

Reports from Parish Clubs and Organisations

For the Annual Parish Meeting in Grafty Green Village Hall on Monday 15th May 2023

2022/23 Annual Report by the Parish Council Chairman

The past year has been one that has taken up a great deal of our Clerk's and Councillors' time with both success and disappointment.

In my 2022 report I was able to report that the work by the Parish Council to facilitate the setting up of a Pop-up Post Office in the Village Hall had led to successful negotiations between the Post Office and the Village Hall Committee, The Post office in combination with a coffee morning is now an established event every Tuesday from 11.30 am to 2.15 pm for tea/coffee and home-made cakes etc, and from 12.45 to 2.15 pm for the Post Office.

Unfortunately, the setting up of a Community Village Shop Committee that started with high hopes did not materialise into a replacement for the village shop and it is now unlikely that it will happen in the future. However, fresh local farm produce and craft products are usually on sale during the coffee morning period every Tuesday in the Village hall. Please support these activities into which goes a lot of volunteer work to keep it functioning for the benefit of the community.

A real blow to the community was the announcement by KCC that financial support for the 59-bus service was being withdrawn and the service was due to be cancelled from the 11th of February 2023. However, Nu-Venture will continue to operate a limited service on Wednesdays until July 2023, but passenger support is essential to keep it viable. The timetable is printed on the last page of this Magazine and brief details follow nearer the end of this report.

The 59 bus was the only means of public transport serving Parishes along its route to Maidstone and many residents without an alternative to get to town would have been cut off from essential services. Since the announcement, the Parish Council has taken the lead with support mainly from other Parish Councils, John Collins who is our own representative on the East of Maidstone Bus Committee, and Norman Kemp of Nu-Venture Bus Company in negotiations with KCC to keep the service operational.

Others such as our MBC Ward Councillors Martin Round and Ziggy Trzebinski, together with our KCC representative Shellina Prendergast have also taken part, given support, and attended various meetings on the subject.

I am pleased to now report that a limited grant to fund continuation of the 59-bus service has been obtained by this Parish Council from KCC and with further contributions from us and other participating Parishes, and the possibility of using our unspent Community Infrastructure Levy funds that are ring fenced for specific purposes which MBC has now advised us includes

provision of essential bus services, we hope that the 59 bus can be maintained long into the future.

Having achieved success in keeping the 59-bus operational, I wish to make it clear that without sufficient passenger numbers to keep the service viable within the finance available it may still have to be terminated **and if you do not use it, you will still lose it sometime in the future despite the funding provided by grants and direct Parish Council contributions. If you have a bus pass the fare is free, otherwise the fare is £4.90 adult return from Grafty Green to Maidstone.** The service runs every Wednesday leaving Grafty Green at 09.37 am, arriving at King Street at 10.33 am, and returning from Maidstone King Street (the stop nearly opposite The Mall entrance) at 13.00 pm. The return time at Grafty Green is 13.54 pm.

The Parish Council continues to support local groups where possible and to facilitate better access to footpaths via kissing gates etc. but in the past year the majority of our resources have gone into keeping the 59- bus operational. Nevertheless, we continue to work with MBC and the Police in dealing with rural crime and antisocial behaviour and are regularly chasing KCC regarding dangerous potholes in our roads. We also have to deal with all planning applications and appeals as they arrive and provide our input into the new local plan and the proposed MBC development for a new town that MBC calls a village of 5000 new homes at Lenham Heath, which is on our border with Lenham Parish.

Our appointment of a lengthsman, to look after roadside rubbish clearance and report any problems with fire hydrants has made an impact which I hope is noticeable to everyone. Ken Parish collects several bags of litter every week and his activity is expanding. Thank you, Ken, for your contribution.

We suffered a great loss with the resignation of Cllr Grant Kennaird, and I take this opportunity to thank him for the hard work that he contributed to all matters, particularly planning, roads and traffic problems. I hope that one day we might be able to welcome him back.

I would also like to thank Vickie Ford, our overworked Clerk, for her immense contribution to the working of the Parish Council since she joined us.

In conclusion, thank you to all my fellow councillors and everyone who has contributed to Parish Council activity during a very trying year.

Ron Galton
Chairman, Boughton Malherbe Parish Council.

Maidstone Borough Council Headcorn Ward Annual report

From Ziggy and Martin: Elected Ward members

We still experience strange and interesting times in the world of politics, economics and public services as we now move on after the worse pandemic not only in our own country but throughout the world certainly in our living history. We have also had a major political and economic change with world events, an edge of Europe war with Russia and significant effects to the cost of living -especially energy- together with cultural & economic effects following Brexit and certain other world events or reactions that also have repercussions.

LIFE has been DRASTICALLY affected with issues from the Health & Care services, poor Policing to absurd weather. We have actually had record rain downfalls and much more pollution of our waterways.

Frankly every aspect of our lives has been affected. And it is important to realise that whilst the national government have experienced more than a few problems, there have also been some mighty happenings in Germany and France with near Revolution in Paris to financial worries in the auto industry of Germany.

Yet Maidstone Borough Council have proved to be un-distracted by that! But it hasn't been easy.

Whilst that significant national and international picture does bear significance we must put that into perspective and consider that in Maidstone Borough Council a new leadership have gone about managing and effecting change whilst leading strongly and being innovative with foresight.

Broadly our aims were:

Promote and improve the Town Centre, encouraging visitors for shopping, supporting & promoting business and cultural benefits, and supporting new and established businesses throughout the Borough. So we handed out 100s of grants & actively set up a Town Centre Strategy. Part of that work also put Arts, Culture and Leisure to the fore with more events to bring back people to the area.

Many businesses, some community groups in Headcorn, the Church, Grafty Green Village Hall etc have benefitted.

We continue with the governments Housing agenda and deliver a revised Local Plan, but also make it work better for LOCAL communities and its residents. So we decided to enter the market as developer and return to being a Housing provider, with a very ambitious but well managed budget and plan for 1000 homes. We now have some plans advancing well.

Not only have we ensured front line services like Waste Collection have coped with struggles of continued ill health absence and soaring energy costs but where possible we sought improvements. Now we've got a new contract with a new provider from next year.

And we maintain financial responsibility, invest with foresight and innovation for long term financial returns but also review services and structures to secure the new directions & benefits for local people and communities. So we have a new Constitution, with a Leader and Cabinet system that can make or change Executive decisions quickly.... AND we have reviewed the size of Wards and reduced the number of Council Members from 55 to 48.... AND set up 4 yearly whole Council Elections for the Borough AND restructured management to deliver this!

But we still have one more Election of a third of the 55 Member Council this May, but the Headcorn Ward will not vote this year...BUT we all will in 2024. And then Sutton Valence will be added onto the Headcorn Ward.

We still have a long way to go but we have made great progress.

Meanwhile the work of being a Council Member is not just sitting on Council & Committee meetings, attending briefings and training sessions and contributing to or challenging the directions and policies, it is also about the Ward and many issues that arise or concern.

Headcorn Ward is a very busy and frankly demanding Ward. It has 4 Parishes, soon to be 5, with several other distinct communities within them. Each is different whilst there are some common interests and many issues have knock-on effects.

The issues around Planning probably raise the most concerns and most of the work where lots of interactions are needed. The list is endless! Then crime, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour including speeding vehicles and rogue lorries on country roads take up many emails! Yet they are not always directly Maidstone Borough Council issues and require much more dialogue with other bodies. As does flooding and clean and dirty water matters, bus and train services and many concerns over health and care issues. So dialogue with those other agencies and keeping our MP informed is critical, especially if they are key issues which can provoke their involvement or possible benefits in National debate, law and policy. And the Headcorn Ward DOES have such key & national issues!

So the role of a Parish Council is critical to our work.

So Ziggy and Martin do keep very busy, especially where both play a very active role in many of the Council and Ward affairs. Martin is a Cabinet Member and Ziggy sits on several committees whilst both try to keep in touch with the Parishes and maintain that flowing dialogue ...and finding ways to support or seek solutions.

We don't know about the May 23 (one third) Elections and what it will reveal but we hope we can continue our initiatives for one more year ...and then? Well we all have to be selected and elected again!

Thank you so much especially to the Clerk and Chair of this Parish but especially the people and organisations who do allow us to work, all of us, for the benefit of this wonderful community.

CLlr Martin Round

Grafty Green Gardening Club – Programme of Events 2023

Date	Speaker/Event	Topic
January 10	Dr Mick Lynn and AGM	Which came first the Bee or the Flower
February 7	Steven Harmer	The story of Plant Hunting
March 7	Kevin Tooher	Getting the best out of Composting
April 4	Caroline Halfpenny and Spring show	A Gardener's response to Climate Change.
Saturday April 29	10 am Plant sale on the Green	
Sunday May 14	Coach outing to Leonardslee	
June 6	Outing to Faversham – Edible Culture	
July 4	Outing to Elmside, Ulcombe - Rhian Banham's Garden	
Sunday August 13	Coach outing to Hyde Hall	
September 5	Victoria Golding and Autumn show	Marden Meadow
September 8,9,10	Weekend away in Dorset, staying in Weymouth, visit Chawton House and Gardens, Abbotsbury, Athelhampton House and Garden and Holme Gardens	
October 3	Ylva Blid-Mackenzie	Designing a Perennial border
November 7	Christine Bartlett	Healthy House Plants, Happy Home
December 5	Social – wine and cheese with slide-show	

The events held in the village hall start at 7.30; outings generally at 6pm at the chosen garden. The Gardening Club welcomes non-members to any of their activities.

50 members enrolled this year. The gardening club continues to manage the planters sited around the parish.

Sue Burch

Community Warden Service – Stuart Ellesmere

Unfortunately, I have very little to report and have received no calls from the area and I have also been attached to the Maidstone Task Force. Due to Neighbourhood Policing changes this current task force is now changing its format which now has me working predominantly back in and around the Headcorn area of late.

Whilst I was attached to the Task Force, Headcorn and the surrounding area received the assistance of an additional Warden to cover some of the hours I wasn't present. My new colleague is called Owen Moemken who is also covering Coxheath. Even though I return to fuller hours in the Headcorn and surrounding areas, Owen will continue to assist in the area.

Clearly if there are issues of isolation or vulnerable people in the Boughton Malherbe area we are more than happy to assist or link up with other relevant services.

Unfortunately, you may have heard via the press and other sources that KCC Non-Statutory services are under threat of cuts. Sadly, we have been advised that it is likely that we will have our budget cut by 50% and we will be entering consultation in June for this so the future is a bit unclear at present on how the service runs and progresses. What is clear is that until this time both the service and myself will continue to give our all for Kent's residents.

For Reference, Owen's phone contact number is 07811 271021. And email: owen.moemken@kent.gov.uk

My details remain the same as below.

Stuart Ellesmere
KCC Community Warden
07969583923

Village Hall Committee – Registered Charity No. 288091

As a committee we feel that 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 Government elections, Parish Council meetings, yoga classes, children's drama classes, (Dazzle), the pop-up Post Office, a coffee morning, a crafting club, an art club, Pilates, a dance fit class, indoor bowls and the gardening club.

We are always looking at ways in which we can further support our local village community and I would be pleased 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 as a committee continue to organise and host the Christmas panto, the pancake evening on Shrove Tuesday, the summer fair on the old cricket field, a themed meal with a live band, the winter craft fair and the Christmas quiz. We have over the last year expanded the craft fairs to include two further craft fairs at both Easter and in the summer. We have hosted a scarecrow festival in the village with many of our scarecrows being displayed in Maidstone Town Centre and run our first film night which was a suggestion made by a local resident at our welcome back event held at the hall after the easing of lockdown restrictions. We are presently collaborating with the Parish Council, Platts Heath School and the Church to host a Coronation cream tea at the Church on Sunday 7th May. This has been possible by a generous grant from the Parish Council which is very much appreciated, thank you.

Renovations to the Hall continue, repainting of the outside of the hall has been completed and the exterior doors to the hall have either been refurbished or replaced. Draught excluders have been fitted to all exterior doors in order to reduce drafts for hall users during periods of cold weather. The exterior notice board has been refurbished. Further work will need to be undertaken but we are making good progress in making the hall fit for purpose for the 21st Century.

Priorities for the forthcoming year are to continue to expand the activities at the hall for the benefit of the local community and continue with our programme of renovations to ensure the hall is fit for purpose and run on a sound financial footing. We also need to recruit a web specialist to update and maintain the village hall website and we will continue to seek grant funding whenever this is available in order to fund essential maintenance and further improvements to the fabric of the village hall.

Finally, I would like to conclude by thanking the committee for all their hard work, the 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.

Jon Thompson, Village Hall Chairman
07932 112730
bromley@ashleylaw.co.uk

KENT POLICE



Boughton Malherbe Parish has continued to maintain a low level of crime during the past year. This has been possible through the support of the community and the Parish Council. We have dealt with a number of issues throughout the year, which have included the following:

- Numerous youths dealt with throughout the year for causing \ASB and nuisance around the village. Working with newly appointed School Police officers.
- Regular patrols by a dedicated vehicle for ASB hotspots in the area. Action plan formulated to tackle the issue of youths in the village.
- Joint agency work involving various partners including local housing providers and MBC.
- several operations in the area around rural crime. Particularly a regular rural operation called Op innovate.
- Follow ups on the victims of burglaries/breaks to give crime prevention advice and information booklets.
- Kent police rural task force monitor and patrol the area on a regular basis

Can all residents please pass on any information that they deem suspicious. Including where possible descriptions of persons and vehicle registration numbers. This really helps on building information around activity within the rural areas. We do encourage residents to call in any incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour.

My community voice is a new app for connecting members of the public to police for updates and advice and can be downloaded via the web. Residents are urged to join.

Search – **mycommunityvoicekent** in a search engine for access.

I would also like to reiterate that residents call 101/999 for any incidents that occur and not just post on Facebook. We need to know!

Anyone wishing to contact me about any issues or crime prevention advice can call the non-emergency Police number 101.

As council are aware Kent police are going through a re-structure so as from the beginning of June I will belong to the Maidstone Task force and not the PCSO for the area, I would like to

thank the Clerks, Chair and Council members for the support I have been given in my tenure as PCSO for the area. As I will still be working for Kent Police in the Maidstone area, therefore I have no doubt I will still be around from time to time albeit in a different role.

Thank you for your continued support in making the area safe.

PCSO John Boyd - Maidstone Community Safety Unit

Grafty Green Bowls Club

Grafty Green bowls is held at the Village Hall every Tuesday at 2-30. It's a friendly group, playing bowls and having fun. We welcome new members: please ring Joan Marriott 01622 858100 .

Joan Marriott

St Nicholas Church

Because of Covid, we began holding our services outside in the churchyard last summer, which everyone enjoyed, and this enabled to host members from the other three churches in the benefice. As the weather got colder, we reverted to holding services indoors and we are now back to holding our old rhythm of weekly services, apart from the 4th Sunday service, which is rotated around the benefice.

Two new stones were replaced in the top string of the tower during the summer, making it secure; whilst the scaffolding was in place the opportunity was taken to repaint the clock face. A new notice board has also been erected inside the wall of the closed churchyard. When reordering the South Aisle last summer, the 1650 tomb of Lord and Lady Edward Wotton was discovered; this had been covered over with pews when the church was reordered in the 1850s by the Victorians. We have yet to decide what to do with that corner. Towards the front of the South Aisle, we have turned the pews round to face the Nave and have had a refectory table made with oak donated by the Chantler family, for which we are very grateful. 18 people had breakfast round it on Easter morning at 6.00 after having seen the sun rise across East Field.

The Harvest Festival was well supported in the autumn, as was the Carol Service and the Crib Service on Christmas Eve. We are looking forward to celebrating the Coronation in and around the church on Sunday 7th May and hosting a few cream teas later in the summer.

Kenneth Alexander, Churchwarden

Malherbe Monthly

During the past year we resumed 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.

As normal, 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.

Michael Hitchins

Emergency Plan Committee Annual Report 2023

There have been no updates to the Emergency Plan during this year but the existing version is still in place. A couple of minor updates will be made in the coming year.

Ron Galton

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 27 people a week.

Sue Burch

Report of Trustees of Honywood and Douglas Alms-house Charity

During the last 12 months we have celebrated our 400th anniversary at the same time we opened the three new alms-houses at 23 High Steet Lenham which were converted from a bungalow and garage on the site.

During the year William Alexander was appointed as the 2nd trustee representing Boughton Malherbe in place of Michael Davidson who had represented our parish for many years.

The trustees now have 29 alms-houses for qualifying residents of either Lenham or Boughton Malherbe .

David Chantler

Community Shop

The situation hasn't changed over the last 12 months. The discovery of a significant tomb at the church has meant plans for a sales area have not been decided. The Village Hall has been hosting the Post Office on Tuesday lunch time and there have been goods for sale such as local vegetables, meat, home-made jam, Pluckley Tea, greetings cards, honey and eggs. The footfall and sales are not sufficient to suggest that something more permanent would be viable.

Sue Burch

The 59 Bus Service

Ron has covered much of the detail in his Chairman's report but there are a couple of things I would like to add.

Firstly, it is intended that the service will operate in its current form until at least the end of March 2024. However, passenger numbers are being closely monitored, with options to terminate or to expand the service being held in mind. Any decisions made will depend on whether the scheme is financially viable to Nu-Venture and the Parishes; and if it is providing the expected community benefit.

Secondly, the 59 is effectively a "hail and ride" service. As the timetable (below) says: "Nu-Venture bus 59 serves all fixed bus stops on line of route, and on request at any **safe** point in rural areas and villages. As the bus approaches, please give a clear hand-signal to the bus driver." It is also a very friendly, helpful service, as I have experienced myself.

Ron has already thanked many who have contributed to retaining our 59 service but I would like to add my personal thanks to our own John Collins, for many years Boughton Malherbe Parish Council's representative on the East of Maidstone Bus Group (there is no one connected with transport he doesn't know!); Norman Kemp of Nu-Venture; Broomfield and Kingswood and Ulcombe Parish Councils for partnering with us; and Cllr Mike Taylor, Chairman of Borough Green Parish Council, for his help through the grant application process.

**Vickie Ford
Parish Clerk**

