



West Dean Parish Assembly
held at King George's Hall on Monday 18th May 2026 at 18:45.

Present: Councillor Higgins (Chair), Councillor J Camilleri, Councillor M Camilleri, Councillor Lee, Councillor Livesey, Wiltshire Councillor Cooper, PC Kelvin Ramsey, PCSO Charlotte King, Amanda Owen – Clerk & ten members of the public.

1. Welcome and apologies

Councillors Higgins welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

2. Approval of minutes from 2025 Parish Assembly.

The 2025 Parish Assembly minutes were noted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Chair's Report.

Chair's Report to Annual Parish Assembly 2026, West Dean

West Dean PC has met 12 times this last year. For much of the year we had a full Council, but Nick Hiddleston had to stand down in September and we thanked him for his service.

We have also benefitted from the guidance and regular attendance of our Wiltshire Councillor, Gregory Cooper. We appreciate his commitment to West Dean.

Wiltshire police have also sent regular reports.

Cllr Livesey took on the recreation ground brief this year. He has been dealing with repairs and improvements highlighted in the annual RoSPA report. Some work, for example dealing with chamfers on sharp edges, and dealing with the rotten wood on the train roof,

he has done himself, and other work has been commissioned from providers of playground equipment. The climbing wall has been strengthened and is usable again. We have received quotes for repairs to the swings and work on the slide. We have applied for a grant to replace the ground surfaces under the play equipment. Thanks to Cllr Livesey.

We were pleased to have welcomed Cllr Lee to the council. He has taken on the task of footpath warden, and has walked many miles noting where paths needed tending or signs were missing or broken. All this has been recorded with the authorities in Wiltshire Council who work actively with the PC. Obvious and welcome results can be seen around the village, for example in the steps cut into the steep bank on Moody's Hill, which was a really hazardous exit. The path under the hill towards East Grimstead has been cleared.

A long standing request for HCC to reinstate the path from the lane by the station up to Park Cottage has finally (after 20 years!) got to the top of the pile at HCC.

Cllr Lee is also actively looking at traffic monitoring on Rectory Hill along the notoriously dangerous section above the Church. Wiltshire Council has agreed this is an area of concern, and later on the PC will be debating whether to approve spending PC money on this project. Thanks to Cllr Lee.

We had approval and were expecting to be able to accomplish our project on the river banks at the Green this Spring, but were thrown a curve ball on discovering, thanks to some photos taken at the time by Christine Warry, that the cables for the street lights had been laid right along the edge of the river. It was just as well those photos existed or

else the contractors would have been digging through a live cable. Unfortunately the cables had not been registered so were not visible on the Wiltshire map of underground assets. The river project has had to be postponed until next year because the time window for working there is very short, so as not to overly disturb the wildlife. Meanwhile the PC is sorting out a different route for the electricity supply to the lights.

Planning applications locally have been discussed and voted on. Ones in the village included tree orders and extensions for houses, but there have also been proposals in neighbouring villages. We sent a stiff response to the proposal for an estate in East Dean/Lockerley Green, and also responded negatively to a proposal for development in Bentley Wood (actually in Farley, but technically in West Dean) which would have negatively impacted the SSSI. Thanks to Cllr Mel Camilleri for drafting these responses. Cllr Mel Camilleri has also been our representative on the South Wiltshire Area Board.

The main planning application, which has taken up a lot of Councillor time, particularly that of Cllr John Camilleri, has been the development at Glebe Farm. The S106 agreement, having been worked on by Cllr Camilleri seemed to get stuck in the TVBC planning office and then with their solicitors. However it is now signed, and the planning permission has been granted. Thanks to Cllr John Camilleri for his continuing work on this major project. The village can now look forward to having 2 new permissive pathways and access to the woodland at the rear of the site, as well as 11 new houses. We would like to record our thanks to TVBC Cllr McDonald and West Tytherley PC for their support through this long drawn out process.

We had one flood event this year when the river came perilously close to flooding the houses abutting the Green, but fortunately stopped on the doorstep.

Cllrs were actively there supporting villagers, putting out signs and doing our best to deter traffic from driving through the floodwater. Since then The PC has been given permission to close the road as necessary during a flood. The river rises and falls remarkably quickly, and periods of closure would not need to be long.

During that event, the village hall store also flooded which means that our equipment suffered some damage. We have negotiated with Christine Warry that flood signs and equipment can be stored in her yard. We might need wellies to get at it, but at least it will be dry and accessible to those that need it. We have set up an emergency comms WhatsApp group with the Village Hall committee, to coordinate emergency action, and have also registered the village hall as an emergency hub so that police and emergency services can be in direct communication with us.

Our parish clerk Amanda Owen is also our responsible finance officer, and has dealt with both routine secretary and treasurer's tasks such as writing minutes and paying bills, but also the PC's budgeting, insurance and audit. She took on the application for the Lotto grant, and has been instrumental in communications with Wiltshire Council over pothole repairs, gully clearances and tasks for the Parish Steward. Amanda also keeps the website up to date and has made sure our website is compatible with the latest government requirements. Villagers may have noticed that we have been given new .gov email addresses this year, but our familiar www.westdeanvillage.co.uk website address is still usable. We would like to record our thanks to Amanda for the quiet way she goes about her work.

Finally I would like to thank the Village hall Committee for their hospitality during the year and Cllr Seabrooke for his wise advice and quiet help to me in particular. Thank you to all my fellow councillors for their active and effective participation in PC business. This has been a year when effective progress has been made in keeping West Dean a safe and very pleasant place to live.

Cllr Jane Higgins (Chair 2025-2026)

4. Report from Wiltshire Police.

West Dean EU11 - Crime is extremely low across the area given the geography and scale of it. There have been breaks to sheds / garages and cars consistent with that of the wider area and pro-active patrols continue to target those responsible as well as the investigative side. Tackling these crimes remains a priority for our team; several of the suspects live out of county.

We continue to work closely with our neighbouring forces to resolve this cross border crime. Our team is up to full strength and JT and I have been covering this post for several years.

We located a stolen cash point dumped in woodland in Landford, attributing this to a ramraid in Christchurch and are pleased to report that at the time of the theft- which would have taken considerable effort, it was totally empty of cash having recently dispensed its final note.

We also seized several power tools found stashed in woodland in Whiteparish. Through research via their serial numbers we attributed them to a theft from Southampton and returned them to the grateful owner. Similarly in woodland in Alderbury we seized handbags from a vehicle break in Fordingbridge, which the owner was relieved about.

The other week a stolen vehicle from out of county crashed into other vehicles on A30 near Lopcombe Corner. We attended and after an extensive area search arrested the three occupants hiding in a nearby field, one of whom admitted to being the driver.

Hare coursing continues to be an issue in the areas surrounding Pepperbox Hill and Bentley Wood. We have been jointly patrolling these with our Rural Crime Team and have placed anti-poaching blocks at certain locations. We have been utilising thermal binoculars and drones to search areas for offences / suspects. In Bentley Wood the reports of indecent exposures have stopped completely since we identified and interviewed the suspect.

We continue to work closely with outside agencies, recently going out on foot patrol around Firsdawn with Trading Standards to target rogue traders and raise awareness of them with vulnerable residents.

In Alderbury there has been a small amount of knock and run ASB which has recently progressed into mud throwing, causing some damage. This is something the team are concentrating on and have been speaking to individuals previously associated with such behaviour.

Speeding is also mentioned as being an issue across some areas and we liaise with the Road Safety Team camera enforcement who now regularly work out of our office to help deploy them to relevant areas.

We try to attend as many parish council meetings as possible but will always send a report as an alternative; for perspective this area alone has up to 9 of these a month as well as the need for the team to continue patrolling, attending emergencies, investigating and assisting other areas. We also attend schools and local meetings such as the Peoples Emergency Briefing I attended here last Wednesday.

There has been no crime or ASB to report on for the last 30 days, in fact the last crimes that were reported in West Dean was at the of January however the victims only made mention on this on Facebook and did not report to Police. Please encourage residents to report officially via 101 or our website.

Enjoy the fete on 30th, I can't attend this year unfortunately but have requested our team pop down for patrol.

PC Ramsey was updated that the Fete would not be taking place this year.

5. Reports from Village Groups.

The River Group

The River Group unfortunately could not attend due to project restrictions.

King George's Hall AGM 16th March 2026

Chairman's report

The purpose of the Village Hall

Last year I summarised the history of the hall and its purpose for 'the physical and mental training and recreation and social, moral and intellectual development for the benefit of the parish of West Dean' as per our constitution set in 1946. We are a charity and the committee are all trustees.

Hall activities during 2025

Social

The hall has continued to put on a variety of social events for local people. These included pop up pubs around the Rugby 6 Nations in the Spring, a Burns Night, 2 music quizzes, a cheese-tasting evening, the annual Sunflower competition, the Beacon and Bangers night, Christmas wreath making and of course the Christmas Cracker. This year we held a Christmas Party mainly for children and their families, the night before the Cracker which was a successful alternative to the afternoon party. The pantomime is always such a key part of Christmas in the village and we're grateful to the producers and actors for their entertaining efforts.

Charity

We also host events to raise money for charity including the Remembrance Day Curry lunch for the Poppy Appeal, various raffles this year for the Stars appeal and for Kidney research. The Pony Express used the hall and raised money for kidney research and Headway. The hall has hosted the safari supper for the church's fundraising and the Fete uses the facilities and equipment over the Fete weekend.

Others

The hall hosts a regular lunch for the over 60s supported by the Evelyn Thistlethwaite charity. There has been a weekly toddlers group (Busy Bees) and the Church uses the hall for breakfast churches. The parish council hold their meetings here and there have been Pilates classes and a regular children's theatre class on a Saturday morning. The local business hub has met at the hall and there are regular cream teas over the summer. National and local elections are held here too. Sadly the only current regular hall booking is for the children's theatre group.

Private hire

The hall is available for hire to private individuals for meetings, parties, family celebrations and other events.

Net zero project

As you know we have been benefiting from our solar panels since May last year and thanks to the power wall battery we are using very little grid electricity now, indeed we are often exporting to the grid. The committee's decision to switch off the heating jacket on the generator has significantly reduced our energy consumption too. The lighting is now all low energy and we will research more sustainable heating systems in due course.

Hall Maintenance

We have become aware of some major issues with damp (particular on the front wall and in the storage room). Brian Livesey kindly provided some valuable advice and we have started some remedial action including work on the gutters, drains and ventilation. The big job to come is to remove and replace the damp plasterwork in the hall before any redecoration can commence, and add a damp proof membrane to the floor in the storeroom which will make it more fit for purpose. We are hoping to get grant assistance with this.

The lighting has all been replaced with LED and we have some new smoke alarms. The garden has benefited from some regular expert attention. The heating system is showing its age and has needed remedial work to replace

defective thermostatically controlled valves. The wet winter in the village resulted in the shed flooding and other damp issues including a jammed front door!

Emergency Refuge

The village hall is part of West Dean's Emergency Plan and has a team of volunteers (VH committee, parish counsellors and others) who can open up the hall if required. The solar panels and battery backup means that there's no immediate requirement to fire up the generator though it is still there as a backup if there's a prolonged power cut. We haven't had to test this for real yet but, depending on how much electricity is used, the battery should last for several hours.

Support for King George's Hall

We are very grateful for the continuing support of villagers in particular the Friends of the Hall. This includes providing advice, cooking, running the bar, organising events, washing up etc etc. We are grateful too for the annual financial contribution from the Fete Committee which significantly helps with our running costs as well as for specific projects.

We are also very grateful for those unofficial friends of the committee who help out on a regular basis (Chris Lucas, Brian Kemp, Chris Woodward and Nigel Musto in particular).

Finances

Our finances are in reasonable shape helped by our fundraising and the reduction in our utility bills. However we have some big expenses to come this year and need to be prepared for the further costs required to maintain this building.

The Committee

We are very lucky to welcome 3 new committee members:

Nicola Musto

Rob McKay

Barbara McKay

The other committee are:

Chris Kemp, Chairman

Helen Woodward, Secretary

Peter Coupe, Treasurer

Lucy Allen, Deputy Chairman

Tamara Lucas, Bookings, car park and hall monitor

Derek Howland, Church representative and Advertising

David Allen, Event organiser, barman

Chris Mundy, Social Club representative and advisor on buildings maintenance

John Camilleri, Parish Council representative and Net Zero Team Leader

Chris Wilde, barman

Plans for 2026

We plan to continue with regular social events at the hall and welcome ideas from villagers for events that would appeal to a broad range of people.

We welcome interest from villagers considering joining the committee, in particular those with an interest in running events.

We will develop a plan for renovations, repairs and improvements of the building to keep it suitable for the future. These may include remedial work for damp issues, flood resilience, better lighting for the outside steps, redecoration, updating furnishings and equipment and considering alternatives for the heating system.

Christina Kemp
Chairman, King George's Hall

West Dean Club

Pete Dawkins addressed the meeting and provided the following report:

- What a year, West Dean Club started no chair, no secretary and the treasurer resigned, resulting in a start from scratch.
- Huge thanks to everyone who stepped in. Chris took on bar duties, Dave became Secretary, Pete stepped up as Chair with support from others behind the scenes.
- Ongoing heating problems caused issues throughout the year: Repairs to the heating system have been conducted, unfortunately the system remains inefficient and large utility bills remain a concern.
- The 2025 fete and Summer Beer Festival were both successful.
- Around 20 live music acts performed during the year. It can sometimes be disheartening when events are not well attended, especially as they are always well advertised.
- The club has continued to support the community by allowing private functions to use the venue free of charge, asking only for donations.

Congratulations to:

- The Crib Team for winning their cup
- Growmore Club, and thank you for their continued support using the skittle alley. Next year it would be lovely to have another skittles team.
- Bingo and quiz nights continue to help support the club financially.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to cover bar shifts during the year. More help and volunteers are always welcome.

More committee members are always welcome to bring fresh ideas to keep the club moving forward.

Special thanks to Dave and Chris for all the hard work they've put into keeping the club going, and the message remains to "use it or lose it".

The upcoming year sees the following Committee changes:

- Pete stepping down as Chair, with Chris becoming Chair
- Tina has become Treasurer
- Jodie is Secretary

A WhatsApp group is open to everyone, there is no divide and everyone is welcome, contact the Club for more information

Although there will be no village fete this year, West Dean Club will be holding its own Fun Day on Saturday 30th May. Fun Day plans include:

- Line dancing
- A singer
- Another live act in the evening
- Thai food
- Ice cream van
- Face painting for children

Please come along and support the club and the Fun Day events!

Brooke, Evelyn and Thistlethwaite Charity

Registered charity 249087

Annual report for the year ended 31st December 2025

The Brooke, Evelyn and Thistlethwaite Charity was created to apply income from its investments (after defraying expenses) to relieve either generally or individually persons who are resident in the ancient parish of West Dean and the ancient chapelry of East Grimstead who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by making grants of money or providing or paying for items, services or facilities calculated to reduce the need, hardship or distress of such persons. Publicity is given to the activities of the trust through word of mouth and notices on village notice boards and halls.

The trust has 7 trustees, comprising:

- 1 ex officio trustee appointed by, in summary, the Clarendon Ministry
- 2 appointed by West Dean Parish Council
- 2 appointed by West Dean with East Grimstead Parochial Church Council
- 2 appointed by Grimstead Parish Council

In 2025, our previous Chairman, Michael Marx, resigned from the trust after 8 years' service and the trustees would like to thank him for his advice and guidance and wish him and his family well for the future. The trustees also welcomed to the trust Barbara McKay as an additional trustee and we look forward to working with her.

The trust provides funds, directly or indirectly, to families who require financial assistance for daily living expenses, senior citizens who need repairs or maintenance of their accommodation, village events which provide social occasions for residents who may be isolated: for the year 2025 this amounted to £1,305. There was also a donation of £1,000 to the Salisbury Hospice towards the purchase of a "cuddle bed" in response to their request for funds from the community. In addition, the trust gave token presents to deserving/vulnerable members of the community at Christmas and Easter. The Trustees anticipate continuing to provide such assistance to individuals, events and charities in the coming years.

The trust is financed by investments with Black Rock and M&G and rent for a field in East Grimstead. In 2025 the trust generated income of £4,026 and expenses of £2,491 yielding a profit of £1,535. Funds have been kept in reserve to meet maintenance costs of the field in East Grimstead which requires hedge maintenance and ditch clearance every so often. I am pleased to say that the trust is in a healthy financial position with funds sufficient for anticipated ongoing needs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the trustees who are all volunteers and offer their time and effort free of charge. We encourage anybody who is, or knows someone who is, in need to bring them to our attention.

James King
Chairman

Trustees

Sue Addey and Barbara McKay, nominated by Grimstead Parish Council

Julie Rowe and James King, nominated by West Dean Parish Council

Glynis Newman and Christine Warry, nominated by West Dean with East Grimstead Parochial Church Council

Ruth Livesey, nominated as Ex Officio trustee representing the Rector of the Clarendon Team Ministry

Fete Committee

Despite a financially very successful fete in 2025, the 2026 event has been cancelled.

In 2025 the fete committee felt that the event as a whole had not been as safe as it could be. There were a lot of issues with traffic and parking. Also the number of volunteers needed to staff the event has increased beyond our capacity as a small village.

We sought advice from Wiltshire Council and their Officer was very helpful, but although we could increase the number of car parks, we could not reach the number of volunteers needed to keep everyone safe. We needed 150 and we only secured 70.

Our village fete is amazing, and we are proud of it, but it has become a victim of its own success. Hopefully, it will be back next year.

St Mary's Church

Report for Parish Assembly - St Mary's Church

I took over as acting Church Warden towards the end of 2024 when unfortunately Mike Marx had to step down. I formally took up the role in May last year at the Church APCM.

This is the first opportunity I've had to publicly record my thanks for the many years of wonderful service that Mike has given to the church.

Unfortunately following the departure of Rev Ruth Schofield in 2024 the post of team vicar became vacant for 2 years. However, at Easter this year we were able to welcome with open arms the Rev Marcia Wadham to the Clarendon Team of churches. Marcia has responsibility for East and West Grimstead, and Alderbury as well as West Dean, but I'm very pleased to say that she is already making herself known here in our village.

St Mary's Church followed a monthly pattern of a Eucharistic Service plus either Morning Worship at St Mary's or Breakfast Church here in the Village Hall. Breakfast Church was generally well attended, with time for a bacon roll, coffee & chat before a short service. I would like to invite everyone who prefers a less formal service to join us at the next Breakfast Church.

The 2025 Carol Service, Christmas Day, Remembrance and Easter Services were as ever well attended.

Many people do not realise that St Mary's Church in West Dean and Holy Trinity Church in East Grimstead are in the same parish – they form the parish of West Dean with East Grimstead. The Parochial Church Council, the PCC, are responsible for both churches and I am currently the Church Warden for both Churches. And so I would like to give a short update on the situation in the next village.

Last year, significant financial concerns about the viability of keeping Holy Trinity Church in East Grimstead open, resulted in me formally asking the Archdeacon to initiate the church closure process. Prior to the start of this process a village meeting was held to inform the community of this decision, whilst also informing them that it was not too late to take action to halt the process. The community response was one of shock, and then one of action. And so the Holy Trinity 'Save our Church (SOC)' group was formed. Progress has been significant with the 8 member SOC group communicating widely with villagers, raising the profile of the church within the village and establishing a good level of support. Planned giving has increased significantly, and many successful social and fundraising events have been held. It is hoped that a number of building repair projects which had been put on hold due to lack of funds will be completed during the current year.

Here in West Dean we must not be complacent in thinking that St Mary's Church has a secure future, as it too has its financial struggles.

I am sure that many of you will be aware of the huge amount of maintenance work that has been done at St Mary's Church over the past 4 or 5 years, including repairs to the roof and bellcot, resolving drainage and damp issues, replacing the floor and internal redecoration. However maintenance of a building built in 1866 does not stand still, This year we are planning further significant roof repairs (at a cost of nearly £5K) and repairs to brickwork and pointing.

On the fundraising front, the church last year organised a Safari Dinner, Open Gardens event and a Summer Barn Dance – my sincere thanks go to the villagers who have supported the organisation of these events, as well as those who have participated.

The West Dean Fete, as we all know, is a highlight of the village year and is widely renowned. The partnership between church and village creates goodwill and community spirit and is our largest annual fundraiser, generating much needed funds not only for St Mary's Church but also for the West Dean Club, the Village Hall and various village projects. I thank the committee, organisers and the very many helpers for the tremendous effort they put in to create yet another fantastic fete last year.

As you probably are aware, the fete has had to be cancelled this year, and so we have decided to run a smaller 'Church Fete' on August Bank Holiday Monday purely in aid of the St Mary's Maintenance fund. Please put that date in your diary! I hope to see you there.

Jane Higgins is PCC Treasurer and St Mary's Organist. Ruth and Brian Livesey also do a huge amount for the church, often 'behind the scenes'. Although there are others who support the church in many different ways, I would like to thank Jane, Ruth and Brian in particular for the support they give the church and the support they give me in the role of Church Warden.

Derek Howland, Church Warden, May 2026

6. Questions and Comments: members of the public.

A member of the public present advised that they were unable to view Glebe Farm documents on the Test Valley Borough Council planning portal. The Clerk advised of Test Valley website maintenance.

There being no other business or questions asked, the meeting closed at 19:45.