



Press Release

21 May 2024

Benwick volunteers preserve memory of historic village landmark

Volunteers in Benwick have completed yet another community project in the village, with the unveiling of a miniature replica of St Mary's Church – nearly 40 years after landmark's demolition.

The church, originally built in 1854, held significant historical value until its unfortunate demolition in 1985 due to ground stability issues.

Determined to preserve the memory of the beloved landmark, Benwick In Bloom / Street Pride group took up the challenge of recreating the church in meticulous detail.

The group engaged the expertise of skilled craftsman Harry Jackson, a former apprentice at Metalcraft, Chatteris, to produce a steel replica of the church, paying homage to the original structure's design.

The replica now stands proudly on top of the St Mary's Church memorial, which was erected in the churchyard in 1988 and features the original brass plaque from the church stating when it was built.

The project was made possible thanks to generous support from FACT Mobile Community Hub and the Government's Know Your Neighbourhood Fund.

It is the latest in a number of achievements by Benwick In Bloom / Street Pride group, which celebrated its 10th anniversary last year.

In recent years, the group has reinstated an historic tree seat as part of the late Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, completed enhancements to the Second World War pillbox alongside the old River Nene, installed a fence featuring chickens, pigs and sheep in front of 'The Pound' in Benwick High Street where stray animals would have been impounded in medieval times, created a 'stumpery' garden in the churchyard to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla, and much, much more.

Cllr Peter Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Refuse and Cleansing, Parks and Open Spaces at Fenland District Council, which co-ordinates the district's 17 Street Pride groups, said: "Words can't begin to express how grateful we are to Benwick In Bloom / Street Pride volunteers for their incredible dedication to their community, and all that they achieve. They are truly remarkable.

“Our Street Pride and In Bloom groups enhance our district so much, making it more colourful, more attractive and an even better place for the whole community.”

Benwick In Bloom was formed in 2013 by chair Jill Hindle, who approached Fenland District Council about creating the group when she moved to the village. As well as delivering community projects, volunteers invest hours of hard work creating and maintaining beautiful floral displays around the village, organising litter picks and holding fundraising events too. They also enter the village into the Anglia in Bloom competition every year and scooped the top gold award in 2019.

Jill said: “The volunteers love being part of the group and playing an active part in bringing the community together, with many of our projects also involving residents and the local primary and nursery schools too.

“This year, we’ve also given special attention to increasing biodiversity to help tackle the effect of climate change and worked with the parish council to sow many wildflowers.”

Volunteers run Street Pride and In Bloom groups across the district, carrying out all kinds of environment enhancement from litter picking to major planting projects. Volunteers can give lots of regular time or turn up occasionally to help.

Want to get involved? See: www.fenland.gov.uk/streetpride

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Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226 or email: communications@fenland.gov.uk