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DRAMATIC CLOSURE OF CHURCH

Action being taken to remedy asbestos problem

The centuries-old St Mary's church, closed just a fortnight after the induction of the new Rector when "worryingly high" asbestos fibre levels were discovered inside the building, may not open its doors to worshippers again for several weeks.

Meanwhile services have been taking place in the Village Hall opposite and there are plans for the Harvest Thanksgiving to be held at the church primary school.

The shock discovery came when the organ tuner decided to oil the bearings of the electric fan. Once the lid of the blower box had been removed an asbestos lining was revealed. When the parochial church council was informed, members realised immediate action had to be taken.

Test results were received on Saturday September 17, when David Way who chairs the Fabric Committee of the church, said: "We now need to call in experts as soon as possible to advise us on the next steps necessary to remove the source of the problem and deal with the consequences.

"I have been in touch with West Farleigh, Ide Hill and Sundridge where similar problems arose eight years ago, to see how long it took before their churches re-opened and at what cost."

Mr Way explains that records show the asbestos lined blower box is thought to have been installed either just before or shortly after the second world war, when the dangerous effect of the fibres was not realised. Asbestos was then normally used as a fire retardant and for deadening noise.

The PCC called in independent surveyors and laboratory experts to confirm their fears, with the possibility that the blower box was emitting contaminated air not only to the organ but into the church interior. Firstly a check was made on the material in the blower box and then an air test was made. It was these that led to the "worrying levels" being revealed and the immediate decision to seal off the church to the outside world.

"Fibres of a certain size can get into the lungs and it is these that are the major cause of concern. Tests were carried out near the blower box when keys of the organ were played and in the chancel.

"Now the PCC has to determine a strategy and policy plan to assess what work is needed. In the meantime the Archdeacon has been informed as well as the church organist Philip Moore.

Churchwarden Alison Ellman-Brown has put up notices on the church doors to say that under no circumstances is anyone allowed to enter without permission. "If such an occasion arises the person entering will have to wear top-to-toe protective clothing with a mouth shield and when they have finished, leave all this wrapped up in the church porch." It is obviously a highly serious situation and further news will follow next month.



Your Local Contacts:			
Parish Council Chairman: Roger Sawtell	820731	Village Club Doug Redfarn	820495
School: Secretary/Head Teacher	820360	Clerk to Parish Council: David Swan	814445
Under 5's Pre-School:	820309	Village Hall Booking: Jackie Crooks	820226
Maidstone Police:	608186	Under-5s Playgroup:	741951
Pond and Tree Warden: Anne Bishop	820683	Pre-School Supervisor: Pippa Fordham	746829
Associate Rector: Revd Ruth Bierbaum	743866**	Neighbourhood Watch:	608173
also: Revd David Jones	741474**	'Potholes' concern (MBC): Adrian Hygate	0845 824 7800
Hon PCC Secretary: Nicky Grainger	813527	Churchwarden: Alison Ellman-Brown	820288
Rectory:	747570	supported by Joy McLoughlin	820551
		Organist: Philip Moore	749356

**not available on Fridays

Dates for Diaries:

- 1st October 'Hell and High Water' The Blue Chicken Theatre Company, village hall (820683/820226)
- 8th October Local History Exhibition, Yalding Village Hall 10am—5pm
- 26th October Bridge Drive and Tea, Village Hall 2-5pm, £6, proceeds to church restoration (813527/820369)
- 26th November ZUM, village hall (820683)

All items for the November issue to the Editor as soon as possible, and by 15th October, please

'Do not be possessed by possessions'

In the last week of August, three removal vans at various times delivered furniture and effects to us. Neighbours may well have thought that there must be a family of at least 12 moving in!

Kind friends whose house where we were living in Swansea had said to us that we were welcome to any items of furniture if we so wished - and we did. That was one van. The second van contained some furniture and effects from my mother's house in Cornwall and the third van contained all my books and personal effects from Spain.

We have come to realise the truth of the saying : 'do not be possessed by possessions!' Words in the scriptures remind us: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (St Matthew 6, 9-21)

Thank you one and all for your kind welcome to us in the United Benefice. We particularly appreciated the wonderful bouquet of flowers which greeted us and the perfume which permeated the whole house.

It reminded me of St Paul's words when he wrote: "But thanks be to God who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of knowledge of him everywhere." He writes: "For we are the aroma of Christ to God (II Corinthians 2, v 14)

In thanking you for our welcome and the joy Diana and I felt at the induction service, I would like to say a particular thank you to Ruth and David for their care of the parishes during the interregnum. I look forward to working with them and the lay readers and all of us together as we seek to preach the Gospel and help people grow in the knowledge of Jesus.

In the meantime, we continue to make the Rectory into a home. Please always feel free to visit us if only for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat. With our love and prayers.

Peter and Diana Walker

David brings council back to full strength

Hunton parish councillors have appointed David StJohn of Old Savage Farmhouse, East Street to fill the casual vacancy which arose when Liz Oliver stepped down earlier this summer. Married to Suzie and with a young family of three children, he has lived in the village for 12 years. David, who works in London as an insurance broker at Lloyds, is keen to get involved with work for the good of the community. The next election for all seven places on the Council will be in 2008.

A meeting was arranged between Councillors and the KCC Public Rights of Way Officer to discuss the hazards where the Greensand Way crosses Hunton Hill. Chairman Roger Sawtell highlighted the dangers to walkers coming down the steep bank onto the road where motorists and lorry drivers can often be travelling at fairly high speeds. The lack of a handrail makes the problem worse. Members learnt that 90% of litter that can prove an eyesore in the village is thrown from cars. Something can now be done about this problem if those responsible are reported to the Borough Council's Litter Wardens. All that is required is a record of the vehicle registration number, date, place and time. Quotations are being obtained for a good quality gate from the car park to the Playing Field to prevent unwanted vehicle use but allow easy access for pushchairs and the disabled. There was a full discussion about the South East Plan Consultation Document. Members are to complete questionnaires and send them in. The lack of water resources for additional housing and land for jobs were the two main problems.

Out & Out

Autumn leaves make marvellous 'mould'

As Autumn approaches and the trees start to turn their glorious shades it is time to think about what to do with those leaves once they fall from the trees. Making leaf mould is the most eco friendly solution and there are various ways of doing it.

If you have only a few leaves (say a wheelbarrow load) then they can go on the compost heap preferably mixed with some lawn clippings to speed the composting process. Any more than this should be put into old compost or plastic bin bags and hidden away to rot for two years for fine compost or one year for a rougher compost.

For larger amounts of leaves construct an enclosure with posts and chicken wire and pack the leaves into this. I am experimenting with an enclosure which covers the whole of one or my vegetable beds. The leaves were put in this up to knee height, as they rot they will be pulled into the soil by worms, improving the soil and saving time moving the leaf mould. The enclosure is going to remain in place for a second year to retain the depth of leaf mould but I will be able to plant courgettes and squashes into the leaf mould and succulent soil beneath it.

I am also considering using one of the composters supplied by Kent County Council at Brookside Nurseries for my excess leaves. At a very reasonable £6 each this is an offer not to miss.

Christine McSweeney

Take a look back at Yalding's history

For residents interested in looking back over the years to times gone by in Yalding, a Local History Exhibition is being staged at the Village Hall on Saturday October 8th from 10am to 5pm. Tony Kremer who is helping to organise the event says: "The display includes fascinating maps and photographs of village landmarks with a special note of the social history of groups and families. There are also details of various transport systems such as the railway, along with the rivers. "Detailed aspects of various parts of the town are highlighted as well as Twyford bridges, the High Street and its shops, and how the village grew. Photographs dating back to 1890 will appeal to many," says Mr Kremer. Entrance fee will be £1.00 (50p for concessions).

Rector is looking forward to Kent challenge

In the last major event before it was closed, St Mary's church was packed with 160 people from the five parishes of the Benefice to welcome the Rev Peter Walker.

The service of Institution was performed by the Rt Rev Michael Gear, Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Rochester while the Induction was carried out by the Venerable Clive Mansell, Archdeacon of Tonbridge.

Hunton was honoured to be selected for the gathering and played its part well with the church looking magnificent with its floral displays while many from East and West Farleigh, Linton and Coxheath, commented on the warmth of the St Mary's hospitality.

Before ordination, Peter worked with a well-known High Street bank, before some years later moving to Australia to train for the Ministry with the 'Society of the Sacred Mission' in Adelaide, where he met Diana. After ordination he served for eight years in the Diocese of Tasmania. Returning to England Peter served for 13 years in rural parishes in Lincoln and Bath and Wells. At that point he and Diana felt called to go overseas once more, serving for three and half years with the Costa del Sol chaplaincy in Spain.

Peter, 55, is a great cricket lover and trained as an umpire at the Taunton county ground and has umpired a number of Church Times Cup matches in Bath and Wells as well as first division matches in the West Somerset league. Perhaps he can be persuaded next summer to get involved in the annual Hunton cricket match?

He also enjoys singing and has been involved with many choirs over the years, singing at one time in a male voice quintet. Talking of his life Down Under and on the Spanish coast, Peter says: "We have just gone where we felt called. And now we are looking forward to our time in Kent as an exciting challenge - it is a part of England that I am not familiar with although I grew up across the county border in Sussex."

Maidstone MP to visit school

MP for Maidstone and the Weald, Ann Widdecombe is due to visit Hunton School this month. The novelist and star of BBC2's 'Ann Widdecombe to the Rescue' asked to visit the primary school following a barrage of letters from Upper School outlining their views on battery hen farming. Ms Widdecombe will be invited to sample the school dinners during her visit - will she want seconds?

Dragons and Princesses is the theme of this term's Book Week. The children will come to school in fancy dress and parade their costumes at a special assembly.

Nine new reception children have been welcomed into the school. Headteacher Mrs Sue Wood said: "The children have settled into school life very quickly and they are warmly welcomed."

Events planned to boost club

The Greene King promotional launch evening at the Hunton Club went well, with a good turn-out. Sales of the East Anglian beer have been steady. Organisers say that it was nice to see some new, and old, faces and hope that people continue to call in for a pint. The Committee met in mid-September when the main item for discussion was a series of varied entertainment evenings, to help promote the Club. There have been suggestions of Club-run Race Nights, 60's events and Jazz evenings. Greene King has suggested a Wine & Cheese evening

Records needed to trace adders

An early autumn campaign has been mounted for Hunton's country-goers to join in and record sightings of the adder. Concern about declining adder populations in Kent is growing and these concerns are being mirrored nationwide. The Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (Krag) joined forces with The Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) in 2004 to highlight the plight of the adder in the county. It is thought that like many species the adder is likely to be under-recorded, however Krag firmly believe adder populations are declining. This coming year we are particularly interested in records from south Kent where knowledge of adder distribution is patchy at best, BUT all adder records will help to build an accurate picture of their whereabouts and understanding of their ecology. As the UK's only venomous snake the adder has suffered from years of persecution. Although the adder is now protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), its habitat and hibernation sites are not protected; yet it is recognised as an indicator species for heathland and mire as well as lowland acid grassland, such as Knole Park in Sevenoaks.

Early autumn is the perfect time to record adders as they shed their skin (slough) and often can be found basking close to their hibernation sites - in many cases knowing these sites, is more useful than seeing the adder itself. Collecting adder skin can be incredibly helpful as they can be used for DNA analysis by the KMBRC.

The adder (65cm length) has zigzag markings along the length of its back, but is sometimes mixed up with grass snakes, which are generally larger (120cm length) with two yellow patches at the back of the head. Grass snakes are often associated with water as they feed on frogs, but both snakes will eat small mammals. Male adders are generally greyer and brighter than the brownish females but both have the zigzag markings.

For more information on recording wildlife contact www.kentarg.org/adders_in_decline.htm or www.kmbrc.org.uk/

At St Mary's Church in October

Notices	Services
<p>Church Family Service Coffee Rota (11am) 2nd October: Mrs Holmes & Mrs Way 6th November: the Taylor family</p> <p>Hunton Sunday Club - meets on Sunday October 16th from 5.15 pm until 6.45 pm at 4 The Square, Hunton. Open to all children of primary school age. Please contact David Jones 741474 for further information.</p> <p>With St Mary's church firmly locked with no access to anyone, unless they gain permission and wear protective clothing, there will obviously be no chance this month for the volunteer workers to carry out their brass cleaning duties; or to create the flower arrangements or carry out the general cleaning process.</p> <p>When the church does eventually re-open, everyone will have to rally round to help with a thorough autumn clean so that worshippers can be welcomed back to a spick and span interior. Let's hope that the return is not too far away.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>(To be held in Village Hall until further notice – apart from the Harvest Festival Service which is to be held in the School Hall)</i></p> <p>Sunday 2nd - 19th Sunday after Trinity 11.00am Harvest Festival Service Revd. D Jones followed by refreshments Reading: Mark 10:13-16 OPEN COLLECTION FOR MAIDSTONE CHRISTIAN CARE</p> <p>Sunday 9th - 20th Sunday after Trinity 9.15am Holy Communion (1662) Revd D Jones Readings: Isaiah 25:1-9 Matthew 22:1-14</p> <p>Sunday 16th - 21st Sunday after Trinity 11.00am Morning Prayer Revd P Walker Readings: Isaiah 45:1-7 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10</p> <p>Sunday 23rd: - Last Sunday after Trinity - BIBLE SUNDAY 9.15am Holy Communion (CW) Revd P Walker Readings: Colossians 3:12-17 Matthew 24:30-35</p> <p>Sunday 30th - 4th Sunday before Advent 10.30am Benefice Service of Holy Communion At Linton</p> <p>Sunday 6th November 11am Church Family Service</p>

Annual Bereavement Service

The Annual 'Bereavement Service' for the Benefice will take place on Sunday October 30th at 3.00 pm at East Farleigh Church.

Benefice Service

October has five Sundays so Sunday October 30th will be a Benefice Service held at St Nicholas' Church, Linton at 10.30 am. The preacher will be the Rector the Rev Peter Walker. No other regular Sunday morning services will be held in the other churches of the benefice.

'Up & Running'

The Baby and Toddler Group has started up again after a short summer break. Held every Thursday from 1.30 pm until 3.00 pm at holy Trinity Church, Coxheath it is open to everyone in our five parishes. There is no charge, simply turn up and a welcome awaits.

September	2nd	9th	16th	23rd	30th
Coxheath	11.00 HC	9.15 MP	11.00 HC	11.00 CFS	Benefice Service of Holy Communion at St Nicholas' Linton 10.30am
E. Farleigh	10.30 Harvest Festival 6.00 Choral Evensong & Harvest Supper	8.00 HC 10.30 MP	11.00 Parish Worship	8.00 HC 10.30 MP	
Linton	9.15 HC	8.00 HC 11.00 Harvest Festival & Lunch	9.15 HC	9.15 HC	
W. Farleigh	8.00 HC 6.00 EA	11.00 CFS	9.15 HC	11.00 MP	

10am every Thursday—Holy Communion (1662) at Coxheath
 HC: Holy Communion MP: Morning Prayer CFS: Church Family Service EA: Evening Alternative

For Weddings, Thanksgivings, and Baptisms, please contact Revd David Jones (741474)