

HUNTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
19TH MAY 2025

REPORTS OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Hunton Bowls Club
By Les Hill

I am the Chairman of Hunton Bowls Club.

We started off the 2024 season with our membership raring to go and looking forward to a full outdoor summer season playing bowls. We have signed on 37 playing members and 10 associated members.

During the winter months when the club is closed, we still have to maintain the green alongside other maintenance work that requires attention. This involves scarifying and re-dressing the green, with weekly visits in all weathers to brush off the worm casts to allow new growth.

At the end of last season, we had some damage to our fence panels which resulted in us having to replace 16 of them with new ones. Thankfully, this cost was only to purchase them and the able bodied members of the club replaced them all in one session.

The committee also agreed to replace the flooring in the clubhouse and with the help of one of our members we were able to do this at a reduced cost. The chairs also used in the clubhouse had finally seen better days, so we purchased 24 second hand ones in excellent condition for £350. The downside to this resulted in two of our embers travelling to Norfolk to collect them,

I would like to mention at this point that we lost one of our longstanding members, Alwyn Chapman. Alwyn was a strong, lovely and well respected lady. She had requested only family flowers at her funeral and all donations were to be given to Hunton Bowls Club. Therefore, the chairs were purchased in her honour.

As of this year, we have 38 playing members and we are looking forward to the new season. We have a full fixture list with friendly, Weald and Maidstone & District Weald games.

Finally, on behalf of Hunton Bowls Club, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Council and the Field Committee for their continued support in every aspect.

Hunton Village Club
By Roger Lee

This report covers the period of the last 12 months during which time the Club has held a number of events including:

- Plant and Produce sale
- Beer festival
- Green Hop weekend (a new event we intend to continue)
- Walks and lunches
- Wine tastings
- Quiz nights
- Several private hires
- Football and rugby internationals
- Packing tea boxes for the local community

- Monthly Gents evenings
- Ladies nights
- Gardening Club meetings and suppers
- Yoga mornings
- Hunton Book Group
- Singing events
- Mexican Night
- New Year's Eve party

The Club has been open to members on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday evenings when regular dart playing also takes place. Attendance on Fridays has been variable and we are looking at various options to address this. As at our AGM in December we had over 130 members which is the same as last year but we are still striving to increase this number.

Finances are generally in good shape although we have a number of repairs and refurbishments in the pipeline such as external painting. We are now deregistered for VAT as planned. To continue our policy of making improvements we replaced the glass washer, beer pumps, lines and equipment, repaired external woodwork, put in a new bar top and back bar downlights.

Last year we co-opted Zoe Webb and Kerry Larkin to the committee after Nic Rudd resigned due to work commitments. We are also keen to hear from anyone who would like to volunteer for helping at events and running the bar.

Hunton Book Group **By Christine Summersgill**

Hunton Book Group has 7 members and meets at Hunton Club on the second Wednesday of each month. Coxheath Library supplies us with copies of the books recommended by group members. We have enjoyed several books this year including "Lessons in Chemistry" by Bonnie Garmas, "The Bee Keeper of Aleppo" by Christi Lefteri and also an old favourite "A Town Like Alice" by Neville Shute. New members are always welcome.

Huntonwatch **By Sue & Steve Wyles**

Judging by the fact that over the last year Huntonwatch has sent out considerably more notices about road closures than regarding criminal activity, it would appear that Hunton remains a safe place to live. There have been very few incidents to report and we are grateful to our members for bringing these to our attention but as a result this report is quite brief.

During the first Covid lockdown the Parish Council provided Huntonwatch with a dedicated mobile phone, primarily to help us organise a meds collection service. We still have that phone, but it is rarely used and as O2 has advised that it now needs upgrading, we have decided to return the mobile and use our home phone as the Huntonwatch contact number instead.

There has been much talk of late about increasing the number of police officers on the beat. Hunton has been assigned two "beat officers" and we have recently made contact with them. Sadly, their workload seems heavy, so it remains to be seen whether there is any increase in police presence or in response to reports from the village. We did inform the officers about this meeting and suggested they might take this opportunity to introduce themselves, but one is on annual leave and we have not received a reply from the other.

Membership numbers remain steady with around one third of the village signed up.

As always, we would like to thank the Parish Council for its support and hope that Huntonwatch can look forward to another quiet year in the village.

Traffic & Road Safety Working Party
By Mike Summersgill

This Working Group consists of three Councillors and three residents, and meets about 3-4 times a year, looking at both ongoing problems and new matters that anyone has reported. Over the year, concerns about HGVs and large agricultural vehicles causing damage to verge and road edges were raised, blocked culverts were repeatedly reported (with some success on West & East Streets, but not Redwall Lane), and also the number of skid accidents during the cold snap reiterated the need for more salt bins (which the Parish had agreed to fund, but liaison with KCC is slow). The T&RSWG feeds back to the Parish Council and amends the Kent HIP (Highways Improvement Plan) for decisions and actions. In the past year, the Parish instigated a separate consultation on the whole of Hunton's traffic concerns and this is still in the throes of being finalised, led by Cllr Iain Simmons.

SpeedWatch
By Mike Summersgill

We have six volunteers trained for SpeedWatch operations, and two more due to take the online test. Because of a combination of availability and weather, we hadn't managed a SpeedWatch from October to February but re-started it in March. Since the last APM, we have held 11 sessions at the Hall or the Club, and recorded 35 speeding motorists, of which 3 were sent letters by Kent Police for repeat offending (most of the rest were 'first offenders'); we also had the Police attend twice and do their own speed monitoring with a more sophisticated hand-held 'gun', catching two more speeders.

King George V Playing Field Committee
By David Heaton

The King George V Playing Field Committee is a registered charity managed by two representatives from each of the Bowls Club, Cricket Club, Football Club and Parish Council. We meet every two months at the Village Club, except for the meeting in July, when we meet at the cricket pavilion instead as we also walk the boundary and hold the AGM on the same evening.

The work of the Committee is funded by a grant from the Parish Council, for those parts of the field not separately maintained by the sports clubs. This funding is used for regular maintenance, such as grass cutting, strimming, hedge cutting and bin emptying, as well as one-off and capital expenditure.

The play area is inspected on an annual basis by a Register of Play Areas International (RPII) qualified inspector and we carry out monthly play area inspections ourselves now that Maidstone Borough Council no longer do them.

At our meetings we consider any work required in addition to the standard maintenance work, issues which have arisen and any improvements which can be made. Over the past year, a bench has been installed in the fenced play area for parents to sit on, a gate has been fitted in the fencing between the old changing rooms and the cricket pavilion and potholes in the car park have been filled.

Currently, the main focus is repair work to the multiplay equipment in the fenced play area. Metal boxwork holding a platform had corroded, so a new piece had to be made by Yalding Forge. Unfortunately, when the old metalwork was taken out, rot was discovered in one of the timber posts it was attached to, and this will also now need to be replaced. The gates to the fenced play area have been locked while this work is being undertaken.

If you have any suggestions for additions or improvements to the playing field, please get in touch. You are also very welcome to join our AGM, which will be held in the cricket pavilion at 8pm on 16th July.

Peace Cottages Charity
By Iain Simmons

The Peace Cottages Charity is approaching its 125th anniversary. The charity was spawned from the church which is why the Rector and Churchwarden are ex-officio trustees.

Money has been invested in projects which make a difference over the last few years. Funds have recently been spent on new windows, doors and insulation.

There are five residents in the cottages.

As with many organisations, the need for more overt documentation, policies, etc came to the fore. The finances are well managed and are in a good position and there is now a full array of policies around safeguarding, complaints and other areas. The Peace Cottages has to send a return to the Housing Ombudsman each year.

The trustees are a great group of people who meet monthly.

Hunton Pond & Flood Warden
By Mike Summersgill

Pond Warden:

We had our third (annual) survey for newt populations in ponds around East Street and George Street, and were again successful in finding evidence of our three types of newts in two ponds, including (for the first time) an overnight capture, and release, of a great-crested newt in one of them – we seem to have a thriving GCN population in our diverse habitat in that part of Hunton. The three ‘new’ ponds created by Medway Valley Partnership recently, on private lands down Bishop’s Lane, continue to be monitored as they establish themselves and attract changes in local biodiversity.

I’m still liaising with other landowners over access to the ponds along Redwall Lane for GCN work, and also with a couple of landowners about reinstating or re-working their infilled/’ghost’ ponds.

Flood Warden:

We have a small group of Flood Warden volunteers (4), who are trained to react to any flood event. We had to spring into action just once this past year, in early January when the River Beult was rising and threatening road closures at both Chainhurst Bridge and along West Street – we put out Flood Warning notices at both locations (in conjunction with Marden and Yalding wardens) but didn’t need to halt traffic and removed the notices the next day. Earlier this year, the Environment Agency published its 5-yearly updates to its flood mapping, this time with better LIDAR topographical data – I am still reviewing this new information against our post-2013 flood risk spreadsheet for Hunton properties, but it would seem that a few of the 30+ properties are now outside the EA risk zones.

Hunton Walking Group
By Jane Langdon

Aren’t we lucky to have all this on our doorstep!

As reported last year, we celebrated our 250th walk with a trip to London. Last week we clocked up our 274th, this time closer to home in Marden for a warm, sunny walk which included swathes of orchids and bone dry ground.

I am sure you can work out that of the 26 possible dates over the year, we missed only 2 – one due to persistent rain (unbelievably this week last year!) and one other as everyone appeared to be on holiday. So well done all for keeping going!

The walks continue to be brilliantly led by Mike Summersgill and Phil Nichols, always with lots of local interest knowledge included in the 2 hour, 4 to 5 mile jaunt. We continue to explore mostly local areas which this year included Linton, Matfield, Tudely, Leeds and Laddingford. After 14 years of the group, we are still finding new places. Kent has so much to offer, hence the oft heard ‘Aren’t we lucky to have all of this on our doorstep!’

Our walking diary is a good record of these days – full of comments on the animals, birds and plants seen as well as the changing landscape. Who would have thought 14 years ago grapevines would be mentioned? We have witnessed the return of buzzards and red kites and an increase in the number of skylarks.

Some things do not change however, complaints about the number of stiles, hills, overgrown paths still feature – but all add to the sense of adventure and sociability of the group. One incident negotiating a locked gate and a debate whether to go over or through it caused much hilarity and will be remembered. Of course, adjourning to a good pub afterwards is always welcome.

Talking of welcome, we have had some new members this year, bringing the total to 22 on the circulation list, although the average each walk is around 9. Obviously, not everyone can make it every 2nd and 4th Tuesday morning of each month, so dipping in and out is all part of the fun.

We would welcome anyone who would like to join us, regularly or occasionally, to keep a bit fitter whilst enjoying the countryside with a group of like-minded people. Who knows, you might even be prompted to declare: **‘Aren’t we lucky to have all of this on our doorstep!’**

Hunton Ladies Group **By Christine Summersgill**

Hunton Ladies Group was formed to replace Hunton WI. The group has 25 members and meets on the last Wednesday of each month at Hunton Club. It is organised using WhatsApp with members taking turns to arrange the evening either leading the activity themselves or organising a guest to lead the evening. In the last year we have had various craft evenings, blind tasting, flower arranging involving a pumpkin and talks on the subject of writing a book, a career in the police force and a career as an airline pilot. We also learnt many different ways to wear a scarf! New members are always welcome as are ideas for meetings.

Hunton Gardening Club **By Lesley Lee**

Why is there a Gardening Club in Hunton? Some of you may remember an event in 2011 here in the Village Hall. Those who attended were encouraged to say what groups might interest them if they existed in the village. Roger and I, along with about a dozen others, signed up for a Gardening group and were then asked to set one up.

Those interested came to a meeting. It was decided that Hunton Gardening Club should be informal, with no membership fees, open to anyone in the area, should meet from time to time and volunteers would organise visits. I agreed to create an email contact list to communicate details of meetings or matters of possible interest to the members. There are now about 200 members, many live in the surrounding villages, join our outings and attend Hunton events. Two meetings are organised each year – our Autumn one was just a social supper whilst, Marden farmer, Peter Hall, talked to us in February and a group will be visiting his farms later this month.

Volunteers mow the grass in St Mary’s Churchyard – contact Sue Heaton if you are willing to do a session. Working Party mornings help maintain the church and churchyard as well as the borders just outside this hall. More helpers are always welcome. Keeping these areas looking OK encourages people to hold weddings etc at the Church and use the excellent facilities across the road here.

Members of the Gardening Club ran a Plant and Produce stand at the Fetes. The last, in 2019, was a great success as were the refreshments areas raising lots of money for village projects. Lorraine Redfarn had the bright idea that the Club could host a small event which would give locals an excuse to meet up and help raise much needed funds to keep the Club alive. Recently, our fourth Plants, Produce and Refreshments afternoon was well attended and raised a record amount of over £1,300. Thank you to everyone who supported this event by donating items, helping or coming along.

If you would like to join the Gardening Club do contact me for more information.

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Hunton CEP School
By Iain Simmons

Hunton Church of England Primary School is Voluntary Aided. This affords the Governors more authority over matters such as the numbers on the school roll. Revenue costs are funded by Kent and the capital costs are funded through the Diocese of Rochester. Though, ultimately, all money comes from the Government.

The school has a Vision: Jesus said, 'I have come that they may have life in all its fullness.'

The Values, developed in conjunction with the children, are: Compassion; Joy; Perseverance; Respect. The past year has been one of consolidation and improvement. The outcomes for the children continue to improve and the recent surveys of parents and children show that overall, the parents are very pleased with the school and the children are very happy. However, the Governors and school staff take every comment seriously and seek to make things even better. The school is full and will be again next year. Some of you may have noticed the publicity around the village. The school reacted to a planned expansion of Coxheath Primary School and decided to market itself in a positive manner. Coxheath will not be expanding but the promotion work generated twice as many school visits and for the first time in my knowledge, there were more first choice applicants than places for the new intake in September.

In the next week a new and enlarged canopy will be erected on the east side of the school. Planning permission has been granted to extend the carparking within the school grounds but no date is yet set for the work.

There is a wonderfully supportive PTA who have raised funds and provided effort to make significant improvements; particularly to the outside areas. We have a Crossing Patrol in the morning but are still looking for someone for the afternoon.

Hunton & Linton Pre-School
By Kathy Reid

Hello everyone, I'm Kathy Reid and I am the Administrator at Hunton Pre-School, here in the Village Hall. We operate from here 5 days a week and currently have 42 children on role and 7 members of staff.

We take children from the age of 2, up until they start Primary School and we have a large catchment area. In July we have 24 children leaving to start Primary School and we are feeding to 9 different Primary Schools, from Yalding through to Sutton Valence.

We had our Ofsted inspection in September – within the first week of being back after the summer break. The Ofsted inspector made no allowances for the fact that we were in our first week or that we had new starters settling in on that day but we were awarded “good” and she made some very positive comments about the staff and the setting, so that was nice to hear!

The Government's “free” funding has recently been in the news as new guidelines were introduced about what childcare settings can and cannot charge for. This has caused quite an outcry within the early years community as many settings charged additional “top ups” to rectify the shortfall between what the Government pay us early years providers per hour and what the actual hourly cost is and we are now not allowed to charge the parents for any additional top ups. This, along with the increase in national insurance and wages in April, has meant that our annual costs have increased considerably but we are managing our budget and will continue to fundraise to pay for any additional resources, toys and equipment that we need.

We envisage that the 2025/2026 academic year will be busy and we already have a strong waiting list for September starters.

Finally, we would like to thank the families and village community for their support in continuing to hold our lovely Pre-School in such high regard.

St Mary's Church
By Iain Simmons

2024 has been a relatively good year for the Church and community at St Mary's Hunton. I was elected as Churchwarden in May 2024, affirmed by the Archdeacon in July.

The church is held in great affection by the parishioners and residents of Hunton. This community spirit is evidenced by the strong attendance at festival services and the many who help with fundraising and maintaining the fabric of the church and churchyards. Of note, November saw yet another thriving Christmas Market and the Carol Service on Christmas Eve saw the church full to the brim. The church continues to be supported well by the Rector and her Ministry Team; with some innovative services and a shared focus across the benefice. During 2025, St Mary's and the other churches in the Benefice will consider the merits of forming a Joint Council. There will be meetings and engagement with the church community before a decision is taken at a Special Parish Meeting.

The link with the local Church of England School continues to strengthen. The School Governing Body has a full complement of governors, including the three appointed by the PCC. The Rector or Children and Families Worker engage with the school on a weekly basis and the school are holding services in the church termly. Many wonderful people assist with the organisation and administration of the church on tasks such as: readers and sides people; flower arranging; chairing the PCC meetings and maintaining the fabric. A special thanks is given to David Jones, who as treasurer and secretary to the PCC undertakes many tasks to lighten the load of the Churchwarden.

Friends of St Mary's
By David Heaton

The Friends continue to raise funds for the maintenance of our church. We had a very successful Harvest Supper last Autumn, an event we hope to repeat later this year. We will also be operating the bar at the theatrical event in October and plan to organise a murder mystery evening early next year.

I would like to thank my fellow trustees, especially Ian Pinks, who is standing down as a trustee but will continue to be treasurer for the time being. Also standing down as a trustee will be Ron Porter, who was our chairman at the charity's inception, so I also would like to thank him. Therefore, there are two vacancies for trustees.

We have not funded any projects in the church in the last year, but due to our close relationship with the Fabric we are aware that there are major works required on the roof of the tower.

Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club
By Steve Jones
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

The club had a challenging year after struggling to regularly put out two full teams, which ended with the 1st XI being relegated after the last game of the season. Things are looking more promising as we enter the 2025 season, with a number of new players joining the club.

We have home games from now until early September, so if you're visiting the playing field on a Saturday and there's a match on, please pop across and say hello and we may even be able to offer you a cup of tea if we're not fielding!

We are always looking for new players to join our friendly, sociable and inclusive cricket club and you can find details of our club on the ECB's Play Cricket website, where you can also follow our results and progress throughout the season (the link is in the contacts directory on the Parish Council website).

Finally, can I take this opportunity to thank the village and the Parish Council for continuing to support the playing of cricket at Hunton it is very much appreciated by everyone at the club.

Hunton Football Club
By Scott Elliott
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

Hunton Football Club have now completed the 24/25 football season, once again playing in the Rochester and District League as there is no Maidstone Saturday league. The Rochester league once again had a smaller number of teams enter and a few teams did not manage to complete the season, emphasising how hard it is to maintain grass roots football teams, and how impressive it is that Hunton continues to have a team. This is in no small part due to dedication of club officials and management team. The club would like to officially thank the council for supporting the upgrade of shower facilities in the summer.

The team had a very successful 23/24 season with two trophies and a promotion. This season has proved more challenging as they were promoted to division 1, but a fourth place finish has been a success. With many young players, and last week's AGM confirming the management team for next year, we have begun planning for a successful 25/26 season. We plan to start pre-season and first friendlies late July/early August. Any new player enquiries please let us know.

Hunton Tree Warden
By Sam Andrews
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

Late autumn, winter and early spring are usually a quiet time on the tree warden front, although we had a couple of large storms and a number of trees came down, were cleared by Kent Highway teams.

We had the 18 monthly Visual Tree Assessment performed last week. The full report will be available in due course; the provisional report has revealed the following:

There is one tree in the south-west corner of the playing fields which we think is on Hunton Engineering land and will need some work. I will approach them about this when I have the written report.

There are some conifers which need trimming behind the cricket pavilion and I will do that in the next 2 to 3 weeks.

There is a dead tree in the north-east corner adjacent to the road, this is small and I will also deal with this.

There are three large willows with damage overhanging the road on the Clapper Green site. When I get the final report, I will approach local tree surgery and we will arrange for these to be pollarded.

There is a sycamore in the garden of Church Cottage with some dead branches overhanging the road which I will deal with in the autumn when the birds stop nesting.

There are two large trees near South Lodge on Hunton Court land. These are dead, they have been reported to Hunton Court by James Forster and I am assured that no further action is needed at present.

There are no new TPOs reported in the village that I'm aware of.

Hunton Herald
By James Forster
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

This past year the Herald has continued to be produced and delivered to every home in the village by a rotating team of editors and then distributed by Sue Pinks and her loyal group of supporters. Dudley Farman continues to manage the layout of every issue but we note with trepidation that his house is now on the market and he may therefore be leaving us during the coming year. Overall, the Herald relies on about 50 volunteers - we couldn't function without them and we thank them all for their support.

We continue to generate a surplus of advertising revenue over costs and have now donated £22,266 to village causes during our 22 years of operation.

Our current bank balance is approximately £5,700 so we are solvent and can look forward to supporting other village causes in the future.

Hunton Litter Picking Group
By James and Andrea Forster
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

Thirty or so volunteers have supported our litter picking days this year collecting 95 large black sacks of rubbish (336 since June 2022). This total does not include discarded furniture, old carpets, car tyres and a range of sometimes bulky car or lorry parts each year. This been collected by Clock House Farm and disposed of with their own commercial rubbish so we are as grateful for their support as we are disappointed by MBC.

We thank the Parish Council for their financial support given in 2022, allowing us to buy high vis jackets, litter pickers and an initial stock of black sacks. We now need to ask HPC for a more money and will make a proposal for consideration shortly.

Hunton Village Hall Committee
By Annette Trought
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

There is little to report about the Village Hall other than we maintain steady state. The committee has not met in 2025.

Community Orchard
By Annette Trought
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

The Orchard Working Group continue to maintain the orchard in good fashion, mowing the grass and pruning the fruit trees. The prime objective is to maintain the space in good state for the village and visitors to enjoy. The last clear up was in April.