

At the Parish Council meeting of Tuesday November 28<sup>th</sup>, the subject of flooding was discussed, I am providing this report in context to the discussion.

### Background

Westhorpe is situated in `High Suffolk` the excess water flows three ways to the north, west and the vast majority to the east.

The parish covers about 2,000 acres an inch of rainfall produces about 100 tons of water per acre. On Tuesday September 12<sup>th</sup> the parish received an unprecedented 35ml (just short of two inches) in 20 minutes. Storm Babet on Friday October 20<sup>th</sup> produced 72 ml (almost three inches) over 36 hours on already saturated land. Over these two events around a million tons of rainfall fell on the parish.

From my farming perspective over many years, we have not filled in any roadside ditches in fact there are ditches from West Farm all the way to the church, however ditches have been filled in often not properly piped within the settlement boundary and this is part of the problem.

The main water course through the parish commences at the woodland to the west, runs through the dip south of Shrubbery Farm the water course heads south of the church and Westhorpe Hall continuing past Fair Oaks Farm to Finningham. This water course is well maintained and indeed during the recent rainfall the dip south of Shrubbery Farm never reached water levels experienced in the past, the channels in the dip I had kept clear and although water built up cars were able to navigate without too many problems.

The problems were in the main water flows through the village much of which caused by rainfall on the road and lack of channels to take the water away.

The height above sea level is significant, Westhorpe Lodge stands 62.3 meters, Wynwood Cottage on the western corner 60.8 meters the church 56.82 meters, Cherry Croft 55.2 meters, the Old School 52.9 meters and village green opposite Little Thatch 48 meters.

### The problem

Rainfall from Wynwood Corner tends to run down the road, the land to the north all falls away so is not a problem the land to the south drains into a pond at the entrance to Kells House and with a ditch with culverts in front of Church Farm, from the corner of Church Farm and Thornglade the water is piped under the road and into a ditch beside the Coach House west of the Rectory. Providing the culverts and gully are kept clear there should not be an issue but much of the water landing on the road simply runs down the road and not off the road. Significant flooding occurs on a regular basis outside Fleural Cottage this is caused by rainfall running down the road and from the driveways to the south of the road. There is a ditch just beyond Fleural Cottage which is unmaintained, on inspection at the corner of Rookery Farm there appears to be a drain but we are not sure where it leads.

The second major problem is the heavy rainfall, on reaching Pheasant Cottage this can flow into the garden and garage. Between Pheasant Cottage and Paigles, the ditch was filled in a few years ago by professional contractors, new pipes were installed and a good-sized entry, the pipe links with a pipe

in the field behind the properties all pipes are of a good size. On the first occasion and for the second time in recent years the drive of Pheasant Cottage flooded removing gravel and flooding the garage, Suffolk County Council Highways have visited the site and a raised kerb has been placed but this failed to stop the water flow, on Friday October 20<sup>th</sup> sand bags were placed across the entrance which resulted in the problem moving to Paigles where the garage was flooded along with the back garden.

Further down the village rainwater drains into the pond west of Street Farm this acts as a large sponge and the water filters probably too slow along the front of Street Farm where it shows up at the corner of Part Acre from here the water filters again probably too slowly to Johntina where a pipe takes the water across the road to our farm ditch where it filters under the entrance of Westhorpe Hall to the village green. The village green acts as a flood plain holding water before going down stream to the main water course behind Westhorpe Hall.

The third major problem is at the village green in front of Little Thatch a large quantity of rain fall from Wyverstone flows down the ditch next to the public footpath, the area south of Little Thatch holds significant amounts of water before it flows under the road. In addition, rainfall from properties around Green Farm and Tudor Court flows in the pond in front of Fiddlesticks, the ditch to the east of Green Farm was filled in by a previous resident and probably not piped sufficiently.

A large amount of flooding took place at the village green this has happened many times over the years but on Friday October 20<sup>th</sup> an electric car (see photograph) tried to drive through at the deepest point only to stall and being electric it could not be moved resulting to it being left abandoned for four days. This stationary vehicle caused other traffic trying to navigate the road to damage the village green. There are two drains off the village green to the water course behind the bus shelter but they are not situated at the lowest point. However, most of the flooding receded in 24 hours. The problem became the abandoned car.

The fourth problem is flooding outside the Old Crown, there is I am told a drain that is blocked, Suffolk County Council Highways are coming out to try and unblock.

As a result of significant rainfall entering the sewer there has been a build up of sewage supplemented by rainwater causing a problem to the Old Cottage opposite Westhorpe Hall entrance.

What can be done?

- 1) In the past Suffolk County Council have kept all the gulleys clear in recent years this was using a contractor with an attachment on a tractor, this regular maintenance needs to be instated every autumn.
- 2) Look at ways to reduce rainfall flowing down the road and being held up outside Fleural Cottage
- 3) Increase the size of the raised kerb and gully entrance at Pheasant Cottage.
- 4) Look at ways to encourage surface water at the village green to go into the ditch behind the bus shelter.
- 5) Ensure the gully is maintained outside the Old Crown and if needs be create a channel to take surface water into the ditch close by.