

ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In addition to dealing with routine issues such as planning applications, grounds maintenance, and parishioners' concerns, the Parish Council sees its role as encouraging community interaction. Within the Neighbourhood Plan, which you recently supported by referendum, there is a set of aspirations entitled Community Projects, which are designed to improve our community. It is heartening, therefore, to see more going on within the parish than for many years. The Carols around the Tree and the recent Village Clean up were the best ever attended, new groups such as the Pluckley Womens Collective, the Tennis Club and Pilates classes have started, the Village Hall Management Committee and the Parish Council have attracted more new members, and our social network site Nextdoor is one of the most active in the country. All of this shows that our community is flourishing.

The Neighbourhood Plan will in due course be reviewed and all residents are urged to contribute in what is our best prospect for determining ourselves how our village evolves. That is not to suggest that we do not face threats and challenges but, if we continue to work together, we shall stand a better chance of resolving them.

Throughout the year, the Parish Council has been helped in this by our Borough Councillor, Clair Bell and our County Councillor, Charlie Simkins and we are most grateful to them for all their advice and active support.

Martin Newman

FINANCE

The Parish Council has again kept its expenditure close to the budgeted figures and within its income for the year. There is now a healthy bank balance though this is in anticipation of significant expenditure to come on traffic calming and the village hall extension.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan was supported by residents at the referendum recently. 271 residents voted (31% turnout, which is average for such referendums), and 88.2% supported the Plan to be used by Ashford Borough Council in determining future planning

applications. The Plan now awaits formal adoption by ABC, which should happen this month. In due course, a copy will be delivered to every home in the parish.

It is now the responsibility of Ashford Borough Council and your Parish Council to deliver the Pluckley Neighbourhood Plan. Pluckley is within the first 300 communities in the UK to establish its Neighbourhood Plan. It has taken two years in preparation and takes a fifteen year view forward. It will be reviewed regularly within that time to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our community.

PLANNING

The Parish Council considers planning applications at its monthly meetings. All applications are posted on Ashford Borough Council's site www.ashford.gov.uk under Planning Applications and comments can be made directly to that site. The Parish Council takes note of any comments made by residents in deciding whether to support or oppose an application so, if you have views, make them known.

The proposed development at the old Brickworks site is proceeding, with the developer gradually fulfilling the various conditions that were set down when the outline approval was granted. This will provide twenty five homes, of which four will be smaller, suitable for downsizing by elderly residents.

QE11 RECREATION GROUND

Routine maintenance has been carried out on the play equipment and the sports facilities. The cricket club and the reformed tennis club continue to use the field. Work will shortly be undertaken to re-open the petanque piste. Anybody wishing to hire the pavilion for say, a children's party, should contact Mike Whatman or Debbie Breach.

TRAFFIC AND ROADS

Given its position as a key entry point for the UK, Kent's roads bear the brunt of traffic, particularly HGV traffic. Unfortunately, Pluckley shares this burden as many vehicles choose to use the routes designed to serve Pivington Mill and Smarden Industrial Estate. Although these routes are not otherwise designated HGV routes (they fail the minimum width criteria), Satnav encourages users. The result for Pluckley is nuisance, potential danger, and a reduced quality of life. Your Parish Council will continue to oppose any planning application that is likely to generate further HGV traffic.

A further consequence of the HGV traffic is the damage to roads and verges. KCC is, inevitably, struggling to keep up with repairs across the county but any damage can be reported direct to them on their portal at kent.gov.uk

One issue where we are making progress is that of speed limits. In 2011, the Parish Council prepared a report for KCC making recommendations for speed control in the parish. This was accepted, apart from the reduction of the 40mph limit to 30mph. We have, however, continued to lobby for this with the help of our County Councillor, Charlie Simkins. Patience

and persistence have paid off and the result is that KCC have agreed the limit will be changed, provided the Parish Council meets the cost. The cost, which is significant, covers the employment of consultants, the necessary publication of notices, and the actual installation of calming measures. The notices have recently been published and quotes sought for the works. We anticipate the work being completed this summer.

COMMUNICATIONS

Broadband within the parish has mostly improved in the past year with the upgraded service. Those homes beyond the station, however, have not benefitted. Gavin Russell has therefore negotiated a solution with Open Reach which links into the facility at Stanford Bridge Farm. The residents involved are meeting the bulk of the cost and the Parish Council has made a contribution, but we are particularly grateful to Trevor Heathcote for permitting the link and also making a generous contribution. It is also intended to install broadband at the Village Hall, which will increase the range of activities that can be held there.

Mobile phone reception continues to be patchy throughout the parish and the Parish Council is currently speaking with the service providers about the possibility of a new mast;

VILLAGE HALL (from Judith Pool)

Pluckley Village Hall is becoming an ever more popular venue for both local hirings and those from further afield. It is popular as a children's party venue and at the time of writing we have several Pilates classes and a Yoga class as regular bookings. We will also have a summer of events including a PWC games evening, (12th May), a quiz night, (13th May), Antique and Brocante weekends, (1st and 2nd July, 7th and 8th October,) Jumble Sale, (24th June) then into the Autumn, Pluckley and Egerton Gardening Society Autumn show, (1st and 2nd September) Pluckley Quilt and Craft Show, (23rd and 24th September,) Pluckley Christmas Fair, (25th November) and Christmas Flower Arranging (PEGS. 11th December).

This year we also hosted a Teak Garden Furniture sale where the company was based in Gloucestershire and a trial run for a mother and toddler group who may well decide to book the hall on a regular basis. So things are definitely looking up and we hope they will continue to do so. The committee now consists of nine registered trustees who are charged with looking after and running the hall. We have formed a working group to continue the hard work that the Parish Council have already done with regard to the new extension and are actively seeking further grants to complete this project. I think this is an opportunity to remind everyone that the Village Hall is a charity, (no: 302818) and survives by being used, fundraising and very welcome donations. The more you use the hall the better it will get. Plans are in place to improve the heating which is inadequate on some occasions, especially when the hall is in use for Pilates and Yoga classes. We hope that next winter will see this improvement which may help us to increase our winter bookings.

My thanks to all the committee who work very hard to ensure that the hall continues to be a successful enterprise, to Sue Exell for her cleaning and key holding duties which contribute to the smooth running of the hirings and to everyone who hires the hall. Judy

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH (from Martin Chambers)

Burglaries Thefts from outbuildings remain an issue in Pluckley and the surrounding areas, although there have also been a number of house burglaries or burglary attempts. Please remember, burglars are generally put off by security lights (the more the better), alarms and CCTV cameras.

Cold Callers Please do not entertain ANY tradesman who comes to your door uninvited no matter what the pretext. Please be very aware of anyone who turns up like this and then asks for a drink or to make a phone call. While this may be innocent, it is best to assume that it is not and always refuse.

Be Suspicious It's OK to be suspicious. If you think something might be suspicious – then it is. If you are not sure if it suspicious, then it is. Please don't fall into the trap of thinking "Oh, I'm sure it's OK". Be aware, be suspicious and look after your neighbours!

Scams The majority of scams seem to be online and can be very sophisticated and often do not appear as scams. Please see the advice here: <http://www.pluckley.net/neighbourhood-watch/online-security-scams/>

Nextdoor.co.uk Do you know about this? It is the private and secure community network for Pluckley. It began in September 2016 and we already have well over 300 members representing almost 50% of households in the village. Most members applaud what it has done for the community spirit in Pluckley. It has helped a number of groups to get started and to develop including the Pluckley Tennis Club, The Pluckley Women's Collective, The Pluckley Joggetters, The Pluckley Adventurers, and the Plant Sharing Group.

On Nextdoor you can ask for and recommend local tradespeople, keep up-to-date on lost and found and free stuff. It also has a Crime and Safety section which in many ways is turning Neighbourhood Watch on its head. Residents are posting their own incidents and alerting neighbours to a current threat immediately rather than waiting for reports from Kent Police which often are a week or so out-of-date.

Nextdoor members held an event in the Village Hall in February which was very well attended and was a great opportunity for all the members to put a face to a name. We will be doing this again soon.

To join simply login to nextdoor.co.uk and sign-up.

WEALDEN WHEELS (from Alan Davies)

Wealden Wheels was set up 14 years ago and continues to provide affordable Community Transport to the villages of Challock, Charing, Chilham, Egerton, Pluckley, and Smarden and surrounding areas.

2016 was a busy year for Wealden Wheels with the arrival of a new Office Coordinator and general good chap, Graham Sivyver. Graham joined us from the Kent and East Sussex Railway where his responsibilities included Marketing and Volunteer recruitment. He is already creating great interest with our new programme of visits to local sights and heritage centres. You'll find these on our website.

2016 also saw the arrival of our new Minibus capable of carrying 17 people and with a tail lift to enable easy loading of wheelchairs. We were one of only 6 organisations in Kent to be awarded a bus from a Government scheme to provide Minibuses to local Community Groups. This process took well over a year from identifying the opportunity to receiving the bus and we must thank Chris Housman for his patience and determination in getting this through to a successful conclusion.

Without our team of Volunteer drivers we would not be able to operate an affordable service and we are grateful to these, but would still benefit from more! Last year two more villagers joined our Volunteer team, thank you Jos and Mark. If you would like to be involved in a rewarding activity and help your Village, please contact us.

To find out more about how Wealden Wheels can help you and how you can help them ring 840000 and ask for Graham or look us up on our website at www.wealdenwheels.co.uk

POND REPORT (from Ros Rowan)

Another spring at last and with it comes sex in the amphibian world. The male great crested newts are re-entering ponds to display the white stripes in their tails to attract the females and toads and frogs are spawning. I have seen a few ponds with clumps of frogs spawn but not yet spotted the chains of eggs that toads lay. Poor toads, I counted five squashed on the lanes where they were crossing at night to reach the reservoir in the orchard.

It has been such a dry winter. My pond only completely filled in early winter and is now going down again leaving exposed newt eggs laid on winter mint. Garden ponds continue to thrive but sadly the agricultural field ponds are deteriorating further due to loss of habitat and chemical run off. This makes our garden ponds and habitats around them really important.

The Pond Warden scheme organises courses which I attend and enjoy and continue to learn. A recent finding is that surveyors can be responsible spreading infections to amphibians so I continue to be careful and sterilise my net and boots if I have been pond dipping. I have just purchased a head lamp which is great for seeing my recording sheets in the dark – and handy too for walking in the dark from the station.

PLUCKLEY WITH EGERTON GARDENING SOCIETY (from Pat Morss)

The daffodils are in bloom along the verges and in gardens. The shrubs and trees are full of delicate blossoms of every shade of pink and white. Although we have not yet heard the first cuckoo (which is reputed to be the official herald of spring), we have all heard the other one (the sound of lawn mowers) to confirm that summer is icummin in!

Despite the messages of impending doom via inflation, the collapse of sterling and leaving the European Union the cost of membership is still £7.50 per garden (not per person) for a full and varied programme of events. We have tried to arrange something for everyone. If you are not already a member then it is very simple to remedy that. A word to Patsy Morss on the old fashioned landline (840686), or a message via e-mail on morss17@gmail.com could lead to the start of the rest of your life. If you want to browse a little more you can find P.E.G.S. on the Pluckley and Egerton websites. We are a relaxed and friendly group who combine the love of plants and flowers with trips to exciting and exotic places through the hard work of Sue Steward. This year the Society will even be subsidising the cost of transport for the day trip to Losely Park so contact her on 840320 to book your place on the coach. Don't delay, as places will be reserved on a 'first come, first served' basis. Don't delay- join today. We want you to share the fun.

PLUCKLEY PANTO (from Judith Pool)

Our 32nd pantomime, Rumpelstiltskin, was yet another well received production. We included the usual songs and stage business but added a bit more choreography for the younger and more agile members of the group! This proved to be very successful. We had some good support from the village and are now embarking on a refurbishment of the scenery which after 30 something years needs some new canvas. We are being sponsored for this by the parents of two of our young performers for which we are very grateful. After all these years it is rewarding that so many of our younger members are really enthusiastic about supporting the group in whatever way they can to help maintain its position within this community and to continue its survival for many years to come. Thank you, Judy.

PLUCKLEY QUILT AND CRAFT SHOW (from Judith Pool)

Started by myself and the late Sue Russell to raise funds to ensure the survival of the Village Hall the show seems to have become an annual event. This year will be our fourth and we hope that it will be as well received as it has been in the past. Last year we raised over £1300 for the hall and hope to equal or surpass that this year. As well as the display of gorgeous quilts, tea tent and trade stalls we will also hold an auction of any previously unsold "for sale" quilts on the Sunday afternoon if sellers wish. Dates this year are Saturday and Sunday, 23rd and 24th September, 10.30 to 5.00pm each day. Huge thanks go to all our supporters and helpers who make this event possible. If you have any quilts, wall hangings or other needlecraft that you would like to exhibit and/or sell then please contact Judy Pool on 01233 840280 or email judith.pool@pluckley.net We look forward to seeing you there. Judy

PLUCKLEY CRICKET CLUB (from Alan Symonds)

The Club play on Sundays in Division 3 of The Kent Village League. We came 10th out of 14 teams in the 2016 season.

We have 12 League games, four friendly fixtures and five mid- week 20/20s scheduled for this season. We enjoy the use of the sports pavilion on the recreation ground, which provides showers and changing facilities for men, women and youth players.

Fund-raising events have included weekend trips to Paris, Stratford –Upon- Avon, Bath and many more. A Golf Day is booked for May 13th this year and is open to all, details of which can be found on Nextdoor.

PLUCKLEY TENNIS CLUB (from Gavin Russell)

Pluckley Tennis Club is pleased to report steady progress. Following generous donations from Pluckley Sports Association, Peter & Margaret Osborne and the Committee, PTC now has two new nets in its possession, new banners and is now formally registered with the LTA (Lawn Tennis Association).

At the time of writing, the club looks forward to hosting its first Open Day on Sunday 2nd April. A professional coach will be in attendance and there are high hopes for a good turnout. For more information or to enquire about membership, please visit our website www.pluckley.net/tennis or email us at pluckleytennis@gmail.com. Club days are currently Saturday mornings between 10–12.

PLUCKLEY WOMENS COLLECTIVE (from Helen Bone)

In June 2016, the Pluckley Women's Collective was launched with an eclectic gathering of over 50 women from Pluckley & beyond. Our aim? To 'create community' by bringing together women from all walks of life, fresh to the village or longstanding residents. With a tagline of 'live well, laugh often, love much' we set out with a programme of monthly events to encourage people to try something new (in the spirit of having a go, rather than being perfect) whilst having lots of fun in the process. Activities have included a foraging walk, yoga taster, wreath making, carol singing, a Spanish food & wine tasting, Great British Bake Off Special & singing workshop, with a games night & sponsored cycle ride coming up in due course. In December, the now popular First Friday Drinks Night started - open to all, we rotate round & fill the various Pluckley drinking establishments with an informal night of community chatter & cheer. In terms of 'loving much', we launched 'Pluckley Food Parcels', an initiative for new parents where 7 people 'gift' a week's supply of hot dinners to a new family. We've delivered cakes & fruit to the A&E staff at the William Harvey in the midst of the Winter Crisis, provided refreshments for the Spring Clean, helped prepare a home for a Syrian Refugee Family and organised a Family BBQ on the Recreation Ground for the village last August.

Beyond all expectations, we are delighted to have more than 90 women on the books via facebook/nextdoor/our email database. We always wanted PWC to be a spring board for other initiatives within the village, so we are delighted that Jessica Davenport is about to launch a book club, whilst we continue to partner with & support other village groups and events. PWC is not about Helen Bone, or the organising team, but about the people who come and support it. As a group, we love living in Pluckley and just enjoy being part of making community happen. If you'd like to know more please do get in touch by email pluckleywomenscollective@yahoo.co.uk or phone/text 07971530491. We are always open to new people & you can be assured of a warm & friendly welcome. Finally, but most importantly, our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been part of PWC and made it what it is!

Helen Bone, on behalf of the launch team: Sue Beattie, Trudy Britton, Sue Clapham, Clare Furnival Brown, Julia Furnival Brown, Lynsey Glasgow, Beckie Green, Alison Kirkpatrick, Helen Mears.

ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

The Annual Parish Assembly will be held on Tuesday 9th May at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. The meeting gives an opportunity to find out what is going on in Pluckley and will include informal presentations from village organizations, and a free glass of wine or soft drink. All residents are warmly invited to attend.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

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The Parish Council meets in Pluckley Village Hall at 7.30pm on the second Tuesday of each month, except August. All residents are welcome to attend.

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