

ULCOMBE

Annual Parish Report

2018/19

www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk



Produced by Ulcombe Parish Council
June 2019

(Reports from the Annual Parish Meeting held in April 2019)

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

In the past year, April 2018 to March 2019, there have been 12 regular parish council meetings and three extraordinary parish council meetings.

The main issues dealt with by your Parish Council in the last 12 months were as follows:

- Crime - there were 12 reported crimes in the year April 2018 to March 2019, 2 fewer than last year. One can view Ulcombe crime statistics on www.e-watch.co.

There has been a change in the Kent policing model, and PCSOs are now much less likely to attend parish council meetings.

- Planning – Ulcombe Parish Council is a consultee on planning issues and Maidstone Borough Council consulted us on 43 planning applications. The number of applications has doubled in the last two years. Ulcombe approved 21 applications (5 of which Maidstone refused) and Ulcombe refused 16 (5 of which Maidstone approved), and 6 (refused by us) still remain undetermined.
- Local Plan - Maidstone’s Local Plan was adopted in October 2017. We have been fighting Maidstone Council’s call for housing development sites in the borough because the infrastructure cannot cope. So far, Ulcombe has escaped planned housing. However, the government could require Maidstone to take an extra 7000 houses by 2031 in the Local Plan Review that is now taking place. Unfortunately, we are now in the eye of a storm because of all the current housing planned in the local rural service centres of Headcorn, Lenham and Harrietsham. The volume of traffic in and around Ulcombe, and the increase in HGVs and large tractors on our local roads, will only worsen congestion and the pothole situation. A Call for Sites is underway with replies needed by 24th May. Parish Councils will have the chance to comment during the consultation period as last time. Maidstone has agreed to appoint a replacement consultant for Salford University when determining Gypsy and Traveller needs and to consult the settled community prior to deciding G & T policy. We consider this a step in the right direction.
- Highway problems – Potholes are a constant problem given the devastation to our lanes over winter, the lack of money, and increased road traffic, particularly large tractors and more and more HGVs. Residents are asked to report potholes online to KCC direct on its “report a fault” page. There is a possible 18 weeks closure of the Headcorn Road due to the need to increase the volume of water supplying the new houses in Headcorn.

Lenham Road – the second survey in July 2017 produced mean speeds of 29.02mph westbound and 28.8 eastbound which was very similar to the speed survey in December 2016. The road edging is due to be repaired soon, and the white lining will be reinstalled The Parish Council has already funded the chevron signage on the bend near “Diamond”.

We are concerned at the proposal for a lorry park near Chilston Park and a slip road to the M20. This is only exploratory and connected to Operation Stack. If it were agreed this could result in more commercial development and traffic in an otherwise unspoilt rural area. Our MP is very much involved in fighting this Government idea, and has the support of the neighbouring parish councils and our County Councillor.

- Recreation Ground
 - a) Play Area – On Tuesday, 19 February the Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Naghi, formally opened our new play equipment. Ulcombe Parish Council contributed £8500, The Kent Playing Fields Association contributed £1000, and our County Councillor contributed £500 from her devolved budget. Maidstone Borough Council then matched funded by contributing £10,000 from its Strategic Play Area Grant.
 - b) We are grateful to Karen Chappell-Tay and Martin Round (our two Borough Councillors) for donating £250 each from their devolved budgets for community projects. We will be using this very welcome contribution to install the old Parish Pump by the picnic table.
 - c) Two signs have gone up to warn against the use of motorised vehicles on the Recreation Ground. We have had quad bikes, mopeds and motorbikes on the grass.
 - d) We have installed a Guard Cam camera and sensor light at the car park to improve security. We are going to be talking with the Village Hall Committee to see what needs to be done to improve CCTV coverage. Our thanks to Simon Odam for his time and effort in this project.

- Grants - Our grant to the Village Hall was £1120. We also gave £50 to the “Lost Words Kent Campaign for Books in Schools”. We have also agreed £250 to help the Church with the costs of floodlighting the church, as this benefits the whole village.

- Planters - We have agreed to install planters in the village. The siting of them needs to be agreed, and the watering of the flowers needs to be organised. Our thanks to Iain Moir for taking on this project.

- AONB -There is a proposal to make the Greensand Ridge an AONB, better to control development on this Landscape of Local Value. It is supported unanimously by Maidstone’s Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee and officers have been asked to liaise with neighbouring authorities. Our thanks to Councillor Round, our Borough Councillor, who sits on this Committee.

- KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils) - We were delighted to propose John Ware for the 2019 KALC Community Award for his great contribution to the life of our village. He knew about the award before he passed away, and we made the presentation to his wife Leila at the very moving Celebration of his life in the Church, in February.

- Buses – In response to many parish council concerns following KCC’s proposed axing of many rural bus services to save money, KCC is to start pilot schemes to improve bus service frequency in rural areas. Ulcombe is one of the pilot villages. School bus services remain unchanged during the pilot scheme, but the number 59 bus service will be increased from Ulcombe with feeder services to Morrison’s supermarket, passengers can then change buses for Maidstone or Headcorn/Tenterden. The timetables have not yet been produced. Your Parish Council would have preferred to reduce the increase in the number of feeder buses to Morrisons so that the schedule could allow all the buses to extend from Ulcombe and Grafty Green to Headcorn which has shops, doctors, dentists, pubs, restaurants and a train station etc. It would have offered a faster, more convenient, and cheaper direct travel option. The hassle of switching buses at Morrisons could be very difficult for elderly passengers with heavy shopping bags, and be a longer journey. Our proposal was sadly rejected by KCC. This is “a Use it or Lose it” pilot scheme.

- Speedwatch - Please contact Rhian Banham or the clerk for more information if you want to get involved as a volunteer.
- Litter and fly tipping continue to be a problem, and we are grateful to all the volunteers who assist in our litter pick days, and to those who report incidents online to Maidstone.
- Village Website - This has been recently redesigned by EIS, our website host. Please contact the parish clerk so we can post future events information for you.
- Facebook – This is now in place to provide news and regular updates on issues and events. Our clerk is responsible for what is posted to the site.
- Defibrillator – the school has advised that we cannot have access to a defibrillator there. We are therefore looking at having one here at the Village Hall and/or perhaps at The Harrow. This is still under discussion. The nearest one otherwise is at the funeral director’s premises in Grafty Green.
- Football- We are delighted that Headcorn boys’ teams are using our recreation ground for football, and we now also have a young girls team using the facilities.
- Trees & TPOs – The Jubilee Corner oaks date from George III’s Golden Jubilee in 1810 and are suffering from compression of the soil on the island. They are not in a good enough state to be given a TPO, but bollards have been installed to protect the soil from parked vehicles, and a mulch has been added to nourish the roots.
- Finances - For 2019/20, your parish council agreed to have a zero increase in the parish element of council tax to each resident. This equates to £52.30 per Band ‘D’ property.
- I would like to thank the other members of the parish council for their contribution and their hard work on the various projects they take on. We are all volunteers. Our Village Carols event here in the Village Hall on Sunday, 9 December was an enjoyable Christmas get-together. Our thanks go to Fiona, Rachel and Mary Ann for organising this successful event. We hope to repeat this.
- Finally, I would like to thank Helen for all that she does as Clerk.

Balance per bank statements as at 31st March 2019 £ 20,718

Less any unrepresented cheques at 31st March 2019

2109	HMRC	£	62
2113	Tree Cycle	£	216
2114	Mrs H Anderson	£	578
2115	HMRC	£	62

Net balances as at 31st March 2019 £ 19,801

The net balances reconcile to the cash book (receipts and payments account) for the year, as follows

Cash Book

Opening balance 1st April 2019 £ 22,430

Receipts in the year

Precept	£	20,262
Interest	£	7
Parish Services Scheme	£	1,871
Recreation Pitch Hire	£	300
VAT Payments	£	4,986
Grants Play Area/Parish Pump	£	12,000
	£	<u>39,426</u>

Less Payments in the year

Staff Salary	£	7,680
Admin Costs	£	324
Publication Printing/Advertisement	£	321
IT Services	£	35
Chairman's Allowance	£	50
Hall Hire & Subsistence	£	546
Subscriptions	£	583
Training	£	120
Finance & Insurance	£	1,410
Recreation Ground	£	1,842
Pavilion	£	864
Play Equipment	£	20,614
Car Park & Village Hall	£	1,464
Road Projects/Surveys	£	1,143
Extras & Miscellaneous	£	233
VAT Payments	£	4,827
	£	<u>42,055</u>

Closing balance per cash book as at 31 March 2019 £ 19,801

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

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

The exercise period for electors to inspect the accounts will be from Monday 17 June to Friday 26 July 2019. The requisite Public Notice and a copy of the return will be placed on the Parish Website www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk and on the village noticeboard nearer the time.

KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR SHELLINA PRENDERGAST

It is two years since I came to represent residents of Maidstone Rural East at Kent County Council – and it continues to be an honour and a privilege to represent one of the very best parts of our County.

Kent County Council (KCC) approached the start of yet another financial year facing an immense challenge in setting the budget. After producing savings of some £640 million over the last eight years, the Council has risen to the challenge of finding another £73 million to fund rising spending pressures during 2019/2020. In line with most other Councils across the country, KCC has raised council tax by 2.99%, plus the 2% specifically allocated for social care – Councillors very much regretted that this proved necessary, but budget consultations indicated that residents were mostly accepting of a rise that would be “ring-fenced” for protecting front line services for our increasing ageing population. The following are some examples of how the £988 million budget will be used to maintain, improve and enhance the services that will benefit our 1.5 million residents in Kent:

- Biggest ever investment in highways – from £70 million in 2017/2018 to £89 million in the current year and rising next year to £95.7 million. This is in addition to the £28 million recently received from the Department of Transport for highways improvements to mitigate against the impact of Brexit.
- Subsidised bus services – £6.2 million to ensure that many of those living in our most isolated rural communities have access to the services they need.
- Housing related support for the most vulnerable - £7.1 million
- £6.5 million on community services including community wardens, arts and culture, country parks
- Children in need of family support - £9.8 million
- Young Person’s Travel Pass - £8.1 million on this non-statutory service.

Brexit – as part of the Kent Resilience Forum, KCC is committed to preparing for the country’s anticipated withdrawal and extensive work has taken place to keep Kent moving and open for business. This includes working with Highways England to keep the M20 open in both directions, minimising disruption for local communities and implementing welfare plans for those who may be affected by delays. Extra Trading Standards Officers have been recruited to address the issue of illegal or unsafe goods entering the County. On resilience, KCC has been overhauling its business continuity plans, providing advice to other businesses and working to minimise disruptions on our schools, hospitals and vulnerable residents. KCC will continue to liaise with central government, fine tune our plans and keep our communities informed over the coming months.

As well as attending meetings of the Council, I am also a member of the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee, the Regulations Committee and the Corporate Parenting Panel – like all of us at KCC, I am very proud to be a corporate parent to Kent's looked after children and care leavers. Appointments to outside bodies include the Red Hill Trust – a registered charity offering support to children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The welfare of our children and young people is one of the Council's key priorities and my work as a Deputy Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education includes responsibilities for commissioning of school places, special educational needs and disability assessment and placement, youth and youth justice, Children in Care services, adolescent support and the fostering and adoption service.

During my time at KCC, I have worked with residents, parish councils/meetings and Helen Whately MP to address the pledges I made to you when elected, and these include:

Transport and Highways

- Speeding, rat running, volume of traffic and inconsiderate parking are a problem for all of us. I have worked with Kent Highways, the Police, Cabinet Members and our MP to improve highway safety not only in our rural villages but also the strategic road networks which impact on residents of Maidstone Rural East - most notably the A20, A249 and the A274.
- Lorry Park – I have worked closely with residents and parish councils on the speculated lorry park between J8-9 of the M20. Helen Whately MP and I have worked closely on this and are both in regular contact with Highways England. We both spoke at a recent and very well attended public meeting and hopefully were able to reassure concerned residents that we are doing everything possible to leave the decision makers in no doubt that the proposal in this area is completely unacceptable to our residents and would cause severe damage to the built and natural environment.
- Access for All – Over the last 12 months, I have worked with our MP, Headcorn parish council and the community to secure step free access to Headcorn station for some of our most vulnerable users. Although unsuccessful in the first round, we are all committed to launching a further bid for the soon to be announced mid-tier programme where accessibility can be delivered for under £1m – which Headcorn would undoubtedly qualify for.
- Rural Transport – Many of our rural parishes are poorly served by public transport and I have worked with commercial bus operators and KCC public transport officers to ensure that good levels of service are maintained where possible. I was particularly delighted, following some considerable lobbying on my part, when it was revealed earlier this year that the bus pilots launched in Kent would include enhanced services to many of the rural villages I represent. The pilot schemes are due to commence in June 2019 and will run for 12 months. I very much hope that the service will be popular and that increased usage will lead to a more permanent service.
- Many of our children are facing unacceptably long daily journeys to school and back – and I am in constant dialogue with bus operators on how these journeys can be shortened and to ensure our children have access to a high quality and reliable service to enable them to get to school on time.

Education

- The unprecedented population growth in Maidstone has put some significant pressure on early years settings and primary schools. I have worked with my Cabinet colleagues and Education Officers to ensure a sufficiency of places and was delighted that my work on the nursery school provision in Headcorn paid off – Juniors Nursery opened in January this year on a temporary two-year basis on the Headcorn primary school site – and I'm continuing with my efforts to secure a long-term solution. I am also working with other areas facing a similar shortfall – I firmly believe it is important to give our

children the best start in life and give their parents/carers the opportunity to fulfil work and other commitments.

- With primary schools, I continue to work with Cabinet colleagues, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, Maidstone Borough Council and our MP to ensure that every child has access to a good or outstanding school within proximity of their local area.

Planning and Infrastructure

- My well-established record in fighting decision makers on inappropriate development within our rural areas has continued at a pace. I am particularly concerned with housing developments where vital infrastructure such as schools, transport links and medical and community facilities have not been properly considered. I have worked very closely with Lenham Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Planning Group in ensuring that highways and education provision are sustainable for both current and future residents.

Communications

- Kent County Council is working with the Government's broadband agency, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) to improve access to superfast broadband services. To date, this work has already brought superfast broadband to over 134,000 homes and businesses, who would otherwise have been left with no, or slow broadband. This means that 95% of properties across Kent and Medway can now access a superfast broadband service of at least 24mbps. I am working with residents in many of our communities – Hucking, Hollingbourne and Ulcombe – to secure a better service and more information can be found on <https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/broadband/making-kent-quicker>

I attend as many of the local parish council meetings within my Division as I can – sometimes two in one evening – as well as the annual parish meetings. My most important role however is to help and support residents with their individual problems. The case work is varied - ranging from school appeals to care packages for our elderly residents, potholes to hedges etc – and it is always very rewarding to see positive outcomes. I am always happy to listen and help and can be contacted by either email or telephone – Shellina.Prendergast@kent.gov.uk or 07970 461160.

I am always very keen to support local community projects with my KCC Members Grant. Beneficiaries this past year include improvements to Filmer Hall in East Sutton, play equipment in Ulcombe and at Hollingbourne primary school, improved facilities at Headcorn Tennis Club, Five Acre Wood School, various highway schemes, Age UK Maidstone, Involve Kent, a youth project led by the Salvation Army and a memorial stone in Boughton Malherbe. I have several worthy projects in the pipeline for 2019/20 but please do let me know if there is anything within your community that I can help with.

BOROUGH COUNCILLORS KAREN CHAPPELL-TAY AND MARTIN ROUND

The last year has seen two elections for your members of Maidstone Borough Council. Firstly, Martin Round was re-elected as one of your Councillors in May 2018, and secondly, Karen Chappell-Tay was elected in a by-election in September 2018, when the previous member stood down.

This means that the Headcorn, Ulcombe, Grafty Green and East Sutton Ward now has two members who have lived here and even grew up here, for over fifty years, and have strong views on the importance of village life and continuity.

Since May 2018 there have been a number of changes at MBC. Firstly, and most importantly, last October a new and stronger Enforcement Policy for Planning Infringements was adopted. It will take time for the effects of this to show, but we are already seeing more Planning Enforcement issues being reported, and Notices being issued. In order not to prejudice the Council's case, we cannot discuss these in public, but if you do see any potential infringements, please report them immediately.

Secondly, we saw MBC issue a Judicial Review case against Kent County Council, over the use of Section 106 monies, to carry out a viability assessment for the Leeds/Langley bypass. Fortunately, this was resolved before the final showdown, but in my view, and the view of my fellow Ward Member Martin, this was a waste of public money on legal fees over what the Judge in the case described as a "disagreement over transport policy".

A review of how the committees work at MBC has concluded that we have too many and their purpose is not always clear. So, in the next year we are reducing the number by two and ensuring that ALL committees will in future be politically balanced, and the Urgency Committee will be scrapped.

Another key change is that as a result of pushing by the Conservative Group, MBC is now reviewing whether to hold elections once every four years, instead of on a rolling basis. This would save the Council £80,000 a year, and so I am very keen to see that passed.

The Council is currently led by a coalition of Lib-Dems and Independents, but the Conservatives are the largest group. 69% of rural seats are held by the Conservatives, but if we are outvoted, it is not always possible for us to pursue policies which are good for the villages. Every single member of staff at the Council that I have met is helpful, friendly, diligent and well-meaning, but if you don't live in a village, you don't always appreciate that the needs of a village can be different to those of a town.

Many residents write to me about Planning concerns, or fly-tipping. Fly-tipping is on the increase, and numerous incidents have been reported. Please continue to report these: MBC has a mobile team who can set up cameras at hotspots, and have successfully impounded vehicles, and even scrapped one, as a result.

On Planning, I cannot always help as much as I would like. The laws for Planning are not set by MBC but by Central Government, and as a result, sometimes we have to sign off a Planning Application with which we disagree: because if we reject it, and the Applicant wins on Appeal, not only do they get their permission, but MBC has to pay their costs as well. So, if you disagree with an application, I urge residents not just to write to me, or Martin, but to formally object on the Planning Portal, and use legal planning reasons. Likewise, although we cannot always prevent Planning Applications that we think are wrong, you can at least benefit. If your Parish has a Neighbourhood Plan in place, then the Parish will receive 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy, so at least there are financial compensations for the downsides.

I will finish my report by mentioning the Ward Member's Grant. Each Council Member has a grant of up to £1,000 to be made available to support community projects and activities. This year, Martin and I were able to grant £500 to each Ward. Ulcombe used theirs to contribute towards the renovation and installation of the old Parish Pump. Grafty Green used theirs to install some safety lighting in the passage past the King's Head. Headcorn are using theirs to pay for the renovation of the old wooden fingerpost at the beginning of Ulcombe Road, and East Sutton used theirs to contribute towards the cost of installing heat pumps to help heat the Filmer Hall. We invite each Parish to apply for the grant for this new

financial year again. This year we would like to encourage the Village Halls to apply, to support community activities.

Finally, I would like to thank both the Chair and Clerk of each Parish Council, for their support and help over the last six months. All Parish Councillors have been very helpful to us, and you all give up a considerable amount of your time and effort. I am very aware that without you all, our work would be considerably more difficult. So, thank you to you all, and I wish you all a successful and fruitful year of work ahead.

KENT COMMUNITY WARDEN DAWN RIACH-BROWN

I work for Kent County Council as a Community Warden. My role is to act as trusted friend, providing a visible, reassuring presence in the community. Listening to and working with residents and partnership agencies to resolve community issues and improve quality of life. If I can't solve a problem directly my role is to refer people to the appropriate agencies that can help. I work to reduce social isolation and assist vulnerable people.

This year I have had 6 priorities: Domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour, safeguarding vulnerable people, serious & organised crime, preventing extremism and hate crime, substance misuse and road safety.

Acting as the 'eyes and ears' for local residents we tackle low level crime and antisocial behaviour. We are accredited to Kent Police. Part of our role includes offering advice on home security and property marking.

As well as working closely with local Parish Council, Maidstone Borough and Tunbridge & Malling Councils I also work with other professional authorities to ensure residents are able to access the support they need. For example: Kent Fire & Rescue Service, Kent Trading Standards, Schools, Environmental Protection, Social Services and the NHS.

The aim is to enable residents to take a proactive approach to work together to build safer and strong communities and improve the quality of life for vulnerable residents.

Our work with GP's and the NHS has grown significantly over the past couple of years. Working closely with Maidstone Borough Council on an initiative called 'Helping you home' we have been able to give direct support to residents who have been in hospitals by ensuring that they have practical support to enable them to come home. Sometimes this has involved sourcing beds, occupational therapy equipment, food parcels, helping with debt issues, helping to complete benefit forms, and other service needs that need to be met so the resident can be discharged.

As well as being first aiders, Community Wardens are now trained Mental Health First Aiders and so we have been able to use our skills and knowledge to give direct support when it is required to enable those who have mental health conditions to live safely and independently. By direct intervention we can help to stop matters escalating to crisis point.

We also help to tackle social isolation with the help of voluntary agencies and local charities. During the last year I have been supporting residents with dementia; hoarding; food parcels, self-neglect and welfare visits, some requiring hospital treatment.

We are also KCC Incident Liaison Officers working closely with the Kent Resilience Team in times of emergency. We will have a role to play across the county with any identified issues relating to Brexit. In the past I was involved in assisting residents during the flooding in Yalding and Boughton Monchelsea and distributing food and water during operation stack (a few years ago) and last year distributing water in areas with burst water mains shortly after the snow.

Community Wardens continue to work closely with Trading Standards to help educate and support residents affected by various Scams, we are also regularly asked to give talks on a range of subjects, including Road Safety, Anti Bullying, Think Jessica, Internet Awareness, Beat the Bogus Caller and Stop the Scammers.

Volunteer Support Warden

Do you like meeting new people, want to learn new skills and provide valuable support to local residents? Kent County Council, working in conjunction with the Kent Association of Local Councils have introduced an exciting new Volunteer Support Warden role in selected areas in Maidstone. Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton currently have vacancies.

The role will be challenging but rewarding and you'll be making a real difference to local communities. For more information and to find out which areas this role is being launched contact Community Wardens on 03000 413455 or visit www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens.

KENT POLICE – PCSO JOHN BOYD

Ulcombe has maintained a fairly low level of crime during the past year.

Crime levels throughout the year have their peaks and troughs but I am pleased to say that we are sustaining the reduced level of crime overall that we have benefited from over the past few years. This thankfully has been possible through the support of the community and the Parish Council.

We have dealt with a number of issues throughout the year, which have included the following:

- Provide a visible presence in my wards and surrounding areas.
- Follow ups on the victims of burglaries/breaks to give crime prevention advice and information booklets.
- Helping neighbours to try to sort out their disputes, this on most occasions means linking in with the housing associations where applicable.
- Linking in with the Kent County Council Wardens and other agencies to help out with many problems that arise.
- Speed enforcement checks and speed monitoring checks throughout the area.
- Patrols of outlying areas to deter and stop vehicles known for scrap metal thefts. This has been backed up with pre-arranged Policing Operations County wide involving numerous authorities and scrap yard inspections.

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

As with most areas in life the police have changing priorities and budgets.

I am pleased to say that my area hasn't changed this last year which continues to be the Headcorn ward with Lenham and Harrietsham.

I have and will continue to provide the visible presence and a first-class service that Kent Police is renowned for.

Anyone wishing to contact me about any issues or crime prevention advice can call the non-emergency Police number 101.

Thank you for your continued support in making Ulcombe safe.

HEADCORN FOOTBALL CLUB – KIERAN KILLEEN

Under 16's

We have now played all our home games for this season (10 league 0 Cup). Another season of progress. We are all but mathematically certain of finishing as runners up, after just being pipped to the league title. Headcorn have been complimented widely and regularly on their style of play and their sporting attitude. The praise has come from opposition managers, fans, referees and league officials. That's some consolation, but as I'm sure those of you who have played competitive sport understand, I would trade some of that niceness for the title!!

The pitch has held up well again and drawn its own compliments from visiting teams. We had to postpone only one game at Ulcombe and the fact that we have 3 outstanding away fixtures left, gives you some idea of how good that is in comparison to other venues.

We had 17 boys in the squad this year. That's 17 young men getting out in the fresh air and running themselves ragged every Saturday. Learning discipline and teamwork and how to be magnanimous in victory (quite often) and gracious in defeat (occasionally)!!

Pending a check on the compatibility of the fixings, we have a pair of nearly new nets that will be left in the changing rooms, as time and our lethal front men are taking their toll on the existing nets. We are also applying to the league for a grant to buy topsoil to build up levels around the goal lines (assuming we have permission to do so?) and if this application fails, I will make the case to our treasurer to fund it.

There is some debate whether the league will run for our age group next year. We hope so, but in any respect the club propose to continue to use the facilities you kindly offer us, for competitive games (as well as the girl's team) if you are in agreement.

Also, on behalf of the coaches, the players, the parents and our opposition, I would like to say thank you for ensuring we have a safe and good quality pitch available week in week out. If this is to be our last season, there will be nothing but fond memories in this group of players' minds about their residency at Ulcombe.

ULCOMBE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL– EMMA HICKLING (EXECUTIVE HEAD) AND EMMA MASTERS (HEAD TEACHER)

There is much to report from the school, following a busy few months. I shall talk about some of the highlights.

Whole School Home Project - Over the past few terms the whole school has been involved in a project entitled 'Home'. This has been an exciting and insightful opportunity for every child to share experiences and/or feelings of what home means to them. The aim of the project is to have a book published displaying all of the written work. I am currently in discussion with a publisher to make this a reality.

Residential trip, daytrips, sports day and other summer events - Each year we take the KULB federation children in years 5/6 on a residential trip for three days to an educational centre. This year we took them to Swattenden. The children enjoyed climbing walls, zip wires, 3G swings, campfires and other outward bound activities. The infants at Ulcombe are taken on an annual farm trip to the Rare Breeds centre which they thoroughly enjoy. This year the PTA took the whole school on a trip to Go Ape at Leeds Castle where children and adults enjoyed a very enjoyable morning. Various year groups across the school have taken part in a variety of trips and workshops including the Victorians and a nature hunt – more are planned for the summer terms.

Working across KULB - Ulcombe have been taking part in the KULB cup which is an inter-schools sports incentive set up throughout the federation. Ulcombe have enjoyed success as first place winners and runners up in a variety of events including cross-country and speed stacking. Ulcombe have also taken part in joint federation visits to Leeds castle. Each year group has been able to visit and take part in workshops.

Lottery Funding - Ulcombe have secured lottery funding to enhance and improve the wildlife provision around the school. This will include interactive bird and bat boxes, minibeast habitats, herbaceous borders and a sensory prayer garden. The work will start later this year and will result in a partnership between the school and the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership. We will be taking groups of children on field trips and enjoying structured nature lessons from professionals in this field.

Upgrade to outside learning area - The outside learning area will be upgraded this term to include an interactive playground designed to enhance learning in all curriculum areas. We will also be taking delivery and installation of some outside gym equipment to promote healthy living and learning about ourselves through science.

Future of KULB - The future of the KULB federation is looking particularly exciting as we can announce that we are hoping to federate with Platts Heath Primary School. The documentation is currently out for consultation. Following a successful consultation period this next step in the KULB federation journey will begin in September. The newly formed federation will be called ASPIRE.

We look forward to another busy and successful year ahead.

ULCOMBE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL – RHIAN BANHAM AND JOHN GOODE

The Church building and closed burial ground and grave yard:-

Church Fabric - This year in May, we had our five yearly quinquennial report. This has highlighted a number of issues, which will need to be addressed over the next few years. General maintenance works to the stonework and roof will cost approximately £20,000. This has been organised and will take place over the next few months. More concerning is the repair and restoration of the north facing windows and the St Leger stained glassed window. It is anticipated this will cost about £150,000.

Throughout 2018/19 there have been many additions to the church. In July we had a new carpet fitted. In January the new glass door was fitted, this was paid for by generous grants including a £1,000 grant from KCC organised through our local borough councillor and the generous contribution from FASU. An external disabled ramp was fitted in March and two further ramps will be fitted shortly to improve disabled access to the church. In addition, the external flood lights have been replaced and repaired. The cost of their running (for a couple of hours every night) has been met by a donation from the Parish Council, which we are very grateful for and wish to formally offer our thanks.

Closed church yard and graveyard

The closed church yard surrounding the church is the responsibility of MBC Parks department and is always well maintained. The cemetery which is located to the rear of the church, is the responsibility of Ulcombe PCC. The community group supervised by Kent Probation Service continue to work for us and for which we are grateful.

The Church Community

Worship – There has been no change to the current worship offered, that being, Holy Communion (twice a month), morning worship and a family communion service. However, there have been more additional Taize services run by John Goode.

This September will see the retirement of the Rev Mille Hart. She will be sorely missed by the benefice and we want to wish her the best of luck for the future and for her commitment to Ulcombe.

We are pleased to continue to welcome new worshippers to our congregation and we now have two regular organists who play for us, which is very much appreciated by the congregation.

Church Activities / Community Events

We have held several events this year:

- **April** Plants and pancakes sale.
- **June** African Tea Party.
- **September** Harvest Supper.
- **November** The very successful Remembrance Day, BBQ and singalong by the bonfire. This was paid for by the donations of the church's immediate neighbours.
- **December** The introduction of the monthly lunch and indoor games afternoons. This is paid for by the church and hopes to provide a regular community event especially for those living alone.

Charitable giving.

This church, together with the other 3 churches in the Len Valley Benefice, have continued to support the following charities:

Fields for Life – who work to keep girls in education and provide them a better way of life in Africa.

Maidstone Christian Aid -who support the homeless and those living in poverty in the local area. Both by regular donations and the reverse advent calendar.

The British Legion – giving support to ex-servicemen.

FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS', ULCOMBE – MOLLY POULTER

The Friends of All Saints, Ulcombe (FASU) continues to receive welcome and enthusiastic support from the villagers and from people with connections to the village.

In 2018 we had three very happy events – a very amusing concert by the Good Gnus in March, a wonderful concert by Lyra from St Petersburg in May, and a Garden Party for the Friends at the Old Dairy in August. We had planned a Christmas Market in December but found there were many similar events at the same time in the villages around so decided to postpone it and have a Summer Fair instead.

We gave £2,640.17 to the church last year. The most significant donation was for the insurance of the church. As our main objective is to preserve and enhance the building, we felt that paying for the insurance was part of our commitment. We hope to do this annually. We also gave £500 towards repairing and installing the floodlighting. I am sure you will be happy with our decision.

In this New Year the Friends are going to contribute to the new glass door. Most of the work is already completed. We do not yet know the precise cost but anticipate our contribution will be in the region of £6,000. The rest is being covered by grants from charitable trusts.

This year the Friends will be organising three events. The first was a Burns Night on Saturday the 9th of February at 7 pm in the village hall. It was a fun evening with the true Burns Night spirit. We were welcomed by a talented piper who later piped in the haggis. We all had champagne and a draught of whisky, haggis, neeps and tatties, Scottish tablet and coffee. During the evening there were traditional speeches, singing and Scottish dancing. Much of the evening was organised by our Treasurer and his wife Fiona who also did the calling for the dancing.

Our second event will be the Summer Fair on Saturday the 8th of June in the church. We already have a number of stalls booked and look forward To more bookings. If you are interested in having a stall (£10), contact our Secretary, Bridget Samuelson (01622 890912). We are planning to make it a real fair with other activities going on round the church.

Our final event will be the return of the UK Brass Band from Sittingbourne on Saturday 5th October in the church at 2.30 pm. The Band was very popular when it came two years ago and people requested a return visit. The concert will be accompanied by a cream tea – also popular!

Our thanks go to the many in the village who have supported The Friends in the past year.

VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE – KAREN CHAPPELL-TAY (CHAIRMAN)

The last year has been a good year for our Village Hall, with a lot of successful fund-raising, some new committee members joining, and more maintenance being carried out on the Hall. There have also been quite a few changes for the administrative side of the Village Hall, and we hope to make more in the future.

Firstly, there were a lot of changes to the Committee. We were fortunate to have several new members join: Tracey Watton, Sarah Jackson, Wendy and Karen Chappell-Tay all joined the Committee as new members over the last year, and we are delighted to have them all. As we had been without a Chair since May, we were also pleased to be able to elect Karen as our new Chair. Sadly, the one real low in the whole year was the loss of John Ware, who died in March. He had been an incredibly valuable member of the Committee, and had given up a huge amount of his time to carry out maintenance, assess work, and in general contribute wherever and whenever he could, and he is missed enormously by all of us.

On a more positive note, the drama club that he helped found is starting up again, and there are plans to put on a new production during the next year, so do look out for the notices.

We held two fund-raising quiz nights, each of which raised over £800, and were full of enthusiastic competitors. We were also fortunate enough to receive a grant of £1,000 from the Parish Council which was much appreciated. In addition, we also had two Working Days, in which members of the Committee found time to either carry out essential maintenance, re-arrange storage, or help to do a bit of gardening.

There is also the continued contribution by our members individually, whether it is our Treasurer, Debbie Boland, constantly monitoring our oil supplies, Simon Odam putting up shelves or fixing lights, or Christina Cox wrestling with insurance companies.

Over the last year, numerous groups have used the Hall for a whole range of community activities. The Ulcombe History Society, Ulcombe Badminton Club, Ulcombe Table Tennis Club, the Crafts group, and two separate dance clubs held regular meetings here. We have also had bookings from such diverse groups as the Maidstone Conservatives Group and even a group of visitors from Germany!

Our plans for the next year include going online, with our own Facebook page to improve publicity for the Hall, hopefully repainting the Hall and putting in new curtains, and looking at new equipment for the kitchen. So, in summary, we have had a successful year and hope to continue that in the next.

FRIENDSHIP CLUB – PAT SMITH (CHAIRMAN)

As we come to the end of my first year as chairperson of the Ulcombe Friendship Club in its new format, I feel that our growing membership has very much enjoyed the past year.

We thank Pat Davis again for her continued kindness in allowing us to use her home for our meetings when we are not out enjoying ourselves elsewhere.

Throughout the year we have been on trips to Dover picnicing on the cliffs and visiting Brogdale Farm at Faversham where we enjoyed a trailer ride through the orchards and then lunch. A visit to Melanie Ford's to see the farm animals and back again in July to Melanie's for a bar-b-q .The weather was

wonderful and nobody was in a hurry to leave. We also had a tasty cream tea at Mary Miekles home all supplied and cooked by Fiona and John. Delicious!

We have had games afternoons and demonstrations at Pats house, with a wonderful afternoon there in December with mulled wine and mince pies accompanied by Fiona playing her organ and everyone singing carols. Such a joyous Christmas afternoon.

We now look forward to another busy year, if anyone would like to join us please contact Pat Davis or Melanie Ford phone numbers on the back of the Ulcombe newsletter.

HISTORY SOCIETY – MOLLY POULTER (CHAIRMAN)

The year ended with a very sad event – the death of John Ware who has been one of the main stays of the History Society since its inception. Formally he was Membership Secretary, but he also did the work of the Secretary as no one offered to take on that role. He and his wife Leila were responsible for producing all the posters and the art work for our History Society Programme. And he did many more things for the Society. He was a warm and caring man and coped with his terminal illness with great courage. He will be greatly missed.

We also remember Derrick Martin and David Easton who died during the year and were faithful members of the society.

Sadness aside, we have had an interesting year. Our two outings – to Greenwich and to Elham –were both very interesting and successful. The Greenwich outing involved visits to the Greenwich Observatory, the Maritime Museum and the Cutty Sark, and allowed time for a leisurely lunch. The visit to Elham was an evening visit and the weather was dry and balmy. After a most interesting tour, led by a local historian, we all met for dinner in the local pub in Elham's high street.

We had planned a weekend away on the continent, but there were so many obstacles to what we had planned that eventually we cancelled it.

During the year, we had eight talks – one by our own Treasurer, John Moore, about his educational contacts with Indian schools, and a talk by Simon Odam, a local resident, on the little known St Kilda Archipelago.

Other talks were on a Schoolgirl's War, Woolwich Women at War, Bad King John, from Ragstone to Riches, Printing in Renaissance Venice, Wandering in Flanders Field, and the Women of the First Millennium – all of which were enjoyable.

The programme meant that we had an event every month except August, which of course meant that we kept regularly in touch. But this has implications for finance as speakers cost an increasing amount of money. I think we will be discussing whether we want this to continue. It would mean putting up the subscription to cover the cost.

Finally, I would like to pass on my and your thanks to a great committee who have worked hard to make the History Society successful.

ULCOMBE VILLAGE NEWSLETTER – RACHEL ROBINSON (EDITOR)

It has been a year of change at the Ulcombe Village Newsletter (UVN). Since last year's update we have welcomed Bridget Samuelson and Richard Pilborough to the newsletter. Bridget to assist with printing and Richard took over the treasurer role from John Ware in late 2018. As you know John passed away at the beginning of the year and has left a large hole in the newsletter team. We miss him greatly.

UVN circulation has remained static at around 300 covering the majority of the village. The annual subs have remained frozen at £3 a year and we continue to generate reasonable income via advertising. The ethos of the UVN remains as a local, apolitical newsletter, with articles provided by the local community for the local community. The newsletter only exists in paper form and at present there are no plans to move to an online platform.

This year the newsletter was grateful to receive a generous donation of £100 from a Mr R. J. Town who lived in Ulcombe in the 1950s & 60s and are currently in discussions as to the best use of this money.

Printing is still undertaken, by Leila Ware & Bridget Samuelson, at the school during term time and we would like to thank the school for accommodating us and letting us monopolise their printing facilities for one afternoon each month. Outside of term-time Charles Tassell has continued to make his printing facilities available to the newsletter. We would like to thank him for his help and tremendous flexibility, particularly at the beginning of 2019 which proved to be a very difficult time personally for many members of the newsletter team. There is at least one month where there simply may not have been a newsletter without him. We are incredibly grateful.

As you know the newsletter is fully reliant on volunteers who give up their time on a regular basis and as editor I would like to pass on my personal thanks to Leila & John Ware, Richard Pilborough, Mimi Humphrey, Bridget Samuelson and of course all our distributors who brave the weather and the potholed lanes to get the newsletter out each month.

Finally, I would like to thank the community, particularly our regular contributors, for providing the articles for the newsletter. Over the last twelve months we, as a committee, have tried to improve the content of the newsletter and we hope this has been noticed and appreciated by our subscribers. We have new regular columns from Rowena Hawtin – The Wine Lady, Leeds Castle, more regular updates from Ulcombe Primary School and have been able to leverage some of the columns from the *Malherbe Monthly*. We have also launched a book review column where the content is provided by a different member of the village each month, we are grateful to those who have already taken the time to contribute to this column and we hope other members of the village will volunteer to enable us to keep the column going. In addition to these new columns we continue our regular contributions from the Parish Council, the Village Hall, the Len Valley Benefice, Headcorn Health Walks and the excellent music column from Brian Hardy and occasional articles for many other groups within the community. Without these individuals and groups taking the time to write each month the newsletter would not exist.

As always if you have suggestions on content or improvements for the newsletter, or perhaps would like to write a column(!) do not hesitate to get in touch. Without the ongoing support of the village UVN would be a thin publication indeed and we hope that the village continue to find it a useful and enjoyable.

BALLROOM DANCING CLUB – ROD DAVIS

The dance group continues to meet on a Wednesday and we always welcome new members.

BADMINTON CLUB – ALAN BURCH

The Ulcombe Badminton Club plays in the Village Hall on most Friday evenings from 8pm-11pm from October to May. We don't play during the summer months because it gets too warm in the hall and members tend to be busy doing more exciting things, like going on holiday.

Unfortunately, the club has lost some regular players over the past couple of years but on the positive side has managed to attract some new players. We currently have 9 members playing regularly and the average weekly attendance is perhaps 7 or 8. This is just about perfect because there is, of course, only one badminton court in the hall and therefore only 4 people can play at a time. However, there are times when attendance falls to only 5 or 6 due to other commitments so we could do with another couple of energetic players to increase overall numbers. For information, most of the members live in the village and the others have many years of association with the village.

We don't play in any league, we are a group of people playing what I call 'social' badminton for the exercise, the conversation, a bit of fun and the odd glass of wine or two – which doesn't really help to improve the playing however!

Because of the number of members and the single court, we don't really have the ability to teach people how to play but if there is any interest in coming along then please give me a call.

THE ART CLASS

Established 8 years ago, The Art Class continues to offer structured and informative courses at Ulcombe Village Hall. We offer a range of courses for all levels of experience, each covering a variety of mediums including pencil, watercolour, pastel and acrylic. With the guidance of our professional tutor and step by step tuition, we ensure each student's artistic skills are developed to their individual potential.

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

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

For more information please contact: theartclass@outlook.com

ULCOMBE TABLE TENNIS CLUB – LEON HOLMES

Currently we only have 4 regular members. Unfortunately, if we do not increase the attendee numbers over the summer we will need stop as we will not be able to cover costs. So, a quick appeal, if you are interested in a fun social evening from 8pm on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Tuesdays of the month then come along. You don't need to have played before, all equipment is provided and the cost is normally £4.