

Priors Hardwick Village Meeting – Thursday 23rd October 2025 at 19.30 in St. Mary the Virgin.

Present:

Gill Kinnear: Chair, Carolyn Bath: Treasurer, Margaret Clarke: temporary note-taker, Nigel Rock: District Councillor, Natalie Gist: District Councillor

Attendance:

Rob and Anita Barritt, Chris and Natalie Bull, Richard Cutt, Isabel Davies, Tim and Jenny Hoban, Paul Hobday, Christopher Hodgson, Stuart Hyde, Charles Holland, Derrin James, Libby Jameson, Alan Kinnear, Chris Russon, Sue Talbot, Steve Webb

Introduction:

The meeting opened at 7:30 pm with thanks expressed to all attendees for coming out on a blustery evening. The Chair reminded everyone that the meeting was being recorded to assist with accurate minute-taking.

Apologies were received from Emily and Hugh Darbshire, Angela and Simon Darbshire, Candy and Diarmaid Kelly, Anne and Eddie Ukleja, Barbara and Ivan Harvey, Sarah Loble and Rolle Nieminen, Jane Richards, Gail Holland, Joy Redfern

Summary of Discussion

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- Previous minutes were approved, with a correction noting that the October meeting began at 7:30 pm (not 7 pm).

2. Matters Arising

- The Chair thanked everyone who helped with the village tidy-up sessions at No Man's Land and around the centre of the village, particularly following recent storm damage.
- The Priors Marston and Priors Hardwick WI will now take over the running of the monthly coffee morning in the Priors hall (first session Tuesday 25 November, 10:30–12:30).

3. Financial Update – Carolyn Bath

- Several items of village expenditure were reported:
 - £160 spent on a grit box for Hollow Meadow Lane.
 - £500 donations each to **Air Ambulance**, **Myton Hospice**, and **Katharine House Hospice**.
 - £600 donation to the church.
 - £654 spent on a new village **gazebo** (already hired twice, generating £40 income).

- £680 allocated for **village green repairs** (thanks to Ann, Eddie and Alan for organising).
 - £2,800 set aside for improved **heating and lighting** at the back of the church.
 - £4,000 reserved toward the **War Memorial restoration**.
- Current balances:
 - Current Account: £3,797
 - General Reserves: £7,925
 - Fête Reserves (before commitments): £7,388
- £3,956 remains from the **HS2 Action Group** fundraising, held separately for a future community project.

4. War Memorial Restoration – Steve Webb

- Three quotes obtained between £5,700 and £6,600 for stonework, re-lettering, and cleaning.
- Application submitted to the **War Memorials Trust**; decision expected early 2026.
- The **Royal Regiment of Fusiliers** and **Royal Warwick Yeomanry** have pledged £500 each.
- Further funding enquiries made to the MOD Kineton and Warwick School.
- Steve invited villagers to join him at the Royal Warwickshire Museum on 8 November to learn more about those commemorated.

5. Planning

- Recent applications limited to routine tree-pruning works.
- The Leys: appeal against Enforcement concerning SAM land was unsuccessful
- Noted that the proposed sale of the **Butcher's Arms** did not complete.
- The premises is now scheduled for **auction on 22 January 2026**.
- The Chair has expressed to agents that the village welcomes future engagement with any potential buyer and values the building's heritage and community importance.

6. Councillor Updates – Cllr Nigel Rock

- **Housing Land Supply:** National planning changes may prompt more speculative developments, though impact on Hardwick likely minimal.
- **Gypsy & Traveller Encampments:** Police to hold an information session for local landowners next month in Napton.
- **Fuel Poverty:** Data shows "Ladbroke–Priors" area as among the worst in Warwickshire; older rural homes and oil heating are key factors.
- **Community Policing:** Next mobile police visit expected 6 December in Priors Marston.

7. Parish Meeting vs Parish Council – Discussion

- Prompted by correspondence from Stratford District Council inviting consideration of becoming a parish council.
- **Richard Cutt, Christopher Hodgson, Derrin James, and Natalie Bull** all spoke in favour of **remaining a Parish Meeting**, citing:
 - Strong attendance and open democracy.
 - Risks of forming a small, unrepresentative group if a council were created.
 - Potential legal and insurance liabilities.

- Additional costs and administrative burden.
 - Stuart Hyde and Steve Webb asked about perceived advantages of change.
- Cllr Rock and Cllr Gist explained the background: Stratford is reviewing local governance in an area including Radbourne and Stoneton. No external pressure; purely an invitation to review.
- **Margaret Clarke** asked about costs. Cllr Rock advised setup costs for a contested election could reach £4–5 k; uncontested ~£200.
- After discussion, the meeting **voted unanimously to remain a Parish Meeting**, while agreeing to **review this status periodically**.

8. HS2 Update

- Concerns over excessive and misleading signage at crossroads and diversions making local travel confusing.
- Requests for HS2 to repair damaged roads, particularly towards Boddington.
- Cllr Rock reported these issues raised repeatedly at the **Jeremy Wright MP Forum**; HS2 has been criticised for poor communication and delays.
- Encouraged all residents to report issues directly to HS2 to strengthen representation.

9. Project Enable – Christopher Hodgson

- Church project (PCC-led with parish meeting support) continues despite setbacks:
 - The chancel window masonry urgently needs work (£50 k estimated).
 - PCC pursuing phased repairs and faculty permissions.
 - Immediate improvements underway: new **infrared heaters** and **downlighters** installed at the rear of the church (funded by fête money).
 - Aim is to make the space usable year-round for community events.

10. Website & Podcast Update – Jenny and Tim Hoban

- **Village Voices Podcast**: 12 episodes recorded featuring local stories and interviews. Recent editions include Carolyn & Alex's spooky tale, with upcoming features on local farming and village childhoods.
- **Website**:
 - A spike in overseas visits followed Carolyn's "SAM PDF" going viral in the US (500 downloads).
 - Around 3,000 visitors per month (half from UK).
 - New **online gazebo booking form**, **village marketplace**, and **automated grass-cutting rota** all now live.
 - Archive updates planned before Christmas.
- A **fridge has been donated** for gazebo and event use (thanks to John Eustace).

11. Priors Sports & Social Club

- The club has new trustees and seeks a **Hardwick representative** to attend two meetings per year. Volunteers to contact Jane Richards or the Chair.

12. Any Other Business

- **Progressive Supper (Natalie Bull):** 17 January 2026. Villagers will rotate between homes for starter, main, and dessert – a fun way to socialise and meet new neighbours.
- Around 16 people already signed up; more participants encouraged.

13. Dates of Next Meetings

- **Thursday 8 January 2026** at 7:30 pm
- **Thursday 30 April 2026** at 7:30 pm (AGM)

The Chair closed the meeting at 9 pm, thanking everyone for attending and for their continued commitment to village life.

Action Points

Action	Responsible
Ensure correction to previous minutes (meeting start time 7:30 pm)	Secretary
Circulate details of Priors Marston & Hardwick WI coffee morning	Chair
Continue War Memorial funding applications and update in Jan 2026	Steve Webb
Monitor progress on Butcher's Arms auction and liaise with new owners	Chair
Share policing visit dates with residents	Chair
Investigate insurance implications of adding Radbourne/Stoneton	Carolyn Bath & Chair
Pursue HS2 signage and road repair complaints	Cllr Nigel Rock / Residents
Complete installation of heaters & lighting at church rear	Contractors / PCC
Publicise Progressive Supper and coordinate participant list	Natalie Bull & team
Seek village rep for Priors Sports & Social Club	All residents

Key Points Summary

- **Village votes to remain a Parish Meeting**, with strong consensus to preserve open participation.
- **War Memorial restoration progressing**, external funding support secured.
- **Butcher's Arms to go to auction 22 January 2026** – village keen to engage with new owner.
- **Church improvements** underway with new heaters and lighting.
- **Village Voices podcast** and **website** continue to thrive, celebrating local stories.
- **Progressive Supper 17 January 2026** – all welcome to join in.
- **Next meeting: Thursday 8 January 2026 at 7:30 pm.**