

Malherbe Monthly

Number 235
February 2024



Pat Dodson who is much missed was cremated at Charing on January 10th
2024

Useful contact names and telephone N^{os}.

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Village Hall General Enquires	Jon Thompson email bromley@ashleylaw.co.uk Mobile 07932 112730	851351
Gardening Club	Doreen Hulm	850287
Church Choir	Doreen Hulm	850287
Dance Fit	Sharon Harris	890170
Craft Group	Jan Carter	850898
Yoga	Sue Burch	850381
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Pilates	Cheryl Stubbs email: c.stubbs8@btinternet.com	07852 602369
Art Class	Cathy Hill email: cathyonthehill@hotmail.com	07927 045708
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The views expressed in "Malherbe Monthly" are not necessarily those of the Production Team; publication of articles/adverts does not constitute endorsement and we reserve the right to edit!

Anything for the **March** edition should be left in Grafty Green Telephone Box, or contact Mike on 01622 858937 (mfhitchins@btinternet.com) by **20th February**

News from St. Nicholas Church – February 2024

The church calendar is racing forward, this year especially, as Easter is at almost the earliest it can be, i.e. 30th March. This means that our usual post-Christmas events cannot be taken at a leisurely pace, not giving us the opportunity to take stock before the reflective and spiritual aspects of Lent are upon us. We will be making pancakes in the village hall and in homes around the country shortly, on Shrove Tuesday, 13th February, followed by Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, sometimes with a solemn service of anointing foreheads with oil mixed with the ash from the burnt crosses given out last year on Palm Sunday. In March last year Anne and I experienced this in a packed church in Timaru, New Zealand, where the congregations from local churches of various denominations had joined together for this special and thoughtful service. Definitely an evening to remember.

Reminders

The church porch is open at all times with the opportunity to make a hot drink and stay for a time in that peaceful place. Hoping the coffee sachets were there when you needed them. They were getting low, but more are on the way. Sad the beautiful Christmas tree outside the porch has now gone for another year. It was a lovely beacon in the darkness of winter.

Please use the mini food bank there if you need. There is also the larger food bank at the back of St. Mary's church in Lenham, open daily from 10.00-4.00pm.

The main church building is open for services, meetings, cleaning etc. Please contact the churchwardens for a key at other times if you would like to visit.

Church service times are on the noticeboards by the roadside and by the porch, also outside the Village Hall in Grafty Green.

Celtic Morning Prayer is said in the side chapel each Monday 9.00-9.30am. This is an informal prayer time with short (usually very short bible readings), giving time to remember those people and things which we can easily forget in the business of our lives. If you have any prayer requests, please contact Rev. John Huggins or the churchwardens at any time and these will be said in morning prayer time or in private if you wish.

Village Coffee Morning takes place each Tuesday morning from 11.30am-2.00pm in the village hall in Grafty Green.

The Post Office is also there from 12.45-2.45pm. There are usually items for sale; eg. local free-range eggs, honey, greetings cards, Pluckley teas. homemade marmalade and jam.

Any donations received at the coffee mornings are shared equally between St.Nicolas church and a charity chosen by the 'regulars'. This month £100 will be given to Save the Children for their vital work in Gaza.

Looking back

Crib Service on Christmas Eve was a delightful event, well supported by families and friends of all ages. The Nativity story was enacted and narrated with much enthusiasm, with participation from the congregation. There was a special, quiet time, as Millie aged 10yrs and her 2 younger brothers 'signed' the words as the choir sang Silent Night, with everyone holding a candle, before Millie placed the baby Jesus in the stable tableau. Many thanks to all who helped and took part and all those who joined us. Thanks to Sue as wardrobe mistress. Didn't recognise Kenneth as a shepherd! Definitely type-cast.

Christmas Day Service was a short and joyful occasion. Another time to appreciate the church decorated as usual with many candles, evergreen branches and two large Christmas trees.

Wedding on New Year's Eve of Faye and Pascual. They chose to keep the church in its Christmas finery, to add to the atmosphere of their special day. St. Nicolas definitely looks it's best on these happy occasions.

Monthly meditation. The first of these sessions of meditation was held in St.Nicolas on the first Saturday of January, led by Rev. John Huggins. So good to have this quiet time of silence and thoughtfulness. Highly recommended. No experience required! These sessions will continue at 2pm on the first Saturday of each month, held around the refectory table in St. Nicolas.

Funerals. Grafty Green said farewell to Pat Dobson at Charing Crematorium on January 10th. Both she and Bernard had been vital to the community in their work running the Post Office and in the social life in Grafty Green. St.Nicolas was grateful for all the washing up and chat during our months of summer Cream Teas.

Also, that week, on January 12th, family and friends said goodbye to Les Parsons at Charing Crematorium, a character in the local rural community.

Looking forward.

Lent Lunches will return for 5 Tuesdays this year. They will take place each Tuesday from 12.30-2pm in the Village Hall in Grafty Green, continuing the hospitality of the Coffee Mornings. Bread and soup will be served while the coffee morning continues. Why not make a day of it? Coffee and cakes from

11.30am followed by **Bread and Soup for lunch** (or more cake?)!! **Dates: February 20th. 27th. March 5th. 12th. and 19th.**

All proceeds will be given to Christian Aid as always, for their vital work wherever the need worldwide.

Craft Club is aiming high with the latest event. Janice invited us into her home to teach us the basics of dyeing skeins of wool. She is very experienced, sending her beautiful hand-dyed merino wool worldwide. We had a vast range of colours to work with and her calm directions kept our ignorance and possible panic at bay. Our efforts and subsequent use of the wool can be seen at Tuesday Coffee time in the Hall, or at Craft Club on Fridays 10.00-12.00am.

Finale

So much to think about in this New Year. So many events and opportunities ahead. Can be daunting, everyone rushing at breakneck speed, can we jump off the treadmill and go at our own pace. Truly, Lent can be used as a time to step back and see where our personal priorities are, buck the trend and look inside ourselves. What is really important and what can quietly be put to one side for another time. Probably better than giving up chocolate.

Sally Alexander



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Boughton Malherbe

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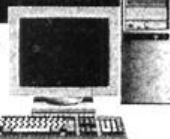
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Village Hall – February Newsletter

Pancake evening on Tuesday 13th February 4pm to 6pm

Once again we will be hosting our pancake evening. We will be offering a selection of sweet and savoury pancakes together with the usual refreshments so please come along and enjoy a delicious pancake or two and spend some time over a cup of tea with friends. As well as the pancakes there will be activities to keep the children entertained.

Stressed out and need to relax why not try Yoga?

Sue our lovely Yoga teacher offers three Yoga classes, (Monday and Thursday mornings and Wednesday evening), at the hall. Yoga improves flexibility, stamina and strength together with reducing stress and tension. Just the ticket to get fit and relax after the stresses and strains of Christmas & the New Year. The cost is £8 per session or prepayment for the term works out to £6 a session; to book your place or for further information please contact Sue on 07803 962339 or Email:

grafftyyoga@gmail.com

New Evening Art Class Commencing Thursday 11th April 7 to 9pm Fortnightly

Cathy our brilliant art class teacher is by popular demand starting an additional art class fortnightly on **Thursday evenings commencing on Thursday 11th April from 7pm and 9pm**. Please contact Cathy on 07927 054708 or Email:

cathyonthehill@hotmail.com for more details and to book your place. Cathy is offering a discounted price of £40 for the first 3 sessions, (normally £48).

Spring Craft Fair Weekend Saturday & Sunday 11th & 12th May | 10 am to 3pm

We will also be hosting our spring craft fair weekend at the hall on Saturday & Sunday 11th & 12th of May where you can browse a varied selection of stalls offering a wide range of interesting crafted items, have a chat with friends and enjoy a cup of tea and some cake on Saturday or enjoy a bacon sandwich on the Sunday. There will be a wide range of stall holders including beauty products, bags and lots of gift ideas. Any donations of cake will be very welcome and we look forward to seeing you at the event.

Jon Thompson

Village Hall Committee Chairman

bromley@ashleylaw.co.uk

www.grafftygreenvillagehall.co.uk Facebook – [grafftygreenvillage](https://www.facebook.com/grafftygreenvillage)

Grafty Green Village Hall

Bookings 01622 850898

Regular Weekly Events

Yoga – mixed ability
Susan Burch 01622 850381

Mondays and Thursdays 9.30 – 11am
Wednesdays 7 – 8.30pm

Pilates
Cheryl Stubbs 07852 602639

Mondays 2.00-3pm
Tuesdays 9.30 – 10.30 am

Post Office

Tuesdays 12.45 – 2.15pm

Coffee morning

Tuesdays 11.30 – 2.00pm

Short Mat Bowls
Joan Marriott 01622 858100

Tuesdays 2.30 – 5.30pm

Dance Fit
Sharon Harris 01622 890170

Wednesdays 11am – 12.30pm

Tai Chi
Rhonda Bailey 07985 001782

Thursdays 2.00 – 3.00pm

Craft Group
Janis Carter 01622 850898

Fridays 10am -12.00pm

Art Class
Cathy Hill 07927054708

Alternate Wednesdays 1 – 3.30pm

Regular Monthly Events

Gardening Club
Doreen 01622 850287
Sue 01622 850381

First Tuesday 7.30 - 9pm

GRAFTY GREEN VILLAGE HALL
PANCAKE EVENING



TUESDAY 13th FEBRUARY

4PM TO 6PM

VILLAGE HALL

COME AND MEET YOUR FRIENDS

SWEET & SAVOURY PANCAKES £2 EACH

Yoga Classes

Yoga is a practice that improves flexibility, stamina and strength together with reducing stress and tension.



Monday and Thursday morning 9.30 to 11

Wednesday evening 7 – 8.30

For more information and to book contact Sue - 07803
962339

Email: grafftyyoga@gmail.com

Helen Whately – MP

‘Getting people, the care they need locally

Launch of Pharmacy First.

The faster you can get the care you need, the better health you’ll be in.

This simple but powerful idea is at the centre of everything I’m working on as a Health Minister at the moment to reform our health and social care system.

By bringing care closer to home and identifying conditions when they’re more treatable, we can help people stay out of hospital and live healthy and independent lives for longer.

Primary care services like GPs have a huge role to play in this, but since the pandemic lots of people locally have found it harder to see their GP. That’s why I’ve made GP and dentist appointments one of my 5 local priorities for Faversham and Mid Kent, and I’m pleased to report on recent progress.

In October 2023 there were more than a million appointments offered by GPs in Kent and Medway – an increase of nearly 20% in the last two years alone. Two-thirds of these appointments are taking place face-to-face, and GPs deserve a huge amount of credit for making this all happen.

I’ve also been supporting local GPs to expand in Faversham and Hollingbourne, and I’m still working on bringing new services to Park Wood and to Teynham.

These expansions will be supported by the new Kent Medical School which I campaigned for when I first became an MP. It opened in 2020 and will soon be churning out new doctors, who we know often stay working near where they train.

However, with demand still on the rise we’ve got to change how we do things too, and that’s why from the 31 January the government is launching **Pharmacy First**.

There’s a reason why the local pharmacy is often the first place we go when we’re ill or need advice. You might have to queue for a few minutes, but if the pharmacy’s open you can guarantee you’ll be seen that day.

From this month we’re going to make even better use of their skills. We’re expanding their role and for the first time ever allowing them to prescribe some medicines, as well as increasing access to things like blood pressure checks and oral contraceptives.

These plans go hand in hand with cutting bureaucracy for GPs, hiring 26,000 more primary care professionals, and putting in place new phone systems to finally end the 8am rush for appointments.

These changes are to help people get care more easily, and I'd love to hear how they're working out for you. Please do pop into your local pharmacy and have a chat about what they offer, and keep letting me know about any problems you're having in your area.

At the same time, I'm also working to increase the number of NHS dentist appointments locally, and I'm currently campaigning with other Kent MPs for a new Kent Dental School.

You can find more information about this and all of the above on my website – www.helenwhately.org.uk



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How To Make Cut Tulips Last A Long Time

Tulips are spring's most coveted flower. Unlike other flowers, cut tulips continue to grow! They come in the most beautiful colours and varieties. They look gorgeous on their own or as part of a Spring arrangement. Plant the same colour for a stunning uniform arrangement, or mix colours for a brilliant explosion of natural hues.

Tulips are beautiful flowers that brighten up any space! With just a few simple tips on how to take care of cut tulips, you can enjoy these blooms for weeks on end. Here are a few tips when caring for cut tulips...

TOP TIPS FOR CUT TULIPS

1. Buy tulips that are not fully opened.
2. Remove any excess leaves. Cut 1/4 inch off the stems at a 45-degree angle.
3. Choose a taller vase at first to help the tulip stand up, as you cut the bottom throughout the week you can switch the vase to something smaller and eventually a bud vase.
4. Wash your vase well to remove all bacteria, use cold water for the tulips and a small amount of flower food.
5. Only use a small amount of fresh water in the vase at a time so the tulips to discourage them from continuing to grow. Check the water often as you'll need to replenish it because they do drink a lot.
6. As with all cut flowers, keep away from direct sunlight.
7. If your tulips are wilted in the morning, no big deal! Cut their stems, put them in a taller vase, add a little cold water and they'll stand straight up again.

WHY DO CUT TULIPS DROOP?

Unlike many flowers, this member of the Liliaceae family will continue to grow up to two inches after cutting when kept in a vase, but with a pliable stem and heavy blooms, though, tulips are prone to bend and droop as a result of gravity and phototropism, a response that causes the flower to orient towards light.

If your tulip arrangement feels a bit “stiff” don’t worry, they’ll start to relax in just a few hours!

A VASE FOR YOUR CUT TULIPS

Of course, you can always buy a stunning, traditional tulipiere- some pottery pieces are a great way to display individual blooms. No arranging required at all!

However, in the interest of simplicity and time-saving reality, buy a flexible vase (or two) that will showcase your tulips beautifully! The key is to use a wide enough opening, with a deep enough shape to support the weight of the stems.

Join me for a PYO Tulip session, book your slot at **www.parkhousepetals.co.uk**

Charlotte @Parkhouse Petals



Pick your own tulips
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Boughton Malherbe Parish Council

www.boughtonmalherbe.co.uk

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the FINANCE and STAFFING COMMITTEE of BOUGHTON MALHERBE PARISH COUNCIL held at 7:30 pm on Monday 15th January 2024 in Grafty Green Village Hall

Present: Cllrs: B Adams; T Andrews; N Eastwood; R Turner (Chair)

Clerk: Mrs Vickie Ford

Cllr Turner opened the Meeting at 7:35 pm.

1. **Declaration of anybody filming/recording this meeting:** none
2. **Apologies for Absence:**
Apologies from Cllr R Galton were received and accepted.
3. **Declarations:**
(i) **Declarations of Interest in items on the Agenda:** none
(ii) **Declarations of Lobbying:** none
4. **Approval of Minutes of the Finance and Staffing Committee Meeting held on 6th November 2023:** approved and signed as a true and accurate record
5. **Parish Council Staffing:**
(ii) **Annual Pay Increase (Clerk)**
RESOLVED: to exclude the press and public under subsection (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 for the following item on the grounds that it concerned the Clerk's terms of employment.
The Clerk also left the meeting temporarily.
The Clerk was asked to re-join the meeting, which she did.
RESOLVED: to recommend to Full Council £1 per hour increase in Clerk's salary 2023/24, in line with NJC pay scales. (3 for, 1 against)
6. **Review of Revised Draft 2024/25 Budget and 2024/25 Precept**
The Chairman expressed his view that regular revenue payments should be covered by the annual precept. In order to inform his thinking, he had asked the Clerk to separate regular revenue payments from somewhat likely and contingency payments envisaged in 2024/25. The Chairman pointed out that the regular revenue payments amounted to almost £13,000, which far exceeded the 2023/24 precept of £7,113. He informed the Council that increasing the precept to £10,000 would lead to a rise of £10.95 per annum (91 p per month) per Band D equivalent household; and that increasing the precept to £13,000 would lead to a rise of £22.59 per annum (£1.90 per month) per Band D equivalent household.
RESOLVED: to recommend the revised draft budget (below) to the Full Council.

RESOLVED: to recommend setting a precept of £10,000 to the Full Council, the precept increase to be reviewed in January 2025. (3 for, 1 against)

7. **Internal Audit Review**

Cllr Eastwood stated that he had no confidence in the effectiveness of monitoring of resolutions and action taken.

RESOLVED: to accept the review of the effectiveness of the internal audit 2022/23, as presented by the Clerk. (3 for, 1 against)

8. **Internal Audit Plan**

RESOLVED: to adopt the internal audit plan 2023/24 as presented by the Clerk.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

"Please note that, although the Finance and Staffing Committee recommended a precept of £10,000, Full Council set a precept of £7,326 at its meeting on 22nd January. The finally agreed budget has been published here for the avoidance of confusion and differs only from the revised draft by the amount of the precept and consequent reserves."

	Budget 2022/23	Budget 2023/24	Actual to 31.12.23	Projected to 31.3.24	Budget 2024/25
	£	£	£	£	£
RECEIPTS					
Precept	7,005	7,113	7,113	7,113	7,326
Parish Services Scheme	327	262	262	262	262
Bank interest		300	1,231	1,900	2,000
Community Transport			11,750	11,750	-
Misc					
VAT Refund	150	-	559	559	-
TOTAL RECEIPTS	7,482	7,675	20,915	21,584	9,588
Balance brought forward from previous year		22,844	82,468	82,468	81,905
PAYMENTS					
Staff Costs - Clerk's Salary	4,196	4,700	3,352	4,834	5,075
Other Costs					
Village Green Maintenance:	500				
Grass etc		500	339	500	500
Trees		900	450	450	900
Fencing		500	1,467	1,467	3,500
Village Hall Hire	250	250	-	250	280
Christmas Tree	300	350	325	375	400
Christmas functions	-	400	476	476	500
Litter Collection/lengthsman	-	800	602	800	900
PRow replacement gates	-	2,600	-	-	5,000
Community grants:					
Churchyard Maintenance	500	500	-	500	500
Air Ambulance		50	300	300	50
Community Grants e.g. Coronation event		1,000	982	982	1,000
Community Transport (59 bus)	-	-	-	5,180	7,800
Emergency Plan	-	-	-	-	-
Training Courses	300	300	183	300	300
Internal/external Auditor	100	300	90	90	300
Insurance	400	500	500	500	525
KALC Membership	300	250	239	239	250
SLCC membership fees (Clerk)	-	120	112	112	120
Contingency (incl defib spares)	-	408	-	408	408
CPRE Membership	36	36	-	100	60
Stationery, postage, admin	200	500	191	600	500
Total Other Costs	2,886	10,264	6,256	13,629	23,793
Repairs Fund contribution	-	-	-	-	-
Village Green Fund	400		-	-	-
TOTAL PAYMENTS	7,482	14,964	9,608	18,463	28,868
Ringfenced reserves (CIL)				3,684	
Earmarked reserve (Village Green)				-	
Contingencies					
Emergency reserve		7,500			14,964
Clerk additional hours		2,010			2,175
Community bus		5,000		-	-
CLOSING BALANCE		1,045		81,905	45,486

Grafty Gourmet

This is true comfort food for chilly winter evenings, this slow-cooker French style recipe combines tender pork, smoked bacon and cider

PORK, BACON & CIDER CASSEROLE

2 tablespoons of rapeseed oil or olive oil	2 eating apples, cored and cut into chunky pieces
600g of pork shoulder, fat and sinew trimmed, cut into chunky pieces	1 chicken stock cube
1 large onion, chopped	1 bay leaf
2 carrots, cut into chunky pieces	3-4 thyme sprigs
2 celery sticks, cut into chunky pieces	140g of crème fraîche
200g pack of smoked bacon lardons	1-2 tablespoons of Dijon mustard
250ml of dry cider	1-2 teaspoons of cornflour
	mashed potato and greens, to serve

1. Heat half the of the oil in a large pan and brown the pork in batches. Don't overcrowd the pan, and only turn the meat when it has a deep brown crust on the underside, as this will add lots of flavour to the stew. When one batch is cooked, tip it into the slow cooker and continue with the next batch, adding more oil as you need it.
2. When all the meat has been transferred to the slow cooker, add the onion, carrots and celery to the pan and cook for 5-10 mins to just soften, scraping any meaty bits up from the bottom of the pan. Tip the veg into the slow cooker. Add the lardons to the pan and fry until crispy. Pour in the cider, bubble for 1 min, again scraping the bottom of the pan, then tip the cider and lardons into the slow cooker too. Add the apples, stock cube and herbs to the slow cooker, pour in 400ml water, season well and turn the heat to Low. Cover with the lid and cook for 6-8 hrs until the meat is very tender. You may have to add a splash of water during
3. Turn the slow cooker up to High. Add the crème fraîche and mustard to the stew and check the seasoning. If the sauce is thin, you can thicken it with the cornflour – ladle 2 spoonful's of the sauce into a pan and bring to a simmer, mix the cornflour with 1-2 tsp cold water to make a paste, then stir it into the sauce. Once thickened, return the sauce to the slow cooker and cook for 10 mins more on High, stirring occasionally. Serve with mashed potato, greens and extra mustard and thyme.



Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way

Green Book

Friday February 9th

Performance begins 19.30, doors open 19.00

Running time 2hrs 4 mins

Three Oscars were awarded to the highly acclaimed **Green Book** (12, 2018), including the Best Picture award. And no wonder. The African-American snobbish classical pianist Dr Don Shirley hires Italian-American tough nightclub bouncer Tony Lip as his driver for his upcoming concert tour of America's Deep South. The two men lead very different lives and so barely manage to get along with each other at first; but this changes to an unexpected friendship by the time they reach their destination. In 1962, racism and segregation are at a peak and the guide that they take with them on the drive, *The Negro Motorist's Green Book*, is all too necessary. Based on a true story and with brilliant performances especially by the two leading actors, **Green Book** deserves all the awards it won. It's a fabulous and moving film.

Directed by Peter Farrelly.

Our March performance takes us on another journey, this time of 450 miles on foot in Britain in the unforgettable **The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry**. Jim Broadbent stars as Harold Fry who sets off from his Devon home to see his dying friend Queenie.

Please get in touch for more information or to join our mailing list.

Admission: members £4, non-members £5, under 16 £2, under 5 free.



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Grafty Green Gardening Club Program of Events 2024

Date	Speaker/Event	Topic
January 9	Joe Archer	From Kew to Kent
February 6	Sally Channon	Thanet Earth
March 5	Steve Kirk	Wild life reintroductions in Kent
April 2	Spring show plus Maureen, Christine and Sue	Encouraging wildlife visitors to your garden
Saturday April 27	Plant fair	
May 7	Vicky Golding – Outing to Marden Meadow	
June 4	Social in Bridget Samuelson's Garden, Crumps Lane	
July 2	Outing to Hawkhurst – Hands of Hope garden	
July 30	Outing – Old Rectory Otterden	
September 3	Autumn Show and Steven Harmer	Arts and Crafts movement and their gardens
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 – table decoration with guidance from Sandra Pilborough	

Meetings take place in the Village Hall on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm. Entrance is £2 for members £4 for non-members. Plant and seed swaps and surplus plants can be bought along to meetings. In addition the club has a 10% discount arrangement with Rumwood Nursery, Langley ME17 3ND (01622) 861477 and Potted Garden at Bearsted ME14 4NH.

On **6th February** Steve Harmer is coming to give us a talk on the Arts & Crafts Movement, a very interesting subject. Please note this is a change to our published programme as Steve is replacing Sally Channon who will now come in **September**.

Our AGM went well and we have a full committee in place. Joe Archer's 'From Kew to Kent' talk was excellent and we hope to see more of him in the future.

We are all looking forward to our weekend away planned for North Devon this year and we are currently finalising a list of lovely gardens to visit whilst we are there. RHS Rosemoor will be one of them.

February jobs in the garden!

*Prune -:

* winter flowering shrubs that have finished flowering

* hardy evergreen trees and shrubs

* summer-flowering shrubs that flower on new wood

Repot or top-dress shrubs in containers

Start dahlia tubers into growth

Prepare -: seed beds for vegetables

Mulch fruit trees after feeding

Yoga Classes in Grafty Green Village Hall with Sue Burch

Monday mornings 9.30 to 11

Wednesday evenings 7 – 8.30

Thursday mornings 9.30 – 11

Yoga is suitable for all ages; revitalising and maintaining or regaining flexibility for ease of movement; establishing strength and stamina, releasing tension.

To join a class or for more details please call Sue Burch (*British Wheel of Yoga teacher*) on 07803 962339.

January 2024 Update – Shellina Prendergast Maidstone Rural East – Kent County Council

As we start a new year, some reflections on the work at County Hall during the last 12 months – a year which, like for so many people in Kent, has been difficult for Kent County Council.

Like others across the country, KCC is facing some significant financial challenges – challenges that the Council has been open about and is facing head-on. The current financial position is not one that has come about because of recklessness with public finances but as a direct result of the of the increased costs and demands on services over the last few years.

There is no doubt that times are exceedingly tough - these increased costs and demands have meant that KCC has had to face some very hard budgetary decisions. In Kent we have specific issues, such as travel disruption at our ports, and the response to migration and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Despite what we shoulder, central government funding has fallen far short of what is needed.

After developing the Securing Kent's Future plan in the autumn - [Appendix 1 - Budget Recovery Report.pdf \(kent.gov.uk\)](#) KCC is working every day with this as our roadmap and navigating towards what will be a balanced budget for this financial year, something we are legally obliged to deliver. The plan will also serve as a robust guide over the medium and longer term. The Council's draft budget – to be decided by full Council on 24th February – can be found here - [Report.pdf \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

Across the country, some councils have headed into effective bankruptcy – KCC continue to keep that wolf from the door; at the same time, continuing to change and innovate, while delivering good services to the people of Kent.

Looking back on 2023, there have been some notable moments, some of which have seen KCC rising to support our residents through shock after shock, not least the cost-of-living crisis and helping people in the most difficult circumstances. This is something that remains an absolute priority.

The Council's solid collaboration with the NHS has seen some excellent work on seasonal campaigns and the development of the Integrated Care Strategy. The task in 2024 will be to start turning this into practical delivery across Kent and into our communities.

RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) entered the common vernacular in 2023. KCC's front-foot action following the change of national rules, helped in no small part by the rapid flexibility of our school community, kept disruption to a minimum.

KCC is a central plank of the Kent Resilience Forum, responding to the pressures on Kent's extensive and much-travelled road network, at the same time as working behind the scenes as a group of organisations and agencies to be ready for a crisis. At the front line, highways and other staff respond to emergencies in all weathers.

The Council has a proud and exceptional record in responding to the diverse issues of asylum, migration and resettlement, including responding (across many parts of our organisation) to the referral of more than 2,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into our service in the last year, and working with district and borough colleagues in response to the requirement to empty the Afghan bridging hotels in the late summer.

KCC is committed to the environment, balancing everything we consider with nature's voice and its unrivalled positive impact on health and wellbeing, and preserving the enduring appeal of the Garden of England.

These could be viewed as the 'big ticket items' and are only a small selection of the services that KCC provides. All of us at KCC are incredibly proud that some of the greatest effects of our work can be felt in the quiet, often unseen, interactions full of kindness, compassion and thoughtfulness from across all of our teams.

I remain, as ever, committed to working with residents, businesses and elected representatives at parish and borough councils – whether on an individual or strategic basis - to ensure the best possible outcomes for all. Please do get in touch if there is anything I can help with – Shellina.Prendergast@kent.gov.uk

Which leaves me to wish you all a belated but very best wishes for a healthy and successful 2024!

Shellina Prendergast

To stay up to date on all elements of KCC's work, please subscribe to the online e-newsletter on <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/residents-e-newsletter>

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Love is in the air!

This month we celebrate Valentine's Day and many will prepare elaborate displays of love for those nearest and dearest to them! Perhaps you'll be writing a card, buying a gift or presenting some flowers to someone special in your life? Valentine's Day can also serve as a welcome reminder that even our most sincere displays of love cannot come close to the love that we have received from God.

In the Gospel of Luke (15:11-32) Jesus shares the parable of 'The Prodigal Son'. It tells of a son who asks his father for his share of the inheritance whilst his father is still living. Despite how hurtful this would have been, the father agrees and gives his son the money. The son soon moves away and squanders the inheritance on wild living. He runs out of money, hits rock bottom and eventually decides to return home and ask his dad to live as one of his servants. The incredible twist comes in the father's response to his son and it is designed to show us the love of our Heavenly Father towards us. Rather than reject or berate his son, the father ran to meet him and embraced him in a huge bear hug. He bestowed gifts upon him and laid on an extravagant feast to celebrate that his son had returned home.

Beyond displaying God's love through parables, Jesus demonstrated it through his life and ultimately through his death. The theologian Thomas Goodwin put it this way; "Christ is love covered in flesh". Jesus showed that there is no length that our Father God won't go to in order to lavish love upon us. All we need to do is begin the walk home and receive the embrace of the Father who runs to meet us.

I'll give the final word to the author Dane Ortlund who beautifully states; "Even the most intense human love is but the faintest echo of heaven's cascading abundance. His heartfelt thoughts for you outstrip what you can conceive."

Len Valley Benefice February 2024



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‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.’

Matthew 13:31-32

Sunday 4th February

9.30am Boughton Malherbe:
Holy Communion (BCP)

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast
Church

11.00am Harrietsham: Family
friendly Morning Worship

11.00am Lenham: Holy
Communion

Wednesday 7th February

9.30am Lenham: Holy
Communion (BCP)

11.00am Harrietsham:
Chippendale

Sunday 11th February

9.30am Harrietsham: Holy
Communion

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast
Church

11.00am

Lenham: Holy
Communion

11.00am Ulcombe: Holy
Communion

3.30pm Boughton Malherbe:
Choral Evensong

Sunday 18th February

8.00am Lenham: Holy
Communion (BCP)

9.30am Boughton Malherbe:
Holy Communion

9.30am Harrietsham: Holy
Communion

9.30am Lenham: Breakfast
Church

11.00am Lenham: Morning
Worship

11.00am Ulcombe: Holy
Communion

Sunday 25th February

10.30am Benefice Holy
Communion at All Saints,
Ulcombe

*‘I am
the bread of life’*

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Southern Water Foul and Waste Water drainage/Flooding		0330 303 0368
Calor Gas	<i>Emergencies</i>	08457 444999
KCC	<i>Emergencies</i>	03000 41 41 41
	<i>Highways</i>	03000 41 81 81

KCC Community Wardens:

<i>Local warden – Stuart Ellesmere</i>	07969 583923
<i>District Support – Dawn Riach- Brown</i>	07773 397125

Fire	<i>General Enquiries</i>	01622 692121
	<i>Home Safety Visits</i>	0800 923 7000

R.S.P.C.A	<i>Emergencies</i>	0300 1234 999
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