



**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING &
ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

AGENDAS

BUDGET 2015/16

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND
REPORTS FROM PARISH BASED
CHARITIES, ORGANISATIONS AND BUSINESSES**



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Many people spent most of 2014 recovering from the Christmas 2013 floods and we have continued working closely with all agencies to give support to the local community, improve emergency facilities and attract funding for community flood defences. In July we took a coach party to visit the Leigh Flood Storage Area where residents had the opportunity to better understand the workings of the structure and to learn about proposals to increase the capacity of the storage area as well as creating a storage area on the River Beult. It is hoped to repeat this during the summer of 2015 for those people who missed out last time. In November 2014, we had yet another high profile visit, this time from the Deputy Prime Minister, who announced that Central Government would be setting aside £17m to cover 50% of the cost of proposed flood defences; KCC subsequently announced that it would fund the balance. We continue to retain the services of a team from Community Payback who work every Sunday in the Parish. Following their hard work on The Tatt, MP Helen Grant unveiled a plaque in recognition of the partnership working. Shortly after, we were delighted to see that the Swans had returned to Swan Place and the ducks have nested there this year. Highways is always an important item on the agenda and the new reporting system is causing some concern. We have complained to KCC that the working relationship with the Highway Steward is not as it should be. As you will have noticed from the banners, we are waging a war on those who do not pick up their dog poo and bin it. As I am sure most of you are aware, Yalding Parish owns a large amount of land, 95.6% of all the common land in Maidstone Borough in fact. This is represented by 31 acres of The Lees including the car park, Fowle Hall Green at Laddingford, The Tatt and Yalding Village Green and the two playing fields of The Kintons and The Jubilee Field. We also own the Parish Lock-Up, which stands on the village green, and this will undergo some further refurbishment this year. We continue to support Yalding Fen and our new cattle will be with us shortly. It is extremely pleasing to see our sports clubs doing so well especially with the number of youngsters involved. Last year's Parish Picnic was enjoyed by young and not so young alike and the picking and pressing of apples on site was an experience. No one wanted to go home and we threw the stragglers off well after dark!. This year's picnic will be on Sunday 13th September 3pm to 7pm (or so the rumour has it). The street party last week was not only immensely enjoyable but also demonstrated just what a wonderful Parish we have. A big thank you to the boys and girls who came out to put up bunting and lay out tables and clear it all up afterwards. Also a big thank you to Ken, Symon and "The Team" of lads (and some a bit older) who put up the lights that make Yalding Village look so wonderful over Christmas. And in 2014, with the help of the Chequers, lights were erected for the first time in Laddingford. Following the election last week, we have retained five existing Councillors and four new people will take their seats this evening. A big thank you to our Parish Clerk, Angela Gent, who is a major source of support to the Council and to residents and a thank you to all of you who continue to support and maintain the vibrant community that we live in.

Are you on the Parish Database to receive NHw and other information? If not, please email chairman@yaldingparishcouncil.gov.uk.

YALDING PARISH CHARITIES

YALDING ALMSHOUSE CHARITIES

Mrs Margaret Prevett continues as Chairman, and Mr Donald Troup as Hon. Treasurer, Rev. Paul Filmer, the Vicar for the three parishes, is an "ex officio" member of the trustees. Hon. Secretary Mrs Annie Lee Davey. Will Bates, who had been a trustee for many years, resigned as he had relocated out of the area, and has been replaced by Barbara Grandi. We were able to help a flood victim from the village by housing her for 12 weeks while an almshouse was vacant. We now have a new permanent resident. This year there have been three grants from the "In need" charity totalling £2837. As in previous years the Trustees would welcome any information from either Council regarding anyone needing help from the "In need" or "In sickness" funds.

YALDING EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Yalding Educational Foundation supports the education of former pupils as well as current pupils of Yalding, Laddingford and Collier Street Primary Schools. Former pupils going onto Higher Education are supported by being invited to apply for a scholarship. The Foundation assesses the applications against a set of criteria and successful applicants receive a cheque. In 2014-15, there were twenty successful applicants. The amount received by students varies from year to year according to available funds and numbers of successful applicants. The Foundation also supports a Spoken English Competition at the three primary schools. This involves five pupils from each Year 6 reading a passage from the Bible, a poem of their choice and a newspaper article. They then speak for five minutes on a topic of interest to them. The Foundation provides a prize for the winner at each school. In addition, when possible, good use is made of any reserves, by offering the headteachers of the three schools a contribution to fund an educational visit along certain criteria, for the older pupils. This year the schools are again to have this opportunity.

OTHER CHARITABLE GROUPS BASED WITHIN THE PARISH

FRIENDS OF YALDING SURGERY (FYS)

'Why not try something different?' the adverts say. In 2014, the FYS did, by adding to our tried and tested Spring Quiz evening, with a Family Summer Hog Roast lunch, then an Autumn internet based 'Auction of Promises' Both new events were very successful. The FYS spent around £9,000 on additional Surgery equipment/consumables in the 2014 year, and ended the year with funds at about the same starting level, which is a position to be applauded, but not complacent, since we are alert to the approaching need to replace the ageing scanner.

GamBLE

In the past 12 months GamBLE has achieved a great deal: 40 Grade 9 pupils graduated in July 2014 with excellent exam results and every pupil gaining at least one Credit making them one of the best cohorts in the country. These pupils are the first to follow their education through our school, Yalding Farato, since it started in 2000 so everyone is very proud of their achievements. In November we extended and implemented a programme for pupils needing a Special Education Plan and this is proving very successful with teachers and pupils in terms of paying attention to the gaps in learning. We have several voluntary helpers working in the school. In December our resident Peace Corps volunteer completed his year with us and in March our regular group of students and teachers from Sir Roger Manwoods School in Sandwich came to live and work in the school for a week. This school has also raised enough money for GamBLE to install a solar powered electricity system, which we hope to start using later this year. It will ensure that our communications and

computer training become regular compared to the current (sorry!) situation involving daily long cuts in supply. It will also mean that we can run evening classes and provide safe classrooms for the village pupils to study after school. Our fund raising continues to be successful (but hard work). In the immediate future we are planning a Drumming evening, a summer BBQ and a sponsored walk over the Great Wall of China. We are also working hard to expand our work both in The Gambia – to share our models of learning with government schools – and in the UK - seeking new volunteers to help with administration, education and fund-raising. Our website is www.gam-ble.co.uk and our contact details are 01622 814267 or gamblegambia@gmail.co.uk

KENWARD TRUST

The past year has been a truly momentous one in the unique adventure that is Kenward. Major funding applications resulted in over £200,000 being granted by Public Health England for a wide range of redevelopment and refurbishment projects. As a result:

- The main driveway and car park at Kenward House have been covered in a beautiful layer of tarmac.
- The House itself will receive the painting and repairs its 18th Century exterior has required for several decades.
- The Garden & Craft Shop and Conference Centre are being updated in line with their rapid emergence as thriving social businesses.

Away from Yalding, Kenward's "other" residential projects are also benefiting:

- The female-only Naomi project (Hawkhurst), Malthouse Second stage project (Uckfield) and Final stage supported housing projects (Maidstone, Southborough, Gravesend) are undergoing vital refurbishments.
- Our pilot project – Reset – received a grant of over £300,000 to fund it for the next five years. (Reset trains volunteers to mentor ex-offenders as they are released from prison in order to give them the very best chance of reintegrating into society.)

A new website will be launched this summer www.kenwardtrust.org.uk. Angela Painter left the post of Chief Executive in February 2015 having completed seven successful, and very committed years of steering Kenward through difficult waters. Her replacement is David Philpott.

YALDING CHURCH PRESERVATION SOCIETY

At the beginning of the year we continued to gather in the income from the Auction of Promises which had concluded in the previous year. This did not prove straightforward as one promise could not be delivered and another could not be paid for, with yet another postponed. However, though the final reckoning was disappointing, a useful sum of money of just under £2000 net was raised. At our meeting in July, a Trustee raised the issue of whether our Constitution would allow us to extend our fundraising activities to support other organisations. Trustees were informed that a Special Meeting would be required to vary the Constitution and took the view that, since funds were difficult enough to find for existing commitments that extending our remit to embrace new ones would be unwise. Fundraising continued with the proceeds of the summer play, Lady Windermere's Fan, generously donated by the play's Director, Rachel West. Trustees led by Peter Chapman also took part in selling food and ice cream at The Vicar's Picnic, a small music festival held in Hunton. Income from this was augmented by a generous donation from the organisers. Work continues on the photographic competition and new ideas included a 'teddy parachute' competition planned for later this year. A quiz is also planned but is currently on the back burner. A Trustee is investigating matched funding which has the potential of doubling our income from a selected project. New letters were drafted for standing order

contributors whose payments had lapsed after the end of their initial period of payments. Commitments of up to £11000 had been agreed with the PCC, though only one disbursement had been made which was towards repair of the church clock. So another successful year for YCPS with prospects for the future good. We grateful for the support of other Trustees, particularly Peter Chapman, who will become chairman , subject to Trustees' approval, for the coming year.

PARISH ORGANISATIONS – LADDINGFORD

LEARNING

LADDINGFORD ST MARY'S CEP SCHOOL HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

I am very proud to be the Head Teacher of Laddingford St Mary's C of E Primary School. We want everyone in our school to have an amazing and exciting time while they are here and we work hard to make sure all our pupils and staff have the opportunities they need to develop their learning. We are committed to providing an unforgettable learning experience for all our pupils, we dedicate ourselves to ensuring that our school provides the highest standards of learning and teaching along with a real focus on developing skills for life. Our roll has increased to 82 pupils this year and I have an excellent team of staff who are extremely dedicated and are the most valuable resource that we have at Laddingford. Sadly I will be leaving Laddingford at the end of this academic year having been at the school for four and a half years. We have been on a fantastic journey moving the school from Satisfactory to Good. I leave the school in a very good sound place with potentially the school becoming Outstanding. I would like to thank, staff, pupils, governors and the community for all their hard work in supporting Laddingford St Mary's. Over the past year I have been working hard with the Church committee to improve the toilet provision for the school and the Church. We are hoping for the work to start before the summer. This will also include a much needed corridor so that we no longer have to walk through a classroom to reach other areas of the school. I only hope that I am able to see the completed works before I leave! There have been some wonderful results this year; I am really pleased to announce that 62.5% of children that took the 11+ this year passed, which means that 42% of our total Year 6 cohort passed the 11+ this year, well done to all the children and their families. The children have just received news of their new secondary schools and all are extremely pleased and looking forward to their new challenges and adventures in the summer. I am very grateful to the Friends of Laddingford Primary School for their continuing support and fund raising. Their input is invaluable and the funds they raise provide for the extras that make a school unique. Various school activities have taken place this year including the visit of the author Karen McCombie, later this year our year 5/6 class will be going to 'The Globe Theatre' to see Much Ado About Nothing! In March we celebrated World Book Day, it was lovely to see so many children dressed up as a book character and they and all the staff looked amazing! The staff and governors are continually working extremely hard to improve standards and to make Laddingford St Mary's an exciting place to learn. We value close links with the community and welcome members of the community to support our school to enhance the learning that takes place.

GOVERNORS' REPORT

The Laddingford School Governors are pleased to report on a successful year so far and wish to thank everyone that has been involved in this. In line with Ofsted we are currently

closely monitoring our School Improvement Plan and ensuring we are building on our "GOOD" Ofsted status. This includes a particular focus on Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar as well as ensuring the New Curriculum is in place with all the required resources and training. Already we have had some "WOW" days on the Jubilee Field, based on the New Curriculum, which have been a great success. We are also monitoring very closely that we are fulfilling our Church School commitments and it is really pleasing to see how the pupils and staff are putting our Christian values into action every day. We know we are very fortunate to have our own school Chaplain and are really making the most of her invaluable knowledge and experience. In addition we are currently proactively pursuing a variety of options to ensure all our pupils receive all the increasing evident benefits of outside learning and play and with the help of the FLS we are securing some really fantastic resources and training that will not just benefit our pupils but also the wider community of Laddingford as well. We are delighted to report our pupil numbers are the highest they have been for a significant period of time. A significant part of our overall long term strategy is make sure we can maintain our offer to parents, in the local village and surrounding areas, all the benefits of a small, caring, village church school coupled with the highest standards of modern education for their child. We look forward to working in partnership with the Parish.

FRIENDS OF LADDINGFORD SCHOOL (FLS) REPORT

Events held:

- Father's Day Breakfast Summer Fair
- Quiz Night at the Chequers
- Christmas fair
- Secret Santa for children to buy presents for their parents
- Mothers Days Cream tea

We also raise money through year with Cash for Clothes and Easy Fundraising, With the money we raised we funded Laptops for the school and an advisory visit from Play Learning Life to assess the school grounds and field to see how they can be better used for learning and play.

Year Ahead May 2015 – May 2016

Events we have planned so far:

- Father's Day breakfast 19th June
- Family Treasure hunt and BBQ 27th June

This year we are raising money to fund an extended visit from Play Learning Life which will include staff CPD training, class workshops, design ideas for improvements to the outdoor areas, and facilitating a community meeting to discuss community use of the field including adapting the play facilities to make them attractive to a wider age range.

LADDINGFORD PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

This local group is held each Tuesday from 9.45 to 11.45 at St Mary's church hall, Laddingford. It is run by volunteers and attended by local parents, carers and grandparents with their little ones ranging from newborns to pre-schoolers. The aim of the group is to provide a friendly family network for local people to get together over a coffee and allow the children to explore a craft activity, play with a range of toys and join in with story or sing along time for a small donation of £2 per family. The group is attended on average by 10 regular adults with around 12-15 children. We hope to encourage more families to join us once the new toilet facilities are in place.

OTHER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

LADDINGFORD CHURCH HALL

St Mary's Laddingford is owned by the PCC and incumbent as trustees. A four person committee is responsible for the day to day management of the building, including building maintenance and repair, cleaning and hall bookings. Separate accounts are kept and are incorporated in the annual church accounts. There are at present usually two Sunday services a month to minister to the small regular congregation. The committee is not directly involved in the church actives at St Mary's. Laddingford school rents the hall during term time. This rental income represents over 80% of the Hall's annual income; the remainder comes from various community actives and from occasional public hire. This year the toilet block has been closed pending repairs so lettings have been lower than normal. There is normally a surplus of income over expenditure which is saved against future building maintenance. The PCC has not for some years needed to fund any expenditure at Laddingford. In 2014 we repaired the roof slope facing the school playground and this year we plan to re-tile the whole of the roof slope facing the road. The new toilet block will be a complete re-build to modern standards and will improve the facilities of the building considerably when it is completed this summer. Minor maintenance items have been; Sound system repairs, Toilet water heater repairs, Annual Spring clean, South Porch broken roof tiles, Clock strike mechanism, Chancel roof lead flashing, West Door missing studs replaced, Clock access platform constructed. This report acknowledges the excellent contribution and hard work by all the P&F committee members (Bert Boxall, Peter Crompton, Derek Hudson, Graham Spillman, Andrew Thurston and Wendy Thurston), St. Mary's church hall management committee, and others who contribute to the practical side of our church operations and care. In 2015 we will be looking for 'younger workers!'

CHEQUERS CHASERS

The Chequers Chasers are a running group formed several years ago with locals from the Parish who enjoy running but do not want the constraints of a formal running club. However in 2014 several runners moved away from the Parish and with a few injuries, group runs are not currently being organised. There were however several entries in the local Paddock Wood Half Marathon in 2015 with two first time half marathon Chasers and two coming in under two hours. It is hoped that group runs will restart during 2015.

CHEQUERS OTTERS

The Chequers Otters are a group who enjoy swimming for fun, and mostly in open water. The Otters are based at The Chequers in Laddingford and swim mainly in the summer when they can enjoy the outside waters. They undertook several swims in 2014 ranging from one mile to 5.25 miles in length. Anyone is welcome to join the otters, the only requisites is that they love swimming, it doesn't have to be fast or for far, and they like to socialise after.

CHEQUERS RACERS

The Chequers Racers are a group of cyclists of all abilities based at the Chequers pub in Laddingford. We combine cycling with socialising and occasional charity fund raising. We meet regularly both mid-week and weekends for predominantly road cycling and to regularly participate in Kent cycle sportives. Highlights of 2014 were our spring tour cycling from Nice to Pisa, and taking part in the Dandelion Trust "Rowathon" winning the team prize. Our annual spring tour takes us cycling through the Rhone Valley and taking on the infamous Mont Ventoux. The mountain has become legendary as the scene of one of the most gruelling climbs in the Tour De France with 1617m of climbing over 21.8km.

PILATES

Pilates classes have been held weekly on a Thursday evening at Laddingford Church Hall. There are a regular number of clients who have been attending since the classes started 3 years ago - with 8 currently attending in total. I hope to keep the class going but this is always dependent on numbers - so attracting new clients is always a priority.

YOGA

Yoga Nut classes are going from strength to strength and the Laddingford class is bursting at the seams! We have welcomed to the class new students and the number of men attending has grown to a dedicated six! The class has many experienced students whom I continue to love teaching. Yoga tones the body by developing strength and flexibility, but also one learns to breathe properly and to relax. Yoga is a truly beautiful practise.
www.yoganut.org.

PARISH ORGANISATIONS – YALDING

LEARNING

YALDING ST PETER & ST PAUL CEP SCHOOL GOVERNORS' AND HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

In the past year Yalding School has seen and undertaken a number of changes including a host of government initiatives. The school has continued to develop and drive forward improvements, completing yet again a very successful year. Amongst other things, the school was recognised as being in the top 2% nationally for phonics teaching with 100% of our Year 1 children achieving the difficult standard. We have welcomed new staff and said goodbye to others. We have undergone a restructure of the senior leadership team and now have 2 assistant heads Victoria Hunter and Gillian Duke. Victoria is also covering Maternity Leave in Year R. Francesca Cooper has joined the teaching team and is currently teaching in Class 3 and Richard Stevenson for Class 5 (a move from Class 3). The school's dedicated staff continues to work hard and their pupils are benefiting from that hard work and enthusiasm ensuring that they reach their potential and are ready to start secondary school. It is a credit to Dorinda Perry and all of her staff that the school continues to go from strength to strength in very challenging circumstances. The school remains a Partnership School with Canterbury Christchurch University helping to share good practice and train the teachers of tomorrow. It has also worked with Brighton University this year placing one of their students. Yalding has engaged with the Kent Apprenticeship scheme and has trained three students. Sadly they will soon be leaving us, but as highly qualified and trained teaching assistants. The current school roll is 161 and once again we are heavily over-subscribed for September 2015. This continues to place the school in a very difficult position, as we have to turn away reception age children, who have chosen Yalding as their first preference school. This is affecting families living less than half a mile away from the school and it is something we feel strongly about addressing. The governors remain keen to encourage the Local Authority to grant us single form entry (a separate classroom for each year group) which would help us better meet the local demand for places and offer the very best start in life to the children of our village. This will allow us to better meet the challenging OFSTED requirements whilst providing long-term financial security for the school. We trust we can count on the Parish Council's support for our strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of our exceptional village school and support for the families of this community who would expect to be able to take their child to the school where they live. As well as having to say no to reception age children, there are a number of families, this year, who have moved into Yalding Village

who have been declined a place at our school. Free school meals have been provided for KS1 since September and the pupil take-up has placed pressure on our small school hall, as indeed we knew it would. A hot school meal is provided daily to nearly 100 children. In addition, collective worship and PE for our current children and indeed future pupils need better accommodation and we have started a project to build a new school hall. This is a huge project as there is no funding available under the current administration and the Headteacher and governors would welcome any support from the Parish Council that they could provide. The introduction of the New Curriculum in September 2014 as well as the departure from the well-known and well-understood, pupil levelling system has brought fresh challenges to all schools. The Government took away the old 'levels' system whereby all children were Nationally assessed across the curriculum in several areas. Instead each school is now 'free' to measure and track children as they wish. We have chosen a resource, which we know will help us measure our children's progress and allow us to bring out the best in each individually. As always there are mixed feelings when we say "goodbye" to our pupils as we wish them well with their secondary education as they go to a broad range of secondary schools this year. As usual there have been a number of enjoyable events and educational visits through the year and we are particularly looking forward to our residential visit to Arethusa in May for the older children. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council and governors for the support and time they have given, all the staff for doing a tremendous job and helping create a friendly, purposeful yet fun environment for our pupils to learn, and the PTA whose fund-raising activities are of great benefit to our children.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA) AND FRIENDS – REPORT

Yalding C of E Primary School's PTA and Friends main role is the fundraising for the school. So far this year we have bought the children new reading records, paid for the whole school to see the Christmas panto together, refreshments for their Christmas parties, crackers for their school Christmas dinner, Christmas presents for every child (which Father Christmas gave to them) and autograph books for the year 6s. To raise the monies for these things we have had our annual Christmas Fair, shared a stall with the Scouts at the Yuletide Market, had a Valentines Ball, Done the refreshment stall at the farmers market in October, held a pamper night in the Church and had some cake sales and school discos. We have our Summer Fair coming up on 27th June (armed forces day) at the school. This year's theme is WWII and the 1940s. We hope that we will see many of you there in your 1940s clothes. There will be a history board there, if anyone could help with any history or photos of this time it would be very much appreciated. We would just like to take this opportunity to thank you all for supporting us. We would never have been able to let our children have what they do without your help and support

YALDING TODDLER, PARENT AND BABY GROUP

The Yalding parent, baby and toddler group had a very good end to 2014. We had a lovely Christmas party in which Father Christmas came to visit. We had a fantastic start to 2015, welcoming many new faces. We were very successful at the Yalding farmers market in February raising enough money to fund our fantastic Easter egg hunt that took place on the last week of term and enough money for our Christmas party at the end of the year, plus a little extra to buy some new toys for the group.

SUMMER PLAYScheme

Another successful year, with highlights including water fights, sports day, talent show, parish council BBQ (thank you to Geraldine, Ken and Vivienne). We also had a drama production produced and directed by Michael and Brenda Stewart, performed by the

children to the parents and staff. We had visits from MBC, the police, the Mayor and his wife, Paulina and various parish council representatives. The weather was good, the children were great and the photos of activities were displayed in the library for all to see. We would like to thank Yalding School for the hire of the premises. The parish council for its support, and in particular Angela Gent the parish clerk for all her help and assistance.

TWYFORD PRE-SCHOOL

We have had an eventful year. Fundraising has been well supported by the village and has enabled us to go on several trips, the highlight being a bus ride to Maidstone to see the pantomime. We have also had some visitors which included Jaws'n'claws, The Playbus and an increased programme of creative activities, such as music, exercise and dance. We are grateful to the Village Hall Committee, in particular Sue and Pete Gerrish who help us to maintain a well used garden/play area. Twyford Pre-School continues to thrive and offers the children an opportunity to learn in a caring and safe environment.

CHURCH AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

BAPTIST CHURCH & YOUTH CENTRE

The Baptist Church was pleased to conduct a service of adult baptism of one of its younger Members (the first such service in 50 years?) and see this as a sign of the 'good health' of Yalding's Christian Community. In the longer term, the building would benefit from a better defined entrance hall, modern toilet and changing rooms and a Village Room for groups such as the ever-growing 'Treasure Seekers' Sunday School, which currently meets in the kitchen but would benefit from a dedicated meeting place. The Youth Committee and the Church are looking to raise the very considerable amount of money needed to eventually build these facilities.

ST PETER AND ST PAUL CHURCH YALDING AND ST MARY'S CHURCH LADDINGFORD

Over the past 12 months, with our incumbent Paul Filmer being absent on long term sick leave for much of that time, the workload on the Wardens (and the Parish Administrator) has been exceptionally high. However, thanks to support from the Diocese, (and in particular the Rural Dean Bryan Knapp), together with leaders of the various sections making up our church life, we have managed to achieve something approaching 'business as usual' (Services, Weddings and Funerals). Regular attendance has little changed, with Festival services (Christmas, Christingle, Easter, Harvest) as usual being very well supported. Whilst most services have been covered by visiting priests, some Prayer and Praise services were replaced by Morning Worship, led by the Church Wardens. After a brief break, services at St. Mary's Church Hall, Laddingford (two per month) are now being covered again, and the Hall continues to be hired regularly by the school. The Junior Church attracts a healthy number of the younger end of our congregation. Music continues to thrive in our church with enthusiastic Senior and Junior choirs. With the Church Wardens, and many members of our congregation being involved in the wide range of community organisations, together with prayer groups, men's breakfast, our church outreach is very visible. Our beautiful church has been used for a number of community events including the Summer Concert, Gamble Concert, Church Fete, Yalding School PTA Pamper evening and Parish Council communication events, with great thanks to our wonderful Social Committee who is always ready to help. Two major repair projects, namely wood rot in the South Aisle roof and the supports to the Tower water spouts are being progressed. Our unique Tithe Map has been cleaned, with funding help from the YCPS. In summary, in the circumstances we hope we have done well to hold our Mission –

'the church in the community and the community in our church', with again sincere thanks to Diocese support, the Yalding congregation and helpers in the community. Finally, an Interim part-time Minister, Rev. Gary Colville has been assigned from the 3rd May, to support the ministry in the Benefice at this time.

MINISTRY & WORSHIP - CHURCHWARDENS

2014/2015 was overshadowed by the deteriorating health of our Vicar Paul Filmer, culminating in Paul taking long term sick leave from the beginning of July 2014 and continuing to date. We wish Paul well, and our thoughts and prayers are with him in his recovery. Thanks to the hard work of all officers and sections of our Church and the support of the Diocese, we are still delivering our mission effectively. Due to the tremendous time-consuming efforts of many people, cover for our Sunday and special services (weddings, funerals and baptism) gained momentum, such that no services at Yalding were cancelled. Particular thanks go to our Benefice Administrator, Sue Crompton and support from Revd Bryan Knapp, Rural Dean facilitating the use of Diocesan resources. The Diocese, at a time when they are being called upon to provide sickness and absence cover for several benefices asked that local resources led the worship for services where the presence of a 'dog collar' was not crucial. Consequently the Churchwardens and others have conducted several services, including Morning Family Worship (replacing Prayer & Praise), Benefice Nativity, Carol and Christingle services. The attendance levels at the Christmas services were in the gratifying large numbers we have come to expect. Usual Sunday attendance during the year was 62 adults and 10 children (2013 - 69 adults and 12 children). We continue to promote our occasional services for baptisms, weddings and funerals, encouraging families to use the church irrespective of previous contact. We welcome all to our Church and anyone attending is sure of a warm welcome through our fellowship. This year there has been; 10 Baptisms, 7 Weddings/Blessings, 17 Funerals (of which 11 were held in Church).

PARISH GIVING

The total amount given in 2014 was approximately 5% less than in 2013, the shortfall was covered by a generous legacy. The Church would urge all members of the congregation to consider including a gift to the Church in their wills.

BELLRINGERS

We have gained 4 new recruits, one of whom is now a Sunday service ringer. We rang for most of the major services, always call changes, with an average attendance of 4.9. The average attendance at practices was 5.7. We rang for 6 weddings and a funeral, had 2 visiting bands, and there were 2 quarter peals. We rang for the Yuletide market but unfortunately had to cancel ringing in the New Year due to lack of available ringers. We carried out the annual tower clean on 12th April and had our annual meal in the Walnut Tree. The outing once again was cancelled due to a lack of commitment and we didn't enter either of the district competitions.

CHOIR

The choir continues to lead the singing at Sunday morning services as well as singing for other services such as Evensong and, when requested, at weddings. For the first time this year we also sang at one of the occasional Taize services. The main Festivals at Christmas and Easter are a personal favourite from a musical perspective. My selection of music will often include differing styles and can be challenging, but the choir always responds with enthusiasm and choir members show considerable commitment at these busy times, when extra practices can be required, and the result is a very high standard of singing. At Yalding I believe we are fortunate to continue to have our music and worship

led by a choir. Within the local community we support the Yuletide Market by leading the carol singing in church and were also fortunate to have the opportunity to run the Farmers Market refreshment stall in July. This is the main fund raising event for the choir as we are essentially self-supporting. From the proceeds of this we were able to purchase a new set of anthem books to further expand our repertoire. Singing at the church summer concert allows us the opportunity to include items which might not usually be associated with a church choir – anyone at the last concert may recall “Old McDonald had a farm”. As always, if you would like to join the choir, please speak to me or any of the choir members.

JUNIOR CHOIR

September onwards once again saw the addition of some new members. Numbers now stand at a very committed group of 15 youngsters aged 7 -12 years and include 4 boys. After Easter another youngster will also be joining us.

The choir continues to meet most Fridays during term for an hour of singing and quite a bit of talking! We have some excellent young voices amongst us and the choir always pulls out the stops when it matters to produce a beautiful sound and great performances. Having been absent for several months due to the flooding, we are delighted that Lisa Brooks is back and once again accompanying us on the flute at both practices and performances. Thanks go to the children for their continued commitment and hard work and their enthusiasm and love of singing, the parents for their wonderful support and Lisa, whose accomplished playing always enhances our performances and whose help is much appreciated.

CHURCHYARD WORKING PARTY (THE VANDALS)

The Churchyard Working party is responsible for cutting the grass in the new cemetery together with the management of the trees and bushes and general maintenance of both the Churchyard and the new cemetery. We had a pleasing report from the Kent Men of Trees who noted 'The Churchyard has some superb trees including a tulip tree, a very tall cherry, an acer and a fine magnolia. The area is very well managed'. We are relatively well resourced with equipment but we do struggle with manpower and are often very stretched to complete our work. If you are able to help keep an important part of the fabric of our village in good order, or would like more information about this, please contact Paul Mahoney 01622 814420 mahoneys.yalding@cfsbroadband.co.uk We meet on the first Saturday of the month at 9:15 and work until around 12:30.

PLANT AND FABRIC

In summary, with a number of difficult projects to be prioritised and launched, the Plant & Fabric Committee have invested significant time into establishing the preferred repair/refurbishment options, together with keeping on top of maintenance items. Major Projects:

- Quinquennial Inspection; the many detailed observations and priorities in the report have been inspected and grouped into Work Packages which are to be issued for contractor tenders.
- Electrical Inspection-outstanding items; on-hold pending tenders arising from the QI Work Packages.
- St.Mary's, Laddingford; in partnership with KCC, the toilet block is to be completely rebuilt. The separate contributions to the cost have been agreed.
- Yalding; new Pew runners purchased.
- South aisle roof rot and Tower water spout support repairs; repair process specifications are being prepared for contractor tenders.
- Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund; grant application was unsuccessful.

- Tithe Map cleaning; thanks to a generous grant from YCPS

LITTLE FISHES

It has been encouraging to see numbers grow throughout the year and we have several baby brothers and sisters who have joined the group. It is amazing that mums cope with two children getting them ready by 2pm to come, we must be doing something right!! We always lose the 4 year olds in September and think we will be so depleted but new people continue to arrive I feel God has really blessed this group which seems to fulfill a need in the village and it was wonderful to hear that older little fishes are attending Mini Kings an after school activity run by the Family Trust. The children are building on the foundations laid by us and although parents don't regularly come to church we have seen several at special services like Mothering Sunday.

MOTHERS UNION

Our members meet regularly on the third Thursday of each month in the afternoon in Church. We do not hold meetings in January, February and August. We have had some interesting discussions on Godly Play, the life of a Vicar's wife and the Womens Group. In October we paid our usual visit to Burrswood for the Healing service which is always followed by a delicious lunch in their tea rooms. In November we made some hand scrubs for sale at the Yuletide market, we had learnt how to do this at the Lets Activate weekend. December saw us at the Walnut Tree for our Christmas meal which was enjoyed by many. We help at the Mothering Sunday service, the Passover and Church fete. Two of our members attended the Rochester Diocesan Mothers' Union Autumn Members' meeting. At present we have 12 regular members and warmly welcome anyone who would like to join us.

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Yalding meets The Moral Maze - The group is designed to be an open forum for discussion of any topic which has an ethical slant, while participating in a full English Breakfast (for the nominal charge of £3). Although the meetings are held in the church it is open to anyone of any faith, or no faith at all. The purpose is to expose people to differing ways of looking at issues. One view is a Dogma, two views is a Debate, more than two views is a Men's Breakfast. The majority of people attending do have a Christian background but Christian doctrines and practices are not expounded during the meeting. What is important to the group is to discover what people think, why they think that way and what was it that led them to think the way that they do? There is no fixed agenda, no meeting minutes and no actions proposed to resolve the issues discussed. Instead, the participants leave the meetings with a broader understanding of how they and others view the issues. Subjects discussed are varied and have ranged from Technology in Social Society, The Purpose of Punishment, The True Value of Art, Identity and Identity, The Ideal Number of Political Pares, is Inequality Natural and Inevitable etc. There is usually a recent controversial news item to start the discussion and very open no conclusions are arrived at; however, follow up conversations show that the topics are still being thought about well after the end of the meetings. Meetings are usually held monthly and in 2014 on average about 12 people attended, which is down from 15 for the previous year. Some regular attendees bring friends and relatives who are visiting for the weekend. Advertising is through the Parish Magazine and an opted in email distribution list which has about 30 members.

OPEN DOORS

Open Door is a Christian woman's worship and fellowship group that continues to meet monthly. We have had an amazing year with a varied agenda including a Taize Service

with the residents and staff of Kenward House, continuing our study of the gospel of John and offering outreach in the community including free hot cross buns and Easter eggs!

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

This has quite a busy year for the Committee with some very enjoyable events. God was very good to us all and the sun shone for our Church fete which is always well attended and enjoyed. I was told by someone that they really enjoyed coming as it was such a family event. We served refreshments at the Farmers Market and this was a very good outreach event. We provided refreshments and a Craft Stall for the Yuletide Market, the Church was always full especially when our superb Junior and Senior Choirs were singing. We provided a cream tea for the Concert in September and served refreshments after the Carol Service. Our new venture was Wreath Making led by our own superb Flower Arranger, Sue Williams and this was enjoyed by everyone and the results were lovely. We shall be doing this again this year. We also held our annual Fireside Carols at the lovely home of Jonathon and Joy Virden and many people feel that this is the start of Christmas for them. So we have had quite a busy and enjoyable year. A very big thank you goes to all members of the Social Committee and the helpers who give freely and willingly of their me.

WOMENS HOUSE GROUP (CARING AND SHARING)

Women from across the Benefice, meet once a month to share bible studies and discuss a variety of topics. Over the last six months we have worked together through a book "Unlocking the door, Evangelism in the real world" which has helped us look at new ways of sharing our faith. We have also met for social events and some of the group have been attending the yearly Activate conference (a weekend of seminars/workshops/worship/fun). We are always eager to welcome new members to the group either on a regular or occasional basis.

SPORTS CLUBS

CRICKET CLUB

In 2014, the Yalding CC First XI overcame a tough year to have a successful year in the Kent Regional Cricket League 1B. On the back of the floods that caused major damage in the village, the cricket club also struggled with playing staff, damage to facilities and lack of funds. Despite a vast array of issues, Yalding Cricket Club has continued with a focus on the future generations. The First XI is continuing in KRCL 1B this year, with a particular focus on bringing along the next generation. Yalding has a great base of cricket talent, and that will continue to develop as one of the youngest teams in the Kent first XI set up. However, the club is still in need of support in keeping the club going. YCC still are on the lookout for someone to help prepare the club wickets, as currently there is no one available to prepare wickets for each game. Any help in the village would be greatly appreciated.

YALDING YOUTH CRICKETERS

Last year was a really positive year for the Yalding Youth Cricketers. Most Saturday mornings (weather permitting) there were up to 50 kids from age 5-15 at the Kintons. We managed to field league teams in the Mid Kent Youth League at under 11 and under 13 levels. Both teams won as many teams as they lost, and ended up in mid table; not a bad achievement for a small club. Most important was the team spirit with which they all played, which is very much the spirit of the club. All this, and the successes of the senior club was achieved in spite of various adverse conditions. The pitch was vandalised, we lost our groundsman of several years' standing, and the team's finances were obviously affected by the flood, which ruined much of our equipment. Thanks to donations from the Parish

Council and the KCB, the work co-ordinated by the football club on the pavilion, and Tony Leach and Peter Robinson from the Kent Community Cricket programme, we are back and ready for a new season. We do still need a groundsperson (yes, it could be a woman or a man), it would require about two hours a week, would be paid (though not much), and does give you some great toys to play with. If you want to find out more, call Martin Tripp on 07961 100389.

FISHING CLUB (CALPAC)

2014 saw the implementation of some much needed restorative work on our Lees fishery. This included the reduction in size and removal of some of the bank side trees. This was carried out by CALPAC and the EA, with the EA focusing more on flood defence strategy, than habitat enhancement, which was the focal point for CALPAC. 2015 will hopefully see some benefit from the works listed above, as CALPAC hope to create a more bio-diverse environment for the future on this fishery.

FOOTBALL CLUB - Yalding & Laddingford Football Club

As another busy season draws to a close and there has been a lot happening for the club both on and off the pitch. Off the pitch the club has been working towards obtaining "Charter" Standard with the Kent FA and this was obtained in April 2015. It is a huge achievement for the club and it will open further development opportunities in the future. After all the hard work restoring the pavilion throughout last year the club were accepted into the NRG Kent County League and have had a difficult but rewarding season and we still have a cup semi final left to play and hopefully final at Culverden Stadium. On Sundays our 1st and 2nd teams have competed well in their respective leagues and we were delighted to play several players who had just turned 16. The playing surface on the senior pitch is now in need of work after 2 hard seasons and enquiries are currently being made with local contractors to undertake the work, but initial estimates for the required work are in the region of £4,000. The junior section has been thriving with the soccer school becoming increasingly popular on a Saturday morning and our under 14 squad finishing 4th in their league and reaching the semi final of their league cup competition. Yalding and Laddingford Under 11s are enjoying their second season together and in this short time have become established members of the Crowborough & District Junior Football League. As these notes go to press the boys still have an outside chance of finishing runners up in the league. Despite lining up against some bigger and illustrious clubs we have more than held our own and taken the scalp of the likes of Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Paddock Wood. Along with the villages of Yalding and Laddingford the team can also extend itself to include youngsters from Collier Street, East Peckham and even Paddock Wood. The Under 11s have benefited from Yalding's Soccer School with three boys having graduated just after Christmas. The team are now looking forward to competing in several Summer tournaments during May and June. Next year building on that success we have a second under 15 side being formed. This will create additional pressures on the club as we will need to acquire new goals and we may need to try and find space on The Kintons for a further pitch but work on this will continue throughout the summer. The club would like to thank the Parish Council for the grant of £1000 which will be used towards the acquisition of the new goals ready for next year and also for their continued support throughout this year.

RIFLE RANGE

The last year has been very good for the range and the three clubs that use the range, with membership of all three clubs growing in numbers, with more members from Yalding and Laddingford joining. Range repairs and up-grading are almost complete, with a few

cosmetic changes to the out-side of the range still left to do as the weather hopefully changes and the days get longer and warmer. A fence and gate now mark out the range boundary, which it is hoped will stop any further intrusion into our neighbour's property, and I think has now made the range less of an eyesore that it once was. If the Parish Council has any suggestions with regards to any more improvements it thinks we could make, please let me know, as we wish to get along with everyone. will also reiterate that at " NO TIME ARE ANY WEAPONS OR AMMUNITION STORED AT THE RANGE"

TABLE TENNIS CLUB

The table tennis club is in its seventh year and we remain a small but vibrant part of the community. We have a very small junior section with 4 regular players although in the past we have had as many as 20. One of our junior members represents Barming table tennis club and plays in division 4 of the Maidstone leagues. We also have a former junior member (Callum Hoare) now playing in division one for Barming – a great achievement. The senior section has between 6 and 10 regular players. A new addition to the club is our automatic ball feeding robot which we use as a coaching aid and to improve fitness. It can deliver up to 100 balls per minute. We would like to increase the numbers of the junior section over the next year or so. We can take children from age 10. Please note that Martin Johnson has retired from the club and has been replaced in his administrative role by David Hawkes.

YALDING AND LADDINGFORD SPORTS ASSOCIATION (YALSA)

This year YALSA'S efforts have been to continue to support both clubs with the improvement/running the current facility especially since the floods. This is visible to date with the works been carried out on the pavilion by both clubs. Work has been done on the exterior along with continue internal repairs. The financial agreement by both clubs for the ongoing maintenance of the pavilion is in a healthy position. Both clubs are expanding the junior of the clubs which continues to grow in numbers. However this year we need to move from a focus on maintaining the existing pavilion to draft a proposal to move and update the pavilion facility with a new multipurpose structure will additional changing and social area. We also need to source more playing surface as currently with have 3 football pitches and the cricket field but with both clubs expanding further pitches will be required. On a positive note with the football getting its charter status there is now an opportunity to request funding to replace the pavilion with a multipurpose facilities. In the coming months the committee will be putting together a plan for the parish council consideration. Furthermore YALSA will be looking for additional volunteers to help with the fund raising and grant applications. I believe there is a potential opportunity going forward to create a facility that could be used by the entire community interesting in both sport and recreational activities.

I would like to thanks both clubs for the hard work they have put in the last 18 months.

COMMERCIAL SPORTING ACTIVITIES

AERODANCE

We hold our street dance classes every Thursday in term time at the Yalding Youth Centre. Our classes are for girls and boys aged 4-7yrs and the 2nd class is for 8-15 yr olds. Our classes are fun, exciting and creative designed to develop confidence in all children. We have our bi-annual show coming up in June at the Stag theatre in Sevenoak, where over 120 dancers will be performing to an audience of 450 people.

CHILDRENS' FOOTBALL CLUB

Now part of The Football Club

LINE DANCING

We are very pleased with the facility's in the hall especially the kitchen. It is also very easy to get equipment in & out. The hall is always kept very clean & tidy. Just a small note, The floor is polished to a high standard & is quite a problem with dancing. I have to remind the class to wear rubber soles for more stability as L/Dancing can be quite energetic. We hope to continue into 2016 providing the hire doesn't get to much.

PILATES - BODY CONTROL

Body Control Pilates (BCP) is now the U.K. and European market leader in Pilates teacher training. It is unrivalled, offering the most comprehensive course for training in the classical Pilates method. As an associate of BCP professional development is ongoing. I now teach four classes weekly in Yalding during term time. Participation is good and there is a strong group of regulars. For many it is their main exercise of the week. Ages range from teenagers to mid-eighties and all levels of fitness. Three classes are held at the Baptist Hall in the mornings and one class in the Village Hall in the evening for men only. I would like to take this opportunity to raise the issue of the state of poor repair of the paintwork in the Baptist Hall. Paint is peeling from the wooden panelling and it is questionable if it has been painted in the last three decades. Godfrey Featherstone, representing the Committee, has commented that the hall is mostly used for youth activities and expected to attract wear and tear, which they do not want to restrict. I question this statement as there are many group of adults who use the hall on a weekly basis – art group, dance, Zumba to name a few. It is a very well used facility in the village and a new "lick of paint" would make it a much more appealing and pleasant environment. Refurbishment at least for the lower level would be much appreciated. Understandably redecorating up to the ceiling would require scaffolding and incur a large expense. On a separate matter, I have corresponded with the doctors at Yalding Surgery giving very detailed information about the multiple benefits of Pilates, especially regarding non-specific lower back pain and posture; also detailing up-to-date medical research. They have full details of the four classes I run weekly, but to date have not recommended one patient to take up Pilates. Other practitioners, especially physiotherapists regularly recommend clients. I wonder how many patients are given medication for back conditions, as opposed to be advised to exercise. In addition to classes there are a number of residents who enjoy private lessons at home.

PILATES - WEALD PILATES

Both the beginners' and the improvers' Pilates classes continue to attract new members as well as keeping core members who have made Pilates part of their lives. The beginners' class has been particularly well attended in the last few months. Both are friendly groups, providing a good environment to practise Pilates and meet people from Yalding and the surrounding villages.

ZUMBA

My Yalding Zumba class continues to be well attended. I have been running classes every Wednesday for 4 years in August. Many participants have been with me since I began in 2011 which is fantastic! Thank you to all who support me. If anyone is interested in aerobics or body conditioning classes Please let me know! I hope to keep the residents of Yalding fit and healthy for many years to come!

YOUTH GROUPS

CYCLONES

Cyclones has continued to meet on a regular basis over the past year, usually fortnightly. The format has been to have fun together and explore an aspect of Christianity particularly relevant to young people. During the year we have met up with the Wateringbury youth group, on a couple of occasions, and this has enabled young people from our parish to gain wider exposure to Christian young people and their leaders in another setting. We were involved in the Christmas tree project. A small number enjoyed a sleepover in January, although it is disappointing that competing interests lower the retention of this age group for services and actives in general. In March we attended, with 5 of the group a workshop in Paddock Wood, run by Riverside, a Christian creative arts group, again the focus was to explore subjects of interest to young people. We are aware of the drop in numbers and thinking forward anticipate that Cyclones will no longer run in its current format once we have reached the end of the summer term. A way forward would be " new blood" to take over, or the possibility of linking up with other events run on occasional basis thought the diocese, we are open to suggestions!

MTV

Before Christmas MTV were meeting once every fortnight. However, since then, due to the fact that 5 out of the 6 MTV members are doing their A level's, there has been a decrease in the number of meetings that we have been having. It has now got to the point that because of A level exams fast approaching, MTV has come to a standstill and haven't met for a good number of months. We hope to meet again after A levels have finished before we leave to go to University.

SCOUT GROUP

Yalding Scout Group continues to remain a thriving and popular organisation for all ages of children from 6 up to 18. Our current numbers are now up to 130 including leaders. We remain very lucky as we have a great deal of very keen and willing leaders (all unpaid volunteers) who are willing to commit their time and energy in making sure the children have a fun and safe scouting experience. However we are always looking for additional helpers and these do not have to be parents of the children in the Group. Each section plans and organises activities that allow the children to work for their badges. We are not only giving the children the chance to achieve these levels in their time with us, but also trying hard to incorporate activities just for fun.

BEAVERS

The Beavers held a fundraising event for Demelza House that the children organised with the help of their families and friends and raised about £380 in one hour. They went round the village to sell poppies and have been to see the Military Vehicles as part of their Remembrance topic. They learnt basic first aid and learnt how to keep themselves safe at home. They have continued to keep in touch with the Beavers at East Peckham and have just been to visit them for the final session before Easter. They had a sleepover in the village, themed around animals and are looking forward to another one shortly.

CUBS

The cubs have been experiencing a wide range of fun and thoughtful activities throughout the year and are working hard towards many badges including 'recycling' where they built a wide arrange of robots, spaceships and animals all out of 'rubbish'. They will be camping during the summer along with other cub packs.

SEA SCOUTS

This year we were delighted to be able to form a second Scout Troop and now have Teise and Beult troops providing scouting experience for additional children in the village. The Teise Troop is now well established with 20 boys and girls; the newest made their scout promise by firelight at Hamlet Wood on 26th March. To prepare for this we asked our older scouts to describe what scouts means to them. Sam Tripp (12) wrote "Scouts for me is a fun and welcoming place. At scouts we do games and fun activities. We are always given great chances and opportunities to expand our knowledge and skills. At scouts you will always have loads of fun as long as you stick to some basic rules. Scouts will improve your skills and help you to learn how to do some amazing things. The scout leaders can even teach you how to save someone's life." Beult Troop are averaging 14 scouts every week but would like to see this number rise to a constant 20. The current mix of boys and girls is 50/50 so we are keen to keep this ratio as it promotes a good balance of activities. They have had an interesting winter program with visits to the Scout climbing wall and Hamlet wood. They have also had fitness and food awareness evenings that we hope will encourage our scouts and leaders! to have a healthy lifestyle. Both troops will canoe during the summer term. As a scout group we ensure that no child is excluded on the basis of cost. To enable us to do this we rely on fund-raising and the generous support of organisations such as the Parish Council. Thank you for the opportunity of submitting a report on our activities.

EXPLORERS

With a thriving Scout Group to provide members, Yalding Poseidon Explorer Scout Unit is also very popular, with over 23 members – boys and girls in the 14 to 18 age group. One of the largest village units in our area. Despite most our members coming from Yalding Scouts, we do also take young people from outlying villages, who want to continue Scouting activities up to their 18th birthday. With two leaders and an occasional helper, as well as being able to enlist ex-explorers to help out with some events, we do try to offer activities that build on the skills developed from the Scout group. Being the older age group, the programme is defined by the explorers and facilitated by the leaders, but also tries to build links with other units in and around Maidstone. Our summer event at Gilwell Park, the home of UK Scouting, we partnered with Redback Explorers from Leeds and Broomfield. It was an activity packed 24 hours, including events from abseiling to zip wires, go karts, off road driving and segways, scuba diving, laser quest, along with a fun fair, night time cinemas, discos and live stage events. We are booking up for this coming July. To better utilize the amazing canoe and kayak equipment we have in Yalding, the group will be on the water from May on Wednesday nights, working towards Scout Association water activity permits. July 2015 will also see one of our newest explorers, Ruby Haigh, travelling to the 23rd World Scout Jamboree in Kirara-hama, Japan, as part of the Kent Scout contingent. We look forward to her reporting back on her travels later in the year. As a unit we are very grateful for the support we have from the people of Yalding and our Parish Council.

BOOK AND LITERARY CLUBS

HOLIDAY READING BOOK CLUB

Now in our seventh year, The Holiday Reading Book Club continues to grow from strength to strength. During 2014 our selection of novels was diverse, made up of current best sellers, new launches, and firm favourite classics. This year we have selected our list in advance but have also added new launch titles during the year, members selecting books

that have caught their eye reading book reviews and personal recommendations. This has given us more flexibility, allowing for the latest top sellers to get inserted into our reading list. Our format remains the same, meeting monthly at a different member's home, with refreshments still an important aspect of our discussion evenings! We are a very social book group. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of Yalding Library librarians who are really enthusiastic collecting our books from the libraries of Kent. They provide a really excellent service for us. The Holiday Reading Book Club is as popular as ever and it is a date in the diary that we all look forward to every month.

LITERARY GROUP

We have read a wide range of books over the past 12 months, including essays (by Montaigne), a biography (of Joseph Conrad), poetry (by Matthew Arnold), and a variety of novels. As usual, we have often disagreed over the merits of each book. But two novels which we all enjoyed were "Stoner" by John Williams (written in the 1960s, and rediscovered to much acclaim in the past few years), and "The President's Hat" by Laurin. Both strongly recommended. As usual, Yalding library has given invaluable help in supplying our books.

YALDING BOOK GROUP

As usual our twelve members have enjoyed another interesting and stimulating year. Chosen by each member our books have included such diverse titles as; The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry, Red Dust Road and Tristram Shandy. After Christmas we celebrated our friendship with a lovely meal. Many thanks to the library who somehow manage to get our books despite the number of other book clubs.

YALDING YAFFLES BOOK GROUP

We maintain a steady membership of 10 which we all feel is an ideal number. A varying age range ensures lively discussions and views, during our discussion evenings in member's homes. Our format remains the same, each member taking a turn during the year at being hostess or leader. The library continues to be a source of great help with their efficient and unstinting service, supplying our choice of ten books for the year. In 2015 we look forward to reading, among others, Testament of Youth by Vera Brittain, The Miniaturist by Jessie Burton, The Popular Girl by Scott Fitzgerald and an Act of Treachery by Ann Widdecombe. We continue to support world-wide wine cellars in our search for a good read!

OTHER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Yalding Allotments went from strength to strength in 2014 and all plots except one half plot are now occupied and cultivated. Our monthly working parties were extremely well attended and productive, with much work being carried out on keeping our communal areas & pathways tidy. As usual with vegetable growing, successes & failures are unpredictable and something that yields a glut on one plot doesn't even germinate on another. However that is all part of the appeal: sharing growing stories and passing on knowledge to fellow ploholders. The Allotment Committee met three times to discuss issues such as maintenance, licenses and social events. The year finished with the Chairman, Brian Law, standing down from his position after five years of excellent service. At the AGM, a new Chairwoman, Christine Walker, was elected and we are very pleased that she has taken up this role. There were two social events: the summer barbecue and a new event of a bonfire party. The summer barbecue enjoyed glorious weather and a large turnout. Even some allotment- grown courgettes sneaked themselves on to the barbecue,

along with the usual sausages and burgers! The bonfire party was held in November on an unseasonably warm evening. A fantastic bonfire, built over several weeks, was the focal point and the event made a fitting end to the growing season. As we move into 2015, the allotments are looking very well cared-for and we are excited about the new season, although the threat of development on the adjacent pony field has not gone away and we intend to voice our objections to this wherever we can.

ART GROUP

We have had a happy and successful year. Our numbers remain steady between 12 and 14 in our weekly meetings in the Baptist Hall. We showed work last year in a combined Art/craft Exhibition in The Village Hall, and aim to do the same this May. This last term we have had 2 demonstrations, which have spurred us on to greater efforts. Cards and pottery are on sale in The Post office, and there will be new designs soon. Anyone of any level can join us, and will be given help if needed. We have great times painting together, and it is a good way to make friends, doing a shared activity. Contact either Anne Telfer annetelfer7@gmail.com -01622 813995 or June Chapman chapman.june@btinternet.com - 01622 817324.

BEE KEEPERS ASSOCIATION

As the people of Yalding know all too well the floods of December 2013 were devastating and life changing for many in the area. Not least of which were local beekeepers who, in some cases, lost not only their homes but also colonies of bees and equipment and stores which came as a significant blow at a time of so much damage and destruction. Thankfully, our teaching apiary in the Organic Gardens was unscathed and, by April, there were signs of recovery as the bees were active and every weekend during the summer James, our Apiary Manager held his popular mentoring sessions where new and not so new members can come along and learn new techniques and methods of managing bees or brush up on old skills and we produce and sell our own honey to help finance our activities. By April we were actively preparing for our main fundraising event; the May Bee Fayre and Auction. There was a serious doubt about the proposed location as the field had been flooded to at least 1.5m and it was unclear as to whether it would be in a usable condition in time for the fayre and we were considering alternative venues in case the field wasn't ready. However, the weather was kind to us, the field recovered and the Fayre was held on May 11th with several hundred people attending. The Fayre followed the same format as previous years with stalls selling teas, cakes, honey, plants and books. There was a BBQ and an ice cream van and we took our observation hive along so people could see bees at work. In the village hall there was a demonstration of honey extraction and in the field there was a live demonstration where experienced beekeepers opened a full hive of bees in front of an audience. The auction was held in the afternoon with lots of bee keeping equipment, garden tools and machinery going under the hammer. The last lots were the bees, for sale in small enclosed hives or in packages, a box with about a kilo of bees and a queen ready to go in a hive. All in all, in spite of some people being stung, it was a good day for the club and we look forward to another successful fayre this year on May 10th. During the following summer months we have taken our observation hive to Great Comp for two of their garden shows, to Waitrose in Paddock Wood and to several schools in order to educate and inform people about bees and the environment. This year we will be at Notcutts Garden Centre, Pembury on June 6th, Great Comp Hens and Garden Show on June 21st, Waitrose, Paddock Wood on July 18th and Great Comp Garden Show on August 8th and 9th. We also have requests to visit schools in Tonbridge and the Hadlow Brownies. The children love to put on the bee suits (bought with Yalding Parish Councils 's generous

donation a couple of years ago) and have their photographs taken and of course the suits are available when children visit the apiary. Carol, our Programme Secretary, works hard to arrange a series of talks and demonstrations for our members and we have had talks on bee disease, queen rearing, candle making as well as quizzes and visits to other bee keeping associations. Our meetings are usually held at the Chequers at Laddingford who look after us extremely well. We are one of the youngest and fastest growing bee keeping associations in Kent and our membership continues to grow year on year and we would like to take this opportunity to thank Yalding Parish Council for their continued support and interest.

DRAMA PRODUCTIONS

Yalding and Laddingford's drama group has presented two productions in the last 12 months. Oscar Wilde's "Lady Windermere's Fan", a full-blown outdoor production in the splendid garden of Parsonage Farmhouse, was blessed with glorious summer weather. Audience numbers were – surprisingly – disappointing, but the performances were greatly enjoyed by those who came. With picnics, Pimms and other liquid refreshments these outdoor productions make for a great occasion, especially when they are as visually sumptuous as this one. A strong cast made the most of Wilde's witty script and cutting observations of human frailty and vanity. January saw the year's only Drawing Room Drama with three sell-out performances of Agatha Christie's "The Hollow" at the former Bull pub, now the beautiful home of Rob and Jane O'Connor. This was another visual treat, enhanced by most of the audience also dressing up in between-the-wars costumes. The cast included several relative newcomers, always a welcome development, and the twists and turns of the plot kept the audience fully engaged. Grateful thanks are due to the respective directors, Rachel West and Victoria Field, both of whom executed their very time-consuming roles to great effect. The entire group is now very strong in number and is a great credit to this relatively small but very active and talented village community. New members continue to be welcome, onstage or backstage. There is great fun to be had.

GARDEN SOCIETY

As always, it has been a busy year. Our Spring, Summer and Autumn Shows were well attended, (though we would be happy to see more new competitors!) and the judges, some of whom were new to Yalding shows, were very complimentary about the general standard of exhibits and the lively atmosphere at the Village Hall. We continued our regular series of lectures and talks during the winter months. Our Christmas party was a very festive event, much enlivened by a quiz and raffle (for which our top prize was one of the ceramic poppies from the spectacular installation at the Tower of London) and an entertaining talk on Russia's golden onion domes with a sip of vodka and caviar blinis at half time. The AGM in March was very well attended by about 80 of our members and we were very pleased to welcome two new members to the committee. We also organised three day trips for the society, one to Godinton House, near Ashford, and in the autumn to Belmont House, near Faversham. The third visit to Janet Lerwill's garden and nursery near Marden, proved very inspiring and was greatly enjoyed. This year we shall be visiting Wisley in early May, and Oxford in July with tours of the Botanic Gardens and St Hugh's College garden (with cream tea in the College Hall). A lively series of talks has already been set up for the winter months. At the previous AGM it had been agreed to increase slightly the subscription fee and the cost for the talks in view of the ever-increasing fees to speakers and judges and for the hire of the Village Hall, to maintain our healthy financial situation. Our members are having to adjust to the change for our regular meetings from the first Wednesday to the first Monday of the month to make way for a commercial booking which

obviously brings in greater revenue to the Village Hall. Our newsletter continues to be very popular with members providing reports of the shows and visits, information about events of interest to members, recipes and photographs. Plans are under way for a trip to Holland and the bulbfields in spring next year and we shall be celebrating the Society's 60th anniversary.

RELATIVE MINORS

During 2014 'university' stole away another of our talented players, Felix Haigh, who has played the bassoon so beautifully for many years. Whilst this is to be expected as younger members progress through their education, it has meant that each section of our orchestra is approaching the 'precious few'. The orchestra performed at the Gamble BBQ and both Nativity and Carol services at Yalding and Laddingford. We have started 2015 with more new exciting music, and will be one of the 'acts' at the Church music concert later in the year. We are eager to recruit new players (strings, woodwind and brass instruments) and whilst we do not audition, members do need to be of grade 2 standard and above. We have advertised widely. We look forward to another year of striving to make good music!

VICAR'S PICNIC

The Vicar's Picnic, so named because of its original location on Vicarage Road, started as a party in a back garden, 'build a stage, book a band, invite family and friends while hoping to raise a few pounds for local causes. Originally, a tonic for the disappointment of missing out on tickets for Glastonbury, a plan was drawn up on the back of beer mats back in 2012. Word quickly spread after the first year's success, friends invited their friends and our brilliant festival was born. With help from local businesses and volunteers we have raised (and hope to continue) several thousand pounds for local charity, including Hospice in the Weald, YCPS, Twyford Pre-School and the Yalding Football Club (YSA) and others. Not only is supporting local causes important to us but also to keep tickets very affordable and to put on a great show for our community first, with visitors from further afield of course welcomed to Yalding. Last year's event, sold out with weeks to go, with visitors traveling from as far as the North East, so we realized a new site was required. After looking at a few options, Yalding Parish Council has kindly offered us our new home on stunning 'Vicar's Island' down on The Lees. So begins an exciting new era as we develop into what we hope will be the coolest little family festival in the UK! The heart and philosophy of our organization, is to bring a great time to the whole family and community with a unique edge of cool and creative fun in a safe environment. We work tirelessly to, 'up the game' year on year finding amazing bands and young breakthrough artist who might be next year's global stars plus unique and creative ways to entertain. This year we have been able to capture multi platinum selling Brit-pop band 'Cast' which has raised our, and Yalding's profile. Waitrose, UK Power Networks, Network SouthEast Trains and Gallagher builders have all become sponsors, keen to help and be associated with our event which has also recently caught the eye of live international music impresario John Giddings (manager of U2, Madonna, Sting, David Bowie and many more) who is the organizer of the hugely successful Isle of Wight Festival. He has kindly invited the Vicar's Picnic team to his internationally acclaimed festival in June as his guest to see the workings of his event. This year, to break even is our first target! Following on, we hope to purchase a defibrillator for Yalding whilst also sharing some/any profit with Yalding Football Club, Demelza Childrens Hospice and other charities. We are also supporting local business with opportunities for vendors, entertainers and local hostellers all benefitting. It is also important for us to run a 'green' event as possible with minimal impact on the local area and community. Our dedicated team invites all correspondence and advice, working in partnership with the

relevant agencies and of course Yalding Parish Council who we hope will be a partner helping to develop our annual event into something of which we can all be proud.

VILLAGE VOICES

Village Voices is now in its fifth year and still retains most of its original members. Several new voices/faces have joined in the last year and we still have a very strong male voice section. This year marked a highlight in our history when we sang at a concert in early March to a packed audience in the Church. Despite a few performance nerves, we were all thrilled with our achievement and we received very positive feedback. Every summer we sing informally at the GamBLE BBQ. Our repertoire continues to expand and we enjoy folk songs from all around the world, 4-part arrangements of classical and popular music and lots in between. We always welcome new members, whether you think you can sing or not! - the only requirement is to “have a go” and feel relaxed and friendly about trying something new. We are a very friendly group and find that singing gives us a wonderful sense of well-being. We meet once a month on a Thursday evening and it costs £10 a term (5 meetings) and, after costs of venue hire and music have been deducted, our income is donated to GamBLE. We usually meet in Yalding School Hall or the Church rooms – see the village magazine and the library for dates.

WI

This year is the Centenary of the WI and the Resolution to be discussed and voted on at the Albert Hall on June 4th is “Failing to Care – assessment of need in long term care”. This will happen in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen, The Princess Royal and the Duchess of Wessex, along with approximately 5,000 – 6,000 WI members. The Queen is a member of Sandringham WI so will have a keen interest on how their delegate votes. A baton containing a memory stick has been passed between all the WI Federations in the country, starting in Anglesey, during the past year and will finish its journey at the Albert Hall. Each Federation has put 12 photos on the stick and these will be on display there. On that day West Kent Federation are hosting a live streaming of the event at the Mercure Hotel in Maidstone for members who were not lucky enough to get a ticket for the Albert Hall – ballots had to be held at all WI's for tickets as the only fair way. Three of our members are attending a special WI Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on June 2nd, again a ballot was held. Ruth Bollen and Margaret Ashworth were the lucky two and Thelma Nye (our President) as a member of Kent West Kent Board of Trustees. As a part of West Kent's centenary celebrations a Scarecrow Festival is being held at Lullingstone Castle on July 1st for members to attend and see the 80 or so scarecrows made by WI members. These will be on display for the whole month of July for the general public to see. We enjoyed 42nd Street at the Hazlitt, exercised in our chairs, found out what a difference accessories and colours make to us and attended “Alice's Tea Party” where we took part in a croquet relay. We sung at our Christmas meeting and were entertained by members performing a play by Jean Larkin (Larkfield WI) entitled “Grumpy Old Fairies” which was well received. The Craft Fair in October and Jumble Sale in April helped fund the cost of speakers found by Mary Jakes for our monthly meetings. Lunching Ladies are still visiting various places monthly and Jill Smith's Walking Group is going strong. We are pleased to say that our numbers have gone up and we celebrated our 71st Birthday in June with a touch of magic, our speaker being Jack Devlin, a past President of the Magic Circle. Our Birthday cake was cut by our oldest member, Kath Barlow, 90. We also had our Garden Party in June hosted by Shelie Ripley in her beautiful garden. The weather was kind to us and fun was on the menu. We have enjoyed various talks over the year including Delia Taylor – The Blue Cross Animal Charity; Melanie Gibson Barton who took us to

Bruges; Peter Van Dongen who took us on a trek to Borneo; Fred Lamont – “Flemish Weavers in Kent” amongst many. We also had a demonstration of Medieval cookery from Sue Hollings and tasted Beef & Vegetable Potage and Funges with mushroom, leek and saffron accompanied by Mead. Various Craft and Home Economics workshops have been attended. At our West Kent Federation Annual Council Meeting in March each WI donated a ‘bag of life’ filled with food and we collected 1.267 tonnes for the Trussell Trust. All in all another busy year.

MARKETS

FARMERS’ MARKET

The average number of stalls per market declined in 2014 to 12.4 (14.8 in 2013) a trend which is continuing in 2015 (averaging just 10 in the first four months). This is mainly as a consequence of the continuing decline in footfall (customers), to the extent that it is no longer worthwhile for some stallholders to attend. I have been able to get some new stallholders to replace them but in my view they are unlikely to continue unless the number of customers increases. All Farmers’ Markets have seen a decline in the number of customers, which is largely due to the austerity of the last few years, and a number are struggling to survive. A village farmers market such as Yalding relies almost exclusively on its village and local area population. Customers only travel in any numbers to large farmers markets such as Tonbridge that has 40 to 50 stalls which provide a wide product range. The Yalding market is limited to about 15 stalls because of space. Our marketing efforts, banners, road signs and leaflets (our largest area of expenditure) bring in some visitors to the Yalding Market but only a few. So the viability of the Yalding market depends almost exclusively on the people in the village and surrounding area using it. The product range on offer at the market is still very good and of excellent quality and on a like for like basis the stallholder’s prices are competitive, including those selling top end products. Customers wanting the normal range of vegetables, breads and cakes, meats, sausages would find it worth their while to shop at the market. The plant stalls are very competitive and usually cheaper than the local garden centres. The lower footfall is also affecting the sales at the refreshment stall and profits are now often well below £200 (historically £200 to £250). I shall endeavour to keep the market going and try to get it back to the level it was operating at in 2011/12 but this can only happen if people in the village start to use it much more. Unless this happens there is a serious risk the number of stallholders will decline to the point that the market ceases to be viable and this would be a great loss for Yalding.

YULETIDE MARKET

One again, as in previous years, we had good weather for the Yuletide Market, although it did become colder at about 7.00 p.m and the crowds began to thin a little. The hog roast once again sold out and other food stalls were kept busy during the evening. Again we had capacity number of stalls but it would be nice to see a few more village and local surrounding areas craft stall applicants this year. Keep a lookout on the Farmers’ Market website and the Parish Magazine. In 2013 we contributed £2,000 towards the new LED Christmas lights and this year we are planning to make a further substantial contribution to the purchase of more lights for the village. We also purchased two large gazebos this year which will mean we do not have to hire them every year and therefore save on this expenditure year on year. We are now planning the 2015 Market and would like to try to enhance the Christmas atmosphere. We are also always looking for new members to join our working group who all work extremely hard throughout the year, especially from

September onwards, to ensure the Market is a success. Once again we thank all the High Street and other residents for their patience and co-operation.

HALLS AND FACILITIES

YALDING VILLAGE HALL

The Village Hall has been an important part of the village for 60 years and is a necessary asset to Yalding, being a venue for a wide variety of events, all of which benefit the community hugely. This year we have in plan to change all the radiators in the main hall and to upgrade the current lighting to LED which will be more cost effective. Any financial advice or support on fundraising or obtaining grants would be gratefully received to complete some of the items on our wish list as well as the general day to day hall maintenance requirements. We are appreciative to our regular hall users who continue to use the hall to maintain a good level of income that covered our day to day running costs. The Committee would like to remind everyone that the hall is available at weekends for private hires or fundraising events and we now have 10 5' circular tables and 100 soft chairs.

YOUTH CENTRE

A relatively uneventful year with business as usual. The roof to the toilet block has been completely re-covered and a new fire-exit door fitted at the rear. The flooring in the church room, kitchen and entrance hall has been renewed, new lights fitted and enhanced decoration. Our relationships with the youth organisations has continued to be strong, as it has with the other users. St.Peter & St.Paul Youth Group, Pilates, Aerodance and the Yalding Art Group continue to flourish, although Dance Addiction have stopped their sessions for the foreseeable future. The 'Chat-a-while' Coffee mornings are well attended and the Lunch Club continues to operate at capacity.

HELPING HANDS

Ruth Bollen and I continue to offer what we feel, is an efficient and cheap driving service, together with our volunteer drivers. (Ruth of course is still in treatment, so at present is not participating in Helping Hands until she is well and strong again.) As always, we keep a mind to maintaining moral support and company, during what can be for some, an anxious time. Due to a number of our volunteers who are themselves dealing with their own health issues, we are short of drivers. The moment of refusing a lift came very close during the last year. I have recently recruited five drivers who have generously joined our ranks, but am still on the lookout for another six. The mileage of 50p a mile has been maintained from 2012.

LIBRARY

Events and activities held throughout the past year:

The library is well used by children and families. The primary school visits regularly for book exchange sessions, as does a local preschool group. A local volunteer runs a popular storytime on the first Monday of every month. The annual Summer Reading Challenge for children was well supported, 33 children from Yalding Library joined the challenge with well over half of them completing 6 books to get a medal and certificate. The library supports 6 reading groups in the village and surrounding area by ordering their books. The valuable Home Library Service provides books to those who cannot physically access the library. Please let us know of anyone who would appreciate this service. The parish council have continued to use the building for meetings.

Services Provided

The library provides a varied selection of items for loan to adults, teenagers and children. This includes fiction, non-fiction, large print, spoken word cassettes, babies' board books and DVDs. New stock is added on a regular basis. A free public access computer is available in the library, along with a scanner and printer. You can also access our online library services and can perform many routine tasks, such as renewing books and booking a library PC. Our 'Online Reference Library' acts as your very own electronic bookshelf, providing access to encyclopaedias, dictionaries, newspapers and magazines, and other subjects such as business or health from quality commercial databases or tried and tested free-web resources. eBooks and eAudiobooks are also available to borrow with your Kent Library Card. By coming in to the library and using a public computer, you can access ancestry.com and findmypast.co.uk **free of charge**. These websites provide access to a fast amount of information for those interested in family history.

For further information on the work of Libraries, Registration and Archives across the county go to the Inspire document on our website which demonstrates how our Libraries, Registration and Archives service is inspiring and supporting people across Kent.

http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/11523/LRA-Inspires-2014.pdf

PPG

The PPG provides a democratic forum for patients of Yalding surgery to make suggestions and comment on local health care provision. Patients' opinions are compiled into an Action Plan comprising actions and outcomes agreed with the surgery. The 2014 Action Plan covered the following areas:

- Telephone management
- Dispensary stock management
- Communications relating to prescriptions
- Website review

Actions have been progressed, and were reviewed at the AGM. All patients of the Yalding surgery are welcome to join the PPG.

VOLUNTEER TRANSPORT

Our Volunteer Transport team at Voluntary Action Maidstone has continued to support people in Yalding over the past year. In total, between 8,000 and 10,000 trips have taken place in the past year in Maidstone and Malling. The office is manned by 2 people (one staff and one volunteer) between the hours of 08:30 – 16:00 Monday to Friday. To maintain our level of support to the community we are now seeking additional volunteer drivers; a driver is paid £0.45 per mile, so they not only support their community, the contribution supports the ongoing running of their car. The number of Volunteer Transport is 01622 756 662

INFORMATION

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) in Yalding continues to keep hundreds of residents up to date with recent crimes/anti-social behaviour and with local trends and crime prevention advice. The information comes from Kent Police messaging service and sometimes from Trading Standards. The Parish News database, whereby Geraldine informs us of flooding and other parish council issues, is also used for NHW bulletins. As ever, the email bulletins are of course only received by those with email who express a wish to receive them; so there are many who are therefore left unaware, although I do believe neighbours can and

do help with this problem especially for the more vulnerable members of the community. Information via the bulletins and of course the wonderful involvement of PCSO Nicola Morris surely helps to make us a safer and more aware community. Over the last year, I have attended several Farmers' Markets with Nicola, in order to bring NHW to residents' attention and to sign up new members. In November I was invited to a special after flood NHW morning at Little Venice, again with Nicola, and it was good to meet residents there and to sign up many of them to receive our bulletins. To receive Neighbourhood Watch bulletins, please call 07785 974951 or email jscott@cfsbroadband.co.uk. Otherwise, sign up with Geraldine for Parish News. This is free to residents and data protection issues are observed.

PARISH MAGAZINE

The magazine we hope has gone from strength to strength and apart from a few technical errors every magazine has been published within our deadlines. This is all down to a great team that work hard behind the scenes. Grateful thanks as always goes to: Jenny Scott our Diary Editor, Annie Lee-Davy who runs the advertising, Graham Spillman our treasurer and Martin William and his dedicated distributing team who we would be lost without - Thank you. The magazine is non profit making and relies on the subscription payments, advertising money and donations received throughout the year to enable us to continue. Please do pay your subscription fees! If anyone has anything they would like to contribute to the magazine, albeit a feature or photograph or if you have an idea you want to share, please contact the editor Rachel Curley at mag@yaldingchurches.co.uk

PARTNERSHIPS

MEDWAY VALLEY COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

It has been a changing and a challenging year. First the change, with the hosting of the Kent Community Rail Partnership changing to Sustrans. They are a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. They relate well with us as we go forward working with people, partners and groups of all ages to put the local community at the heart of the railway. Then the challenge of appointing two new officers who had very little time to come to terms with their new posts before they were in the thick of meeting the demands of reviewing and delivering the year's action plan.

Yalding Walk - Medway Valley Line Walks and new signpost maps - Over 50 people attended the launch of the Medway Valley Rail Signpost Scheme at Yalding station in August 2014 (7 brand new walking information panels at stations along the Medway Valley line), which was officially unveiled by Chairman of Kent County Council, Peter Homewood. Walkers, led by our volunteer Yalding Parish Champion, Andy Sanders, set off along the trail by the River Medway, stopping off at the Chequers Pub in Laddingford for lunch and a visit to the Transportation and Train Social Day, before returning to Yalding station. Explore Kent and Kent Community Rail Partnership also launched a prize draw "selfie" photo competition to encourage walkers to use the route over the summer. The best entries won cream teas at Yalding and Wateringbury, meals for two in Yalding and Laddingford and even free entry and rides at Diggerland.

Gardens and Bulbs - The Snodland Station Community Garden was officially launched at a sunny garden party event in May 2014 by over 20 project partners and school children from Holmesdale Technology College. Stations along the line continue to benefit from bulbs planted by our volunteers, including Maidstone Barracks, Maidstone West, Snodland

and Wateringbury. We are hopeful that volunteers will be adopting at least another 2 stations in the next few months.

Station Improvements - We are pleased to confirm continuing improvements on the line. There are new disabled access lifts at Strood and at Paddock Wood which also has a new overbridge. The platform canopies at Paddock Wood have been replaced together with the shelter roof at Snodland. Maidstone Barracks now has new seats. Further improvements work will be carried out through 2015, including deep cleaning of stations, station refurbishments and improved Passenger Information Screens, and new ticket machines will be installed on unmanned stations.

Service Improvements - The Partnership and Southeastern jointly welcomed passengers to Snodland station at the crack of dawn on the 12th January to celebrate the launch of the new High Speed service to St Pancras International. Passengers were served breakfast, hot drinks, and were provided with travel information and goodie bags. Several passengers mentioned that they are now cutting down on car journeys because of the new service. Seventeen children from Holmesdale Academy were treated to a trip on the High Speed train to St Pancras courtesy of Southeastern. Following feedback from the Partnership and other rail users, there are now improved connections to mainline high-speed trains at Strood.

We look forward to working with our supporters to further strengthen the Partnership and the involvement of all members of the local community over the next twelve months. A number of events are planned over the next 12 months. Details are available on the website. www.sustrans.org.uk

MEDWAY VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP (MVCP)

2014/15 has seen another busy year for the partnership in the parish. We have continued to work hand in hand with the parish council and local site owners on a wide range of projects.

Yalding Fen:

- Planting of 19 more fruit trees of traditional varieties with help from the parish council, 20 children from the local primary school and the MVCP volunteers.
- A new run of apple juice was made from 2014 harvest, which was quite modest in size but excellent in quality. Bottles are available from MVCP at £2.75 each.
- Ongoing habitat management to maintain the traditional orchard, boardwalks and gates, mow the footpaths and generally keep the site in good repair and accessible to all. 2014 was a very good year for barn owl breeding success although sadly not at the fen. However the owls have now found the new box erected in 2013 so we are hoping for success this summer.
- Replaced numerous fence posts and tree guards lost in winter gales.
- Hosted the annual parish picnic attended by 100+ people with juice making, wildlife walks and pond-dipping
- Continued on-going ecological surveys for barn owls, bats and amphibians (the roost for brown long eared bats is now formally monitored by the Kent Bat Group). A movement detection camera for the bats was installed but no good images were taken.
- Hosted a series of educational visits for degree level students at the nearby Hadlow college
- Continued with grazing management through the help of Round Oak Hebridean (sheep) and the parish council's cattle. Fewer cattle will be needed in 2015 (c. five or six) as the strong grazing of 2014 has removed much of the underlying thatch and should promote greater species diversity.

- MVCP has now acquired some hay making equipment (see SOMM below) and plans on using this on site to enhance the flora and insect diversity of that are known as the 'hay-meadow' and 'gun-field'.

SOMM (Save our Magnificent Meadows)

MVCP's "Save our Magnificent Meadows" project is now into its second year. We have an established and growing team of meadow champions and a wide range of family and education events and activities. Full details can be found on our website www.medwayvalley.org Should you wish our dedicated officer to make a site visit and advise on good land management practices she would be happy to do so. Please contact Mary Tate directly on 03000 414833 mary.tate@kent.gov.uk. The parish has extended it hay-cut of the Yalding Lees area and the beneficial effects on plant diversity are already being seen. MVCP and two volunteers surveyed a wide area of the Lees in spring 2014 and discovered almost all of the indicator species for declaring it a true floodplain meadow. It certainly provided a beautiful display of flowers in spring and again in late summer. Insect, bees, butterflies and birds should all respond positively to this enhanced management too.

Yalding Tatt

Two sessions of Himalayan balsam pulling were undertaken at the Tatt, further reducing the vigour and spread of this invasive plant. In the longer term controlled releases of a plant specific fungus are now starting in other river catchments to ultimately control this problem species in a more natural way. Please ask Andrea Griffiths andrea.griffiths@kent.gov.uk if you wish to find out more.

Fowle Hall Green

MVCP held a task day at this small and burgeoning meadow site following a now regular grass cut by the parish. The long term aim is to manage the site for wildlife and provide a useful location for local children to learn about nature in the parish.

Giant Hogweed and invasive species (Andrea Griffiths 03000 414795)

The normal extremely comprehensive giant hogweed control programme was in full swing as usual throughout the parish and beyond. We are seeing notable declines in numbers of plants although some problems persist along the Teise in particular and it is vital for all parties to work in a co-ordinated fashion.

Some key facts and figures (across the whole Medway catchment):

- 120 landowners were contacted directly (both 2013 and 2014) about including their land in the MVCP scheme in case Giant Hogweed and any other target flora was observed and needed treating.
- Environment Agency support and permission to spray was granted for multiple years. Natural England support and permission to treat plants on the River Beult SSSI also granted.
- 200km (approx.) of riparian habitat was covered by MVCP's contractor to chemically treat Giant Hogweed in both 2013 and 2014.
- In 2013, 14,605 Giant Hogweed plants (approx.) were treated and recorded throughout the Medway Catchment and River Cray
- In 2014, 9000 Giant Hogweed plants (approx.) were treated and recorded throughout the Medway Catchment and River Cray.
- Several treatments of Floating Pennywort were carried out at the source location and on the Medway near Yalding in both 2013 and 2014 (treatment still ongoing in 2014).
- Water Fern surveying on the River Beult was done in 2013. Funds for Water Fern Bio-Control were re-allocated to Medway Swale Estuary Partnership (MSEP) in 2014.

MVCP also assisted MSEP with funds (via DEFRA funding) for Japanese knotweed and New Zealand Pigmy weed treatment.

- MVCP noted an increase in Japanese knotweed (JKW) in the River Teise in 2014 and with additional funds treatment of all of the JKW on the Teise was undertaken in September/October 2014.

Catchment improvement groups

The Catchment Improvement Groups for the Beult and Middle Medway continue to be active. Sponsored by the Environment Agency but co-ordinated by MVCP these have been created for local stakeholders to have a say in improving the ecological health of our vital water resources. A major flood control scheme is planned for the Medway catchment (2015-2027), which may have beneficial consequences for biodiversity too. Many site visits have been held in the Beult catchment to identify locations for possible re-meandering and biodiversity enhancement projects. One possible scheme has been identified on the boundaries of Yalding parish which may take place in 2015 subject to landowner agreement and EA funding.

LOCAL COMMERCIAL SERVICES

BUSINESS FORUM

The business Forum has been consistently successful again this year. We held monthly business breakfast meetings at Kenwood House throughout 2014. For 2015 we have moved to a new venue and will be holding a breakfast meeting each month for our members at The Walnut Tree in Yalding. They take place the last Thursday of every month at 7am and if you have a local business and would like to join why not come along to a meeting as a guest to discuss joining. We also held various networking events throughout the Year holding our Christmas Banquet at the Mulberry Tree in Boughton Monchelsea. This classy restaurant provided an excellent evening with sumptuous food and a close up magician for 78 of our members entertainment. All our networking events are free to our members. The business Forum is a non profit making voluntary organisation which works for the benefit of local businesses. All the committee work for free and give their time to help their fellow businesses by helping to produce the Business Directory, maintain the website and email contact group for our members. If you are interested in joining the deadline to be included in this year's directory is 31st May 2015 please contact elaine@nrbf.co.uk.

CHEQUERS INN

The Chequers continues to be run by Charles & Tracey Leaver who will have been landlords there for 21 years in 2015. The Chequers focuses on being a traditional village pub, which supports the local community as well as offering good real ale, wine and a traditional menu. There are many events held over the year, usually focussing on supporting charities, as well as annual events such as the fun Laddingford Vegetable & Flower Show. The Chequers is also home to several diverse clubs, including the local bee club, running (Chequers Chasers), cycling (Chequers Racers) and swimming (Chequers Otters) groups. The large garden is popular in the summer with families and hosted the Train & Transport Social Day in 2014 which was attend by the Mayor of Maidstone, who was part of a group from Sustrans, supporting the upkeep of the local rail network. It's planned that there will be plenty of events to be held during 2015.

EDEN

Eden Hair and Beauty has been through some changes this year and despite some rumour we are still here! Reports that we have closed are completely not true. We have obtained

some planning permission on the building which has confused some people but we can assure all our customer we are open and here for Appointments. Eden is a wonderful atmospheric beamed building where you will receive a warm welcome. We have two highly qualified and experienced Hairdressers to cater for all your needs. Maggy has 38 years experience and has been with us 4 years and Jade has joined our team two months ago and is a warm and friendly very experienced qualified hairdresser together with Chloe our graduate stylist you can trust you will receive excellent service. If you have not been to us for a while or never tried us, why not book a introductory visit to Jade at 50% off you will not be disappointed. We have currently closed the beauty suite for refurbishment and will be reopening when works have finished so watch this space. Eden wishes to thank all the people in the village, who supported local this year and used our services in the village. In return we were very happy to support all the local schools and village events. Why not treat yourself, come and relax in a warm, friendly, welcoming environment where we will create the look you want. If you wish to contact us or would like more information please email elaine@nrbf.co.uk.

MOBY DICKS – FISH AND CHIPS

We had another lean spell last year, but finally have seen some improvement in the last few weeks! I hope it will continue. I know Gerry spoke with a few people who arranged for an add to be put into the Parish magazine which has hopefully helped us. We were at the stage of giving the round up but we are now planning to stick with it. We do now have a wood fired pizza van which we may bring to the village, www.pizzacucina.info. Thanks for your support, I hope the last few weeks is a sign of things to come?!

ORCHARD VIEW GARAGE AND CLASSICS

I was a little worried that January/ February 2015 was likely to be slow as the year before we were in rebuild after flood. But as ever our loyal customers have supported us for which we are extremely grateful and we have been busy. We are certainly down on figures but I suspect that this is due to the volume of vehicles lost to flood that we would normally see. Our flood defences grant has been fully utilised and should be finished my April. I have written to Helen Grant about an enterprise Zone for businesses affected by flooding as our insurance has doubled and the excess is now to the point of making a future claim difficult. I have spoken to a number of business affected by the flood and we are all in the same position. This is a very important suggestion as any new business is unlikely to start in an area flooded or in a post code area deemed to be a flood risk. I have suggested that the zone should be in place until flood defences are finished on the Leigh barrier and River Beult. I have received a reply, but if the Parish Council were also to back this suggestion some traction may be gained. I am willing to contribute any help that may be required on this front. As we have insurance now in place we will continue to operate from Hampstead lane for the foreseeable future.

POST OFFICE

As was the case last year this year has again been a bit of a roller-coaster for us. The flood affected us as a family very badly and we are only just moving back into our home. However, the Post Office has been very busy. The non-mails business has been growing steadily with plenty of diverse stock items for sale with the emphasis on “locally sourced, locally sold”. Mail volumes continue to grow steadily and the Christmas period was again exceptionally busy and we are enjoying a relatively quieter period with a chance to change some of our stock displays etc. Royal Mail are changing their prices again this year....customers will lose on some and gain on others. The emphasis is on increasing parcels trade and they are lowering prices on second class parcels of both small and

medium sizes, but stamp prices for UK and International letters go up. My wife June retired from the London Ambulance Service in June this year after twenty years service and is a permanent fixture by my side behind the counter. She is steadily learning the business and we thank you for your patience whilst she finds her feet. June has particular influence over the non-mail related stock and I'm sure her creative mind will make some welcome differences.

TEA POT ISLAND

Teapot Island "Home of the most amazing teapot collection in the world!" Sunday roasts finally made it on the menu, they have been selling very well. We have employed a new chef and with his help, we will be opening between 5.30 to 9.30 from May 1st in the evenings. With a fish menu on Friday nights and BBQ on Saturday nights. He is also making us homemade cakes and desserts. We now hold an alcohol licence, and we are hoping to increase our business by using the premises for parties in the evenings. It was a really busy year trying to catch up with all the things that we were unable to do last year because of the flood. We have increased our flood defences to 4ft. high and have dug pump wells throughout the building so that we can try to keep levels down if it does start coming in again. Lastly all of our benches are made out of environment friendly plastic they will not float away and require no maintenance.

YALDING GARDENS

We have been working on The Gardens constantly clearing and re-establishing the gardens themselves. We have put in a new work shed to improve and tidy the work yard up with new fencing. The main building is undergoing major refurbishment due to complete in June. Externally the new gates have been installed and landscaping to the car parking spaces is also being undertaken. We hope to open in the latter part of June and we will be having open days as the site has been developed as a more prestigious events and conference venue. Once we have opened we will be introducing various courses to operate from the site together with open days at The Gardens for various other events.

YALDING TAXIS

Yalding Taxis are based in the village and are now fully established as the local taxi service. We specialise in local journeys for Yalding, East Peckham, Paddock Wood, Maidstone, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding areas as well as providing Airport Transfers and other medium/long distance journeys. We offer a 24/7 service, 365 days a year, and have both male and female drivers available. As well as standard estate cars and people carriers we also now have two 8 seater mini buses available. We also offer a courier service as required. We are looking forward to another good year building our business and thank all our valued customers for their continued support.

YALDING TEA ROOMS

Well our first year has come and gone and what an amazing year it has been. Massive and heartfelt thanks have to go to Sophie, Amanda, Sophie-Jane, Lauren and Jack for all that you have done and do. The tearooms success is all down to a great team, not forgetting our customers who keep us highly entertained! We were amazed to see that in the first year the Tearooms has raised over £1,500 for charity (this figure is still rising!) - Thank you to everyone who donates and supports these great causes. We will continue to raise as much money for charity as we can during 2015. Thank you for your support! See you soon!

ZARDA

The start of 2014 was difficult for the restaurant, we were under threat of closure due to the effects of the floods. Floodwater surrounded the restaurant and although the water did not get inside, it made it impossible for the restaurant to trade properly for several months. The

village and our regular customers however rallied round and fortunes turned. The restaurant has since scooped the 2015 Diner's Choice award from website Open Table, after becoming one of the website's most booked venues in the area. It is the second year running that we have won the award. We also became just one of 101 Good Food award winners from goodfood.com. It's absolutely fantastic to be doing well now. We have a new chef called Babul Miah (no relation) and he is fantastic, whilst Kajol overlook's everything and runs the whole business its important to have chefs like him who understand the whole ethos. Which is delicious, traditional Indian cuisine with inspiring and imaginative dishes, coupled with beautiful surroundings and excellent service. Our Sunday Buffet continues to be very popular and we do outside catering events. We can cater for birthdays, christenings, weddings and more. We have now celebrated our Second birthday and look forward to many more, thank you to everyone who has supported us.

PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

It has been another challenging year for MBC as the grant from central government is being reduced year on year and we have to find innovative ways to make up the shortfall in order to maintain our front line services. As a result we have been investing capital funds that have accrued over time into both cost saving measures and revenue generation schemes. For example, two properties have been purchased, Magnolia House and Aylesbury House, and converted into bed & breakfast lodgings to provide temporary accommodation at a much lower cost than using private landlords for the increasing number of homeless people seeking accommodation in Maidstone. Likewise the installation of solar panels at our depot in Park Wood is generating surplus power which is then being sold back to the National Grid. In addition, MBC has embarked on a Commercialisation Strategy to boost income. The shared Waste Collection service has been expanded to include commercial waste as well and we already have over 200 customers for this service. New investments in commercial premises now bring in much more rental income than can be obtained from having funds on deposit with the banks. We also intend to make better use of our assets and will be developing new amenities and leisure facilities at Mote Park which will derive income to go towards the upkeep of this fine public space. This year has seen a new Strategic Plan put in place for 2015 – 2020 setting out the priorities for the Council, which in summary are to “Keep Maidstone Borough an Attractive Place for All” and to “Secure a Successful Economy for Maidstone Borough”. This in turn means: *(a) Providing a Clean and Safe Borough, (b) Encouraging Good Health & Wellbeing, (c) Respecting the Character of the Borough, (d) Ensuring there are good Leisure and Cultural Attractions, (e) Enhancing the appeal of the Town Centre, (f) Improving the Transport Infrastructure, (g) Promoting employment opportunities and skills and (h) Planning for sufficient homes.* This is a challenging list of objectives which has been prioritized in the Council's budget allocation for next year following public engagement throughout the Borough. The first consultation on the emerging Local Plan has been carried out in the last 12 months together with a further call for sites. Whilst the housing need for the period 2011 - 2031 has been independently assessed to be 18,600 homes the resulting estimate, after taking into account the enormous public response and much deliberation by councillors of all the objections raised, is currently just under 16,000. Of this figure, over 4000 homes have already been built or have planning permission, some 3400 homes are in broad locations which are not expected to be addressed until towards the end of the Plan and the figure includes nearly 900 unidentified 'windfall' sites

which are anticipated will arise in the last 10 years of the Plan. As yet undeveloped sites are therefore expected to yield some 7700 homes between now and 2031, which is a much lower figure to be realised than many expected. Other activities that have occupied MBC this year include a review of the Flood Response Plan and involvement with the Kent Resilience Forum to help produce a Handbook for residents to help in the event of any future occurrence. In addition MBC has been managing the flood mitigation scheme introduced by the Government which has been widely taken up by those residents whose homes have been so distressingly affected by the flooding last year. This year, there has been a much greater willingness by MBC to engage with Parishes perhaps than previously, as a result of which progress has been made in drawing up an improved Parish Charter setting out the relationship between Parishes and MBC. Finally, plans are in place to establish an Enterprise Hub in the Gateway premises for use by start-up businesses to bring together expertise and services that will greatly increase their chance of success. It is expected that this approach will make a considerable contribution to increasing employment and developing our local economy. So significant progress has been made in changing MBC's direction towards being a more commercially aware and responsive organisation that will continue to serve the Borough well in the future. For more information on MBC's activities please contact your Ward councillors Annabelle Blackmore (tel. 01622 833299), David Burton (tel. 07590 229910) or Steve McLoughlin (tel. 07711 565489).

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

I have been your county councillor for over twelve years and it has been an enormously enjoyable experience. As a resident of rural Maidstone for over 45 years I am well aware of rural issues and, as your representative at the KCC and also an MBC member, I always raise issues of local importance and chase funds and grants needed for various local projects. These have included many highway schemes to lower speed limits, extra signage, road layouts, crossing points, flashing signs, footways and traffic calming to improve general safety especially around schools. Also quality of life issues like the scheme to re-route HGV's to avoid driving through small villages or causing damage to our medieval bridges. I have given many grants to clubs, village groups and parish events. This last year has again been a challenging one for KCC and all councils. The Government has worked hard to reduce the deficit and Government grants to all councils have been severely cut back. KCC has had to make savings of £300M over the last three years and has drastically reduced staff levels in an effort to minimise bureaucracy and smarter working practices. This year they have been tasked to make further savings: some unpopular like the trial of turning off streetlights between midnight and 5am. KCC will have to save a further £250M over the next three years. It is an enormous challenge and Kent will have to do more with less over the next few years and is working on a programme of transformation to maintain and improve front-line services. The budget that was set in February delivered the substantial savings required by Government, whilst protecting front-line services and has also protected the non-statutory services like the Young Persons' Travel Pass, the new 16+ student pass, members' grants for local projects and the Community Wardens (who continue to do a fantastic job in rural areas) to name a few. After managing to freeze Council Tax for four years, we have now had to make a small increase of 1.9 per cent for 2015/16. We had extra funding of £8.6m from the Ministry of Transport last year that helped in dealing with the results of the harsh winter and severe damage to roads and the massive flooding at Yalding and other surrounding areas. This was very welcome finance and enabled additional road maintenance and a Spring pothole blitz. We are working hard to deliver a balanced revenue budget and trying to create some

extra headroom to put into highways but having to also factor in the huge £250M in savings over three years, required by central Government. We are hoping to secure further funds from Government following this winter to carry out urgent road repairs and resurfacing and a pothole blitz. After pushing the Government hard on the flooding issues we have secured a financial commitment from them which KCC will be matching with others. This will go towards improving the flood defences in and around Yalding and other areas up and down stream and remedial work on the Medway to prevent a repeat of the massive damage. There have been many meetings with the Environment Agency, Southern Water and KCC, with Helen Grant's involvement. I have attended the Southern Regional Flood Committee on behalf of KCC in London and recently at their Head Office in Worthing and raised a number of local concerns; The improvements to the Leigh Flood Storage Area and capacity upstream was on the committee agenda and is factored into their programme of work for the coming year. They are going to have their next committee meeting in Maidstone in July and are planning to see the Leigh FSA and surrounding flood areas to familiarise the committee with the issues. I will ensure that notification of this meeting is circulated. I also sit on KCC Flood Risk Management Committee, inviting the Chairman of Yalding Parish Council and others to speak on flooding issues a number of times. There will be a boundary review in Kent this year which will look at the size of the area and the number of councillors needed. We have put in a submission response and await the outcome. The county did come out very well in a Local Government peer review last year by saying that 'there is much to celebrate about Kent, who have committed and talented members and officers' in a county that is already growing fast and has further significant development planned. It noted the huge challenge we face in the next few years. Maidstone Borough still has the second largest budget in the county from KCC (Thanet being the largest). This covers the huge investment in schools, libraries, health and social services etc. Contributions to Town centre improvements which include, Public Realm upgrade, the Museum extension and Kent Library and Archive Centre in Maidstone, as well as the significant costs of elderly social care, children's centres, schools, school transport, bus passes, roads and highway maintenance and infrastructure. The nine Maidstone councillors have had their annual grant allowances reduced from £35k to £25k to spend on local projects in their communities. This is still a significant amount that is spent directly in Maidstone and I am very glad they have protected this amount in the budget for the current year. It is much appreciated funding for clubs, groups and parishes. Community Wardens continue to do a fantastic job alongside PCSO's in the rural areas. A recent consultation praised the work of the community Wardens and was 100% behind retaining them. With an aging population and a more calls on services for the elderly, KCC has led calls for the Government to cap elderly care costs at £35,000 (in line with the Dilnot Report) and to end the system which forces the elderly to sell their homes and possessions before they get state help. The 'Care Bill' will introduce a cap on the cost to any individual at £72,000 and increase the residential means-test threshold from £23,000 to £118,000, while the 'Better Care Fund' will put in billions of pounds of health and social care funding and integrate local services. Councils maintain firm support for the principles behind the Care Bill but there must be a better understanding of the true cost of reforms. We will want a cast iron commitment fully to meet the cost of implementation so that Kent is not left to pick up additional costs. KCC is working with the clinical commissioning group and the Health & Wellbeing Board to improve the delivery of care. There are ambitious targets for new neighbourhood teams, centred on GP surgeries with the intent that health and social care colleagues move to a seven days a week work model and, in some cases, 24 hour care.

Children's' services have been a top priority at KCC since a poor Ofsted report three years ago. Huge improvements have been made since then and KCC is delivering excellent support to vulnerable young people and their families. At a follow up visit there 'were no issues or areas for concern'. Our major goal is to reduce the number of children in care and to keep all children safe in Kent, through delivery of early quality help and preventative services working alongside quality front line social work. A lot of work was done with the Governments successful 'Troubled Families Programme' putting in multi agency support to families in trouble, crisis or under stress. Many families have had their lives transformed with this support and improved the life chances of their children. The troubled families agenda is always at the heart of KCC services. Over 250.000 children are educated in Kent schools every day. We fully support Grammar Schools and the expansion of school places where needed. I would like to thank the parish council for all they do voluntarily for the parish and residents to enhance their lives and for the support and hospitality shown to me as your councillor over many years. I am delighted to represent such a lovely part of Maidstone and will continue to champion protection of our countryside and green spaces, preserving the character of our rural villages at a time of huge pressure for development in Kent. I am very disappointed at the unnecessary high housing numbers for Maidstone and the amount of housing and concrete being shoehorned into some of the villages. KCC has produced its response to the Maidstone Local Development Plan, 'Managing Growth in the Maidstone Borough'. advocating much lower housing figures in rural areas. Kent Association of Parish Councils have also done much research and also advocates a much lower figure. KCC has also commissioned planning experts to produce The Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Plan - intended to be a succinct document that gives coherence across the county joining up the 12 districts and Medway local Plans for both housing and commercial development to 2031. The Growth and Infrastructure Plan will identify the necessary infrastructure needed to manage the substantive population and housing growth agenda estimated at 1% per annum and 11% per decade. This will scope the extent of the necessary capital investment in Education Facilities, Transport, Highways, Public transport, Rail etc. Health; Primary, Acute, community facilities , Utilities - energy, water, sewage, waste. broadband etc. The Plan will broadly identify and assess the capital costs of provision, identify the developer contributions, and central government grants. It will no doubt highlight the substantive funding shortfall that will need to be brought to the attention of the new Government if we are to match growth with the essentially needed infrastructure provision and not diminish the quality of Life for Kent's residents.

KENT POLICE (PCSO)

Over the last twelve months, PCSO Nicola Morris has continued to work within the Marden & Yalding Ward, being involved in numerous local issues and village events, which have included the following:

- Crime prevention events held at Little Venice and Yalding Village Hall. Advice provided to local residents from myself, Golding Homes, local KCC Community Wardens and local Neighbourhood Watch. Smart Water, property marking pens, light timer switches provided and other information has been given out.
- Follow up visits of victims of burglaries/breaks and other crime types to give crime prevention advice and information leaflets. Details added to Neighbourhood Watch and advice re property marking and serial numbers of property to be recorded.
- Continued joint working with British Transport Police – identifying local offenders from CCTV.

- Joint work and visits with Golding Homes – local housing provider.
- Visits/talks and meetings to various groups within the village.
- Regular attendance at the local farmers markets for local engagement, updates and recent crime trends. Local Neighbourhood co-ordinators have also been in attendance to provide advice to local residents.
- Regular visits to repeat crime and vulnerable locations.
- Patrols of outlying areas to deter and stop vehicles known for thefts. This has been backed up with pre-arranged Policing Operations County wide involving numerous authorities and scrap yard inspections.
- Several arrests and convictions of local people throughout the year
- The Parish Council CCTV camera has continued to be effective this year in detection and prevention of crime.
- The Community Safety Unit CCTV has been used within the area to prevent and deter Crime and Antisocial behaviour.
- The Local Community Policing Team has been used to assist with various enquiries within Yalding and to assist where necessary.

Anyone wishing to contact Nicola about any issues or crime prevention advice can call the non-emergency Police number 101 and ask for local officer PCSO Nicola Morris 56202. Please continue to report any suspicious persons/vehicles/events through 101. Thank you for your continued support in making Yalding safe.

GOLDING HOMES

On the 3 May Claire Walker is going to take over as Neighbour Advisor for Yalding. We are investigating ways to improve parking at Lyngs Close and would like to thank all those who completed the questionnaire on their views on parking.

**YALDING PARISH COUNCIL
BUDGET 2015/16**

	£		£
Post Office Rent	6,500	Fowle Hall Green	500
Bank Charges	115	Jubilee Field	460
Yalding Village Hall Grant	500	Kintons	3,000
Parish Magazine Grant	300	Lees	2,000
MV Railway Grant	250	The Tatt	1,120
Grant Pot	1,000	Lees Fencing	1,000
Hire of Halls	700	Cattle	500
Insurance	1,250	Fen Costs	500
Legal & Accountancy	1,000	Playscheme	3,300
Office Equipment	500	Street Lighting Electricity	2,200
Printing/Stationery/Postage	1,000	Street Lighting Repairs	1,600
Salary & Clerk's Expenses	15,475	Litter Collection	500
Signs & Noticeboards	2,500	Litter Bins	500
Subscriptions	1,000	Christmas Lights & Market Road Closure	7,000
Telephone	1,500	Floodlighting	500
Training	1,000	Kiosk Electricity	700
Website Costs	250	War Memorial	1,000
Yalding Church Clock	300	Sundries	500
Garage Rent	300	Parish Events	5,500
Churchyards	500	Street Light Safety Check	1,500
Play Equipment	1,500	River Wall	20,000
Open Spaces Miscellaneous	1,000	Flood Contingency	6,819
Verges	1,500	Traffic Town Bridge	2,500
Village Green	570	Lock-Up	<u>2,500</u>
		BUDGET	<u>106,209</u>

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on

Tuesday 19 May 2015 at 7.30 p.m. in Yalding Village Hall

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20 May 2014
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's report for 2014/15
5. To accept reports from Yalding Parish Charities
6. To accept reports from Yalding Parish Organisations
7. To accept reports from the Principle Authorities
8. To accept report from Kent Police
9. Financial Review 2014/15
10. Presentation of Annual Budget 2015/16
11. To explain the Governance of Finance
12. Flooding in the Parish - Update
13. Any other business

Followed by

The Annual Parish Council Meeting

Agenda

1. Declaration of Acceptance of Office
2. Election of Chairman
3. Election of The Vice Chairman
4. Apologies for Absence
5. The minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 20 May 2014 were approved and signed at the Parish Council meeting held on 1 July 2014
6. Motion to approve Yalding Parish Council's Risk Assessment
7. Motion to Accept Insurance Renewal Premium
8. Note that children's play equipment and street furniture are not insured for financial loss
9. Motion to Approve Fixed Assets Register
10. Motion to Approve Annual Governance Statement
11. Motion to Approve Financial Regulations
12. Motion to Approve Statement of Financial Control
13. Confirmation of Working Parties and Memberships