

Reports from Parish Clubs & Organisations



for the

Annual Parish Meeting

held in

Grafty Green Village Hall

on

Monday 30th May 2022

Boughton Malherbe Parish Council - Annual report by Ron Galton

During the past year we have continued to suffer the effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic that has disrupted all our lives but the Parish Council has still been able to perform most of its functions satisfactorily and also put in place measures to assist residents who needed help during self isolation.

A huge blow to our community was the loss of the Village Shop and Post Office at the end of 2021. The Parish Council did a great deal of research and acted to facilitate the possibility of a replacement for the post office and the shop. This resulted in the setting up of a pop-up post office in the Village Hall every Tuesday from 11.15 am to 2.30 pm with the co operation and help of the Village Hall Committee, and the setting up of a community shop committee to take on the task of providing a replacement for the shop which may take a long time and I am sure everyone wishes them every success. There is now coffee and nibbles available in the Hall when the post office is present and it is hoped this will be a regular social occasion and help maintain custom for the post office.

The traffic calming scheme was completed in September 2021 with varied opinions expressed by the community ranging from "It's a waste of time" to "It slows the traffic down through the village but it creates increased speeds on the 60-mph section of road towards Headcorn causing a number of accidents at the bend on the junction with Crumps Lane"

Measures by KCC roads dept have now been agreed to add signage at this bend to warn drivers that it is a sharper bend than it appears to be when approaching it.

We are still working to obtain permission for a speed indicator device in the centre of the village and to resume Speed watch checks.

The other traffic problem which we continue to bring to the attention of the authorities is that of speeds estimated to be in excess of 100 mph on Headcorn Road past the houses near the Southernden Road Parish boundary. We involved our MP Helen Whately in this matter at a meeting with MBC, the Police and Headcorn / Ulcombe parishes. The response from the Police was that the road is far too dangerous to risk officers lives by carrying out speed checks on this road. When I suggested a 40mph speed limit all the way to Headcorn, the KCC member in attendance said that a speed limit was unlikely to be effective (and that was soon after the fatal accident claiming four lives on this road nearer to Headcorn). A limit may not be very effective but that should not prevent one being imposed and if it prevents

only one fatal accident it is worthwhile. The trouble is that, as with the traffic calming, nothing can be proved, but we will continue to apply pressure for a speed limit.

Owing to the never-ending increase in time required by our Clerk to process all that is required of the Parish Council we had to increase the salary to cover the cost of the extra hours worked. After taking advice, we reluctantly decided to fund the extra hours by increasing the precept. This raised some protests from a small number of residents even though the final increase in council tax was only 7.39 pence per week for a band D property. The understandable argument was that any increase in precept should be paid for out of our considerable reserves because families are under so much financial pressure. We decided we could not accept this argument based upon the advice given that the Clerk's salary is a regular outgoing and all regular outgoings should be charged to precept. Using reserves for this purpose is regarded as unsustainable because nothing would be left for one off projects to benefit the community in the long term. In reality other councils set aside a proportion of precept, and use any underspend to build up reserves.

Another problem the Parish Council had to deal with was the resignation of Chris Hume our Parish Clerk after five years of excellent service. Fortunately we have replaced Chris with Vickie Ford who is sitting beside me. Vickie has had considerable experience as a Parish Clerk elsewhere, and she has already settled into the job. We hope she will enjoy the challenge and we wish her well for the future.

While dealing with all the above matters The Parish Council has made a grant to the Village Hall Committee to help pay for a new roof on the Hall, made a grant for start up costs to the village shop committee, organised a new walkers notice board on the Village Green and has continued to facilitate replacement of old stiles with kissing gates to make it easier for residents and visitors alike to enjoy our footpaths.

We have also made a grant to the Platinum Jubilee Committee who are organising a special event to mark the Queen's Jubilee.

One last thing of note is that we have appointed a Lengthsman to help keep the Parish free of litter and report any problems with fire hydrants.

It has been a very busy year for the Parish Council and with more in the pipeline I believe the future will be just as busy, and I hope rewarding for the residents we serve.

Ron Galton
Chairman, Boughton Malherbe Parish Council

Annual Report from Cllr Martin Round, Maidstone Borough Council

COVID remained a priority issue to address and as the Environmental Health Authority/Public Health Authority much time and effort was resourced into various partnerships together with the Emergency Planning resources of County/ KCC and the other agencies.

It's been a massive change at MBC with last May's Elections results shaking up the mix and personalities at the Town Hall. New Leadership has proposed and Council has agreed:

- a New Constitution returning to a Cabinet and Leader Executive decision making system that means faster turnaround in decision making and changes-to start May 2022
- a new 4 yearly Election system, to save election costs -to start 2024
- A revised membership of 48 Members (now 55) with Ward changes – to be considered by the Electoral Commission hopefully for 2024 to save costs and reflect many changes.
- And with that Corporate Management changes will be required.

A quasi-interim Cabinet has formulated several new directions in readiness for May 2022:

A new 5-year Local Plan has been agreed and presented to Inspectors. This will still nonetheless continue to be "work in progress" as Policies will be changed and the work of the Planning Committee will reveal new needs and expectations.

Staffing has been a challenge in most areas, with Planning being the biggest one especially in Enforcement and "application chasing". This also takes up massive Ward Member time.

This Ward has had numerous problems reflecting "Conditions" amendments and simple non-adherence, plus water/flooding issues.

Community, Housing and Environmental concerns are high. Golding Homes, the biggest community house provider has slowly improved after major problems. A rise in ASB in most parts of the Borough has required new and better partnership working. The management of the Bin service has been very difficult in the last two years. Labour-Driver shortage and fuel costs means a review of the services and contract.

Post Covid the economy has returned to something like previous levels but in different ways. This calls for a different approach. Thus, the ERL Committee have stimulated support through grants and increased events and activities.

Health based issues-to the fore- suggest we need to re-examine recreation, community and leisure needs. A consultation IN HEADCORN will be set up soon.

Maidstone as a town needs a "revamp" . Already the Riverside and Lock Meadow has been spruced up, but there's more to come.

We no longer "live in" rented offices, we've bought them! That has SAVED money in rents. It also allows income too.

(We reviewed costs and assets very early in the new Leadership; we made some cuts/savings and put more into other areas whilst seeing opportunity).

We have decided to grasp the nettle of housebuilding-and build 1000 MBC homes for local people. We will reflect a range of needs.

Overall, one of our priorities is we MUST cut our energy use and look at different ways of managing our environment. MBC has made great strides from reducing lighting to going to greener transport. MBC is the 25th Best authority for doing this according to a recent audit, but it needs to be better.

That keeps the report reasonably short, but at this juncture I must thank Parish Councils, their Chairs and their Clerks for their major contribution to local communities.

Martin Round

Grafty Green Bowls Club

We returned to bowls last July having been shut down because of covid , it was a slow start but now we have 11 members which is good for a small village, we welcome new members to a very friendly club. Contact Joan Marriott 01622 858100 or Robert Turner 01622 850325.

Joan Marriott

Headcorn Morris

I'm sorry to say that Headcorn Morris will be "standing down" this year after a couple of years of trying to find some new dancers and musicians.

We have been a side since the late 1970s and have danced all over Europe and USA but as with all societies and clubs, new blood is needed to replace the ageing ones.

From having over 20 dancers and musicians, we are now down to a half dozen and a couple of musicians, all of whom are well over 55 years and some over 80.

We thank the Village Hall committee for all the years we have used your facilities but feel that following the Covid Outbreak a couple of years ago, we cannot continue and our last stand will be at Broadstairs Festival in August 2022.

John Moore

GRAFTY GREEN GARDENING CLUB – PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2022
Our 25th Year

| Date | Speaker/Event | Topic |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| 11 th January | AGM and Alison Marsden | More garden impact for less effort |
| 1 st February | Dr Mick Lynn | Potions, Parasites and Pests |
| 1 st March | Simon Ginnaw/Spring Show | Birds beyond the boughs |
| 5 th April | Fergus Garrett | Succession planting for a long season |
| 3 rd May | 6pm Outing to Bilting House, Godmersham, TN25 4HA | |
| 7 th May | 10am. Plant Sale, Village green (if wet in the Village Hall) | |
| 20 – 22 May | Weekend away to West Sussex and Hampshire | |
| 7 th June | Outing to local garden | |
| 5 th July | 6pm Garden party in the village | |
| 2 nd August | 6pm Outing to Hurst House, Hastingleigh, TN25 5 JD | |
| 6 th September | Katherine Hook/ Autumn Show | Sloe Seduction |
| 4 th October | Steve Edney | Think beyond the flower, plants with good seed heads. |
| 1 st November | Tom La Dell | Brogdale and the National Fruit Collection |
| 6 th December | Practical evening/Social | |

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.

We have awarded the Margaret Hoad trophy to Veronica Moore for the 2021 autumn show challenge and to Maureen Kent for this year's Spring challenge. We have acquired a new trophy which was awarded to Janet Collins for her pot of daffodils. Susan Burch had the most points for the spring show and is current holder of the silver cup.

As this is the 25th year of the club we have planned several events to make it a memorable one; we have approximately 45 members at present and 25 of us will be taking advantage of the weekend away in May.

Sue Burch

Community Warden Service – Stuart Ellesmere

Many apologies but I will be abstaining from the report for the AGM this year – at present. I have been detached to help with the Maidstone Task Force and have been doing this for nearly a year and a half. My time in Headcorn and the surrounding area is very limited and currently serve the area approx. one day a week. We have recently been able to add to our Warden staff to which we have recruited James Watson who is also covering the Headcorn and surrounding area a further two days a week.

On the referral front and with public engagement in mind we are still open to calls from local residents in the Grafty and Headcorn area and will provide advice and support where necessary.

With regards to calls to Wardens in the last year from the Grafty Green area, the numbers were extremely low but as mentioned above we will respond if called or emailed.

James is very new to the role but is already doing some very positive work in the area. He is now technically in the location more than I am, and in the first instance if you have any resident's that need help or support, please navigate them towards James.

For Info: James Watson's details are:

James.watson@kent.gov.uk

07811271021

Stuart Ellesmere

Community Shop

Autumn 2021 the village was notified that the village shop was to close at Christmas and the Parish had a consultation with the village as to whether there was any interest in a community shop being a viable alternative. From the consultation, 11 people came forward to form a committee to investigate further the possibilities. One possibility that is most able to be operational quickly is to join with the ECO products sales at St. Nicholas Church. At present the committee is waiting for an area in the church to be adapted for sales to be carried out and at the same time we envisage market traders bringing their veg/eggs etc. to form a mini market. This will also have to be agreed by the church diocese.

Sue Burch

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 now having come through the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID Pandemic we are back hosting, Local Government Elections, Parish Council Meetings, Yoga Classes, Children's Drama Classes, (Dazzle), Morris Dancers, 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 am pleased that we have been able to step in following the sad closure of our Village Post Office and Shop and successfully host a weekly Pop-up Post Office on a Tuesday afternoon. We have also with the support of a small band of highly trained volunteers been able to link the serving of light refreshments at the hall whilst the Post Office service is being provided. This allows us all the opportunity to socialise regularly with our friends and neighbours over a cup of tea and a biscuit in our cosy Village Hall.

In addition to our regular hirers we as a committee continue to organise and host the Panto, the Pancake Evening on Shrove Tuesday, the Summer Fair on the old cricket field, a Themed Meal, the Winter Craft Fair and the Christmas Quiz. We also stand ready to assist the Church in continuing to host the Annual Harvest Supper when it is safe for this event to return.

We continue to look at ways in which the Village Hall can be used to host more community events, and are actively looking at supporting a craft club and hosting regular film nights, but if you would like to use the hall for a club or society that you would like to run for the benefit of the local community, please let me know.

This year is the hall's centenary and we plan to celebrate this milestone with an event on Saturday 20th August further details on the event will be provided shortly. Renovations to the Hall continue, we have replaced the flooring and the stage, installed planters at the front of the hall, a new hot water system to the kitchen and weather permitting will shortly be having the outside of the hall repainted. Further work needs to be undertaken but we are making good progress in making the hall fit for purpose for the 21st Century.

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 and all of the hall users who support the hall so loyally and make the hall such vibrant and fun place to visit.

Jon Thompson, Village Hall Chairman



Grafty Green 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:

- Regular patrols by a dedicated vehicle for ASB hotspots in the area
- Joint agency work involving various partners including local housing providers and MBC.
- Follow ups on the victims of burglaries/breaks to give crime prevention advice and information booklets.
- Patrols of outlying areas to deter and stop vehicles known for scrap metal thefts. This has been backed up with pre-arranged Policing Operations County wide involving numerous authorities and scrap yard inspections
- Kent police Community Policing Team and the 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 involving Anti-Social Behaviour.

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.

Thank you for your continued support in keeping Grafty Green Safe

PCSO John Boyd - Maidstone Community Safety Unit

A Year In The Life Of The 59 Bus Service

Presumably because of the Covid pandemic, the service is now in the third year of what was supposed to be a year long trial from February 2020 as one of KCC's five feeder service pilots. Although the timetable has not changed, a contract to run the service from 1st November 2021 to April 2023 was awarded to Nu-Venture in place of Arriva. Whilst Arriva continue to operate the morning and afternoon school day journeys, there has since been a dramatic improvement in the reliability and timekeeping of the rest of the service. Unfortunately it is still blighted from time to time by road closures for work by KCC and various utilities, and it still doesn't really go to where most people would like it to go, direct to and from Maidstone Town Centre as it always used to.

For reasons known only to KCC, their promised reviews of the feeder trial with the East of Maidstone Transport Group have not taken place, and yet despite this, KCC has now included the service on a list of contracts being considered for cancellation as it looks to reduce its spending on subsidising bus services. Submissions against the withdrawal of the 59 service have been made by the East of Maidstone Transport Group, Boughton Malherbe Parish Council, and by other Parish Councils along the route as part of a KCC consultation on their proposals. That consultation has now ended, and at the time of writing, KCC's decisions on the fate of the services proposed for withdrawal are awaited, but by the time the Council's annual meeting takes place, we should know what the future holds for the 59.

John Collins

Boughton Malherbe Parish Council's representative on the East of Maidstone Bus Group

Report for the Parish Council from St Nicholas Church

The last year has been eventful for our church community. Despite the Omicron variant normal church services have resumed. We were able to have a Carol, Christmas and Easter service, as well as weekly Sunday services and so the rituals of celebration, so dearly missed in the first year of Covid, have returned.

As attendance numbers are dwindling, we are facing the question of how our church community can attract new members and how the church can better serve the community in order to give it a sustainable future. Village coffee mornings organised by Sally Alexander every Tuesday in the village hall, are proving popular.

Faculties have been obtained from Canterbury to change the use of the South Isle of the church which is currently rarely used. The faculty permits us to create a shop on the left-hand side of the entrance. This will house our zero-waste shop which offers goods that can be filled into reusable containers. The hope is to widen the product range and include local produce and a regular pop-up farmers market with tea and cake for sale. The hope is to join forces with the village shop committee to make this happen. In this way we hope to become a regular destination for the village where people can shop, meet and enjoy a slice of cake. Work has begun on this site, but has recently been delayed due to discovering a Wotton tomb of historical importance. This was found under the rotten floorboards. We hope to resume work soon and invite the community in the meantime to visit the site before it may be covered again and give us ideas of what produce they would like to see in the shop.

On the other side of the door the pews will be re-arranged so that they can face each other along a long refectory table. The table will be crafted from spare pews and will lead up to the Lady-chapel. We hope in this way to create a space that can be used by the whole community and the church for hospitality events. We should be able to seat around 20 people so that we can offer tea and cake in all weathers. We also encourage others to use this space for their meetings or for family gatherings. The hope is that the church can once more become a meaningful space for everyone to use and enjoy whether for spiritual or community events. Please talk to us if you have ideas of how we could fulfil our ambition. What would you like to see the church used for?

Finally, a new notice board will replace the old one and announce events. The next event is a Jubilee celebration service in honour of her Majesty the Queen on Sunday the 5th of June at 3:30pm. This will be followed by tea and cake at 4:30. In the near future there will also be the chance to help yourself any time to a cup of tea and coffee in our church porch. So many walkers and visitors pass by and sit on the bench outside, we hope to share our hospitality with them and you in the near future.

Kenneth Alexander, Churchwarden

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 36 people a week. During the lockdown period I was running five classes a week via ZOOM.

Sue Burch

Malherbe Monthly

During the past year with the restrictions imposed on us by the Government in regard to the Covid 19 pandemic we have had to somewhat curtail our distribution of the magazine. Whilst we have been able to produce the magazine in its normal format and content we have been unable to distribute it widely throughout the parish and the surrounding areas as before.

However since the end of 2021 we have been able to resume delivery to all the households within the village of Grafty Green and the rest of the Parish and in addition copies of the magazine are left at Grafty Green Post Office and Boughton Malherbe Church Porch thus enabling visitors to the Parish to view the magazine.

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.

We have now taken the view to not distribute the magazine outside of the Parish and consequently have reduced our print run to 275 copies. To reflect this reduced distribution we have not charged any of the advertisers fees for their adverts as we believed they were not getting the exposure their adverts signed up for prior to the onset of Covid 19 restrictions. All advertisers will be advised of this change of circumstance when they are asked to renew their adverts as we hope to resume including paid for adverts in the near future.

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 Hitchens

Emergency Plan Committee Annual Report 2022

Unfortunately the Emergency Plan has not been updated for more than a year because of difficulties caused by Covid.

The existing version is still valid and should not be discarded.

However, some updates are in the pipeline and it is hoped that the next version of the plan will be ready for printing and distribution within the next 8 weeks.

Ron Galton

Report of Honywood and Douglas Charity for 2021/2022

Firstly, I would like to thank Mike Davidson for his many years' service as a Trustee representing Boughton Malherbe Parish Council, and welcome William Alexander who has been appointed as his successor.

We have had a busy year and we now enter 2022 celebrating the 400th anniversary of the founding of the charity by Sir Anthony Honywood in 1622.

In 2019 the Trustees purchased 23 High Street Lenham to provide extra accommodation of 3 Alms-houses. During 2021 we have been able to complete the planning process and the financial arrangements to fund the scheme. This involved obtaining grants, negotiating loans in addition to the Charities own funds. Subsequently going out to tender and appointing builders, work commenced on site in the first week of January with an expected completion in early Autumn and available for occupation later this year.

This will mean the charity has a total of 29 Alms-houses in Lenham; these are available for occupation by residents of the parishes of Lenham and Boughton Malherbe who have lived in the Parishes for more than 2 years, are aged over 60 and are needy.

Over the last year most units have been fully occupied other than when undergoing repairs.

Finally, I would like to thank John Collins for the enormous amount of work he has done to make the project at 23 High Street a reality.

David Chantler

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

A group has been formed to plan and organize an afternoon/evening of entertainment and refreshments on the village green/pub garden on 4th June. At the moment the plan is to provide tea and cake in the afternoon and ask villagers to come with their picnics to join in. We have booked a children's play double-decker bus for two hours and a band for the evening (dancing on the green). During the afternoon it is hoped that there will be a magician working around the tables and also a saxophone musician playing; plus barbeque in the evening.

The green will be festooned with flags and bunting.

Sue Burch

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Alan Colledge