project was able to go ahead to a very successful conclusion. Two performances of the specially-written play "Village Voices" were performed (by local actors, backed by Mikron's professionals) to packed houses at the Church Hall on Saturday evening, April 30th and Sunday afternoon 1st May 2005. All those involved, whether in the research (which involved finding about the history of Doxey from members of the community), as actors, or in other back-stage capacities found it a very rewarding experience and one which brought the community together in a very real way, thus fulfilling a main aim of the Community Association. The knowledge gained led to many other activities including the formation of the "Doxey Players" and the very successful Pantomime performed in April 2006.

The community play of "Village Voices" was basically a record of events in Doxey from about 1945, centred on youngsters Bob and Ena and fishing in the Doxey Brook. Further scenes were in 1945, in 1953 (Queens accession, work and parties at Universal Grinding Wheel Company) before the interval. Afterwards the scene shifts to 1962 (M6 opening, Ena as midwife in the very cold winter etc) and finally to 2005 when an older Bob and Ena meet another generation fishing in the brook. The River introduces all the action and is written for two characters, one young and one older. Richard Povall says in his notes to the script that they are like a chorus and represent the youth and age of Doxey. Originally written for Alison Cordon and her daughter, Sophie Tasker, the older part was played by Denise Peel, since Alison was

unfortunately too ill to perform. It was good to see that she was able to come along to the opening night and see her daughter act, and we hope that things will go better for the family in the future. Both parts of the "River" had wonderful costumes produced for them by Letty Hall which were very much admired. As part of the associated skills programme, the Community Play was videoed and sales of the dvd were good; residents appreciated being able to see the play again and hear the many songs being played and sung by local people. Programmes for the Community Play of Village Voices can be downloaded from the website, as well as a lot of information about the production.

### **May 2005 to May 2006**

The 2005 AGM was held on 11th May, 2005, and was therefore the first AGM following the granting of charitable status on 14th April. Twenty seven residents of Doxey were present, with Community Police Constables Di Powell and Steve Croft and a, Community Support Officer. Apologies were received from John Smith and Val D'Arcy and also from Owen and Sarah Moody (nee Jessop) who were on honeymoon.

There were written reports from the Chairman and Arts Officer on the past year's events and the Treasurer presented the accounts up to the new accounting date of 31st December (2004).

Nine trustees were elected: Joan Moore (Chair) Sarah Moody (Secretary) Barbara Simpson (Treasurer) Gill Smith, Jane Essex, Pat Perks, Laura Day, Stephen Moore and Denise Peel. In addition, Michele Elliott was appointed to the Committee by the William Sutton Housing Association (formerly the William Sutton Trust) and Sue Fox by the Staffordshire County Council Youth Advisory Service.

There followed a question and answer session with the police personnel present about priorities in local policing. Residents were also concerned about the report that there would be no summer playscheme for Doxey in 2005. This matter was taken up by Nigel Barnett Chairman of Doxey Parish Council (and DCA member) who was able to persuade the relevant authorities to run the scheme, as in previous years, at Doxey School, an action which was greatly appreciated.

A Clear-out Day had been held on 8th May, the Sunday before the AGM, and was again successful. A second Clear-out Day, also held at the William Sutton Centre, was held on 9th October 2005. Thanks were due to Mike Turner who organised them and will continue to do so in 2006. Three other Residents/Community Associations, who have heard of the Clear out days, have approached the DCA about our procedures. In 2005 the DCA received a Green Award for its work in promoting environmental awareness in Doxey.

The Garden Sale in 2005 was held on 14th May, despite the loss of the Moore's potting shed and its large stock of plants, and was well-attended. Thanks are due to the "Three Tuns" for allowing the DCA to use their premises each year and to Stephen and Joan for all their hard work for this and other plant sales in the past.

It was decided that the DCA would not have a "Doxey Day" in 2005 as all members were extremely busy with the "Village Voices" project, but would think about having a larger event in 2006.

The DCA learned in 2004/5 that the long campaign to establish a **Parish Council** had been successful. Eleven residents were nominated in April 2005 and were willing to stand for the nine seats. In the event two withdrew and it was not necessary to have an election, but it was good to see that the interest was there. **The Doxey Parish Council** had its **first meeting** on May 18th 2005 at 6.30 in the Sutton Centre, and met regularly, at different venues after that. Members elected to the first Doxey Parish Council were Nigel Barnett, Isabella Davies, Michael Johnson, Stephen Moore, John Peel, David Adams, Carol Haigh, David Hughes and Philip Kinnersley (who resigned before the first meeting, Rose Leason was later co-opted to fill the vacancy). At their first meeting Nigel Barnett was elected as Chairman and Isabella Davies became Vice-Chairman. Councillors would serve initially for two years, until the next general Parish Council elections which are due to take place in May 2007.

An Exhibition following the performances of the Community play was held in the Stafford Borough Council Culturegen Tent at the County Show, on **June 1st and 2nd**, where it reached a large audience. The Exhibition had to be mounted very quickly to meet the deadline, so Stephen and Joan Moore with the help of Laura Day worked very hard to produce it. John Smith and Iain Simpson went along to help set it up and man the tent, and reported a fair amount of interest. The exhibition boards were later put up in the Church Hall so audiences attending the Professional version of the play could see them.

Part of the Community "Village Voices" project had involved young musicians who formed a "Rap" Group. The Rappers performed before the Opening scenes of the Community Version of "Village Voices" on 30th April and 1st May, which was much appreciated. Three members of the group, Dominic and Rory D'Arcy and Richard Holland, a newcomer to Doxey, took part in the Stafford Borough Council's "Raw Talent" competition at Victoria Park on 9th July and won the MC section, for which they were congratulated. It was good to see a successful spin-off from the project so soon after its completion.

The Community version of "Village Voices" had been very successful with the church hall filled to capacity so the DCA eagerly awaited the return of Mikron with the Professional version of the play, (also called "Village Voices") which had its first performance in Doxey Church Hall on **11th June**. This was especially true of members of the Steering Committee who had been overseeing the organisation of the project, having had twenty meetings during the period from 28th January 2004 until 13th May 2005. Members of the committee were Joan and Stephen Moore, Jane and Richard Essex, Sarah Jessop, Denise Peel, John and Gill Smith, and Barbara Simpson who were helped by Jane Wells and Jim Wheeler of the SBC Arts Department, Culturegen, also regular attenders over the period. The professional version of "Village Voices" also played to an almost capacity audience of approximately 160 people, and the response gratified both the DCA and Mikron personnel.

The professional version of the play took as its theme the closure of the local post office, since this was not only a local issue but one with which other communities, who were also losing facilities, could identify. Like the community plays, the professional version relied heavily on the Doxey research, especially the memories of Trevor Pattyson, Brenda and Judy Bishop, Ossie Lloyd, Susan and John Corcoran, Sheila Ball, Sandra Brereton, David Sinfield, Eileen Skelton, Mary Pickard, Tom and Joyce Beach, Hilda Lunt, Jeannie Parrack, David and Maureen Dutton, Margery Middleton, Marie Peake, Adrian Venables, Hannah Burgess and the D'Arcy family, among others

who contributed. Extra information on the problems associated with running and the closure of the post office was obtained from David and Linda at Bradbury Rise Stores (who left in December 2005) and Joan Moore. Barbara Simpson had helped organise the research and sat in on most of the various interviews. She found the interweaving of the various stories into the plot of both versions of "Village Voices" was absolutely fascinating. More information on the Mikron project and other matters about Doxey, including Minutes of Meetings and copies of the "Doxey Times" is available on the Doxey website, set up in June 2004 by Iain Simpson and maintained on a regular basis.

On August 23rd 2005 the DCA arranged for a Community Bus to take residents to the other Mikron Play of 2005, "Wheel of Fortune" (about the Falkirk Wheel which moves boats between canals in Scotland). A donation to cover the cost of the Community Bus was received from Stephen Moore. Some members also went to see the professional version of "Village Voices" when it returned to our area, with venues at Gnosall and the Junction Inn, Norbury on 22nd and 24th August respectively. The Last Night of "Village Voices" was on October 28th 2005 at Mikron's "Home" at Marsden near Huddersfield, when a party from Doxey were warmly welcomed.

Litter picks have continued to find a place on the DC Agenda and volunteers went out to help in Stafford before the "Stafford in Bloom" competition, and there was a very successful litter-pick in Doxey on 8th August, when adults were joined by some enthusiastic children.

The Life Support Project was presented to the DCA at the meeting held on **13th July** by Dr Darshan Seerha, a local resident. This was (and is) a project to provide basic life-support training based on a tried and tested methodical approach to training. Sessions would be self-contained and last for two hours and learners would find out what to do in an emergency and how to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation when appropriate. A grant of £1370 was obtained from the Staffordshire Community Council "Community Champions" budget (similar to one obtained by Richard Essex for production and lighting costs for "Village Voices") to be administered through the DCA. The first session, showing the approved method of resuscitation for Adults and children over the age of eight, was held on **6th October** 2005 and this was followed by others showing how to deal with the resuscitation of young children and babies, and with choking.

David Hughes organised a successful trip to Blackpool on 17th September. There were not enough trippers to fill a coach, so a block booking through "Happy Days" was made and the DCA subsidised the fares so that they matched the prices advertised in the "Doxey Times" of £10 per person. David and Sally Hems also prepared the refreshments for the August Social "Cheese and Wine" event, which was appreciated.

In September 2005 Vicky Singleton from Neighbourhood Watch attended a meeting of the DCA and told those present about the scheme. Several "Neighbourhood Watch" schemes have now been set up and are operating in the Doxey area.

In October 2005 the Stafford film festival commemorated VJ Day by recreating a street party in Castletown. The DCA contributed to this event by providing copious quantities of sandwiches and cakes, most of which became inedibly soggy between our party tent, pitched close by, and the hungry children. About 20 Doxey residents attended the showing of the resulting film.

Another spin-off from the Village Voices project was the formation of a Digital Photography group, as Mike Day, our local artist and mentor for the "Village Voices" project volunteered to provide free tuition. The group had its first meeting on Saturday 5th November 2005 and met several times after that date.

Eleven editions of the Doxey Times, edited by Stephen Moore, were delivered during the year to every home in Doxey thanks to a team of 23 deliverers

The DCA also provided a decorated Christmas tree for the display held in Doxey Church during the weekend from December 2nd to 4th. Organisations and businesses in Doxey were invited to bring a real or artificial Christmas tree, not more than 4 metres high, decorated to illustrate their "business" for display at a special exhibition, the proceeds of which went to charity. Jane Essex volunteered to provide a tree which she had in a pot and be responsible for its decoration, consisting of linked hands, which was very effective. The Monday Morning Coffee Group also provided and decorated a very attractive tree, which featured cups and saucers as well as other items, and many other local organisations and local businesses took part. The display was a great success and was visited by many people from Doxey and elsewhere. It was the brainchild of the Doxey Vicar, Paul Thomas, who was inducted in November 2004. The previous vicar, Heather Osmond, had retired, with her husband David, in October 2003.

The DCA had provided a Lighted Community Christmas tree in the two previous years, so it was agreed that it would do the same in 2005. This time the tree would be erected outside Doxey Church and would be a joint venture with the Church and the Parish Council. The DCA agreed to pay one third of the costs involved in getting the necessary electricity supplied outside the building, and in providing the tree and decorations. Doxey Parish Council and St Thomas PCC would pay the remaining two thirds. It was stressed that the substantial costs would be a "one-off" charge as providing the outside electricity supply was expensive but would not have to be done again. There was a good response to the tree and the carol singing event held round it, and the DCA would like to thank all those who helped, especially John Smith, Nigel Barnett and Adrian Venables – and Susan Corcoran, Treasurer of St Thomas Church Doxey, who did a lot of the organising and sorting out the finance afterwards.

When the Queen came to visit Stafford on 31st March 2006 (to commemorate the 300th year anniversary of Stafford obtaining its charter from King John) Eileen Skelton represented the DCA at the service held at St Mary's in Stafford. We are sure that the event will be well-recorded as are other interesting things about Doxey preserved in Eileen's extensive and fascinating archives and are grateful that she represented us there.

The first Doxey Pantomime ("Mother Goose") was performed by the newly-formed Doxey Players in the Church Hall on Friday 21st and Saturday 22nd April after many weeks of painstaking work, and was very successful. It was produced by John Smith and directed by Anita Sumner, both of whom worked extremely hard to obtain the satisfactory results. They were grateful for the input of Derrick Gask and the hire of the Stafford Gatehouse Lights which enabled the production to take place and to the forbearance of the Church Authorities for the duration. The project was supported by the Community Association who obtained grants for the pantomime from the Staffs County Council Arts Fund, Lloyds-TSB, "Awards For All" and Doxey Parish Council. Plans are in hand to do more plays/pantomimes in the future and it is to be hoped that these will meet with similar enthusiastic responses from Doxey audiences.

### **May- August 2006**

The AGM of the DCA was held on Wednesday 10th May, when there were substantial changes to the officers of the Association, since the Chairman, Joan Moore and Treasurer, Barbara Simpson, both wished to stand down. Tunga Muzangaza had been acting as Secretary after Sarah Jessop (Moody) left the area and was confirmed in that post. Anita Sumner became Chairman with Robin Belcher taking over as Treasurer after Helen Stuckey, elected as Treasurer at the AGM had to resign a short time afterwards for personal reasons. The other trustees were re-elected to office: They were: - Laura Day, Jane Essex, Stephen Moore, Denise Peel, Pat Perks and Gill Smith. Anita Sumner became Charity Correspondent (to the Charity Commission).

Joan Moore presented her outgoing Chair's report to the AGM. In it she thanked John and Pat Perks for running the weekly coffee morning which continues to meet each Monday and is very well attended. She said that she would also like to acknowledge the contribution of William Sutton Housing Association in providing the hall free of charge for the coffee morning and for Community Association meetings, events, and for their storage of DCA equipment. The DCA is also grateful to the "Three Tuns" for allowing its premises to be used for the annual plant sale.

Stephen Moore continued to edit the "Doxey Times" throughout 2005 and for the first half of 2006 as he had done since 1998, but a change became necessary as he and Joan let the DCA know that they are planning to move in the near future to be nearer their families. John Smith took over as editor in July/August 2006 with assistance from Stephen for the duration. Copies are sent to many outside bodies that have an interest in Doxey and an extended version is posted on the DCA Website each month.

Mike Day, leader of the Digital Photography Group was involved with recording of the Pantomime in April, but was able to meet with other members of the group in May for a pleasant and informative session at "Downs Bank" near Stone, a very attractive Nature Reserve. It is hoped that other meetings will be held later in the year. There have also been further sessions of the Life Support Project and more are planned for the future.

Mikron returned with Richard Povall's Play "Carrying On" on Saturday 10th June, which was well attended. Thirty people went to a Sculpture Workshop led by Adam Wilkinson on the following day, making a very busy weekend for the DCA. The "bird" created was briefly installed in the trees in the church grounds, where it looked interesting.

The School PTA Summer Fete was held on 8th July, incorporating some input from the DCA and Doxey Parish Council as part of "Doxey Day" and two days later the Etruria Theatre came to Doxey with their play called "A Novice's Guide to Go(o)d". It was good to see that nearly all the tickets were sold for this innovative performance, which also included refreshments.

A workshop on Indian Dance was held on Saturday 15th July, which was also interesting. It is hoped that further sessions can be held in the future.

The DCA will be pleased to welcome back Mike Lucas of Mikron who has written a play called "Mrs B". This about the life of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, 1806-1859, celebrated engineer, as seen through the eyes of his wife) which is due to be performed at the Church Hall on Saturday 24th September.

The DCA continues to take an interest in Doxey Parish Council matters including the formation of a Parish Plan, where Mike Turner is the "Community Champion" responsible for its production. The DCA also welcomes the recently formed Youth Clubs and hope that they will continue to run successfully. There's lots going on, and hopefully enough people to organise and take part in the activities so that the Community Association will be able to continue with its stated aim in the future, as it has done in the past, which is to serve the interests of the people of Doxey.

Barbara Simpson August 2006