



Ulcombe Annual Parish Report 2010/11

*Produced by
Ulcombe Parish Council*

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www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk

Welcome to our fourth Annual Parish Report. We hope that you enjoy reading the reports which have kindly been submitted by our village community groups and others who work on behalf of the parish. These reports were originally presented at the Annual Parish Council meeting held earlier this year on 14th April. It is heartening to read of the great work which is being carried out by so many volunteers to keep the community spirit alive in Ulcombe and make our village a better place in which to live. Ulcombe has a total population of about 850 residents. Many people live in the outlying areas of the parish (Ulcombe is one of the largest geographically) but it is possible for everyone to feel a part of the place by joining in with the village activities. Please do let the organisers of the various groups know if you would like to participate. If you cannot find their contact number direct – many are listed in the Village Newsletter – then come via the parish clerk. If you do not already do so, we thoroughly recommend that you subscribe to the Ulcombe Newsletter. Please contact Philip Easton on 01622 890345. This is the very best way of keeping in touch with what is happening in our village.

Ulcombe Parish Council Finance Report 2010/11

Summary of receipts	£	Summary of payments	£
opening reserves	15,213.00	office and staff costs	4,153.00
brought forward from the previous year		insurance	1,933.00
precept	8,363.00	audit	700.00
reserve account interest	3.00	hire of hall for meetings	503.00
concurrent functions grant	6,401.00	association membership	327.00
MBC/KCC grants for safety surface	946.00	publications	25.00
insurance claim for safety surface	1,401.00	Annual Report	141.00
KCC grant for play area	1,041.00	recreation ground/car park pavilion	5,236.00
security lighting		grants to organisations	735.00
VAT recovered for 2009/10	261.00	speedwatch	180.00
VAT recovered for 2010/11	912.00	broadband grants	3,948.00
		parish pump restoration	118.00
		VAT paid in 2009/10	1,053.00
Total income	34,541.00	Total payments	19,775.00
Closing balance	14,766.00		

Notes:

- i) For more detailed information please refer to the document entitled *Ulcombe Parish Council Receipts and Payments 2010/11* which can be viewed on the parish council website or contact the clerk for a paper or electronic copy.
- ii) Any queries about the accounts should be referred to the parish clerk.

Parish Council useful information

Members

Geoff Beale (Chairman): telephone 842823
Trevor Sharp (Vice Chairman)
Joyce Braggs
Peter Titchener
John Watton
Hazel Bingham
Jim Noble
Bridget Samuelson (Parish Clerk):
telephone 890912, email:
bridget.sam@thurstonhelis.co.uk

Meetings

Our monthly meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month, starting at 7.15pm. The public and press are welcome to attend but the meeting will be closed for the duration of any confidential items. Sometimes we have to hold additional (extraordinary) meetings to discuss planning, finance or other urgent matters where a deadline needs to be met. Notice of all meetings and agendas is published on the noticeboard and also on the parish website: www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk

The parish council is consulted on all planning applications for Ulcombe which have been submitted to Maidstone Borough Council. Please check with the clerk when an application is due to be discussed if you wish to be in attendance. A site visit will usually be carried out beforehand to help the parish council to assess the plans. If you submit comments relating to a planning application to MBC and want the parish council to take them into account too, please forward a copy to the parish clerk.

Website

Visit our website for details of:

- Minutes and agendas
- Reports and procedures
- Budgets
- Parish projects
- Village contacts
- Trading standards information
- MBC information for households (please access all of the above information via "Site Pages")

Ulcombe Parish Council Chairman's Report

Meetings

The Parish Council met in full session on 20 occasions during the last 12 months. Attendance has been good and all meetings have been quorate. Individual members have represented the council on a similar number of occasions such as Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) Planning Committee, the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Maidstone Branch Committee, the South East Maidstone Rural Transport Group, the Joint Parishes Group and the Police/Parish Forum. There has also been an increasing number of training sessions run by MBC and KALC but these were selectively attended depending on their relevance. Similarly the large number of consultation documents received has made it necessary to restrict our responses. We only have 7 members on the council and we all have a life to lead!

Crime

The number of crimes reported in the parish has continued to be small but 3 incidences at the recreation ground were of concern and involved considerable expense from the repairs required and the installation of additional security equipment. The fire at the playground junior swings was mindless vandalism but the burned out rubber crumb safety surface was replaced under our insurance policy. The theft of heating oil, twice, from the village hall's tank was a sign of the times as the price of oil has steadily risen. Movement-activated flood lighting fixed to the building has been installed recently. These works have been funded with the assistance of our KCC and MBC members.

Highways

Regrettably traffic calming measures to deter HGVs from using Chegworth Road have not been achieved due to financial constraints at Kent Highways plus the fact that there have only been 3 personal injury crashes reported on the road in the last 3 years. KCC is developing a county-wide

HGV route plan but if and when it will be completed is not known. Similarly the proposed speed limit review has been suspended due to financial cutbacks. We are hopeful that the white 'gateways' and coloured warning safety surfaces agreed for installation at the locations of the 3 speed limit signs at the entrance to the village can still be implemented. The Parish Council reports monthly to Kent Highways on potholes, road drainage, footpaths, damaged road signs and problems from overgrown vegetation interfering with sightlines.

Planning

The Parish Council has been consulted on 12 planning applications over the past year. There is concern over changes to the status and role of parish councils in relation to planning decisions. These changes, proposed by the Government to stimulate development, and apparently used by MBC to save money by reducing the number of meetings of the planning committee and expenditure on appeal inquiries, appear to give sway to the planning officer's recommendation based solely on policy.

The Parish Council's view based on local knowledge will be irrelevant and the applicant, objectors, supporters as well as the Parish Council will have no means of substantiating their views in front of the committee. Another matter of concern is the regularity of retrospective applications gaining approval, evidenced by the increasing number of travellers living on the outskirts of the community. MP Hugh Robertson is taking up the matter with the Secretary of State for Communities Eric Pickles.

Finance

In the past year the Parish Council has been able to carry out the intended capital projects and maintenance responsibilities with the funding from MBC, including the parish precept and concurrent functions, plus some assistance from our KCC and MBC members' devolved budgets. For the current year substantial cuts have been made by MBC in the concurrent functions

and members' devolved budgets. The Parish Council has therefore raised the parish precept by 10% to reduce the shortfall in the Parish Council's income for the current year but it will still be substantially less than it was in 2009-10. There is a reserve available for any unforeseen essential expenditure and we have achieved some economies by seeking competitive tenders for the contracts to mow the recreation ground and installation of the new security systems. However the reduction in our income does mean that will not be possible to implement any projects in the wish list but agreed grants to village organisations will be met.

Conclusion

The year ahead will be difficult and there won't be anything exciting that we can do to improve life in the village. I fear that we shall be spending our time ensuring that we are complying with all the required procedures and devising policies for every eventuality. This reminds me of the wonderful episode of *Yes Minister* on television when Secretary of State for Health Hacker was being shown around a brand new hospital. When he remarked that he couldn't see any patients Sir Humphrey the senior civil servant of the department gave assurance that the hospital was running perfectly. It was clean, in budget, all boxes were ticked, and there were no complaints.

Finally I wish to thank on behalf of the Parish Council our MP Hugh Robertson, County Councillor Jenny Whittle and our Borough Councillors Jenny Gibson and Richard Thick for their continued advice, support and funds when we have needed them. And of course we thank Bridget who has had to cope with a lot of pressure recently in making sure that we are compliant with all the procedures. Apparently the clerk bears responsibility for everything we do and we ought to be paying her a lot more for keeping us straight.

GEOFF BEALE
CHAIRMAN ULCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

Kent County Council Member's Report

A very tough budget but some good news... KCC had a 7 hour budget meeting in February 2011 when Members agreed to £95m of savings from a £950m net revenue budget (excluding schools). I am very pleased to say that despite having to achieve massive savings of 10 per cent, we have managed for 2011-12 to:

- Freeze the KCC element of your Council Tax bill
- Protect the Highways maintenance budget (potholes etc)
- Maintain the eligibility criteria for older people accessing vital social care services to "moderate". KCC is now one of only 26 out of 148 councils that now fund social care for older people in "moderate" need. Other councils have raised the threshold to "critical" only following central government funding cuts.
- Keep open all 97 Children's Centres in Kent, whilst many other councils are consulting on closing centres to save funding. Expectant parents and parents of under-5s in Ulcombe and surrounding parishes will now benefit from the new Children's Centre provision at Headcorn Village Hall. The Meadow Children's Centre is now running two sessions a week in Headcorn Village Hall: Wednesdays 2-4 alongside the Baby Clinic and also a stay and play session 1-3 on a Thursday. For more details please contact 01622 699900.
- Protect the Kent Freedom Pass, enabling 11-16 year olds in Kent attending Kent schools to free bus travel. We have doubled the administrative charge from £50 to £100 in order to continue with the scheme, but this still represents an annual saving for parents for each child using the Freedom Pass of around £300. Children and young people can use this pass during evenings, weekends and during school holidays as well as during the school run.
- Protect my Member Community Grant of £10,000 and Member Highway Fund of £25,000 so that I can continue to support local schemes in my Division. In the last year I have committed funding for security lighting for the play area, refurbished toilet

provision at the Village Hall and enhanced village gateway signage at the three main entry points to the village (which will be installed later this year). If you would like further information on either fund and how you think it can be used to benefit the community, please contact me.

We will achieve the £95m savings through using our reserves, generating income by selling services to other councils and agencies and redesigning our current services so we achieve the very best value for money. 1500 posts at KCC will also be going over the next four years and £20m saved from staff benefits. There will obviously be some things that we will not be able to fund; for example, traffic calming schemes will not be financially supported unless there is a real need demonstrated by a particularly high record of personal accidents.

Highways

KCC has undertaken some footway patching recently in The Street, Ulcombe and some larger footway patching will be done later in the way to address the deteriorating footway. Highways inspectors have deemed the area safe at present as safety critical defects have now been dealt with. A request to clear road gullies near Street Field has been submitted to Kent Highways' Drainage Team and I will be on the case to get this done on a regular basis.

A new "Find and Fix" contract started on 18 April under which a private company, Mason Ltd, will undertake high quality repairs on potholes in the parish. This follows on from last Summer's exercise when a Detling-based company, Steadline, did some very good repairs around the borough. Safety critical defects on Eastwood Road and Headcorn Road will be passed to Mason Ltd to repair. Due to the condition of Headcorn Road, it is being inspected on a more frequent basis to ensure the area is kept safe. I am pressing Kent Highway to undertake more substantial and permanent repairs. In the meantime, KCC's road maintenance contractor, Ringway, will do patching on this road to ensure it is safe for road users.

Ulcombe CEP School

I met recently with Headteacher Vince Hampton and Chairman of Governors, Terry Shortland, to discuss how we can best deliver the library and refurbished reception area project that will benefit the children and lead to continued improvement in educational attainment at the school. This work is ongoing and I will continue to liaise with the school and KCC Property officers to take this forward.

Gypsy and Traveller sites

A key concern for many residents has been the growth of unauthorised gypsy and traveller developments, especially in Ulcombe and Headcorn. I have met with residents, Parish and Borough Councillors and Borough planners to discuss issues relating to enforcement and accessing government funding to purchase publicly managed sites that would provide gypsy and traveller pitches and thus stop "planning by appeal" as is often currently the case. I will continue with this work over the coming months. I also spoke at the Public Inquiry on the Meadows site development in Headcorn in November 2010.

Kent International Gateway

I was delighted that on 5 August 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government rejected AXA's proposals to build a massive freight interchange and warehousing over a beautiful 250 hectare site north of Bearsted. I worked particularly closely with the Stop KIG group, Hugh Robertson MP and Members and officers across KCC and MBC and our joint efforts paid off. I am now working with both authorities to prepare an application to extend the Kent Downs AONB to include much or part of this land. This process could be complex and protracted, so in the meantime MBC will offer special protection to this land in their Local Development Framework through a specific statement that they do not wish to see any development on it.

Maternity Matters

On 23 December 2010, the Secretary of State for Health announced his

Ulcombe Village Hall

This year has been a very busy year for the village hall committee. We started the year with a fabulously healthy bank balance and we have, we think, and I hope you agree, spent it very well.

We have had new windows and doors installed along with a new combi boiler system with new and more efficient radiators. This has made a great difference to the warmth of the hall and we now have a thermostat that we pre-set to make the hall comfortable for all our users.

We have renovated the loos. Switching the ladies with the gents and thus being able to now have a larger ladies with three stalls, and a more practical gents. We have also added a disabled toilet, which has been needed for some time.

In addition to these improvements we have had WiFi installed, bringing the hall right up to date.

In addition to our regular users who are, Ulcombe Pre-school, the Friendship Club, two dance groups, Keep Fit, badminton club, the drama group, Ulcombe History Society, the stitching club, and the parish council, we have hosted the drama group's exciting Murder Mystery, the annual MacMillan coffee morning and two quiz nights.

This is of course in addition to the hall being used for private functions and social events.

Unfortunately we had to postpone our quiz in April but this has been rescheduled for May 14th (tickets are still available).

We are planning a village garage sale in June and hopefully a bingo evening, possibly joining forces with the primary school which will enable the children of the village to also be involved with an event at the village hall.

Unfortunately we have also had a theft at the village hall. In November our oil was stolen from the tank, we believe a van pulled up in the road along side the tank and the thieves siphoned the oil from the top 'vent' cap. We have undertaken increased security measures and have; we hope, made it far harder to access and steal from.

And finally, we will be hosting a 'street party' on April 29th, organised by Lorna McCreery to celebrate the upcoming royal wedding.

We do hope that the new improved village hall continues to be an asset to the village and we can always accommodate more bookings. Thank you.

MARIA REVELL CHAIRMAN
VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE

Ulcombe Village Newsletter

Introducing the accounts for 2009 (see below) in which there was a very modest profit of £67.65, the Treasurer noted that the principle of keeping the cost of subscriptions as low as possible meant that there was no excess that could be used to support village activities or functions.

He questioned whether the contents of the News might be regarded as purely functional and a bit dull and might be enlivened by stories or articles of local interest, but the meeting indicated general approval of the present content, though it was suggested that the subscription could be raised. Also that any archive material, photographs etc. would be welcome to fill any blank page.

The present lease on the photocopier machine will run out on 14th September and negotiations are in hand to share the school machine.

Expenses

Postage	47.16
Paper	243.76
Lease of photocopier	820.58
Supply of toner and maintenance of copier	649.65
<i>Income</i>	
Subscriptions	803.90
Advertising	825.00
Copying of flyers, at cost	199.90

PHILIP EASTON, TREASURER

◀ decision to centralise consultant-led maternity services at the new PFI Pembury Hospital, thus depriving expectant parents of an essential service in the County Town and the largest district in Kent. The current A21 links are very poor – single line carriageway between Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells is wholly inadequate for transporting expectant mothers should they require medical intervention. As a member of the KCC Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in January 2011 I tabled a motion which was backed by Members, calling for the Health Secretary to defer his plans until the new

GP commissioning plans had been put in place. As Maidstone GPs have overwhelming called for retention of consultant-led maternity services at Maidstone, it would make sense to allow them to decide the future. The Health Secretary has rejected this request but the battle continues!

Vulnerable Children

On a personal note, in January 2011 I was appointed Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services with the specific brief of transforming provision of safeguarding and services for looked after children from inadequate to outstanding in the next 2-4

years. This follows a very critical Ofsted report published in November 2010 that rated KCC's services for vulnerable children as inadequate. My late mother grew up in care with 20+ foster placements and a 5 year period in a children's home that she hated. I therefore have a real passion and commitment to turn around the service so that Kent's children in need get the support and intervention required to protect them from abuse and neglect and to have the opportunity to achieve as well as we would wish for our own children.

JENNY WHITTLE
MAIDSTONE RURAL EAST WARD MEMBER

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School

It is official – Ulcombe is in the top 20% of schools in the country! This was shown by the contextual value added score achieved following SATs in May last year. We are incredibly proud to be able to show that our school is helping children move forwards, and that children make greater than expected progress through the school. This, of course, does not mean that we will rest on our laurels. We will take this information, along with everything else we know about our school and strive for each and every child to make excellent progress during their time with us.

A highlight from the last year was the visit of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, on behalf of Ofsted. This was a monitoring visit which takes place with no notice. This was not like the previous inspections though. Monitoring visits focus just on the key issues that were raised by the last full inspection. For us, the key issues were using assessment information, raising expectations and improving attendance.

We know that the inspector was pleased to see everything that we have done to try and make the curriculum stimulating and exciting, including our creative curriculum and our multi-sensory room. (This is a hot air balloon at the moment!) She was happy to see that all of the lessons were well differentiated, with children completing tasks which were appropriate for their ability. The area which continues to challenge us all in school is attendance and punctuality. However, from the inspector's point of view, she could see that the school has worked hard to make a difference, and she was happy that we were doing all that we could.

Her conclusions were that the school was continuing to make progress towards being a good school and that the rate of this progress is as she would expect. The letter from the inspector to me is both on the school web-site and on the Ofsted web-site, should you wish to read it in full.

The proposed extension has taken up a significant amount of time and energy during the last year. Having got the backing of the DfE and KCC, we are still waiting for a second planning application to be made

to Maidstone Borough council by the architects. The land is surplus and will be sold, so we continue to do all we can to push this forward, before the offer to pass proceeds to the school is put at risk. We hope that submitted plans will find favour and we can make progress. We see this as crucial to the long term future success of the school.

Also, with regard to buildings and development, we have been working with Sturgeon's for ten months to get our playground resurfaced. We hope this episode is now drawing to a close. The front of the school and access to the playground had a massive makeover during last summer, and we have received a huge amount of positive feedback in school.

Going back a full twelve months, April 2010 was expected to be a quieter month and so it has proved, though there was still plenty of time for plans to be thrown up in the air by a volcano in Iceland. The month started at All Saints Church with our Easter Service on Thursday 1st April, followed by our Easter Egg Hunt, thanks to the FUS. In the following school holiday both myself and Mrs Owens had our return to the UK severely affected by an ash cloud. Thank you to governors and friends in the village who contacted the school to offer help as the news of my delay spread.

During the week after the Easter break there was a special treat for Film Club. We had a web-cam interview with Tom Felton, the actor who plays Draco Malfoy in the Harry Potter series of films. Film Club was opened up to parents and friends in July, giving everyone a chance to see the 1966 World Cup Final. We have continued to offer a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and although Film Club remains our most popular club we have been able to offer art, athletics, basketball, chess, choir, drama, football, karate, Kingsquad, school magazine and more during the last twelve months.

On the sporting front, children have enjoyed taking part in the Maidstone Schools Cross-Country events at Mote Park just before and after the Easter break. Unfortunately cuts to funding for School Sports Partnerships will limit how many

such events will be organised in the future. Our footballers took part in the annual Lenham Football Tournament and competed well, but they have surpassed themselves this year in the area league, winning five and drawing the other two matches this season. Leeds & Broomfield Cricket Club hosted another area Kwik Cricket Tournament last May, and two teams played very well, with one of them finishing as runners-up. Our cricketers also took part in the Maidstone Kwik Cricket Festival during the following month.

We have extended the curriculum through educational visits of various sorts, too. The oldest children completed river study work at the Canterbury Environmental Education Centre back in April, before heading off on their Residential Adventure at the end of May. On this occasion we headed overseas, to PGL Little Canada on the Isle of Wight. The children were able to face challenges such as standing on a tea-tray fixed to the top of a telegraph pole. As you can imagine several thoughts went through my mind when I was asked to go first to show the children how it was done! This was, for the second year, a combined trip with children and staff from Platts Heath Primary School and John Mayne CE Primary School. Last summer the youngest children also went out and about, visiting the lifeboat station at Dungeness, before taking the train to Dymchurch. All of the children from Y1 to Y6 went to London on Tuesday 21st September, to go to the National Gallery to see Tobias and the Angel. This was our topic for the term. It was quite an adventure, going by train up to the capital, a first for some of the children. We took in a few of the sights, too, with older children having a brief walking tour seeing the Houses of Parliament and Downing Street. In November Tawny Owls were invited to be part of the Canterbury Cathedral Church Schools' Day, taking part in a variety of workshops, before helping to lead the act of worship. More recently, our youngest class took the bus into Maidstone, to compare the town with our village.

We were delighted to welcome Mr Armstrong to the school last month, who came in to start off National Science and Engineering Week. Later in the day he worked with two of our classes helping children to understand structures, electrical circuits and how a cable car works. As the week went on the different classes all had different projects to work on. The oldest children, Tawny Owls Class, were creating and racing cars which relied on renewable energy. Barn Owls Class looked at strong shapes that could be used in buildings and bridges, as well as several smaller challenges trying to save the Easter Bunny. Our youngest children, in Owlets Class, investigated what happens when we mix ingredients for food or drinks.

There have been a variety of events organised which our friends from the wider community are invited to, including our four services at All Saints each year, our productions, Ulcombe School Friends' Dinners and FUS events. Our Sports Day and Summer Fayre took place on Saturday 26th June. This was a fantastic event, and it was great to see so many there. After the children took part in races, there was a barbecue, cream teas, drinks and other refreshments on sale, as well as various activities to enjoy. The stocks seemed to be a particular favourite for some reason. It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying taking part in different activities raising over £1,000. Thank you!

Two weeks later the Friends of Ulcombe School hosted the second F.U.S. Summer Ball. This was a massive success again this year, and everyone who went had a hugely enjoyable evening. Congratulations to everyone who was successful with their auction bids, stand-up bingo or the raffle to win a free meal in the hotel restaurant. Our thanks go to everyone who donated items for the auction as well as all of those involved in organizing the event. The total raised was over £1,300.

The Summer Production for 2010 was called The Pinafore Pirates, and was a spoof of Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas. Children worked very hard learning lines and songs, which were certainly not easy. This was extremely entertaining with children really getting into their part, including boys pretending to be ladies and

girls playing the parts of men. Well done to all of the children who were brilliant.

After school on the last Wednesday of term, FUS organised an end of year disco for all of the children. After the disco, Tawny Owls, our oldest children, were all invited to stay for the Leavers' Barbecue. The last day of the school year for pupils started at All Saints Parish Church for our Leavers' Celebration. It was great to see family and friends at the church for the service. It is always very enjoyable hearing what events and moments stand out as significant to the children, and this year was no exception.

We sent our best wishes to all of our Leavers this year. Eleven children moved on to 'big school' this summer, with children going to Invicta Girls' Grammar School, Oakwood Park Grammar School, Angley Sports College, New Line Learning Oldborough, Cornwallis and Swadelands. We also said farewell to one of our staff, Mr Sheehan who moved on to pastures new after two and a half years with us.

With the end of the autumn terms upon us, the snow returned for a second time. It affected our Christmas Service, which was moved to the school, but otherwise the term ended with the usual level of happiness as we all looked forward to Christmas. In the last two and a bit weeks of term there were several events for the children, parents and the wider community to enjoy. Snow was just one of them, with school being forced to remain closed for one day. The penultimate week ended with the FUS Christmas Fayre. This was a very enjoyable and successful evening, with Father Christmas coming to see us, as well as a whole variety of stalls and activities.

The last week saw our younger pupils performing Shine, Star, Shine. Alongside this, the Drama Club performed an entertaining version of the Nativity. Also during the final week the children had a very enjoyable Christmas Party. The final morning was the time for our Christmas Service, when we took time to reflect on and celebrate the coming of Jesus into the world as a baby.

After the wonderful Fireworks Night the FUS quickly turned their attention to the Christmas Fayre, and this was another great event. Thank you to those who

helped to organize the event, and to all of you who came along to support it. The Christmas Cake raffle has been another great success. In all, the event raised more than £900, which is an incredible sum for our small village school.

2011 started with us helping our neighbours! When Ulcombe Pre-School found themselves unable to use the Village Hall for a few days we were happy to let them use a room at school. This prompted several questions about whether this could be long-term, but we at school know this is not an option until we have our extension as an additional space.

This year has seen a fantastic amount of fundraising, not just for the school and FUS, but for charities, too. Early on in the autumn we raised over £60 for the Kent Air Ambulance by taking part in Funky Footwear Friday. The Poppy Appeal received £42.27 from our collection in November. Just before Christmas we sent seventeen shoeboxes to Operation Christmas Child, to be distributed to those in need elsewhere in the world and donations made at our performances of Shine, Star, Shine and our Christmas Service totaled £58.30 for RSPCA.

Friday 18th March was the date for Red Nose Day 2011. The School Council asked that staff and children come dressed as someone famous for the day, and we were not disappointed. It was great to see so many entering into the spirit of the day, despite comments about whether or not I needed a mask to be Desperate Dan. With Jedward, Harry Potter, Beetlejuice, Minnie Mouse, Simon Cowell and many more all coming into school for the day it was a star studded event! Well done to everyone who took part in our talent show, too. We were entertained by song and dance, street-dance, excerpts from film, hand-bells, jokes and a musical arm-pit. Proceeds from our weekly Film Club were also included, and our last piece of fundraising was money-model building, which some of Tawny Owls were working on. Thank you so much to everyone who contributed as we raised the astonishing amount of £220!

The most amazing amount was back in mid-November, though. Children In Need took centre stage. I am thrilled to let you know that our small village school raised ►

Ulcombe Friendship Club

The Ulcombe Friendship Club, now in its twelfth year, continues to thrive and grow. Currently we have forty-two members. What has been especially good has been the growing numbers of members from our sister village of Kingswood.

We were all deeply saddened during the year by the death of our beloved treasurer, Dorothy Playford. Despite being ill for well over a year, she manfully attended our Friendship Club meetings every month, and dispensed smiles, raffle tickets and concern for everyone. She will be sadly missed.

So, too, will Gladys Mouncer who, despite knowing she was terminally ill, came along to meetings and outings with a lovely smile on her face – never complaining about her illness. We are delighted Sid will continue to be with us.

Last year we had an interesting series of meetings. Our first meeting in February was one in which nearly everyone participated, with reminiscences about their experiences during the Second World War.

Members found enlightening a presentation on Crime and the Sentences Offenders Received by the local Crime Community Service.

Ann Carter came to talk to us about *Preparations for a Royal Wedding*. We were amazed at all the arrangements that had to take place before such major events.

In June it was good to hear the Headmaster of our local Primary School,

Vincent Hampton, talk about *Ulcombe School and its activities*. He described the school's efforts to reach out into the local community.

In August, we had to decamp to Kingswood Village Hall because of work being done to the floor at Ulcombe. It proved a very happy venue. But there was a slightly embarrassing situation when two speakers turned up! A compromise was reached, and both gave slightly shortened talks – one on Mrs Beeton and the other on The Donkey Sanctuary.

Gerry Harris' talk on China was fascinating, and in November everyone enjoyed Margaret Cliff's talk on Sweet making and afterwards tasted her delicious home made chocolates.

Our two outings were very successful - one to *Snow White on Ice* at the Churchhill Theatre in Bromley, presented by a fantastic group of skaters from Russia. Then, in September, on a beautiful sunny day, we had a most enjoyable time at Michelham Priory.

Our annual Garden Party was held, as before, at Dorothy's home, and enabled her husband, Cliff, to be with us. Again, it was a lovely sunny day and we all enjoyed sitting in their lovely garden. At the party we celebrated the 90th birthdays of Edie Cuckow and Doris Walker.

Our Christmas party, at the last minute, was held in Kingswood Village Hall, due to the theft of oil from Ulcombe's Village Hall. There we were well entertained by *Spare Parts*.

Finally, the first event of 2011, was our New Year Lunch at The Ridge Golf Club – so successful that we hope to go there again.

On a very practical note, I would like to add that we are all getting a little older – and some of us less robust than in the past. This year we asked those of our members who are more able bodied to help with the chairs and the tables.

We owe a big thanks to all those who have helped keep the Club running during the last year. It is invidious to pick out names, but we particularly thanked Melanie and Meg for all their hard work in organising the catering arrangements - bringing in and taking home to wash our crockery and tablecloths, organising the Tea Rota and helping to set out the hall.

On a less happy note, we are beginning to feel the pinch financially, and our funds are not stretching as far as they used to. The cost of speakers and their travelling expenses are rising all the time, as is the cost of hiring the hall, and hiring coaches for our outings. Members pay an annual membership fee of £6, and at each meeting are expected to buy a raffle ticket to help with funds. Raffle prizes are provided by members. Teas are also provided by members on a rota basis each month. But we are very anxious about the future and would be extremely grateful for some financial help from the Parish Council as we are providing a service to the elderly in our community.

MOLLY POULTER
CHAIRMAN, ULCOMBE FRIENDSHIP CLUB

Ulcombe Church of England Primary School continued

◀ a massive £507. This is a phenomenal amount and a hard act to follow next year!

The Friends of Ulcombe School, our PTFA, has already started its events for 2011. As always, the St Valentine's Disco in the middle of February was hugely popular. 'Phil the Bag' is a new venture for us, which FUS organized to raise money and support the school as an Eco-School. Thank you so much to everyone you

brought in unwanted items on Tuesday 8th March. We had more than five times the amount 'Phil' had expected with one hundred and five bags of clothes, shoes and more. Our thanks go to Mrs Roe and family for their work on our behalf. Our thanks go to all of the FUS who helped before hand and on the day.

We came full circle for the year with the first week of April 2011. An Easter Egg hunt took place for the children just before the end of term. Then family and friends were all welcome to join us for our Easter Celebration Service at All Saints Parish

Church on Friday 8th April at 2.30pm. All of the children will be playing their part in helping us to celebrate the wonder of the Easter story. This will be the end of Term 4 and the start of our Easter holidays, until Tuesday 26th April.

I must pass on my thanks to every member of the village community who has supported the children and the school during the last twelve months. We trust you continue to be as proud of our village school as we are!

VINCENT HAMPTON
HEADTEACHER, ULCOMBE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ulcombe Parochial Church Council

We have now settled down into a regular pattern of worship with two *Communion* services a month, one *All Age Worship*, and one *Morning Praise*. We had two *Benefice Services* during the year at All Saints – one in August, and one in November at our *Patronal Festival*. Sadly, at the *Remembrance Service*, we had no representatives from either the British legion or Scouts and Guides as these organisations no longer function in the village.

In August, there was an historic gathering to celebrate the *Beatification of Cardinal Newman* by Pope Benedict. Cardinal Newman spent time in Ulcombe in the 1820s as the guest of the Rev'd Samuel Rickard, Rector of All Saints, and he officiated at a number of services when Father Rickard was on holiday. It was a great occasion and the church was full of both Anglicans and Roman Catholics – a real ecumenical gathering.

'*Messy Church*' was introduced into the benefice in December when a special *Christingle Service* took place at Harrietsham. It was a great success, and since then has been a monthly event, taking place in each of the Benefice churches in turn. At Ulcombe's *Messy Church* service in February, there were seventy people present – of whom 42 were children.

Sadly, the *Carol Service* at Christmas had to be cancelled because the very heavy snowfall made the steep path to the church dangerous.

The *Women's World Day of Prayer*, always held on the first Friday in March, was organised again this year by Mrs Rosemary Davis. There was a morning service in Lenham and an evening service in Ulcombe – both well attended. The service was written by the women of Chile. A number of parishioners attended the preparation day in October in Tunbridge Wells.

Back to Church Sunday on the 26th of September brought in only a few new people. We hope to do better this year.

Last year, as Bishop Trevor was new to the Diocese, the *Annual Visitation* took place, on the evening of the 12th of May, in Canterbury Cathedral.

On the 8th of June, some of our parishioners accepted the invitation by the Dean of Canterbury to the North Downs Deanery Synod, to an evening at Canterbury Cathedral. We had an interesting guided tour of the cathedral, followed by supper in the Education Centre.

Later, on the 3rd of July, we all went to the Cathedral again for the *Ordination of Millie Hart as Deacon* – another great service followed by a party for Millie in Harrietsham village hall.

There are now three regular *house groups* in this parish – a Bible Study with Joan Drury on a Thursday morning, and a House Group at the Strutts' home on Tuesday evenings with the Rev. Venn, and another on Monday mornings with Molly Poulter at The Old Dairy. *Lent Groups* are currently taking place at ten venues in the Benefice.

Men's Breakfasts in Lenham, once a month on a Saturday morning, are now a regular feature and are proving very popular. The Benefice Churchwardens meet regularly at the vicarage in Lenham – usually monthly. Some of our parishioners are now involved with the Benefice Pastoral Group which is being led by the Rev. Marian Bond.

Ulcombe C. of E. Primary School continues to come to the church for services at Festival times – though the snow prevented them from coming at Christmas. Members of the clergy team visit the school and take *assemblies* each week. Churchwarden, John Goode, is a governor of the school. *The Kings Squad* continues to run a group after school under the auspices of The Family Trust

In June we held a very successful *Auction of Promises* in Ulcombe's village hall and raised £2,000 towards the project of making a kitchen under the tower and using the vestry for the Sunday school. This project is being kept on hold while we consider alternate possible alterations.

The Friendship Club, started by the people from the church, is seen as outreach, and continues to meet monthly in Ulcombe Village Hall

In March we had a *Bring and Share lunch* at The Old Dairy. In September a *Benefice Picnic*, followed by a *Harvest*

Supper organised by Mair Chantler, Rosemary Davis and Chris Parkinson

The church continues to be opened daily thanks to a group of people who now share the responsibility of locking and unlocking. We did, however, keep it closed during the extremely cold weather – believing the steep path to be a hazard.

On a sad note, the album of old photographs of Ulcombe Church has gone missing.

On an even more sober note, we are facing considerable financial problems.

We have a beautiful mediaeval church which needs constant maintenance and repairs if it is to survive – and this is costly. The insurance alone costs £2,750 per annum. Ulcombe's church is part of the community, and, as you know, the Anglican church and its clergy are accessible to everyone, in times of joy and in times of sorrow, and is valued by many people – even by those who do not worship there week by week. I know many people would be dismayed if it were not there, and the building was left to fall into decay.

This year, but for the fact we were able to raid a few reserves we had set aside for the maintenance of the building, we would be £2,000 in debt. As everyone knows, the cost of everything has gone up. Our electricity bill has been huge compared to previous years; insurance of the building has increased; and the Quota, which we pay to the Diocese to cover the cost of having a priest, has gone up by nearly a £1,000.

Because our current financial situation is very serious, we have asked the Parish Council for help in paying the cost of insurance and the maintenances of the graveyard. We are hoping it will be able to help.

On a personal note, I would like to finish by saying that after serving for ten years as Churchwarden, I have now handed over the wand of office to Mrs Rita Strutt. It has been a rewarding time and I am grateful for all the support I have received over the years.

MOLLY POULTER
CHURCH WARDEN, ULCOMBE PCC

Maidstone Borough Council Member's Report

The Borough Council has made big economies over the past year but they are not impacting on front line services, for example investment in recycling increased by 40% due to new contracts which were introduced last autumn.

The Mid Kent Partnership has been set up between Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Ashford, Tunbridge Wells and Shepway Borough Councils. Back office functions such as licensing, Human Resources, payroll and audit are now shared to enable large savings to be made. A review is being made of all unnecessary expenditure.

£750 from the MBC Members' devolved budget was given to the village hall committee this year to assist with their

purchase of a new oil tank. There will be no devolved funding in 2011/12, however.

Further to the proposed removal of the concurrent functions grant to parishes I am supporting the consultation for a fair review for funding for future years.

As a member of the Transport Scrutiny Committee I have taken part in the rural review of transport infrastructure in the borough. A tour of businesses was made to assess the transport problems which they face, especially the logistics of moving large lorries through such small roads from the warehouses. Improvement of country roads is also needed for future housing growth in villages but cannot be allowed to spoil the villages themselves.

If below 400 people are attending a public event then the application for a temporary event notice (TEN) must now be made to the police. If a member of the public is unhappy with a proposed event they should notify the police or environment office.

The new MBC Gateway houses CAB, some KCC offices and all MBC departments.

MBC is continuing with the projects for improving Mote Park, the regeneration of the High Street and the extension to Maidstone Museum. They are all being funded from capital budgets and lottery money and the sale of redundant premises.

JENNY GIBSON
HEADCORN WARD MEMBER, MBC

The Pre-school has continued to operate for 4 mornings a week in the Ulcombe village hall, and is open from 9.15am – 1.00pm Monday to Thursday, which accounts for the KCC funding for three and four year olds of 15 hours per week. This increase of hours from 12.5 last academic year has proved successful, and the pre-school now offers a daily lunch club.

We began term one in September 2010 with 5 children, 3 of whom attended the full 15 hours of operation. Our child numbers have currently increased to 12, with children attending a variety of hours. We will lose 5 children at the end of this academic year due to movement to primary education, meaning that we will commence September 2011 with approximately seven children. These regular fluctuations in child numbers and attending hours, mean that our 'income' is rather unpredictable, never allowing much room for development of the Pre-school.

In September 2010 the management committee experienced significant changes, with a new Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, all of whom are working successfully. We currently have six committee members, including the aforementioned officer positions, which satisfies our requirement of a quorum of 5 members. We continue to welcome more committee members, whether or not directly linked to

Ulcombe Pre-School

the Pre-school. All of the work in support of the Pre-school by the committee members and parent helpers is carried out voluntarily, and I thank everyone for their hard work.

In April 2010 we had a change of Supervisor to Corinne Giles, who had previously held the position. We have recently had a resignation of a staff member due to increased employment hours at a separate workplace. This means that we now have 2 full time members of staff, 1 part time, and 1 in a 'cover' position to accommodate illness and training. This is providing us with consistency and flexibility to suit the Pre-school's requirements. In November 2010 the Pre-school was inspected by Ofsted, and received a 'satisfactory' grading.

Due to heating/water difficulties with the village hall, the pre-school has had to close or temporarily move premises to the Ulcombe Primary School. We thank Mr Hampton, the Head of the primary school, for providing us with a room from which to operate.

The Pre-school is currently trying to organise a permanent advertising banner, as we feel strongly that this would significantly increase the profile and awareness of our organisation. This sign was rejected by the residents living opposite the

village hall, and we are currently awaiting a response from the village primary school as to whether it would be able to position a banner for us. The Pre-school's proposal of using funding from KCC for a wendy house/outdoor storage was declined, and we have now used the money for outdoor planters and blackboards. The Village Hall Committee has proposed an increase in the village hall fees for the Pre-school, which is currently under review.

The Pre-school has continued to fundraise throughout the year, including a Christmas Open Morning, an Easter coffee morning, and a forthcoming boot fair, and raffle and donut stall for the Royal Wedding village street party. Fundraising is a critical means of keeping the Pre-school in operation.

The Pre-school will be holding its AGM at the beginning of May, and I intend to run as Chair of the Committee for the following year.

We feel that the Pre-school is an important part of village community and an essential link between home and school for our children as they grow. We realise that these are difficult times, and we ask for the support of the Parish Council in order to help sustain the Pre-school. We thank you most sincerely in advance for any donation you might be able to give in supporting our work.

MELISSA DALLAMORE
CHAIRMAN ULCOMBE PRE-SCHOOL

Ulcombe History Society

Speedwatch

We had a successful year in 2010. Membership continued to grow, and we had four interesting talks and three very successful outings.

A local resident, Chris Parkinson, started the year off with an interesting and amusing talk about his father who was responsible for introducing the idea of *Parkinson's Law*.

Jeremy Hodgkinson talked about *The Wealden Iron Industry from the Iron Age to the early 19th Century* – an industry that once flourished in this area. Again, it was an interesting talk.

John Hare's talk on *The Mysteries of Lop Nur* was absolutely fascinating, and introduced us to an area and to history very little known. Mr Hare's tales of his travels and involvements were so interesting that we plan to invite him to talk to us again.

Of my own talk on *The Watermen of the River Thames*, I can only say that I hope members found it interesting!

We had three outings during the year.

The visit to the archives was, I gather, much enjoyed, though, sadly, I missed it as I was in Yorkshire. It might be that members would like us to try and arrange a second visit sometime. Our thanks go to John Ware for organising it.

Then we had an excellent day in Oxford – thanks to Peter Titchener who organised the day, and supplied us with lots of useful information, both beforehand, and during the visit.

The weekend at Ironbridge in September was a great success, and much enjoyed by everyone. The museums,

the iron bridge, the river, and the whole area was fascinating. But I think the highlight of the weekend was the visit to the mediaeval moated Stokesay Castle. We owe a debt of gratitude to John Moore for arranging it all, and for finding us such a pleasant hotel to stay in.

Your committee has produced what we hope will be an enjoyable programme for the coming year. Our first visit to Bletchely Park promises to be very interesting, and we hope many of you will join us. You should all have had the details.

By popular request, our weekend visit will be to Warwickshire to visit Warwick and Kenilworth Castles and Beddesley Clinton. More anon. Then we are to have a private evening visit to Godinton House, arranged through the good offices of Veronica Moore.

On your behalf I would like to express our thanks to our Treasurer, John Moore, who is keeping our accounts happily in the black; to our Secretary, David Easton; to our Vice Chairman, Geoff Beale who does much of the hard work in sorting out and sticking up posters; to Joyce Braggs who organises the raffle each month which helps keep us in credit; and to Peter Titchener, a mine of information; and John Ware, who is helping with publicity.

As I said last year, we have enthusiastic and convivial committee meetings, and if anyone feels they would like to join, please give your names when we have the formal elections.

MOLLY POULTER
CHAIRMAN, ULCOMBE HISTORY SOCIETY

Speedwatch volunteers did 6 Speedwatch outings in Ulcombe during 2010: in March (twice), April, May (twice) and July. Each outing was of about 2 hours duration. During this time we recorded 71 vehicles exceeding the 30mph limit, and reported 8 repeat offenders to the police. This would have generated a letter of warning from the police to the owner of the vehicle.

During the year the number of volunteers prepared to continue with Speedwatch decreased and we were left with 6 people on the list at the end of the year. I had to give up co-ordinating Speedwatch for personal reasons during the Autumn period, but when I contacted the remaining volunteers in March to suggest re-starting there was little enthusiasm. 2 volunteers suggested this was a waste of their time as we are too few to go out to do Speedwatch more than once a month and this means that the effect on motorist' speed is minimal or non-existent. Some volunteers had difficult experiences last year, too, with drivers actually speeding up when they saw the Speedwatch team and making rude gestures as they passed. This was very dispiriting. In general, the volunteers who have spoken to me feel that the only efficient way to stop speeding through the village is by a permanent speed camera and/or speed indicator or by traffic calming roadworks. They expressed interest in a petition or campaign to press Kent Highways or the police to take appropriate action such as this before a fatal car accident occurs (rather than after it!).

CHRISTINE CROSBIE,
ULCOMBE SPEEDWATCH CO-ORDINATOR

The season 2010/2011, last season, started well with a good win under our belts against Sherwood near Borstal. We started off 2010 very well, with forty plus fixtures on the card and a shortage of players we struggled to play all of our fixtures. The club suffered in the end by a few players going to play else where and this resulted in not having the Christmas meal and trophy presentation.

Ulcombe Cricket Club

The 2011 season is just about to start. New players are waiting in the wings, with the first game played on 24th April 2011. This season has fewer games than last year, as everyone has more commitments due to cost of living going up.

We have sixteen games this year and half of these will be at home. We

need a recruitment drive to assist with the games and anyone that would like to play in the spirit of the game is welcome to join.

The Christmas meal, presentation evening should go ahead near the end of the year as planned.

We thank the Parish Council for their support and hope the jobs on the pavilion can be sorted out by our club.

TREVOR SHARP
CHAIRMAN, ULCOMBE CRICKET CLUB

Community Policing Report

It has been my aim to be a professional, friendly and familiar uniformed officer as your local PCSO representing Kent Police. I would like to begin this report by explaining that due to the nature of my role and out of respect for people's privacy I must remain discreet when discussing what I have been involved in during the year. However, please do not hesitate to contact me should you ever feel that you need police advice or would like to discuss an issue that might require the mediation skills of a PCSO. I have spent a lot of the year supporting victims of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour by carrying out home visits to ensure that they were happy with all police action, answer their questions and give advice.

I have carried out visits to older people in the community to give advice regarding their home security and how to handle situations involving rogue traders. If you are over 60 and concerned about your home security I can refer you to an organisation that will carry out security improvements free of charge – prevention is better than cure!

During the financial year 2010- 2011, 38 crimes were committed in Ulcombe (this report does not include domestic crime). I have monitored the crime reports each month and feel that the crimes committed in Ulcombe vary from mindless damage through to occasional high value theft of farm plant. I have always wanted to help tackle the issue of rural crime especially when I get feedback from farmers who had told me they were worried about poachers and tractor thefts.

I recently arranged for a meeting of

30+ farmers from all over the Headcorn Ward to have the opportunity to meet a variety of police officers and also security companies such as Smartwater, Mech Lock, Farm Watch and the members of the Crime Support Unit. One of the main purposes of the meeting was to establish a solid network of farmers who could assist Kent Police with local intelligence and for us in turn to keep farmers informed of what the police are up to in our daily business. Since this meeting, there has been a significant increase in information received from farmers, which has helped us to monitor, disrupt and target people involved in committing crime. I will continue to recruit farmers to join the CountryEye Scheme and encourage them to improve their security.

I understand that some people in the rural community feel quite vulnerable due to the remote nature of their location and I want to help combat this by creating closer links with various groups in the community – I will focus closely on this in the future. I would urge anyone who is part of any club/organisation to contact me to arrange a visit. Please email siobhan.deburca@kent.pnn.police.uk and for those that do not have internet access please call me on my mobile – 07772 226099.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the numerous farmers and residents in Ulcombe for their support during the year.

SIOBHAN DE BURCA
HEADCORN WARD PCSO

Royal Wedding Street Party

A Royal Wedding 'Street Party' is being held at the Village Hall between 1pm and 6pm on Friday, 29th April. If the weather is fine we will have tables and games outside. If it is bad weather we will go indoors. There will be prizes for the Best Hat Competition and a raffle is being organised by the Play Group. The children at Ulcombe School will be working hard before the day to produce decorations for the event, as well as designing their hats!

All are welcome. There are no tickets to buy. Party goers are asked to bring their own food and drink to share. I have asked that people let me know if they are coming to get an idea of numbers and how many tables to set out. No parking will be available at the Village Hall, except for Disabled Access, as we will need to use the car park for the event.

Public liability insurance cover has been arranged for the day and a Temporary Event Licence has been applied for.

Please spread the word as we would like this to be a village event for all to enjoy. Thank you.

LORNA MCCREERY
ORGANISER

Ulcombe Dramatic Amateurs Society (UDAS)

We have had a very successful year culminating in two evening performances last February selling 121 tickets and raising approximately £700 which will become our working capital towards next year's production.

We have 15 members and a small support team who help with pre and post

productions as well as the production evenings. To all these people I would like to express my thanks for the smooth running of the production which enable the audiences to have an enjoyable evening. We are extremely fortunate to have the guidance of Pippa Evans our producer/director, her encouragement and

enthusiasm spurs us on to better things!

We are always looking for more members, both for back stage and on stage, so if you or anyone you know would like to join our amateur group please ask them to contact me on 01622 843977.

Thank you

ROSEMARY CASSWELL, CHAIRMAN, UDAS

Produced by Ulcombe Parish Council June 2011