

HUNTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
22ND MAY 2017

REPORTS OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Hunton Bowls Club
By John Apsey

Hunton Bowls Club had a successful season last year. We play friendly mixed matches every weekend and also play in the Weald League as a mixed team on a Tuesday. We have a strong ladies team who play in the M & D League while our men play in the Men's Friday Night League.

We are only a small club but have a good reputation as being a friendly club and other clubs enjoy coming to Hunton. We are still in need of a few new members and it would be nice to get some from the local community.

We have been doing quite a lot of maintenance over the winter when there were no matches, as we had to replace the kitchen in our pavilion due to a burst pipe.

We are looking ahead and realise that our buildings are now quite old and will need to be replaced if our club is to keep going well into the future. With this in mind we have set up a small committee to look into what we can do to raise funds and apply for grants.

I would like to thank Simon for the advice he sent us about the way the cricket club went about updating their facilities. If there is anyone else with helpful advice it would be appreciated.

Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club
By Simon Taylor

Good evening, my name is Simon Taylor and I am chairman of Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club.

The club runs two Saturday sides in the Kent Regional Cricket League and a Sunday side in the Kent Village Cricket league. We also play a few friendly fixtures, mainly on Sundays, a couple of T20 evening fixtures and in recent years we have participated in the Maidstone indoor leagues during the winter months.

The last Annual Parish Meeting was held the day after the grand opening of the new pavilion; the charity event raised over £700 for the British Lung Foundation and was an unqualified success. So much so, that we are planning to hold a similar event this year on the 30th July, in aid of MIND, the mental health charity.

The pavilion has been in full use for over a year now and continues to be admired by visiting teams. It has weathered well over the winter and, with a little repainting and the replacement of a couple of roof tiles, has been fully restored to its new looking status. We have added an extra area of decking at the front of the building this Spring, enabling more spectators to be seated.

Depending on how much the external timbers weather in the glorious summer sun, we are considering treating the building with a coloured wood preservative this autumn to keep it looking bright and well maintained.

Our playing surface did not winter so well; we carried out our autumn groundworks in one of the driest spells of the year and the grass seed did not germinate very well; when it did rain at last in November, it poured and poured, washing half of the seed away and leaving us with a thick crust of mud on the square, which prevented much of the grass that had germinated from getting through.

Thankfully, the square is at last starting to recover, partially due to the recent rainfall and in part due to the efforts of our new ground manager, Simon May, who has taken on the thankless job of preparing wickets for our teams every week.

Last year we obtained grant funding, thanks to the ECB and our local County Councillor, Paulina Stockell, for a new set of wicket covers to help us get games on when the forecast is for rain in the days prior to a match. It did take us a while to work out when to put them on and take them off, and this led to a series of infamous exchanges between captains and the ground preparation team which became known as “Covergate”.

As far as our teams are concerned, our Saturday 1st XI held its own in Division 1A Central of the Kent Regional Cricket League, our Sunday XI were promoted for the fourth season in a row to Division 3 of the Kent Village Cricket League and our Saturday 2nd XI offered the opportunity for the old crocks and youngsters to enjoy getting thrashed by the second XIs from much stronger clubs – still they came back for more, so must have enjoyed it.

To end on a serious note, we have just conceded our first Sunday league game of the season (the first time we have conceded a Sunday game for nearly 10 years) due to lack of players – only 3 made themselves available for this particular fixture. We hope this is a one off, but against the background of a nationwide decline in recreational cricket, it is quite worrying. We know of 4 or 5 teams who folded completely last year and we are currently playing teams that used to have 3 or 4 sides and now only have one or two. There does seem to be an underlying trend – county matches are being played in virtually empty grounds and the only formats of the game that attract large crowds are test matches and T20 games.

When we launched our bid for funding for a new pavilion in 2014 our objective was to grow the club, but it now seems that, at least for a few years, we will do well to continue to run 3 sides.

This leads me to my rather obvious closing statement, which is that if there is anybody within the village, or indeed from within a 250 mile radius, who you know would like to pick up a cricket bat or ball and play at our lovely ground, please ask them to get in touch.

Hunton Village Club By Philip Nichols

Since the last report there has been quite a lot of activity at the Club which continues to be used by different sections of the community and is gradually seeing its use change from its historical links, dating back to 1956, from a Working Men’s Club to a true village centre. The Club hosts yoga classes, WI meetings, the Book Group, the Gardening Group, Needles and Natter gatherings, two darts teams, quiz nights for the Pre School, Bowls Club and Club itself, the starting point for Village walks followed by a light lunch, Karaoke nights, wine tasting evenings, seasonal lunches, the Pop Up Shop and we even had a beer and cider festival last year. The wine tasting and supper nights have also been extremely popular and we are extremely grateful to Graham Ashlin and his company’s generosity in donating the wines, not forgetting the efforts of Lesley and Roger Lee and their band of volunteers who provide the excellent supper. The Club is also available for member’s private hire, Shirley Parnell celebrated her birthday with family and friends just last Saturday.

The past year has seen the finances take quite a beating, with funds being spent on a new central heating boiler and oil tank plus replacement of all the surrounding flat roofs, roof insulation and refurbishment of the gabled tiles. The total costs were in excess of £20,000 and is testament to all of the voluntary work and fund raising events that have taken place over the past few years that we were able to finance these. However, that leaves the coffers fairly empty and we still have the kitchen project ahead of us. As mentioned in previous reports, we are unable to prepare any foodstuffs for sale on the premises and a kitchen is needed. It is thought that some members and volunteers could do much of the

work, this would keep the overall costs down. I have sent out a newsletter to members to see what help may be forthcoming but meantime we need to build up reserves again before we can commit to work commencing. As a short-term measure we have been able to save sore backs by raising the sink in the bar. The work was carried out by volunteers at little cost.

We are also aware that the frontage is in need of a facelift as the hedge is leaning into the public footpath. However, the cost of removing the hedge and holly tree stumps by the entrance and replacing them with a picket style fence is currently too expensive for us. We have investigated the possibility of obtaining grants for some of these projects but this has proved very difficult as we do not have a charitable status and being a members' club creates obstacles for such things. We have a Club Premises Licence for the sale of alcohol and that determines that we remain a members' club.

The Club is a big asset to the Village and we can all be proud of our achievements in keeping it running on a voluntary basis for so long.

We do need two or three more volunteers to help run the bar, just one session per month would be helpful. We also need some more help on the Management Committee. I took back the role of Club Secretary when Liz could not continue after just one year and I am also Chairman. I resigned as Chairman at the last AGM in December but as there were no volunteers to take over I agreed to continue for a few months until a replacement is found. Unfortunately, to date no one has come forward and I will not be continuing into 2018. I believe I am correct in saying the Club cannot legally function without a Secretary or Chairman. The roles are not particularly onerous and I am quite happy to continue with much of the practical work, such as beer line cleaning etc, so I sincerely hope someone will come forward.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the volunteers that have helped to keep the Club functioning by raising money and helping out at the various events. The work, time and effort are greatly appreciated not just by me but the whole community.

Hunton Club Book Groups **By Tricia Nichols**

The book group continues to survive and we are now in our 12th year. From the original group of about 10 we grew and later formed a second unit. We discovered that too many in a group was not conducive to good discussions as, with the way of women, alternative conversation erupted and the theme moved away from books! The two groups continued running until membership in both groups began to dwindle. This was due to various reasons including members moving from Hunton and other commitments taking precedence. So, last July the two groups combined bringing our number to 8. We continue with this number and discussion works well.

Yalding Library continue to supply the books to us monthly which is an absolute boon and we are grateful to the staff there who are so accommodating in gathering our suggested books from across Kent. We read a mixed variety and it is interesting to note differing opinions. Among the books most enjoyed this past year are *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce and *The Children Act* by Ian McEwan.

You may have noticed that *The Herald* does not always publish a book review. We spent many of the 12 years ardently writing a review of each book but have sadly neglected this task. So they may display our findings at Yalding Library, the staff there have requested that a small account be written by all the book groups they support. We have met this request and so, in future, will share this with *The Herald*.

We hope to continue our monthly meetings at the club and promise you that we do indeed discuss the books before we allow nature to take over and female gossip begin.

Huntonwatch

By Steve Wyles

In our fourth year, membership numbers have remained steady with a few people moving out of the area and a few newcomers joining.

We have seen the usual mixture of scams, thefts from outbuildings and gardens and general minor crimes being reported from the surrounding villages, although once again Hunton seems to have been impacted rather less than some other areas. Sadly though, we have seen a few more incidents than in previous years. These include theft of tools from a rear garden, theft from the boot of a parked car, attempted theft of tools and equipment from a parked truck and the attempted theft of dogs from a locked enclosure (the latter two involving the same vehicle). In addition, we have had two incidents at the village hall where police have had to attend private functions being held there. In one of these (the charity rave), there were a number of injuries to attendees (sadly the CCTV recording had been overwritten before the police were able to view it) and in the second, a teenage party got out of hand (this time police were able to review the CCTV footage captured by the security cameras).

At this point in time, Huntonwatch is still unable to help with the viewing of CCTV recordings so the responsibility for this remains, rather unfairly, on just one person's shoulders.

We have received a number of calls and reports about vehicles being seen in suspicious circumstances and people trespassing on private property. The information provided was passed to the police and added to their database for analysis and action, as and if required.

It seems that police funding is hitting us here in Hunton, as it is nationwide, and we are now on our sixth PCSO since starting in 2013. We have recently met our newly appointed PCSO (Jasmine) and will continue to work closely with her as we have with her predecessors.

Whilst a major focus of Huntonwatch is to do with reporting and reducing crime, we also try to provide a community support network.

Last winter was, fortunately, a kind one weather wise and although we once again had a number of 4x4 owners who had volunteered to help out should the need arise, there was no need to call on their services. We will, once again, be seeking volunteers to be on standby for the coming winter.

We have helped with the reporting of lost animals and the reuniting of six dogs and three pigs with their owners. We have reported sheep and horses in difficulty, allowing their owners to come and deal with the problem and tried to identify the owner of a deceased cat – sadly without success. In one particular incident, we worked very closely with the Traveller community to reunite a lost dog with its owner.

This year, Huntonwatch has taken on the responsibility for maintaining a record of all road safety incidents reported in the village - to include near misses, actual collisions and disruption caused by large lorries using our narrow lanes. The database is made available to the Parish Council at regular intervals to assist with their work on trying to make our roads safe for all users.

Huntonwatch continues to be active and enthusiastic and we are very grateful to the entire team for their invaluable support.

Hunton Herald
By Helen Ward

It's been another busy year at The Herald with much going on in the village. We hope you've found our reports informative and interesting. We're grateful to the various organisations and individuals within the village who keep us updated with news of their events and activities – we do rely on your contributions so please keep them coming!

Being a monthly publication, there are sometimes events organised (and cancelled) at short notice, and other news - emergency road closures for instance - that don't make it into the Herald. You'll find the most up to date information on the Hunton Facebook page and community group, by following our Twitter account or on the Hunton website, all of which are updated regularly by the Herald team.

Our Local Business Directory that was introduced last year has been well received and a new 2017/18 edition went out for the first time with the May Herald. We have a number of new advertisers, so please do take a look and support them when possible, as it is this advertising revenue that pays for our production costs and allows us to make donations to good causes within the village. After two successful years of advertising we do have some funds available, so if you have any suggestions of where a small donation would benefit the village, please do let us know.

Whilst on the subject of advertising, we must thank Sue Pinks, our advertising coordinator, for her hard work and innovative approach – she has been a great asset to the Herald team. However, she wishes to step down and we are looking for someone willing to take over this crucial role. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please speak to me or Sue and we can give you more information as to what's involved.

Thanks must also go to the rest of the Herald team – Dudley Farman, Lisa Halliday and James Forster – for their valuable work behind the scenes doing the layout, organising the printing and deliveries and managing our finances, as well as the many people throughout the village who deliver the Herald each month.

We look forward to bringing you more community news in the coming year. If there is anything you would like us to include or if you have any suggestions for improvement, please do get in touch.

Speedwatch
By Helen Ward

The Speedwatch team has been active over the last year, carrying out 16 hour-long sessions in total. We have recorded in excess of 150 speeding vehicles, which is those travelling at 35mph or over in the 30mph limit on West Street. Twelve letters of advice have been sent by the police as a result, six to drivers who have been reported on more than one occasion and six to drivers travelling at excessive speed, in this case between 45 and 55 mph. During 2017 we have seen a slight decrease in the average speed of vehicles and I'm pleased to report that we have not seen any excessive speeders, with the fastest recorded being 42mph.

The temporary 20mph limit outside the school has now been made permanent with flashing lights and improved signage and we hope that drivers will take note and reduce their speed accordingly.

It is clear from the data we have gathered that when the Speedwatch team is out regularly it does have an impact. It's important that we continue to maintain a roadside presence, particularly as the volume of traffic through the village is likely to increase with large numbers of new houses being built locally.

However, as the current volunteers all lead very busy lives, it is becoming increasingly difficult to put a team together and we have managed only three sessions this year so far. We urgently need more volunteers and also someone with

basic computer literacy willing to coordinate the sessions. I took over as coordinator temporarily when Steve Wyles stepped down last summer but am finding that I really don't have the time and need someone else to take on this role.

As things stand currently, the Hunton Speedwatch is at risk of folding, so I would ask anyone concerned about speeding in our village if they would consider giving a little of their time, even if it is only an hour here and there.

Lorry Watch **By Jonny Goddard**

Lorry Watch is a joint project between KCC, Kent Police and local parishes and involves volunteers who record details of any HGVs that are seen within a restricted weight limit zone. We are now running Lorry Watch in Hunton because of the high level of HGV traffic that passes along East Street from Redwall Lane and Marden.

Details of all lorries seen within the zone are passed to Kent Police who use the registration number to obtain the contact details of the company that owns the truck. If the vehicle is seen more than once in the restricted zone the company is contacted by the Police.

If the vehicle is legitimately accessing an address within the restricted zone and has used the shortest route within the zone to get there then the local parish is informed, but if the HGV is breaching a weight restriction and does not have business in the area or is merely passing through the restricted zone, then the company concerned is warned by Police.

We have also collected HGV data from Mike Summersgill, who lives opposite the Redwall Lane junction, and Helen Ward, who lives at the Amsbury entrance, and I have combined this with Lorry Watch data. Since April 2016, there have been 86 HGVs seen on Hunton's roads. It's obviously highly likely there have been many more than that, but they have gone unrecorded.

Further to the HGV issue, Hunton Parish Council is applying to KCC to move the 7.5 ton sign from the bottom of Hunton Hill on East Street along the road to just beyond the exit of Amsbury Farm. In this way we want to commence the weight limit zone at Amsbury Farm so HGVs can access the address via Hunton Hill without entering a restricted zone. Consequently, if HGVs are seen on any other part of the East Street weight limit zone approaching from the east, then they will be in clear breach of the weight restriction because they should access via Hunton Hill.

King George V Playing Field Committee **By Simon Taylor**

Good evening, my name is Simon Taylor and I am chairman of the King George V Playing Field Committee.

For those of you unfamiliar with its purpose, the committee is responsible for administering and maintaining the playing fields next to the village hall. The Field was acquired by the Parish Council in 1937, dedicated to the memory of King George V and is held upon charitable trust to be used in perpetuity as a playing field for the local community. As such, it is one of the focal points of the village, particularly considering its location next to the Church and the Village Hall.

The committee meets once every 2 months, including an annual meeting at which we walk round the field, note any items that need attention and set out our objectives for the next year.

It comprises trustees from each of the sports clubs that use the field, from the parish council and also co-opted trustees from the village.

This year, I took over as chairman from Danny Peacock, to whom I would like to extend my thanks for his hard work in previous years.

Since the last Annual Village Meeting, we have addressed a number of items in an effort to improve the amenities at the field.

- A new pedestrian gate has recently been installed at the field entrance to match the field gate and post and rail fencing abutting the car park, installed in April 2016;
- In the light of some problems with bin emptying we have changed contractor from Maidstone Borough Council to RIP Cleaning Services at a saving of approximately £1,400 per year;
- We have reviewed the contract for grass cutting to ensure that the field is cut at appropriate times during the year;
- We are currently in the process of applying for funding for the provision of new play equipment; originally, we were looking to replace the existing multiplay unit with a twin tower wooden unit but the costs seems disproportionately high, so we are currently considering the resurfacing of the area around the multiplay, some renovation work to the unit itself and the installation of a new nest swing and safety surface between the multiplay unit and the field boundary;
- The field boundaries have been tidied up with the assistance of Robert Cox, who has undertaken various cutting, strimming and clearing jobs for us;
- We have liaised with the Parish Council and the Tree Warden, Mike Summersgill, in the commission of an audit of the trees on the field for safety and condition. A number of trees needed attention and I'm sure Mike will elaborate in his report. One large tree, a rather splendid Turkey Oak, is unfortunately looking quite the worse for wear;

We try to keep up with routine matters – moles and rabbits are the best example – although our small furry friends seemed determined to outwit us whatever we do. Personally, I think a small tactical nuclear weapon may prove to be the best option, although the collateral damage probably doesn't justify this approach.

In conclusion, I'd like to thank my fellow committee members for their input and contributions both on a practical level and also at our meetings, which are always entertaining and sometimes quite lively.

Hunton Parish Plan Steering Committee
By Annette Trought

The Parish Plan Steering Committee in its seventh year and oversees the projects which were priorities voted for by village residents, including both the condition of the highways and the speed and volume of traffic. The remit of the Committee is to ensure timely delivery of project outcomes; sourcing and application for relevant funding; engagement with the Parish Council to ensure their awareness of plan priorities and to seek support and advice. The Committee started off meeting six times a year, but meetings are now twice a year as so much of the Parish Plan work has been embedded in the village.

Highways and transport are the top area of concern for residents. The Parish Council continues to work on these concerns. The Parish Plan led to the formation of the Hunton Speedwatch group. This group has been very active but is currently struggling to find enough new members to continue.

The Community Orchard saw the erection of new rustic chestnut fencing and 3 gates last year. These were funded from the Kent Orchards for Everyone Project of which Hunton is one of 15 orchards receiving Heritage Lottery Funding. Hunton Engineering have generously donated a bench and table which will be in situ during the summer. The group is looking at the provision of 1 or 2 more similar tables with seating.

Other workgroups and projects currently active are: litter picking; Fete; Pop Up Shop; Neighbourhood Watch; Communications Strategy. Our communications strategy has seen the development of the Hunton Facebook page and the Hunton Community Facebook page.

Hunton Litter Picking Team

By Di Martin

Litter is a huge problem not just for Hunton but countrywide. I am pleased to say we have a very reliable team of volunteers who are prepared to give up their time to keep our village tidy. The roads around the village are very busy and quite dangerous in places, making clean ups very hazardous so I am inclined to put volunteers cleaning in areas where they know the road. Several residents also carry out occasional clean ups under their own steam and I am very appreciative for this.

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting we have carried out three further clean ups in the village.

The first was on 11 June 2016 and 15 people volunteered for this. The collection for this was 30 sacks of general rubbish, car tyres and miscellaneous items.

The second one was held on 22 October 2016. There were 11 volunteers for this and we collected 23 sacks of general litter, 6 tyres, an oil drum, 1 golf trolley, 1 clothes horse a baby bouncer, plywood and assorted car body parts.

The third clean-up was on 4 March 2017. This clean was part of a country wide event to coincide with the Queen's 90th birthday and was very well supported by the county. Our collection towards this was 25 sacks of general rubbish, 16 car tyres and 12 commercial gas cylinders which had been dumped in a field on the border of Hunton/Chainhurst.

I would like to thank everyone involved with the litter picks for giving up their valuable time to keep Hunton neat and tidy and I think we do a brilliant job. Our next event will be on 10 June at 10 a.m.

Hunton Village Hall Committee

By Mike Summersgill

The Village Hall Committee comprises 7 Trustees, two of whom are Parish Councillors and 3 others represent the Church, Village and Pre-School users, plus the Bookings Secretary & Treasurer (who manage the Hall on a voluntary basis; a Cleaner and (new) Caretaker helping with upkeep as needed).

Last year was another 'successful' year for the Hall, with 15 weddings and many other weekend events and day hires for parties, plus two Applause plays and five musical events (attended by a range of 37 – 87 people). The Hall is already booked for 15 weddings in 2017 (we have a self-imposed limit of 15 in a calendar year), and a couple in 2018. We have decided to hold less musical events in 2017; any surplus from such events isn't now as crucial to the Hall's funds as previously.

The Pre-School use the Hall every weekday morning and on two afternoons during term-time; Judo now use the Hall one midweek evening (for youngsters); no new midweek evening users this year.

We didn't have too many cost calls in 2016, after the significant expenditures in 2014/15 on flooring, decoration and the collapse of the sewerage plant. We did get the main hall repainted last Summer and bought new hot water boilers (the main one having failed quite recently, causing kitchen ceiling damage). We've also recently spent some funds on replacing 2 drainage manholes and clearing vegetation, and we intend to spend some more on internal redecoration in 2017, after we've installed the new blinds. We're maintaining a healthy surplus each year and building reserves up.

Medium term planning includes re-sanding the sprung floor, and possibly renovating the kitchen with Council grant aid (if available), as well as the Parish Council hopefully arranging to re-paint the outside. We are grateful to the Parish for assisting with making Community events/usage of the Hall free of charge and would again like to gratefully

acknowledge the unsung efforts of many volunteer parishioners in keeping this facility running and helping out when assistance is needed.

Peace Cottages Charity
By Reverend Peter Callway

Peace Cottages Charity was established in 1899 as a charity to provide housing for the elderly people of Hunton. The row of five cottages was built as an attractive single storey building on the corner of West Street and Bishops Lane, opposite the village primary school. They are surrounded by pretty gardens and the back garden overlooks fields.

The cottages are held in trust by the Diocese of Rochester and are currently occupied by five ladies.

The charity is run by a small number of volunteer trustees who meet every two months. All trustees are required to acquaint themselves with the residents' handbook and the Almshouse Association handbook which contain details of trustees' responsibilities and the regulations relating to almshouses.

The trustees are Mrs Ruth Porter, Mr Roger Sawtell, Mrs Alison Ellman-Brown, Mrs Liz Oliver, Ms Fay Joyce, Ms Celia Kennedy-Stone, and myself (Rev Peter Callway). We are delighted that Fay and Celia have become trustees and are already making a great contribution. Ruth Porter, a Trustee for 16 years, has decided to step down which we are very sad about. Ruth has made an amazing contribution.

The premise is that housing is made available for those who wish to stay living in Hunton but who are not able to finance it themselves. This provides a degree of community cohesion, as a requirement of the charity scheme is that residents of the cottages must have been previously resident or have a strong connection to the Parish of Hunton. In addition, as the residents are generally elderly, the cottages provide the benefit of enabling them to retain their independence in their own homes as the cottages are closely supervised by the trustees.

The residents' weekly maintenance contribution is reviewed each year and because we are a charity and have a reasonable reserve fund to cover future repairs and developments, the contribution has not increased this year.

We continue to make some substantial repairs and improvements as highlighted in the quinquennial inspection carried out in 2015 including the overhaul of all external joinery, repairs to guttering as well as to internal carpeting and smoke alarms.

Future plans under consideration include a new heating system to replace the individual cottages storage heaters; and supply of some parking spaces for residents and visiting care staff and relations. This addition will require the demolition of the garage, and the possibility of the purchase of some land from the adjacent land owner and discussions are ongoing.

There is a register of interest for those who might wish to become residents at some time in the future, and we hope that the provision will continue for at least another 120 years whilst there is still need.

Hunton Tree and Pond Warden
By Mike Summersgill

Mike Summersgill took over this role in 2014, from Anne Bishop. Previous information (chiefly on the Tree aspects) is still missing; this may not actually be recovered now.

Mike has been carrying out a survey of the Ponds and Ditches in the Parish, as part of Biodiversity aspects within his Parish Plan Steering Group role. That hydrological study is continuing, but most drainage routes in the Parish are generally known; ownership of ditches and ponds is not complete.

In respect of Trees, Mike has attended further Kent Tree & Pond Partnership training this past year, covering pond monitoring and tree pollination aspects. These have a nil course fee to the Parish, due to our annual voluntary contributions to Kent Tree & Pond Partnership. We hosted a 'recording day' for 7 tree wardens in September at Hunton Court grounds, led by the Hadlow tree warden; this allowed us to learn and practice how to record trees. Comparing our results against records of some trees made 20 years ago also provides good information for the national archive; we have both the tallest and widest Cork Oak trees in Kent in the Parish, plus other major specimens at Hunton Court.

The parish commissioned a Condition Survey of its own trees on the Playing Field & Parish Hall area, something that is recommended to be done every few years. The results of that professional survey meant that one Poplar tree had to be felled, and one Oak cleared of dead branches. All the Limes around the Hall were cleared of trunk debris and a couple were further trimmed, but all seem to be healthy. The Hornbeam out the front of the Hall was crown-lowered, to prevent over-hanging limbs.

Cost to the Parish of the Condition Survey and two days of tree work was just over £1,000.

Hunton Walking Group **By Ann Sawtell**

We have enjoyed 24 walks since our last update. All of these have had sunshine apart from three wet walks. We must be very good folk to be blessed in this way.

We have not ventured far this season and revisited some of our old favourites. No real incidents to report, apart from losing Phil in Shorne Woods. It was rather like the Agatha Christie tale "then there were none", as we subsequently lost another two who had gone to look for him.

Walkers are mainly our original group from the formation in 2011, we are all older but no wiser, perhaps more forgetful, we are fitter but less agile and welcome the odd helping hand over many a rickety style.

We are a close group who have shared each other's ups and downs, a birth and another death this year. Like Les, Maurice kept walking until near the end. We all greatly miss his wise words of wisdom and his Irish wit.

We are now experts on pubs serving good ales, with Roger Lee, Phil Nichols and Mike Summersgill being our chief tasters. They have only managed to get us barred from returning to one pub during the year.

We are not organised enough for a program of walks, we just decide a couple of days prior to a walk on what takes our fancy, it seems to work, there is certainly a lot of chatter and laughter ringing out.

As with other Hunton Groups, all are welcome to join us on 2nd and 4th Monday of the month.

Hunton WI **By Jane Langdon**

Hunton WI has enjoyed another eventful year for the ladies and friends of our small village.

We have again learned a lot and been entertained by a wide variety of speakers at our monthly meetings. Particularly memorable ones included:

Alison Surridge and her 'House of Rhythm', this was an exhilarating evening with everyone taking their part playing African drums, resulting in a stunning final performance!

A talk by Melanie Gibson-Barton on the city of Bruges made us think that this would make an interesting weekend break.

A couple from the village, David and Sue Heaton, have set up a smallholding, producing high quality pork from Gloucester Old Spot pigs (Spot On Produce). They gave us a highly amusing and informative talk on their efforts to set up their business.

We again held a Christmas Craft evening in November, as this was so popular last year. This time we turned our hands to making quilling Christmas cards (very fiddly but worth it!), and peg fairies for the tree.

We decided against a traditional Christmas Party this year and the committee put on a 'Murder Mystery' evening. We do not appear to have an aspiring Sherlock in our midst, as no one was able to correctly identify the murderer.

We have continued with our occasional theatre trips, the latest being to Gary Barlow's 'Calendar Girls', which was thoroughly enjoyed by all who went.

Our 'Open Meetings' have proved to be very popular, both with non-members and with the men in the village, helped no doubt by having a licenced bar at the village club! We try to provide speakers who will appeal to a wide audience, and the numbers attending suggest we have succeeded.

The journalist Bob Ogley's talk on 'Doodlebugs and Rockets' recounted how Kent became known as Doodlebug Alley in WW11. Some members of the audience even had personal memories of those events.

Hunton Gardening Club **By Lesley Lee**

Like so many other groups in our village, Hunton Gardening Club only exists because volunteers are willing to give up their time.

In 2016, Des & Lynne Garnham again ran the Plant & Produce stand at Hunton Fete and, thanks to their efforts, their helpers, those who grew and donated plants and produce as well as those who purchased items, raised a record amount for village projects.

Gardening Club members continued to help to maintain St Mary's Churchyard, and contributed produce to the Pop-Up shops.

Our two annual social evenings and suppers included a 'Save our Magnificent Meadows' presentation by Mary Tate from the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership which resulted in several villagers starting their own small wild flower meadows. We also enjoyed a talk from Hadlow Tree Warden, David Carey, who works with our own tree warden Mike Summersgill, about ancient trees and in particular ones in and around Hunton.

In June during an evening visit to three local Hall farms followed by supper, we learnt from Peter Hall about growing organic crops, flood minimisation and conservation work and from Ray Morris on how the RSPB works with farmers to protect and encourage our birds.

New members are always welcome, whether they are experienced professional gardeners or just interested in maintaining their own gardens or simply visiting ones created by other people.

Hunton Primary School
By Stuart Murdoch

I took over as Headteacher in March, with Ed Ming as Assistant Headteacher.

The relationship between the school and the community has not been that strong in the last three years, but we would like to build up that relationship. We have already held a meeting with the Hunton Herald editor, with children from the school contributing to the Herald.

St Mary's Church
By Alison Ellman-Brown

St Mary's has found itself in a very healthy position. Yes, we need more people on Sunday mornings, but the support we have from our community, for which we are very grateful, is amazing.

High days and special events are always well supported, not only in attendance, but also taking part in the event itself.

I would like to thank all those who have managed to raise funds to keep St Mary's in such a good state.

The church is well supported by the village hall for weddings, thanks to Kathy Reid.

Our lunches with Lesley Lee and her team have been a great community effort and enjoyed outside the village.

The churchyards are really looking in good condition and these are important, as is the internal refurbishment of the church, which was completed at the end of last year. Many thanks must be given for all monies raised by grants and fund raisers. The Friends of St Mary's have been, as always, a huge support.

Thanks are also due to Rector Peter Callway and his ministry team, along with all participants in services.

Friends of St Mary's
By Ron Porter

We have enjoyed another successful year thanks to the support we receive from so many of you as Members, attending our Supper Dance, eating our beef burgers and hot dogs and through the generosity of village organisations such as the Christmas Market through Ann Sawtell. Ann has stepped down from running that successful annual event and we at Friends would like to publicly thank her for allowing us to take part each year and for having a share of the proceeds.

The internal redecoration of the Church was completed last year and it really has made a stunning difference. Sadly, those decorations were slightly damaged by water just above the door but we are assured that the PCC have that in hand. If you have not seen the interior then you should try if you have the chance.

The PCC are awaiting the Quinquennial review which inter alia shows what priorities for the maintenance of the Church are required. That review is imminent but we at Friends are already considering repair to the outside perimeter wall, the pointing of the tower and possibly refurbishment of the listed gravestones. The PCC is looking at the possibility of installing a toilet in the Church and, with FOSM funding, the maintenance of the Church and its surroundings does help them with their plans by giving them much greater flexibility.

This year we will be at the Fete as usual and Sue and Lawrence Martin are holding just one open train day this year on Sunday 30th July and we at Friends will be the beneficiaries of that. I hope that many of you will come and enjoy the new extended track. Each ride is now about 20 minutes long, plus teas and refreshments and children's entertainment. At the Christmas Santa event the Martins had to turn away 100 ticket applications, such is the popularity of this event,

so please make sure you apply in time. Details will appear in the Hunton Herald soon. Before moving on I must just mention that Lawrence Martin, as one of the Trustees of the Cobtree Trust, obtained a grant of £3,000 for us, which went towards the redecoration project.

Please keep supporting us the way that you do and if any of you wish to become Members please contact our Membership Trustee Ian Pinks on 820709.

Finally, I must not close without thanking the Trustees. Without them and their hard work, often including their families, none of this would happen. In addition to Ian, our Membership Trustee, they are: Mary Goddard, Lucy Dickinson, Kate Banks, Lisa Dolman, Lisa Halliday (Secretary), Jenny Vickers, David Heaton (Treasurer) and Roger Sawtell.