

Earl Stonham Website Report May 2019

At the end of April last year, Alan Sarsby and I transferred the Earl Stonham website to my account with Heart Internet, and I was granted access to upload and edit it. At around the same time, I was able to buy a new computer and updated software to allow me to move the web site to a new design platform able to cope with things like responsive design and secure hosting.

Over the year, several of these hurdles have been crossed successfully, so we now have a site that is mobile friendly and not accessible to would be hackers. It now has an accessible photo album with photos from our Hullabaloo 2018 and our super Christmas Pantomime, Pirates, as well as all the older photos of Earl Stonham events.

While that's all fun, we also report all the obligatory Parish Council business items as well as a full page of Diary Dates to keep people up to date with what is happening in the village, and a smattering of adverts for local businesses.

I try to look at the statistics for the website each month (try to stifle the yawns!) because there is little point if people don't use it. I am pleased to be able to report a consistent level of unique visitors above 300 per month, each making, on average 2.5 visits per month. We have to realise that many people use both a mobile and a computer for access and this would count as two unique visitors, so we may guess that this equates to access for about 200 households.

Typical downloads include the ES Recorder, including back numbers, The Welcome Pack and copies of several editions of Council Minutes. Anything up to 14 copies of each, and a total of 135 different items with more than 1 download. (I don't count the first one as that's probably me doing some testing!)

The stats record the time and date for each visit, although I can't trace visits to individuals, and some of the data is quite odd. For instance, time of day shows peaks at around 9.00am, 1.00pm and 11.00pm and one peak between 2.00 and 4.00 in the morning. This one must surely be in a different time zone!

Days of the week also produce some strange results. Most visits are made on Tuesdays each week, but in April the peaks were on Tuesday 2nd, Wednesday 10th, Thursday 18th, Thursday 25th and Saturday 27th. Each peak has many more visitors than on other days. If it continues like this I will enquire of Heart Internet whether they are accumulating the data for some reason.

I have noticed that the search response to "keywords" is not as good as I would like. While most people get to us through a URL link published elsewhere, or by simply typing something like "Earl Stonham" into a browser, searches using locality key words such as Forward Green or Middlewood Green do not produce the desired effect. Search engines no longer use simple keywords inserted into web pages (Meta data to the geeks!) because web designers used them to cheat the system. They now use artificial intelligence (AI) to "understand" the content of each page, so I will need to do some work to introduce more substance to the text accessible to search engines so that they can establish a more realistic response to obvious entries.

Another task I have to undertake is to provide sensible names for all the files present on the website. My design programme (Rapid Weaver) applies an alphanumeric name to each file by default. The designer needs to replace it with a name relevant to the content to help with keyword identification. I had too much else to learn at the time, so I now have some catching up to do. However, it shouldn't affect use of the site.

My final word is a repeated plea for content. My job as editor is to receive content and place it on the web site. I can only do this efficiently if the content is available. I don't believe residents want to hear my opinion or interpretation of things relevant to the village, especially as I am usually well behind the latest news. Sending content and photos by email is very easy these days. I can do the formatting and "editing", but I am very reluctant to generate original material. It is your web site after all.

Chris Hamilton
Webmaster
May 2019