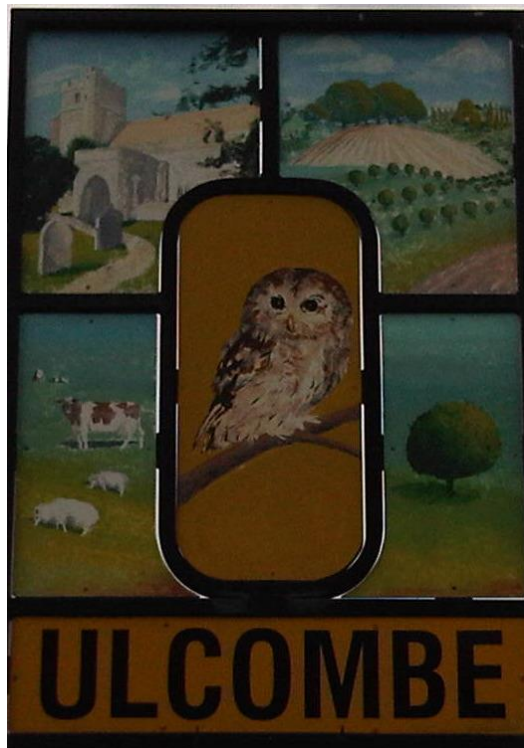


ULCOMBE

Annual Parish Report

2016/17

www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk



Produced by Ulcombe Parish Council
June 2017
(Reports from the Annual Parish Meeting held in April 2017)

ULCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL – Chairman’s Report – Mr Peter Titchener

In the past year, April 2016 – March 2017, there have been 11 regular parish council meetings and no extra parish council meetings - 6 fewer than last year.

In the last twelve months, Fiona Kenward and Rachel Robinson have joined the Parish Council. We have sadly just accepted the resignation of Shellina Prendergast. Understandably, she does not have time to combine her duties as a borough councillor with that of being a parish councillor as well as possibly being a county councillor too after May 4th. We would like to thank her for her very proactive hard work on the council.

I also want to thank our clerk, Helen Anderson, for her hard work and support in her first complete year.

The main issues dealt with by your parish council in the last 12 months were :

- Crime - there were 18 reported crimes in the year April 2016 –March 2017 and approximately 41 calls to the police about anti-social behaviour, flytipping etc. This compares with 15 crimes in 2015/16, 17 crimes in 2014/15 and 31 crimes in 2013/14. There could well be a link between the reduction in crime and the increased popularity of spending much more time on social media.
It is important that people always get a crime report reference number when reporting a crime so that they are all properly logged. The PCSO requests that people call 101 to report crime, or 999 for an emergency.
- Planning – Ulcombe Parish Council is a consultee on planning issues and Maidstone Borough Council consulted us on 24 planning applications. Of these, Ulcombe agreed 18 and refused 6. There were also 3 Prior Notification advices. The issue of permitted development of agricultural buildings, particularly in sensitive landscape areas, is an issue we and other parishes are asking to be much more rigorously regulated by Maidstone, to conform with their own rural policies.
- Local Plan – we have been fighting Maidstone Council’s call for development sites - , particularly on housing, and traveller sites in Headcorn Ward. Ulcombe Parish Council spoke on these issues at the recent Inspectorate hearing on Maidstone’s Draft Local Plan.
- Highway problems – Pothole filling are being dealt with now the winter is over, particularly in the Headcorn Road. The potholes from Headcorn to Ulcombe Village Hall are scheduled to be filled on 21st April. KCC has had to balance a massive cut in funding with the usual spring demand to repair the roads after the winter.
There are still problems at the Pye corner Z bend where the water sits in the road in heavy rain and then floods down William Post Lane. It seems that 150 yards of pipe under the

road in William Post Lane is blocked, and the ditches are also blocked. Kent Highways (KHS) has visited the site and will report back on action to be taken.

Ditches have also been dug at the lower end of Knowle Hill lane to relieve flooding.

We are also fighting the use of Chegworth road by Nu Venture bus 66 because it can cause congestion in the afternoon rush hour and this narrow lane is not an appropriate route for a bus. They use Chegworth road as an empty bus repositioning exercise to Maidstone because it is faster than proceeding along Chartway Street.

Several residents have also asked about having parking restrictions on the blind bend by the school. This is currently being looked at.

- HGVs - The monitoring of traffic speed and HGVs - we are looking at reducing speed on the Lenham road between Wents and Kingswood . The traffic survey in December 2016 showed that the average speed was 28/29 mph. The possibility of a further survey is being discussed at the present moment.

Kent Highways will be installing white lines at the Lenham road edge in the next few weeks and we are liaising with them about better signage to highlight sharp bends. We will discuss with residents and the Parish Council will probably have to fund this .

We are about to erect “ not suitable for HGVs” signs at the top of Ulcombe Hill , at the Grafty Green end of Eastwood road , and on the Ulcombe Road near Headcorn, to try and limit HGVs coming through Ulcombe village. This project is now underway. We have been in talks with KHS to narrow the Chegworth road where it meets the A20 and an experimental siting of bollards has been put in place to try and discourage HGVs from entering Chegworth Road . We are now monitoring their effectiveness. We cannot stop HGVs and to make HGV drivers think twice, we might have to review the better positioning of signage or even better bollards. As this part of the Chegworth road is in Kingswood, we are grateful for the support of Kingswood Parish Council.

- Traveller sites - Maidstone (MBC) has now got a 5 year traveller land supply which helps MBC to oppose development which is contrary to its rural policies, and to strengthen its decision making if appeals are made to the Inspectorate . We would like to thank our Borough Councillors, Shellina Prendergast and Martin Round because, together with the Joint Parishes Group and Kent Association of Local Councils, there is now a momentum to try and get a much more sensible policy for gypsy and traveller sites in the Borough. Our MP, Helen Whately, is also helping us at government level, for which we thank her too.
- Recreation Ground
 - a) Play Area – we are investigating what we can do to upgrade the play area and provide some new equipment for all ages.
 - b) Dog fouling - more “ no dog” signs on the recreation ground and car park have been erected. We do not want dog mess in the children’s play area or on the playing fields

- c) Trees - Following a recent tree inspection survey, some surgery has been required to ensure that these remain in a safe condition.
- Grants - We have increased our grant to the Village Hall to help one of our most valuable community assets.
 - Speedwatch - This has restarted under the leadership of Rhian Banham and we recently purchased our own equipment so that it can be deployed as and when volunteers are available. The more that the equipment is deployed, the greater the message that is delivered to motorists. Please contact Rhian or the clerk for more information if you want to get involved as a volunteer.
 - Roadside litter and Fly tipping - This is becoming a big problem. Our thanks to our Community warden Dawn Riach-Brown for helping us get this dealt with by Maidstone, and to those of you who have organised litter collecting sessions in and around the village. Fiona Kenward organised a very well supported litter clearing group on April 9th this year and we collected about 75 large bin bags of litter from the A20 junction with Chegworth Road to Headcorn Road in the village.
 - Village Website - This has been recently redesigned by EIS, our website host, and allows the community to be better represented. However, in order for this to work well, we do need to know about future events taking place. Please therefore contact the parish clerk and we can post the information for you, and help in any publicity required to spread the word.
 - Football- We are delighted that Headcorn youth teams are continuing to use our recreation ground for football. We are still trying to find a cricket team - no luck so far.
 - Village Day - The Parish Council organised a successful family Village Day on Saturday 11th June here at the Village Hall to celebrate the Queen's Official 90th birthday. We are grateful to the Friendship Club for providing the cream teas. There are no plans for a Village event this year.
 - Finances - It was agreed to generate a parish precept of £19,875.00 in 2017/18. This equates to £52.04 per Band 'D' property. The LCTS grant (Localising Council Tax support grant) of £797, received last year, is no longer being paid to parishes, and the Parish Services Scheme from Maidstone has been reduced by £486. The Parish total funding will therefore be 5.2% lower in 2017/18 (ie: £1,283.00) compared with last year. It was therefore agreed to increase the precept by 1.89% in 2017/18. This will produce an increased revenue contribution of £369.75
 - Pop up Café - On Tuesday 16th May, a new initiative by Action with Communities in Rural Kent is coming to Ulcombe. A pop up café will be situated outside The Harrow from 10am to 12noon providing free tea, coffee and cake. Please do support this venture which will be returning on a monthly basis (ie: 13th June and 11 July). The Harrow is fully supportive.

- .On behalf of Ulcombe, the Parish Council would like to welcome the new landlords of The Harrow (John and Tracey Sinclair) and wish them every success. We would also like to thank the small group of residents who took the initiative to buy The Harrow.
- I would like to thank Jenny Whittle for everything she has done to support Ulcombe, particularly financially, in her role as our KCC Councillor. She is standing down next month and I want to say how much we will miss her. Our very best wishes for the future, Jenny
- Finally, I would like to thank Helen for organising our refreshments.

Summary of Receipts

Opening reserves brought forward from previous year	21,184
Precept 16/17	19,505
Council tax base support grant	797
Parish Services Scheme	2,281
Transparency Grant	30
Football fees	640
Business account interest	2
Donations	250
VAT recovered for 2016/17	<u>1,291</u>
Income Total Received for 2016/17	<u>24,796</u>

Total Income: 45,980

Summary of Payments

Office costs and staff costs	7,389
Publications, printing and advertising	102
IT Services	31
Hall hire and subsistence	400
Association membership fees	497
Training courses	60
Finance and Insurance	908
Recreation Ground	2,320
Pavilion and utility bills	781
Play Equipment	74
Car Park and Village Hall Queens Birthday Event	1,120

	1,165
Extras and miscellaneous	2,575
VAT paid out	1,281
	Total expenditure: <u>18,703</u>
	CLOSING BALANCE: 27,277

BREAKDOWN OF PAYMENTS (included above)

OFFICE AND STAFF COSTS - salary, HMRC, office supplies/equipment, telephone

PUBLICATIONS, PRINTING, ADVERTISING - copies of local plan, Ulcombe Annual report

HALL HIRE, SUBSISTENCE - Hire of Ulcombe/Headcorn village halls, refreshments

ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES - KALC, SLCC, KCPFA, CPRE, ACRK

TRAINING COURSES - inc. Annual Planning and Clerks' conferences

FINANCE, INSURANCE - internal/external audit, IOC (data protection), annual insurance

RECREATION GROUND - Grounds maintenance, emptying litter bins, tree and drainage works

PAVILION - annual alarm/fire extinguisher checks, cesspit emptying, external decoration

PLAY EQUIPMENT - annual safety check, painting of goal posts

CAR PARK, VILLAGE HALL - maintenance work on hall path and guttering, replacement bollards

EXTRAS, MISCELLANEOUS - village sign, war memorial, wreath, grants to other organisations

The proceeding statement are only a draft summary of the accounts. Copies of the full Statement of Accounts is available from the Parish Clerk.

Ulcombe Parish Council accounts are audited internally by Lionel Robbins F.M.A.A.T and the Statutory Annual Return is externally audited by PKF Littlejohn.

The exercise period for electors to inspect the accounts will be from Monday 5 June to Friday 14 July 2017. The requisite Public Notice and a copy of the return will be placed on the Parish Website www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk and on the village noticeboard nearer the time.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL – Ward Members – Cllr Martin Round and Cllr Shellina Prendergast.

There are 55 elected Members to Maidstone Borough Council. It is fair to say with no exaggeration that both Headcorn Members have contributed fully to the work of the Council and represented the Ward in a prominent manner. We are both “frequent attenders” at most key committees and additional meetings/briefings where others may not be noticed. We are stunned by the amount of low prominence by some members! (see some later comments).

As previous years, and probably future years, Planning and the building of homes is the most high-profile and demanding/consuming matter. And both Headcorn Ward members take that “full-on” with Shellina on the SPST (Strategic Planning) Committee and both of us sit on the Planning Committee, with myself as Political spokesperson (with many additional meetings). I also serve on the Policy and Resources Committee which oversees all policies, funding, personnel and much more, so this again has knock-on implications in other aspects of the Council. We also sit on, or attend, or substitute on some other committees and external bodies.

Planning has now moved on in that the Local Plan has now been presented to Inspection and has NOT come through unscathed. Currently, whilst the Plan has provisionally been passed to go forward, it is subject to several amendments including a well-publicised small reduction in numbers; with a very substantial FIVE YEAR Land Supply of allocated sites and house numbers. There will remain a need to satisfy those numbers beyond what is currently 6.2 years and “windfalls” will continue to be discussed, especially those that are considered disused/redundant or “brownfields”. So the Plan will continue to be contentious and where any and all Planning Applications will be subject to much work. However, the general verdict is that the plan sets many “terms and conditions” and in so doing they are legal precedents.

It is the view of the Headcorn Members that whilst Planning law highly favours much development and that our hearts, our heads and our stomachs are often torn when having to make a decision, often ones we are reluctantly forced into, that the MBC Local Plan was flawed at the start of its development-and continues to be-with a greater need for better policies, OR CLEARER INTERPRETATIONS OF THEM, especially those that would protect rural countryside and also those that might provide appropriate developments in acceptable places with the right design, size, number etc. This thus forces even more difficult and contentious decisions.

That process itself of decision making has been brought into great controversy in the last year with Members receiving both specific legal advice and training and some personal admonishments within MBC together with a level of intimidation and abuse from all sides of the debate.

The importance of Planning is not exclusive to House building. Naturally G&T policy is high on the Ward agenda and the matter of enforcement for many issues continues to be both challenging and costly. It is fair to say that Headcorn Ward and its immediate neighbours has the greatest problem. Ward Members have been raising this matter with other members to get support. It has not been easy. To this effect a workshop was ultimately set up to inform and discuss-after several abortive attempts-and of the 55 members only a minority attended and only those with a political or rural interest. The work on the Enforcement issue continues. This is symptomatic of the MANY rural issues that face some of us, yet many of the other Members fail to respond to and/or don't want to! And the MANY and wide ranging issues of Planning continue to be hard-work and time consuming.

For example, Junction 8 is an issue that must have some sort of plan, together with any Leeds/Langley Relief Road.

There is a review of the Planning function (the personnel, the tasks, the budget & policies etc.) at present, pertinent to what is needed following the Inspection of the Local Plan and what was exposed over the development of it. This is, itself, a key matter SOME members will be involved in. Surely, we must do it BETTER? From processing and supporting applications, approving, declining, monitoring, communicating, policies, design, dealing with problem or sensitive issues; like the environment or conservation, setting conditions, following through, discharging, S106s and enforcement. All with lots of legal work!

It is especially significant that your TWO Ward Members are very involved at all strands of that work, whilst AGAIN some members of MBC don't even turn up to key briefings. (Some of us can have double and triple diary events because of many interests/concerns much at the same time, plus family and/or jobs, AND Parish Councils to interact with, and we get ill sometimes, whilst some do not have PCs, or jobs or many interests/concerns!).

Litter and fly tipping continues to attract our time and attention. This is combined with the reality that our country roads have become Lorry and van rat runs with overnight parking. There is a bigger picture to this that needs work with many agencies, KCC and better government legislation. This is being discussed across that wide spectrum. For both of us it is another challenge!

And the final issue I must draw your attention to: DEVOLVED Government. I believe it WILL be noticed by those that are involved in all tiers of government and sadly I believe the public will notice & MAY be affected MORE SO in RURAL areas. There is a keenness of all political parties to streamline and save, together with Brexit implications. MBC must make enormous savings, and KCC must make even bigger ones. So the merging of Council services in some way is inevitable – but how will it be done? With the North? With Thanet, Canterbury, Dover and Shepway/Folkestone merger decisions well underway, thoughts will emerge and decisions will start to loom soon after the KCC election. My belief will be that rural areas may be more isolated culturally and thus disenfranchised by the lack of “condensed” critical mass in services, especially if the Headcorn ward is part of Gravesham/Dartford/Maidstone/Medway. We are the southernmost now as we are in MBC, and to share services and admin with the “bridge to Essex” seems totally unacceptable.....unless the plan really can offer rural areas a satisfactory deal. But this may mean Parishes may need to rethink their future Business Plans and services. But don't ignore this matter! We won't!

There will be Brexit implications, with devolution very much part of the thinking with regional development issues and ALL public services considered for more changes or cuts OR opportunities.

We must close by thanking our Parishes, especially our Clerks and Chairs for their patience with us at busy times and their active contributions and assistance all the time. Together we still believe and know that we have a great Ward to represent.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – Ward Member - Cllr Mrs. Jenny Whittle

A written report was received as follows:-

1. Chegworth Road – following a meeting with Parish Councillors, Kent Highways and a resident, I funded posts to act as a road narrowing measure to deter lorries from using this road. It is hoped that this measure will also reduce/eliminate fly tipping here, but that will need to be monitored and close working with the MBC Street Cleansing Team, Kent Highways and Highways England
2. Ongoing discussions about whether to reduce the speed limit on the Lenham Road. I've allocated funding from my Member Grant for a second speed monitoring assessment. Residents have agreed that the speed limit should not be reduced if the results are the same as the assessment undertaken in December 2016. If the results show that speeding is an issue, a further discussion will need to take place between Kent Highways, my successor and the residents. White lining will be done soon. A couple of bend signs need to be funded and the locations agreed with residents before installed by Kent Highways.
3. Council Tax for 17/18 was increased by 4%, half of which is earmarked for Adult Social Care.
4. An extra £26m has been given to KCC's adult social care services in the Chancellor's Spring budget.
5. KCC is seeking to encourage lorry drivers to park in official parks and has been working with the Department of Transport (DfT) to explore what can be done to stop the blight of overnight lorry parking. As well as an increase in the number of smaller lorry parks, increased enforcement on the county's roads will be needed. KCC is exploring with the DfT new signing that will tell drivers they cannot park up overnight. The level of penalty notices for HGVs is also being reviewed along with clamping of vehicles.

KENT COMMUNITY WARDEN – Dawn Riach-Brown

Dawn Riach-Brown gave a short introduction to her role as Community Warden and the fast array of issues that they assist in from welfare and vulnerable persons care to youth projects. Their work is very much assisted with a multi-agency approach, but can be the first port of call for any residents who have a problem and do not know how to deal with it. Dawn covers a wide area of Kent but can always be contacted for advice on 07773 397125 or email dawn.riach-brown@kent.gov.uk

KENT POLICE – PCSO John Boyd

Ulcombe has maintained a low level of crime during the past year.
I report the crime statistics to the parish council meetings every month.

Crime levels throughout the year have their peaks and troughs but I am pleased to say that we are sustaining the reduced level of crime overall that we have benefited from over the past few years. This thankfully 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:

- Provide a visible presence in my wards and surrounding areas.
- Follow ups on the victims of burglaries/breaks to give crime prevention advice and information booklets.

- Helping neighbours to try to sort out their disputes, this on most occasions means linking in with the housing associations where applicable.
- Linking in with the Kent County Council Wardens and other agencies to help out with many problems that arise.
- Speed enforcement checks and speed monitoring checks throughout the surrounding areas.
- 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.

We are always trying to keep on top of any nuisance youth issues in the village. As with the previous year this has also not been a major issue this year and any incidents of this type of behaviour have been swiftly dealt with to good effect. We encourage residents to call in any incidents of this type of nuisance behaviour.

As with most areas in life the police have changing priorities and budgets. Taking that into account my wards now stretch from Headcorn to Leeds which incorporates eight parishes. I have and will continue to provide the visible presence and first class service that the Kent Police is renowned for.

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 making Ulcombe safe.

HEADCORN FOOTBALL CLUB – Kieran Killeen

There are currently two teams using the ground and they have played in total 23 matches, involving 34 local children in the under 14 and under 17 categories. The ground remains well drained and thus provides an excellent playing surface which we are really grateful for.

ULCOMBE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL– Emma Hickling, Executive Head Teacher

There is much progress to report from the school, the theme of the year has been recognition of success.

Recognition in inspection.

In May 2016, the school was inspected by OFSTED. It was judged to be good in every area. This is the first Good OFSTED report in the schools' history. The following is the points from the front page of the report.

- *The leadership of the executive headteacher has been pivotal to the success of this school. She has implemented a strong ethos of effective teaching, learning and good behaviour.*
- *Staff are highly motivated and share the executive headteacher's vision for the school.*
- *The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are accurate in assessing where a pupil is in their learning and provide work that is of the right level. As a result, pupils make strong progress from their starting points. Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils' learning.*
- *The curriculum is motivating and challenging. It has been carefully designed to fit the needs of the pupils who attend this school.*

- *This is an inclusive school. There are effective links with harder to reach groups, particularly within the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community. Those pupils who join the school in different year groups are given a warm and friendly welcome.*
- *Good relationships are a real strength throughout the school. They are central to developing the trust needed for pupils to make good progress in their personal and academic development.*
- *Children make good progress in the early years because of skilled leadership and effective teaching. They are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.*
- *Pupils report that they are proud of the school and frequently said that they 'love coming to school'. v Parents praise the commitment of staff. They say this contributes to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.*
- *Those responsible for governance fully understand their roles. They continually look for ways to improve the school. They know the school's strengths and areas still left to improve.*
- *Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well developed through the school's core.*
- *It is not yet an outstanding school because :*
- *Attendance for some Gypsy, Roma, Traveller pupils is still too low.*
- *Teachers do not develop pupils' skills in phonics rapidly enough.*

It was rightly rewarding for the staff and pupils' efforts to be recognised. The school has come a long way in the last three years. The success was recognised with a balloon release and a tea party. The areas of development feature in school post OFSTED development plan and we have already moved forward in these two areas.

Recognition by KCC

The successes that we have at Ulcombe particularly around the pupil's progress and the high expectations staff have for work and behaviour of the pupils have been recognised by KCC. We have had a number of important visitors over the last year including Patrick Leeson, corporate director, Anton Franic, Head of school improvement, Quentin Roper, director of the Canterbury diocese along with many local heads coming to see what we do and share ideas.

Recognition in the quality of education

Ulcombe is a unique school as many of its pupils are from the Gypsy Roma Traveller community, this is made clear in the OFSTED report. The school itself has no right to choose who it admits and believes that all children have the right to a GOOD education. All pupils make at least good progress at Ulcombe no matter what their back ground is. Last summer we sent pupils to secondary schools including Grammar. We have a small but dedicated staff team who work with all families to ensure that children are happy, healthy and making progress.

Recognition via award

The staff team of Ulcombe C of E Primary School have won an award at the Kent teacher of the year prize giving. As we have won in the team of the year category, myself and two senior members of staff will attend the ceremony in May. I am very grateful to whoever nominated us for recognising my team and their dedication.

I look forward to another successful year – the theme this academic year so far has been building on success.

ULCOMBE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL - Rita Strutt, Church Warden

FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS', ULCOMBE – Molly Poulter

The Friends were thanked for their generous support during the year.

The year started with the very successful themed party at the home of Fiona and John Kenward. Everyone responded to the evening and came in fancy dress, and it was much enjoyed by everyone. It raised £452.

We had a wonderful afternoon in June at the church with the UK Paper Band from Sittingbourne. We combined this with a cream tea which was much appreciated by both the band and the audience. This raised £604.

Then in September the well-known Kent Police Choir came and gave us a concert. This time, we added a hot supper in the interval which, again, was much appreciated. £501.00 was added to funds

Our final event of the year was the Auction of Promises which raised £2,851. The evening was enhanced by the presence of a number of children who urged their parents on to bid generously!

To date we have £16,620 in hand and are awaiting the outcome of plans to put a glass door on the porch to preserve the heat.

The church's organist, due to ill health, has sadly had to stop playing, and the church has currently been unable to find a replacement. As a result The Friends have agreed to finance a special system of recorded organ music which can easily be adapted to fit a variety of services. We hope it will be in place by Easter.

Work is in hand for a new History of the Church, and The Friends continue to help with tidying and work in the graveyard and car park.

This year, we have plans for three events. The first, on the 15th of July, will be a *1960s Themed Party* at the Kenward's. Tickets, price £20, are available from John Kenward (01622 891889) or Molly Poulter (01622 842988). The evening starts at 7.00 pm and will include music, food and wine, competitions, a treasure hunt, a tombola and a raffle.

Then on the 23rd September the *Lees Court Music Chamber Choir* will be giving a concert in the church. And on Saturday the 18th of November we will be organising a *Christmas Market* in the church which will include a whole variety of events throughout the afternoon and evening. Watch for details.

Our Treasurer, Chris Parkinson, who moved to Benenden two years ago, has passed the baton to John Kenward. We are very grateful to Chris for all his work since The Friends were inaugurated. John, our new treasurer, will be writing to you separately to ask for your subscriptions for 2017.

Our AGM will be held on Saturday 29 April at 11.30 am at The Harrow Pub which will be re-opened by then.

VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE – Frances Crawford

Current Committee Members: Chairperson – Frances Crawford, Treasurer – Vacant, Secretary – Debra Bell, Mimi Humphrey, Christina Cox, Jack Webb, John Ware,

MaryAnn Lovegrove, Janine Monk, Debby Boland

The village hall is used on a regular basis by many clubs and societies providing a range of interesting activities. These include Badminton, Ballroom Dancing, Table Tennis, History Society and Art Classes. All of these events take place from Monday to Friday, but at the weekends the hall is frequently booked out for children's parties, celebration parties and yoga workshops. Contact details for all these clubs and activities are available from the Bookings Secretary Nikki Sharp on 842848 or from myself on 843862.

During the past year we have organised two very successful Quiz nights – the first was in May and the second was in January, having been postponed from November due to insufficient committee members being available on the night. These two events raised £1,700.00 for village hall funds. We tried to run a Barn Dance on 1st October but this was cancelled as we did not sell enough tickets to pay for the band.

We have recently purchased 6 new tables for use in the hall or the meeting room.

Unfortunately despite spending nearly £4,000.00 on restoring the woodblock flooring last year, we have already noticed some "wear" in the varnish and the ballroom dancers have noticed some slippery patches on the floor. We asked for the floor to be treated with Bona anti-slip varnish and the quote included 4 coats of this, but we are suspicious that only one coat was applied and we will be seeking a second opinion in the near future.

Our disaster this year – we seem to average one such event per year – was internal flooding at the end of January. The cause was the failure of an anti-flood device in the manhole at the far end of the car park; this has happened once before in 2012 when there was minimal damage as pre-school were in the hall at the time and therefore the fault was quickly rectified. However, on this occasion the flood happened overnight and the ladies toilets and entrance hall were flooded with contaminated water. Southern Water have denied liability, though they have paid some compensation for the manner in which the problem was dealt with and we are therefore in the process of making a claim on our insurance policy for decoration and replacement of the carpet tiles in the entrance hall. The total costs are in the region of £3,000.

Looking to the future, once the flood repairs have been completed, we will be turning our attention to trying to solve the problem of drawing the curtains without pulling them off the rails; current thinking is that this may involve having new curtains made which will only go up to the top of the windows rather than all the way up to the ceiling but we will be getting the experts in for their advice!

We will also be doing a leaflet drop around the village prior to the Village Hall Committee AGM on 2nd May as, although we do have two new committee members, we are now without a Treasurer and two other committee members, including the Chairperson, will be standing down after more than 10 years at the end of the year.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB – Molly Poulter

Ulcombe's Friendship Club has met regularly throughout the year. Its regular meetings were held in Ulcombe Village Hall on the last Thursday afternoon in the month. But during the year it had a New Year Lunch at The Ridge Golf Club, a Garden Party in July at the home of Molly Poulter, and an afternoon at the home of Pat Smith in Kingswood. We also had several coffee mornings to raise funds.

We had a Games Afternoon in February, and talks on Spooky Kent, Nelson's Mistress Lady Hamilton, and the Tower of London. Some speakers dropped out at the last minute and we had to find substitutes.

In the past, the club has had two outings each year but this year we found it impossible to find the numbers to fill a coach and make an outing viable. Coaches are very expensive and unless one can fill them, the cost becomes prohibitive.

The club has been running very successfully for nearly twenty years but numbers have dropped significantly this last year. People have aged, moved away or died and the club has become less viable. For example, we were very sorry indeed to lose Meg and Don Cannings. Meg, who is very ill, was one of the stalwarts of the club and will be sorely missed.

At our meeting in February we had a very serious discussion about the future, and decided, for the time being, to close The Friendship Club in its present form and instead, ask the newly re-opened Harrow pub to host a *'drop-in for tea'* on the last Thursday in the month. This way, there will be less work for the aging committee in moving heavy tables and providing the afternoon tea which has been much enjoyed over the years.

The new publicans at The Harrow are happy with the idea, but as they are not exactly certain on which date they will be opening, the March meeting of The Friendship Club will be at the home of Mrs Pat Davis in Fairbourne Heath. For details of how to get there please telephone either Molly Poulter (842988) or Pat Davis (844855)

The assets of the club will be held on to for the moment until there has been a final decision about the future.

HISTORY SOCIETY – Molly Poulter

Ulcombe History Society has had a busy and successful year with membership growing. It meets on a Tuesday evening in the village hall and last year had six very different talks: The English Gentleman made in Italy, Agincourt's 600th anniversary, Jewish Life in Medway, The Plague Doctors of Kent, the Ordnance Survey ancient and modern, and British Travellers to the Court of the Tsar. We had a musical evening and supper at The Old Dairy when Bryan Gipps gave a fascinating talk on Mozart and the piano.

We also had two very interesting outings. The first was to Richborough and Reculver led by Simon Elliot from the University of Kent. We lunched in Sandwich, and finished with a violent thunder storm, but it was much enjoyed by all.

Then we had an evening in Faversham with a guided tour led by Anthea Bryant. Many members were surprised to discover what an interesting town Faversham proved to be.

Sadly, our planned weekend away to Cambridge, West Stow and Bury St Edmunds, had to be cancelled owing to the small number of takers and the heavy cost of the coach.

We have a very interesting programme planned for this year with an outing in May to Portsmouth, an evening outing to Charing or Elham, and a weekend outing to Amiens in France. We have eight talks planned: on the revolting English in January, on the Cinque Poets, the London City Livery, Mediaeval

bestiaries, a parallel history of England and Hungary, the early kingdoms of Kent, the making of the King James Bible, and the Venerable Bede.

Sadly, a planned concert by Michael Alexander in April has had to be cancelled owing to illness.

DRAMA CLUB – Mimi Humphrey

This year we decided to combine our two favourite themes, a panto and a murder mystery with quite simply, 'Murder at the Panto'.

As for being simple it was anything but, we started this venture without a director but a keen willingness to do something, so to keep the group from folding, step up with a lot of persuading, me!, and with a lot of help and advice from more professional sources, i.e our one time director Pippa Evans we went for it and it went very well, or no one has had the heart or nerve to tell me different.

So onwards and upwards as they say to the next drama, still without a director, so if you feel this is your thing or you would like to join us in whatever capacity, please get in touch, there is room for all from acting to back stage and the production team. There is a small annual membership fee to cover start up costs, last year it was £20.

We are hoping to have regular meetings in the Harrow, now it is up and running for play readings and regular rehearsals in the Village Hall once we have a play decided and underway.

WRITING CLUB – Ellen Richter

The Wayside Writers was set up in 2013 to support and encourage local people with an interest in writing, whether their interest is in fiction or non-fiction, poetry or prose.

When the group was originally set up, it was unclear what response I would receive; we are a small village and writing is not the most common hobby. Amazingly, and happily, there were enough wordsmiths, or aspiring wordsmiths, to run the group.

However, over time the members and the focus have changed and it is uncertain whether there is a long term future. Despite extending the remit to include more discussion on reading, and books which have inspired and engaged us, we have not gained any more members.

Alongside this, other priorities have meant two of our members are no longer attending the meetings.

I am reviewing the situation on a regular basis, but at the same time am looking at opportunities to engage more people in the group and gain more interest within the village.

Over the next year we really need more people to get involved, so if anyone is interested in joining us, or simply coming to see how it works, please call 01622 840199 and speak to Ellen, or drop an e-mail to poetryforevents@gmail.com.

We meet on the last Thursday of the month at 8pm.

ULCOMBE VILLAGE NEWSLETTER –Rachel Robinson

The Ulcombe Village Newsletter (UVN) currently has a circulation of 300 covering the majority of the village. The annual subs have remained frozen at £3 a year and we continue to generate reasonable income via advertising. The ethos of the UVN remains as a local, apolitical newsletter, with articles provided by the local community for the local community. The income generated from advertising is for the purpose of covering the costs of the newsletter, rather than for profit, and therefore advertising only forms a small part of the publication.

This year has seen the departure of Leon Holmes as editor in September 2016 with Rachel Robinson taking over as the new editor from the October 2016 edition. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Leon for his contribution to the newsletter over the years of his editorship.

Sadly this year also saw us lose Philip Easton who made a substantial contribution, over 16 years, to the Ulcombe Village News, as Treasurer, Printer and Distributor.

Printing is still undertaken at the school during term time and as ever we would like to thank both them for accommodating us. During this year Charles Tassell has agreed to let the newsletter use his printing facilities in the school holidays making printing considerably easier whilst the school is closed. We would like to thank Charles for his assistance in keeping the newsletter in print for the full 12 months of the year.

As you know the newsletter is fully reliant on volunteers who give up their time on a regular basis and as editor I would like to pass on my personal thanks to Leila and John Ware, Mimi Humphry and of course all our distributors, especially Meg Cannings and John Foad who have given up their rounds after many years of service.

Finally I would like to thank the community for providing the articles for the newsletter. Without the ongoing support of the village UVN would be a thin publication indeed. I am always open to suggestions for future direction for the newsletter and would welcome any regular contributions, whether from clubs and societies in the village or other regular columns on cooking, gardening, puzzles, cartoons, etc.

BALLROOM DANCING CLUB – Rod Davis

The Ulcombe dance class continues to improve. However we are slightly down on last year's numbers due to people moving away. I think it is made more difficult to join when the standard is so improved. The Thursday night practice continues as usual

BADMINTON CLUB – Alan Burch

The club plays in the Village Hall on most Friday evenings from 8pm-11pm from October to May and is still thriving with a full complement of up to 13 members per week.

For more information on how to join contact Alan on 01622 842984.

THE ART CLASS

Established 6 years ago, The Art Class offers structured and informative art courses covering a range of mediums including pencil, watercolour, pastel and acrylic. With the guidance of our professional tutor

providing step by step tuition, we ensure each student's artistic skills are developed to their individual potential.

I have been running beginners and intermediate courses at Ulcombe Village Hall for 4 years. We now have a regular attendance of students, with approximately 50% of them living in or around Ulcombe Village itself.

We have just started our Summer Course, which will run until mid July. Our new schedule of Autumn Courses is still to be confirmed. However, it is expected that we will begin a new selection of classes in early September, which will include a class for Absolute Beginners!

In the beginners course we will explore the secrets and techniques for successfully drawing and painting subjects such as portraits, landscapes, mountains, beach scenes, sunsets, trees, foliage and flowers and much much more! We provide all equipment to minimise initial investment by Students and the course is designed to educate on best material choices too!

At the end of all of courses we want people to feel informed and empowered, and able to confidently approach a piece of work on their own in a variety of mediums. We also want them to have had lots of fun!

ULCOMBE TABLE TENNIS CLUB

The newly formed club, thanks to Molly for the inspiration, meets on the 2nd, 4th and 5th (if there is one) Tuesday of the month.

We started on the 11 October 2016 and we number about 6 regular members and could do with more people particularly younger people. Anyone over 14 years of age would be most welcome.

We have 2 tables, bats, balls, all courtesy of the Village Hall Committee to whom we thank.

Subs are £4 per session from 7.30pm until we have had enough, with only a few of us this is normally about 9pm to 9.30pm. Light refreshments are available and we have a dart board as well.

One of our tables is essentially an outdoor table and not up to reasonable standard, so if anyone knows of a possible replacement, please do let us know.

Parish Council Members:

Peter Titchener (Chairman)

Mary Ann Lovegrove

Iain Moir

Jon Thompson

Fiona Kenward

Rachel Robinson

Clerk: Mrs Helen Anderson

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