

Reports from Parish Clubs and Organisations

For the Annual Parish Meeting in Grafty Green Village Hall on Monday 13th May 2024

1. St Nicholas Church
2. Honeywood & Douglas Charity
3. 59 Bus
4. Headcorn Parish Council Community Warden
5. Grafty Green Village Hall
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St Nicholas, Boughton Malherbe - Kenneth Alexander

On a bright sunny afternoon on the May Bank Holiday, with the help of the Village Hall Committee, we hosted a luncheon/tea party to celebrate the coronation of King Charles III which was attended by many people.

We also hosted a luncheon party to thank, and say farewell to, Charlotte Coles who had, as curate, helped in the benefice for the past two years. Again, with help from many people we began hosting cream teas during July and August on five Sundays and we do hope to hold more this summer.

Harvest Supper was held in the village hall on October the 8th which was followed by Harvest Festival the following day in the church. It was great to have the church full at the Carol Service and again at the Crib Service on Christmas Eve in which a number of people were asked to use their skills as actors.

Finally, twenty-four people from the benefice turned out at the East end of the churchyard to see the sun rise on Easter Sunday which was followed by breakfast in the church.

Honywood & Douglas Almshouses Charity – David Chantler

2023-2024 has been another successful year for the Honywood & Douglas Charity. New residents have been appointed and there has been interest from Boughton Malherbe residents.

The highlight of the year was being awarded the 'Inspirational Homes Award' from the Almshouse Association to recognise the new properties at 23 High Street, Lenham. The Charity wishes to thank the Parish Council for their continued support.

59 Bus – John Collins

The Wednesday bus service to and from Maidstone continues to run thanks to funding obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund through the efforts of the previous clerk to Boughton Malherbe Parish Council, Vickie Ford. Further funding has now been granted by Kent County Council which will enable the service to continue until the end of March 2026. It leaves Grafty Green at 09.37 and returns from Maidstone King Street (outside Greggs) at 13.00.

Concessionary bus passes can be used on the service but if you are not eligible for a pass or do not have one, the return fare is just £4.90. It has proved a very reliable service, operated by NuVenture, and with regular drivers. Please do use it and help ensure it continues in the future.

Headcorn Parish Council Community Warden - Stefan Christodoulou

Due to the unfortunate cuts that KCC are making to the Community Warden service, we could no longer guarantee that we would have reliable access to the valuable functions that they provide. Headcorn Parish Council thought it would be best to ensure we had an equivalent service to offer the Parishioners, so we asked our then current Community Warden if they would be willing to come work for us as a Community Liaison Officer doing exactly the same thing as they had been doing for KCC. They readily agreed and we set about the process of hiring Stuart and putting in place all the policies etc that were needed to enable him to continue his work in the Village.

KCC and MBC were both very helpful with this change and gave us a lot of information to ensure that this new service would be comparable to the old service. Including how to deal with the various safeguarding, security and public safety issues that the new role would face and to help integrate it to the pre-existing databases and services of KCC and MBC to ensure carry over of service.

This all works in tandem with KCC Warden Service and MBC Community Protection Team as well as with the Police. Which gives our new Community Liaison Officer the ability to look into the issues that he used to be involved in such as vulnerable or at-risk persons in the Village and also ASB etc, which can be sent on to Community Protection Team or the Police. This greatly widens the approaches we can take to any of the issues we face in the Village on a day-to-day basis.

Going forward we very much hope that this new service will be an example of what Parish Councils can achieve for their Parishioners when the need arises and that this new position of Community Liaison Officer will be the first of many in the Country, which will give Parishes some measure of autonomy from their Local Authorities and serve as a means to provide a new service, when cuts are being made higher up in the system. We look forward to supporting Stuart in his new role and using it to better serve our Village.

Grafty Green Village Hall – Parish Council Annual Meeting Report
Jon Thompson

The Village Hall is at the centre of our friendly village community and in addition to ad hoc bookings we host the following clubs, societies and activities; Local & Central Government elections, Parish Council meetings, yoga classes, , the pop-up Post Office, a weekly coffee morning, a crafting club, an art club, pilates, a dance fit class, indoor bowls, the gardening club, Tai Chi and shortly a monthly digital hub to coincide with the coffee morning where local residents can obtain help in accessing the internet.

We are always looking at ways in which we can further support our local village community and It would be pleasing to hear from anyone who is interested in running a club, society or new venture which would enhance and enrich the lives of our local residents.

In addition to the regular activities at the hall we host a range of events for the enjoyment of the local community such as our pancake evening, quiz night, craft fairs, scarecrow festival and this year a return of the very popular Christmas Panto, (oh no you won't ...oh yes we will!). We have increasingly collaborated with other local organisations such as the church who help to host the weekly coffee mornings and their harvest supper, the Parish Council who have generously provided grants to fund the Coronation and Christmas events and Platts Heath School who have supported the scarecrow festival and the Christmas Event. We would like to continue and expand our collaboration going forward so that we can both support local clubs and societies and deliver more entertainment for the enjoyment and mental well-being of our local community.

Renovation of our cosy and lovely timber framed hall which is over a 100 years old is a necessary and constant activity. Our priority as trustees over the next 12 months will be the re-wire of the electrics and making good and redecorating the interior of the hall once these works have been completed.

Finally, I would like to conclude by thanking the trustees for all their hard work, the army of volunteers who make hosting the events possible, the hirers for providing such a wide variety of events at the hall, the hall users who support the hall so loyally and make the hall such vibrant and fun place to visit and finally the Parish Council, the Church and Platts Heath School for their support which is greatly appreciated. Thank you to you all.

Parish Emergency Plan – Ron Galton

Owing to several resignations, mainly due to actual and pending moves from the Parish by first responders the plan was revised earlier in the 2023 year and re distributed to households and the Kent resilience team. Monitoring and attendance at occasional resilience forums continues.

2024 Annual Report by the Chairman Ron Galton Boughton Malherbe Parish council

Compared to previous years this report is relatively uneventful although the amount of work necessitating input by councillors and our clerk does not diminish. Towards the year end we suffered the loss of our hard-working Clerk, Vickie Ford, and I would like to record our thanks for her invaluable contribution to the workings of the Parish Council. We now have a new Clerk, Marie Norris, who has only been with us for a very short time and I welcome her on board. The council continues its work on many fronts to further the interests of our residents, and I am pleased to say that the Pop-Up Post Office, every Tuesday from 12.45 to 2.15 pm that the council facilitated in 2022, in conjunction with the Tuesday regular coffee mornings from 11.30pm in the village hall has proved a great success and is now an established part of village life.

The other major success has been the securing of grants from the Lottery Fund and KCC to enable the 59-bus service to continue between Grafty Green and Maidstone for a further 2 years, and further applications will be made before the 2 years runs out to ensure the service continues. Success of the service so far is encouraging based upon Passenger numbers of 161 in February and 137 in March 2024. for only one return trip to Maidstone every Wednesday leaving Grafty Green at 09.37 am and returning from Maidstone at 13.00pm from nearly opposite the entrance to the Mall. Please use the bus as often as you can, the message is still "Use it or lose it". If you have a bus pass the fare is free, so please make the most of it.

Chasing KCC for pot hole repairs and road improvements is never ending, as are the efforts of Ken our lengthsman who collects several sacks of refuse from our roadside verges and ditches every week.

Despite all the objections to the proposed new development of 5000 new homes on our border at Lenham Heath it would appear that it is still going ahead, and we continue to monitor the situation and maintain contact with Lenham Parish.

In addition to the above activities, we continue to support local events and good causes and the last year has been very busy for the Parish Council. I therefore thank all councillors and others who have contributed to Parish Council activity during the last 12 months.

Malherbe Monthly – Michael Hitchins

During the past year we have continued our normal distribution of the magazine to the residents of Boughton Malherbe. In addition magazines are left in magazine holders on the Village Green and in the porch of St Nicholas Church at Boughton Malherbe.

Additionally the magazine has been uploaded to the Parish Council website each month enabling anyone with internet access the ability to view and read the magazine.

Finally I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the distributors who drop magazines though letterboxes, without their valued efforts the magazine would not be viable.

Yoga Classes

There are, at present, three weekly classes being held in the Village Hall, Monday and Thursday mornings and Wednesday evenings; each class is well attended; on average 30 people a week. Yoga teacher, Sue Burch is a British Wheel of Yoga teacher and has been teaching since 2006.

Grafty Green Gardening Club

The club was formed in the late 1990's and has continued planning and carrying out an event every month since then, even zoom meetings during the Covid lockdown! The weekend away began in the early 2000's and each year we have enjoyed visiting other gardens around the UK.

The events held in the village hall start at 7.30; outings generally at 6pm at the chosen garden and the club welcomes guests to any of their activities. Our aim is to discover

and share the many different aspects of managing a garden as well as being a very sociable club for the community.

Approximately 50 members enrolled this year, not just from the parish but from other areas around east Kent.

The gardening club continues to manage the planters sited on the green and around the parish.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2024

Date	Speaker/Event	Topic
January 9	Joe Archer	From Kew to Kent
February 6	Steven Harmer	Arts and Crafts movement and their gardens
March 5	Steve Kirk	Wild life reintroductions in Kent
April 2	Spring show plus Maureen, and Sue	Encouraging wildlife visitors to your garden
Saturday April 27	Plant fair -10 am in The Village Hall	
May 7	Outing to Marden Meadow with Vicky Golding	
June 4	Social in a garden in Crumps Lane	
July 2	Outing to Hawkhurst – Hands of Hope garden	
July 30	Outing – Old Rectory Otterden	
September 3	Autumn Show and Sally Channon	Thanet Earth
September 13 - 15	Weekend away to north Devon	
October 1	Kevin Tooher	Choice trees for small spaces
November 5	Davina	The story of the Dower House garden at Chilston Park
December 3	Practical session – seasonal table decoration	

