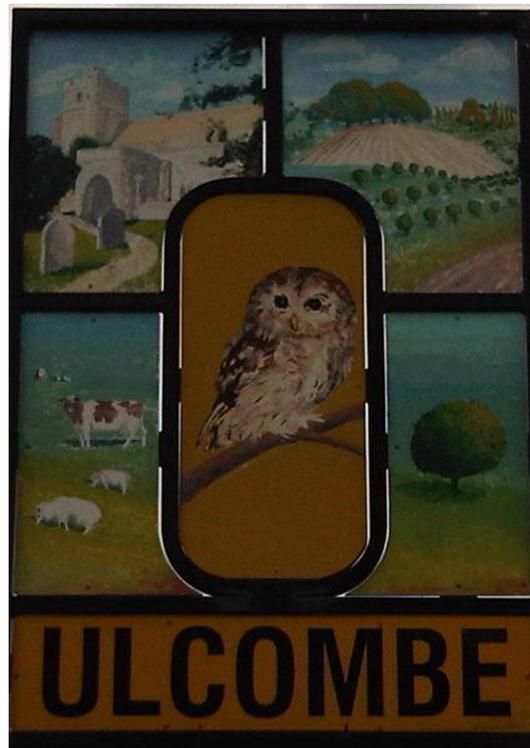


ULCOMBE

Annual Parish Report

2015/16

www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk



Produced by Ulcombe Parish Council
June 2016
(Reports from the Annual Parish Meeting held in April 2016)

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

In the past year, April 2015 – March 2016, there have been 12 regular Parish Council meetings and 5 extra Parish Council meetings - a total of 17 meetings , the same as last year.

We are pleased that Helen Anderson has joined us as our Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. She is very qualified and has many years’ experience. She was formerly the parish clerk for Headcorn until recently, and she also looks after Langley Parish Council. Unfortunately for us, Liz McLaren was promoted by Loose Parish Council to a more senior and time consuming job which meant she had no time to cover Ulcombe, and Liz Rice found that with two very young pre-school children, she found she couldn’t easily fit in being our parish council clerk with the demands of a young family.

I also want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the parish council, to thank John Watton for his very constructive and positive contribution to our deliberations in his time as a parish councillor over the last 12 years. He now feels it is time to move on. We will miss you John. There are therefore two vacancies on the Parish Council. We have one potential candidate whom we can co-opt, but we would like to hear from anyone who would like to fill the remaining vacancy

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

- Crime - there were 15 reported crimes in the year April 2015 to March 2016 and approximately 15 calls about anti-social behaviour and minor incidents like loose horses on the road. This compares with 17 crimes in 2014/15 and 31 crimes in 2013/14. We are particularly pleased that our PCSO has managed to nip in the bud some incidents of youthful anti-social behaviour. It is important that people always get a crime report reference number when reporting a crime so that they are all properly logged. The police want all non – emergency calls to be made by dialling 101, and not 999 unless it is a genuine emergency.
- Local Plan – we have been fighting Maidstone Council’s call for development sites, particularly housing in Headcorn, and Traveller sites within Headcorn Ward.
- Highway problems – potholes, resurfacing and road closures and road flooding. Pothole filling is being dealt with now the winter is over, particularly in Headcorn Road and on Knowle Hill. Sean Charlton has put in a larger pipe in the new orchard at Pye Corner so some of Eastwood Road is no longer flooded. However, there are still problems at the Pye Corner ‘Z’ bend where the water sits in the road in heavy rain. It seems that 150 yards of pipe under the road in William Post Lane is blocked before the water goes into the newly dug ditches. Kent Highways (KHS) still has to try and fix this problem.
- Polytunnel screening east and west of the village is being enhanced with earth bunds and tree planting. There are now two reservoirs between The Street and Windmill Hill. I would ask everyone to spread the word that swimming is forbidden in the reservoirs because still fresh water can be very cold just below the surface, causing cramp and drowning.
- The Solar farm planning application at Tong Farm was rejected by Ulcombe and Headcorn Parish Councils, and also by Maidstone Borough Council.
- We had a plaque unveiling ceremony in January, here in the Village Hall, to honour the commitment and generosity of the Tassell family to the village of Ulcombe over several generations. We had 60 parishioners present. Mr Stanley Tassell was invited to do the unveiling.

- The monitoring of traffic speed and HGVs - we are looking at reducing speed on the Lenham road between Wents and Kingswood. We are putting up “ not suitable for HGV” signs at the top of Ulcombe Hill and at the Grafty Green end of Eastwood road to try and limit HGVs coming through Ulcombe village. KHS is also going to put in earth bunds to stop lorries parking under the M20 near the Chegworth road junction with the A20, and also on the Chegworth Road itself at the A20 to stop lorries parking on the large unofficial layby that has developed there. We are also in talks with KHS to narrow the Chegworth Road where it meets the A20 by removing the traffic island. We hope a visually narrower Chegworth Road will help deter those drivers who think it is a wide two way road. Jenny Whittle, our County Councillor has very generously agreed to fund some of the works. As this part of the Chegworth Road is in Kingswood, we hope Kingswood Parish Council will agree. I want to thank Jenny for her great help in funding these projects. It means a lot to a small parish like ours.
- The proliferation of traveller sites in open countryside in Headcorn Ward and in Ulcombe in particular, is a constant problem because houses and commercial development in the Low Weald Special Landscape Area would not be allowed except in exceptional circumstances. We are constantly under threat from unauthorised gypsy and traveller applications in open countryside. Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) needs a 5 year housing land supply, a Local Plan, and more designated official traveller sites which will then allow MBC to oppose unwanted development, which can be upheld on appeal to the Inspectorate if the Local Planning Authority has no Local Plan. Unfortunately neither of these goals has been achieved yet which leaves parishes open to unwanted housing applications and traveller pitch applications in open countryside. We would like to thank our Borough Councillors, Martin Round and Richard Thick for doing an excellent job in arguing our case with MBC. Together with the Joint Parishes Group and Kent Association of Local Councils, there is now a momentum to try and get a much more sensible policy for gypsy and traveller sites in the Borough. Our MP, Helen Whately, is also helping us at government level, for which we thank her too.
- Dog fouling - we are putting up more “ no dog” signs on the recreation ground and car park, We do not want dog mess in the children’s play area or on the playing fields and we have to have a blanket ban because not all dog owners are responsible.
- Grants were more than doubled to the Village Hall to help cover the floor repair and CCTV replacements.
- It was agreed to help pay for the church floodlighting and electricity costs
- Speedwatch has restarted under the leadership of Rhian Banham. She would like more volunteers.
- Roadside litter and fly tipping is becoming a big problem. Our thanks to our Community warden Dawn Riach-Brown for helping us get this dealt with by Maidstone, and to those of you who have organised litter collecting sessions in and around the village.
- We have a Village Diary on the Ulcombe Parish Council website. Please contact our clerk to get your events posted. This helps others to avoid clashing dates.
- The green picnic table is now outside on the recreation ground
- The new oak Parish Council noticeboard is now in place by the bus shelter.
- We are delighted that Headcorn youth teams are using our recreation ground for football. We are still trying to find a cricket team, no luck so far.

- This morning, the Parish Council gave a souvenir commemorative coin to each child in Ulcombe School to mark Her Majesty's actual 90th Birthday today.
- We are planning a family Village Day on Saturday 11th June here at the Village Hall to celebrate the Queen's Official 90th Birthday. To keep it simple we are looking at repeating a recent celebration. This means bringing your own picnic, refreshments and bunting although we can provide teas and coffee. The Friendship Club had originally booked this day for a cream tea event, but they have kindly agreed to share the Village Hall and will be providing a cream tea in the early afternoon after lunch. We also plan to have a pay bar. In addition, we would like someone to organize something for the children (a rounder's game perhaps?), or a football penalty shoot. We do need a small committee, so I am asking for volunteers to help organize what we hope will be a fun afternoon for families. Please contact me or the clerk if you want to help.
- Finally, I would like to thank Mrs Lovegrove (Mary Ann) for organising our refreshments.

PARISH COUNCIL USEFUL INFORMATION

Members:

Peter Titchener (Chairman)

Shellina Prendergast (Vice Chairman)

Iain Moir

Jon Thompson

Mary Ann Lovegrove

Fiona Kenward

Clerk: Mrs Helen Anderson

Telephone :01622 891945/07944 668802)

Email: ulcombepc@outlook.com)

ULCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE REPORT 2015-2016

Summary of Receipts

Opening reserves brought forward from previous year	21,069
Precept 15/16	19,217
Council tax base support grant	914
Recreation Pitch Hire	500
Business account interest	3
Parish Services Scheme from MBC	2,281
VAT recovered for 2015/16	1,663
Total Income:	24,578

Summary of Payments

Office costs and staff costs	9,566
Publications, printing and advertising	132
IT Services	125
Hall hire and subsistence	675
Association membership fees	442
Training courses	119
Finance and Insurance	1,016
Recreation Ground	3,822
Pavilion and utility bills	547
Play Equipment	71
Car Park and Village Hall	2,737
Extras and miscellaneous	3,537
VAT paid out in 2015/2016	1,674
Total expenditure:	24,463
CLOSING BALANCE:	21,184

BREAKDOWN OF PAYMENTS (included above)

OFFICE AND STAFF COSTS - salary, HMRC, office supplies/equipment, telephone
 PUBLICATIONS, PRINTING, ADVERTISING - copies of local plan, Ulcombe Annual report
 HALL HIRE, SUBSISTENCE - Hire of Ulcombe/Headcorn village halls, refreshments
 ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES - KALC, SLCC, KCPFA, CPRE, ACRK
 TRAINING COURSES - inc. Annual Planning and Clerks' conferences
 FINANCE, INSURANCE - internal/external audit, IOC (data protection), annual insurance
 RECREATION GROUND - Grounds maintenance, emptying litter bins, tree and drainage works
 PAVILION - annual alarm/fire extinguisher checks, cesspit emptying, external decoration
 PLAY EQUIPMENT - annual safety check, painting of goal posts
 CAR PARK, VILLAGE HALL - maintenance work on hall path and guttering, replacement bollards
 EXTRAS, MISCELLANEOUS - village sign, war memorial, wreath, grants to other organisations

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

Ulcombe Parish Council accounts are audited internally by Mr Kevin Funnell 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 6 June to Friday 15 July 2016. The requisite Public Notice and a copy of the return will be placed on the Parish Website www.ulcombepc.kentparishes.gov.uk and on the village noticeboard nearer the time.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL – Ward Member – Cllr Martin Round

Cllr Round gave a short report on his second year in the post and he continues to attend many meetings in relation to this demanding and often challenging role. As a rural ward member, he continues to champion rural issues in an attempt to bridge the gap between services (i.e street sweeping) which is well provided for at urban level but diminishes badly for the outlying parishes. Cllr Round is a member of the Gypsy and Traveller Cohesion partnership (Ulcombe and Headcorn Parish Councils and Maidstone Borough Council) and follows recent planning applications and those decisions made with keen interest. Cllr Round asked the audience to acknowledge the tireless work that his fellow Borough Councillor Richard Thick had put in for the Headcorn Ward over the past eighteen years, and wished him well for his retirement.

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

Cllr Whittle gave a short report on her work during the year and remains especially focussed on working with the Parishes in relation to Highways Issues. Budgetary spending cuts of up to 75% have reduced the capacity of the department to repair and maintain roads and therefore it is important that designated contractors provide a service that is value for money. Cllr Whittle also continues to liaise with local families in relation to any issues that they may have including school place appeals.

KENT COMMUNITY WARDEN – Dawn Riach-Brown

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

KENT POLICE – PCSO John Boyd

Ulcombe has maintained a low level of crime during the past year. I cannot access any data on crime statistics internally any more, However going by the monthly crimes I report for the parish meetings we are sustaining the reduced level of crime we have benefited from during the past few years. This has been possible through the support of the community and the Parish Council. We have dealt with a number of issues throughout the year, which have included the following:

- Follow ups on the victims of burglaries/breaks to give crime prevention advice and information booklets.
- Speed enforcement checks and speed monitoring checks throughout the local villages
- Talks and visits throughout the year to the local school.
- 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.
- The parish hall CCTV cameras have been used this year in detection and prevention of crime. These cameras have had a positive effect on reducing crime and nuisance and are an excellent tool for me to use/ promote and educate with.
- The mobile police station still comes visits the villages every 2 weeks and parks up for residents to discuss any issues they have and I still run my surgeries around the villages on a monthly basis.

- It would be great if we could get some Neighbourhood watch organised and set up for the area. If we could get a co-ordinator arranged I would very much like to get involved and help organise.

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.

PCSO Siobhan de Burca-Ousby sends her best wishes to the Parish Council and all the residents. She has been working with myself since her return from maternity leave in April 2015 and has assisted me in establishing links within the community. She wishes to let you all know that she will be taking leave in July 2016 for a few months and will link back in with myself on her return.

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 – Keith Crisp

This season has been our third season using the pitch at Ulcombe Recreation Ground. This year we have had both an u15 and u14 team using the facilities and 30 games have been played mostly on Saturday mornings, with a few more to play due to postponements through wet weather. The facilities we enjoy are some of the best in the league and we would like to thank all those who keep the grounds good for us to play on and for the use of the Pavilion.

ULCOMBE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL– Emma Hickling (read by John Hoadley, Chairman of Governors)

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

Growth in numbers

The number of pupils on roll at Ulcombe has tripled in the last two years; we now have a roll of over 90 children. The number of pupils does vary because of the mobility of the children, but the core roll is also growing.

Growth in staff

In September 2015, we opened a fourth classroom, having raised the PAN (Published Admission Number) from 13 per year group to 15. KCC funded us to change the use of a resource room to a classroom. The classes are now structured as Reception/Year1, Year1/Year2, Year3/Year4 and Year5/Year6. We have also appointed a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) who works with our families to resolve any issues of attendance, transport, referrals to other agencies.

Growth in the quality of education

You will remember that six weeks after the management of the school changed in 2013, OFSTED arrived and judged the school to be requiring improvement. Now we await OFSTED again. The Local Authority judge the school to be at least good in all areas: outcomes for children; teaching and learning; behaviour; safety and personal development; and leadership and management. We are looking forward to welcoming OFSTED to confirm these judgements. When a good judgement is achieved, this will be the first one in the history of inspections for Ulcombe.

Growth in opportunities

The staff have worked hard this year to provide the children with exciting learning opportunities: the school choir have sung at the O2, Years 5/6 have completed an obstacle course at a partner school; and Years 3/4 have visited the bank. We have also welcomed lots of visitors to the school: an author; an Olympian; a policeman; and a pet snake! Termly, each class invites parents in for a 'Learn with us' day and themes have included Dragon's Den, Chinese New Year and Mexico.

We have also introduced an alternative curriculum in the afternoon specifically aimed at those pupils who won't go to secondary school. This curriculum aims to teach them life skills such as sewing, knitting, cross stitch, woodwork and gardening.

Growth in praise for the school

Ulcombe C of E Primary School is a unique place; the majority of its pupils come from a mobile community. We have ensured that these vulnerable pupils are respected and that all make good progress in their learning. This has been recognised by the KCC attendance service, the GRT outreach team and a GRT advisory teacher. Each wrote letters to the staff praising the inclusive nature of the school and identifying the positive progress children make both in learning and behaviour.

ULCOMBE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL - Rita Strutt, Church Warden

The Church building and closed burial ground

Church Fabric

This year we have seen the completion of the roof repairs to the North and South Aisle. This means that we are now watertight and can turn our attention to the interior of the building. There are areas of plaster damage to the walls as a result of long term rainwater leakage and there is a widespread discolouration of the paint. As this is a Grade 1 listed building, we are required to seek the services of a plasterer and painter qualified and experienced in working in ancient buildings. This will be costly, so the PCC are currently seeking funding from charitable bodies in order to carry out this work.

Lightning conductor

Approximately 5 metres of copper tape, which was part of the lightning conductor, has been stolen. This is both inconvenient and costly in that whilst the labour can be carried out by volunteers the materials will cost several hundred pounds.

Ancient Yew Trees

There had been concern about the state of several of the trees, particularly those close to the paths. In consultation with the Diocese and Maidstone Borough Council Parks department, who have overall responsibility, the trees have been trimmed and made safe.

The Church Community

Worship

This year we have continued to see a gradual growth in the number of worshippers and in particular young families who join us for the monthly family breakfast service. It is a delight to have them here and we hope that this will continue.

As well as welcoming newcomers, we have also said a fond goodbye to old friends Jean & Pat Davis and their son David. They are now happily settled in their new home in the Isle of Wight. Jean's departure meant that we needed to recruit a new leader for our flower arranging team and also a new Church cleaning organiser. We are very grateful to Diane Gray and Valerie Powell Jackson for stepping forward to take over these roles and doing a brilliant job.

The time of the service has been moved forward to 10.45am. This is to allow people the opportunity to get home at a reasonable time to start their lunch. This seems to be working well but we have yet to evaluate it.

Fund Raising

We have held a variety of fund raising events over the year. There has been a series of themed suppers. The first was a Chilli & Chat evening which was great fun. This was followed by a Fish & Film evening. The evening began with Fish & Chips supplied by Lenham and then the showing of film, The Theory of Everything. An interval for refreshments was put in. There was spontaneous clapping at the end which was a good indication that it was successful. The general consensus was that it had worked well. The next supper in this series has yet to be arranged.

The Harvest supper was held in October. This has proved so popular that a hundred tickets were sold this year. Guests enjoyed some excellent musical entertainment organised by Mike Alexander and the event was compered by Chris Parkinson by popular demand.

The food and organisation for all of these events has been undertaken by Mair Chantler who, together with her brilliant team of family and friends, consistently does a brilliant job. They deserve our thanks.

Internet Café

We were very fortunate in receiving sufficient funds from a kind donator to purchase a computer, printer and laptop for the Church. This allowed us the opportunity to offer an Internet café facility. Jenny Odam gave the technical support for which we have been extremely grateful. We ran the café twice a month on a Wednesday and then a Thursday. We had a few people to start but we then found that although people stated their intention to come they then failed to attend. After some discussion we went with Jenny's very generous offer of giving the service on an appointments only basis, which could either be at the church or in individuals own homes. There have been a few takers but currently still little demand for the service.

Church Visits

The Church continues to attract many visitors and this year we have been pleased to welcome organised groups including historical and archaeological societies and U3A. We are always happy to entertain such groups.

FRIENDS OF ALL SAINTS', ULCOMBE – Molly Poulter

We set up The Friends of All Saints (FASU) in May 2013.

We have nearly seventy Friends and they come both from the village and from far afield. Some are previous residents, some are the offspring of residents who have died, some are previous rectors, and one even comes from Germany – falling in love with the village when he stayed here while researching his family history.

Since our inauguration, we have raised some £14,000 and currently have in hand about £10,000. During the short time we have been in existence we have provided a kitchen-cum-vestry for the church, purchased eight folding tables, upgraded the toilet, installed signs to the church on strategic roads, and purchased an extending brush which has enabled us to clear the cobwebs which were hitherto out of reach. In addition some of the Friends have helped with cleaning the church, clearing the car park and doing work on the churchyard.

The Friends have also made a number of offers to the Parochial Church Council for the future. These include:

- Paying for a glass door at the entrance to the church which would help to retain the heat.

- Replacing the sundial which was stolen some years back.
- Assisting in the restoration of the floodlighting of the church.
- Producing a new History of the Church and a hand-held Guide for visitors.

The Friends also offered to help with painting the inside of the church where the damp has discoloured the walls, but the PCC has been advised by the DAC that this work and plastering must be done by professionals. This work will cost some £14,000.

Our money comes from Subscriptions (minimum £10 though most people give more) together with fund raising activities. We encourage our friends to subscribe via Gift Aid so we can recover the 25% the Government gives back on charity donations. We also encourage our friends to make a legacy in their wills. This year we have planned four fund raising events – one of which, the Themed Supper Party at the home of John and Fiona Kenward, has already taken place and raised nearly £500.

The next will be **Sunday 19 June at 3pm** in the church - a Cream Tea and Brass Band Concert with the UK Paper Band from Sittingbourne. The band will provide an afternoon of light entertainment. It has been in existence since 1883 and the original players were workers at the new paper mill which was built to supply The Daily Chronicle with paper. Hence the name adopted in 1988. Tickets £10

Then on **Saturday 10 September at 7.30 pm** - the very popular Police Choir will be giving a concert in Ulcombe Church. Tickets, price £10, will include light refreshments.

On **Saturday 19 November at 7.30 pm** in the church - an Auction of Promises at 7.30 pm which will include supper. (We will soon be coming round the village to ask for promises!) Tickets for all these events can be obtained from Molly Poulter on 01622 842988 or Chris Parkinson on 01580 388402.

Our Annual General Meeting was held on **Monday 18 April at 7pm** in the church and we welcomed all who are interested in helping to preserve our beautiful Grade 1 listed mediaeval church.

VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE – Frances Crawford

Current Committee Members: Frances Crawford - Chair, Paul McCreery – Treasurer, Debra Bell – Secretary, Mimi Humphrey, Christina Cox, Jack Webb, John Ware, MaryAnn Lovegrove

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

We have managed to get through another winter without an oil theft and our heating costs have been reduced quite a bit this year due to the mild weather and of course, the fall in oil prices.

Over the past year we have organised three very successful fundraising events; a Barn Dance, which was great fun, although a little under-subscribed; another Clairvoyant evening, which was well supported and a Quiz night in November. Our Spring Quiz night will take place on 14th May. We are very fortunate to have Jack Webb as our Quizmaster who writes the quiz and manages the whole evening with great expertise and wit. Overall these three events have raised just under £1,300.00 for the village hall funds.

Last year we finally achieved our long standing aim of a new kitchen, which, together with the refurbishment of the meeting room, cost £11,495.00. Both rooms were stripped back to the breeze blocks, plastered and had the ceilings dropped both to help conserve heat and for ease of cleaning.

Unfortunately we did not quite manage to get through the year without some unexpected expenditure as due to some quite extensive lifting of the woodblock flooring, we had to bring forward our next project of sanding and resealing the wooden floor. Together with repairs for the original damage this cost £3,986.00, but, depending on footfall, this should last for 8 – 10 years. We have also upgraded the CCTV and the Village Hall Committee is grateful to the Parish Council for their financial assistance with both these projects.

Looking to the future, we are now in a position where we can hopefully say that, for the time being, we have completed the major refurbishments of the village hall, which were started back in 2004 and have included new doors and windows, new toilets, the creation of a disabled toilet, a new boiler, loft insulation, removal of asbestos, new hall cupboards, new curtains and a new kitchen. At the moment there are still some minor issues to deal with, such as how to draw the curtains without pulling them off the rails!

FRIENDSHIP CLUB – Molly Poulter

The Ulcombe Friendship Club is now in its eighteenth year. It was started by a group of church and village people during an interregnum after the retirement of the Rev. Alan Stockbridge.

It is aimed at the older members of our local community, both men and women, though the current age range is from the mid 50s to the 90s. It is still flourishing and has attracted a number of members from neighbouring villages and even from Maidstone. Inevitably we have lost members who have died or moved away.

We follow the same pattern each year with speakers on eight occasions, a Christmas party in the village hall, a New Year Lunch (which has been held for the last few years at The Ridge Golf Club), a Garden Party, a Quiz afternoon, and one or two outings.

This year our speakers gave talks on *The Mystery of the Missing Nurse*, *French and English Gardens*, *Grafty Green*, and *Royal Visits behind the scenes*. Of particular interest was the talk on *Mongolia's Children* by Fraser McColl.

The outing to the Isle of Sheppey included a tour of the island together with tea and a performance in Sheppey's Music Hall.

Twice a year we have a coffee morning to raise funds, and occasionally a Cream Tea on a Saturday afternoon in June at the village hall. With the money raised we subsidise outings and send flowers and cards to anyone who is sick or bereaved.

The Club is run by a Committee annually elected – though I must confess membership of the Committee has changed little over the years.

As I said earlier, we have lost quite a number of members through death or moving away. We would welcome publicity about the Friendship Club so we can recruit more members.

HISTORY SOCIETY – Molly Poulter

The History Society has had a full and interesting year.

We started the year off with a talk by one of our local friends, Albert Evans, a university historian, who gave an insightful talk about the way historians wrote about the Great War. Given without notes, the talk was much enjoyed.

Simon Elliott, an amateur archaeologist and lecturer at the University of Kent, spoke of Kent during the Roman Occupation. He has promised to take us to one of his digs at Richborough later this year. We had two talks about the sea – on Sailing Barges in their heyday and on the mediaeval trade with Gascony.

We had two return visits – both much enjoyed. The first was by Toni Mount who spoke about sex in the City of London in Mediaeval times, and Imogen Corrigan about the significance of Sutton Hoo. We hope to be visiting Sutton Hoo later this year.

We had a delightful musical evening and supper at The Old Dairy when Michael Alexander entertained with a programme entitled 'from Bach to Desert Island Discs'. After supper, John Brooks and my fifteen year old granddaughter, Genevieve Hawes, gave lovely solo performances.

Highlight of the year was our outing to Guedelon and Provins which had had to be postponed at the last minute because of Operation Stack and the heatwave. We moved the outing to October which meant that our trip to Cambridge had to be cancelled. It caused our treasurer John Moore, an immense amount of work and anxiety and we were all very grateful to him that he managed not only to reinstate the trip at a later date, but also managed not to lose any money.

It would take too long to describe the delights of the weekend but I give a brief outline. We visited first the magnificent 17th century Chateau Vaux-Le-Vicomte. We stayed in a pleasant hotel in Auxerre, and next morning went to Guedelon which is a mediaeval castle in the making. It was fascinating and we would like to go back in a year or two when the castle is more advanced. We then went to the 12th century castle - Chateau de Ratilly.

The next day we visited the mediaeval city of Provins which is a World Heritage site. The town was fascinating with fortified town walls, a central tower built in the 12th century, a 13th century tithe barn, underground galleries and many fascinating building and features.

The History Society has a full programme planned for this year, and always welcomes visitors and new members.

The Society is run by a small committee who were all re-elected at this year's AGM. The Committee comprises John Moore our Treasurer, Geoff Beale our Vice Chairman, John Ware our Secretary, and Peter Titchener who are all great to work with.

DRAMA CLUB – Mimi Humphrey

Better known as Ulcombe's Dramatically Amateur Society

We are a small but friendly drama group made up of villagers and non-villagers (we have to bring in talent from outside the area).

We meet on a regular basis either in the Village Hall or when it is booked at the Kings Head pub at Grafty Green. (I have actually found members pre booking the hall just so we can go to the pub).

On a more serious note we are at present without a director for our next production, so if I can make a plea within this report to all budding directors, actors and stage hands to join us, you would be most welcome, OSCAR pending of course.

Moving on from our last production which was a traditional pantomime with all its usual drama, bad singing, men in dresses, people in cow costumes and the usual chaos front and back stage.

We are at present reading through material that might be suitable for the group to perform and hope to bring you something amusing to watch early next year.

You can contact me on 01622 843592 with any information regarding the drama group.

WRITING CLUB – Ellen Richter

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

We meet on the last Thursday of the month in the King's Head at Grafty Green, except for December's meeting which is a week earlier; last year we used the opportunity to have a meal together.

Membership is free and there is no requirement to attend each monthly meeting, but we do ask that people attend as often as they can – this gives all members an opportunity to seek advice and input on their work.

There are six writers in the group at the moment, and we are happy to welcome new members at any time. Experience of writing is not essential, just a desire to write.

Unfortunately, we have not attracted any new members this year despite some expressions of interest from people in and around the area. All the time there is interest we would like to continue but without new members it may not be able to continue in the same format. However, we have tried to raise our profile over the last 12 months.

We ran a competition in conjunction with the school and the newsletter to encourage young writers, with a prize sponsored by Mowtastic. Despite some challenges we had a wonderful entry which was published in the August edition.

Group members are now feeling confident enough to share their own pieces of work within the newsletter, which we hope will continue. Occasional articles also go in to remind people about the group and give an update on what we are doing.

Some of us also went to a crime writing convention earlier this month, which gave a real insight into different approaches to stories, provided hints and tips on setting and structures, and was a generally fun and engaging day. There was even a talk on Agatha Christie and her enduring legacy, by her Estate publisher!

Over the next 12 months we really need to encourage a few more people to take the plunge and get involved, so if anyone is interested in joining us, or simply coming to see how it works, please call 01622 840199 and speak to Ellen, or drop an e-mail to the newsletter: Ulcombe-newsletter@hotmail.co.uk.

ULCOMBE VILLAGE NEWSLETTER – Leon Holmes/Ellen Richter

The Ulcombe Newsletter currently has a circulation of 300 covering the majority of the village. The annual subs has remained frozen at £3 a year and we continue to generate reasonable income via advertising.

Photocopying is still undertaken at the school and as ever I would like to thank the School for accommodating us

As you know the newsletter is fully reliant on volunteers who give up their time on a regular basis and as editor I would like to pass on my personal thanks to Leila and John Ware, Mimi Humphry and of course all our distributors.

I would also like to thank those who regularly support the newsletters by providing interesting articles. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who would like to regularly contribute to our newsletter. A couple of ideas for regular columns include Gardening Tips, Recipes, and Puzzles/Crosswords etc.

Thank you

BALLROOM DANCING CLUB – Rod Davis

Wednesday dance class: The Wednesday dance class continues to thrive with a hard core of dancers from in and around the village plus approximately half the class coming from further away.

The hall is always well maintained and managed. In conclusion we in the dance class are very happy.

Thursday dance practise is making good use of the village hall as and when there are people, who want to practise. As in the past practice night is viewed as a movable event to accommodate any other event that may need to take place

BADMINTON CLUB – Alan Burch

I believe that the Ulcombe Badminton Club has been in existence for over 30 years. The 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.

The Badminton Club is still thriving with a full complement of up to 13 members per week.

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

THE ART CLASS

Offering Introductory and Intermediate Art Courses for Adults at Ulcombe Village Hall.

Established 4 years ago, The Art Class offers structured and informative art courses covering a range of mediums including pencil, watercolour, pastel and acrylic. With the guidance of our professional tutor providing step by step tuition, we ensure each student's artistic skills are developed to their individual potential.

We have been running beginners and intermediate courses at Ulcombe Village Hall for 3 years. We now have a regular attendance of students, with approximately 50% of them living in or around Ulcombe Village itself.

Our new schedule of Autumn Courses is still to be confirmed. However, it is expected that we will begin a new selection of classes in early September, which will include a class for **Absolute Beginners!**

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

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

More information regarding any of The Art Class Courses can be obtained by contacting us by phone on **01622 892013**, or email us at ***theartclass@outlook.com***