

## PLUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015-6



### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to this Annual Report from your Parish Council for our financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Besides telling you what your Parish Council has been up to over the past year, it includes reports from village organisations and looks forward to the year ahead.

A large part of the Parish Council's role is concerned with dealing with day-to-day matters such as planning applications, maintaining our buildings and open spaces, addressing parishioners' concerns and supporting village organisations and events. However, a significant activity this year has been the development of our Neighbourhood Plan, which, when fully agreed, reviewed and signed-off, will become the formal document governing development in Pluckley for the next 15 years. Developing this plan has taken a huge amount of work by our 'working group'. My thanks go to the whole team for their professionalism and attention to detail.

After many years of talking, proposals, counter-proposals and worries, the PC has now negotiated what we believe to be an acceptable solution for the development of the old Brickworks site on Station Road. This is for 25 houses, and more information is below.

We have also seen progress in our plans to extend the Village Hall, and in our desire to reduce the 40mph speed limit in the village to 30mph. We hope to make clear progress on both these priority areas in the coming year. Unfortunately, both projects will require considerable funding, with much of it having to come from the Parish Council's coffers. We have therefore reluctantly raised our Precept (the Parish Council's share of your Council Tax bill) to assist in this funding.

Thanks to grants from our Borough Councillor (Clair Bell) the PC has purchased an 'automated external defibrillator' (AED) that is now being installed on the wall of the village shop (thanks to Sena). AEDs are proven to save lives: it's reassuring to know we have one, although we hope that it will never have to be used.

After six years in post, Pluckley's Parish Clerk, Graham Smith, retired at the end of March. We wish him well and thank him for his contribution to the efficient running of the Parish Council. We welcome Caroline Levett as his successor.

Finally, please take some time to read the rest of this report, and don't hesitate to speak to any of your Councillors if you have any issues or concerns about life in our village.



## **FINANCE**

The Parish Council finances are in good shape. Each year we are careful to live within our means and budget prudently for anticipated expenditure.

The increase in the precept for 2016-7 is partly to replace grants no longer received from Ashford Borough Council, but is also designed to build up a healthy reserve of funds which are earmarked for two important areas of expenditure that residents have supported: improvements to the village hall, and traffic calming measures (see later). We anticipate being able to move on at least one of these during the coming year.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The draft Neighbourhood Plan was available as a consultation document for comment within the parish in the six weeks prior to 26 March. The Plan can be viewed on the website [www.pluckley.net](http://www.pluckley.net) and copies have been on display in the parish shops and pubs.

The comments received are being weighed up and absorbed as appropriate into the document. The re-draft will then formally be submitted to Ashford Borough Council, hopefully in May. It then has a further six week consultation period in which residents can submit their views. After this, Ashford Borough Council determines when it is ready to go to formal examination by a HM Inspector of Planning.

This Examiner may well make further comments and, once these are incorporated, the Plan is subject to a public referendum within the parish. All being well, this should take place this summer. If the response is positive, the Plan can then be formally adopted and become the Plan against which any development application in the parish will be assessed.

While the Plan takes a fifteen year view forward, it will be formally reviewed every five years to ensure it continues to meet the expressed wishes of the community.

## **PLANNING**

When a planning application comes before the Parish Council, our aim is to support unless we consider it detrimental to the village. Regrettably, some applications have been retrospective for development already undertaken. This shows a lack of respect for neighbours and the Parish Council takes a dim view of these. Ashford Borough Council has been urged to follow up breaches of planning regulations and there are some outstanding cases currently being pursued in the parish as a result.

Of all the applications received, by far the most impactful for the parish has been that at the old Brickworks site. Originally made in August 2014, this was for a development of 51 homes. This was not supported by the Parish Council. Subsequently, following much consultation within the parish for the Neighbourhood Plan, a number of discussions were held between the applicant, Ashford Borough Council planners, and the Parish Council. The result is that the application was amended, supported and, in March 2016, approved.

The site now has outline planning permission for 25 homes. A number of conditions are attached: four of these homes will be smaller, of the type called for by residents; the adjoining lake and woodland will be managed to remain as a wildlife habitat and as a leisure facility for the parish; and the field beyond, off Chambers Green Road, will be retained for grazing. It is to be hoped that the site owner will now proceed with the above as a full application. For the moment, until that is approved or work progresses on site towards it, the current waste disposal licence remains in place.



## **QEII RECREATION GROUND**

Some minor repair works have been carried out to fencing at the Recreation Ground, and clear contracts are now in place for grounds maintenance such as strimming and weed clearance to ensure that the Recreation ground can be enjoyed by all.

The tennis court was resurfaced during the year, so there are now two good courts for use. The Pluckley Tennis Club is now revived and welcoming members - enquiries should be made to Peter Osborne on 01233 840226.

The cricket club would also welcome more members and anyone interested should contact Alan Symonds on 01233 840322.

## **TRAFFIC AND ROADS**

The progress of HGV traffic through the parish continues to take its toll on the state of the roads and cause nuisance and discomfort for residents. The PC has formally embraced the control of HGV traffic as a policy within the Neighbourhood Plan, so any planning applications likely to prompt an increase in such traffic will continue to be resisted.

The overall state of our roads has also deteriorated. KCC Highways have recently carried out significant work on the drainage on Forge Hill and have repaired the eroded surface and drainage at Dering Close. However, the PC will continue to encourage KCC Highways to make speedy repairs to potholes and other road damage.

The PC has continued to press for the 40mph speed limit area to be reduced to 30mph, and KCC Highways have now advised that this can be achieved subject to appropriate traffic calming measures being put in place. The PC will be employing traffic consultants to advise on the most appropriate measures. The bulk of the cost of implementation will unfortunately be down to the Parish Council but, given the views expressed over a long period by residents, we regard this as a priority within the parish. The increase in the precept will assist in this regard.

## **VILLAGE HALL** *(from Judy Pool)*

The Village Hall has seen a greater number of bookings this year which has increased our revenue. Children's parties are very popular and are very good value for money but other events such as parties, conferences, meetings and AGMs, Pilates, Beading evenings, antiques fairs, Harvest Suppers, shows and of course Pantomimes have filled the rest of our calendar. Together with some amazing fundraising from the Quilt show and a successful quiz night, (thank you Paul and Sue Ticehurst and Chris Housman) this has made our task of running the hall much easier. We have also been the fortunate recipient of donations made in memory of Sue Russell (our thanks to Pete, Sam and Paul).

The ceiling in the annex has now been replaced which has created a much warmer space. Our grateful thanks to Dave Clements for this work and his continued maintenance of the hall (at no cost). The container that had been used by Pluckley Panto for storage has now been removed, clearing access to the garden on the North side of the hall.

Good progress has been made towards funding the planned extension. The plan is for a new entrance foyer with much needed new toilets, including a disabled facility. It is also the intention to clad the exterior of the hall improving its appearance and providing better thermal and sound insulation.



Thanks to the higher precept, the Parish Council is now able to allocate more funds to this project, and a grant of £8,000 has also been obtained from Ashford Borough Council. This means we now have more than half the envisaged sum necessary which should assist us to secure the remaining grant funding to proceed.

Thank you to everyone who has given their time to help care for the hall which is a vital village amenity. Contact me (Judy Pool) on 01233 840280 or email me at [judith.pool@pluckley.net](mailto:judith.pool@pluckley.net) if you would like any further information or wish to book the hall.

### ***NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH*** (from Martin Chambers)

Pluckley has suffered one burglary plus a number of thefts of, and damage to, vehicles in the past year along with an attempted break-in to Pluckley Post Office and Shop.

The need for us all to remain vigilant and aware of our area including our neighbours is as great as it ever was. Please keep your eyes open and to report anything suspicious to the Police. Please check your outbuildings and make sure they are securely locked – don't make it easy for the thieves. Check your security lights regularly and make sure they are working. Don't assume that someone wondering round your property is as innocent as they may seem: make a note of their description as well as vehicle details and registration numbers.

**CALL THE POLICE ON 101 IF YOU SEE SOMETHING SUSPICIOUS OR 999 IF A CRIME IS IN PROGRESS  
OR CONTACT CRIMESTOPPERS ANONYMOUSLY WITH INFORMATION ABOUT CRIME ON 0800 555 111**

As Coordinator I send out NHW email bulletins regularly detailing recent crimes and incidents in the area as reported by Kent Police. To receive this please subscribe at <http://nhw.pluckley-village.co.uk/here>. More immediate crime reports are posted on a Facebook Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PluckleyNHW/> and also on Twitter at @PluckleyNHW. I can be contacted at [NHW@pluckley.net](mailto:NHW@pluckley.net), or on 07900 433403.

### ***WEALDEN WHEELS*** (from Alan Davies, Finance Director)

Wealden Wheels has just completed 12 years of providing affordable Community Transport to the villages of Challock, Charing, Chilham, Egerton, Pluckley, and Smarden. We heard a year ago that our application to a Government Grant scheme to provide minibuses to local community groups had been successful. Since then we have answered many questions and filled in multiple forms (primarily carried out by Chris Housman with admirable patience!). The result is that we have now received the money to buy a new vehicle, and it is on order. By the time of the Annual Parish Meeting I hope it will be running around our villages. We will then have a much more reliable and cost-efficient vehicle to help us to maintain affordable services into the future.

Demand for our services remains strong and the only factor preventing us helping more people is the availability of volunteer drivers. This is a rewarding and valuable experience and if you, or anyone you know, could give us some time even just once or twice a month this would really help your Community.

To find out how to use us, or to help us with Volunteering ring 01233 840000 and ask for Liz, Chris or Mike or look at our Facebook Page or website at [www.wealdenwheels.co.uk](http://www.wealdenwheels.co.uk)



## **BROADBAND & COMMUNICATIONS**

The whole parish now has access to faster broadband, although the length of copper cabling between the broadband 'cabinets' and some homes still impacts performance. We are also aware that mobile phone reception is poor in some parts of the parish, and we are pressing network operators to address this situation.

### **POND REPORT** (from Ros Rowan)

It is now the start of another year of slipping on the edges of ponds, gazing into the water and scooping out pond life. When the weather warms up a bit I will start night surveying for newts in earnest. I spotted great crested newts in my pond on 28<sup>th</sup> January and eggs a couple of weeks later (which is really early) and a squashed frog on my drive on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

Last year I attended several Pond and Tree Warden meetings in Wye. We are a mixed bunch of enthusiasts, male, female, young and old - and most with a taste for beer and chips! A lot of planning, networking, offers of volunteering and legal advice goes on at these meetings.

I attended a course on amphibians and invertebrates last April. It was detailed, quite scientific and interesting - but the cake break was very welcome. In July I went on a pond flora survey near Maidstone where I discovered new plants and friends. In September I went to Bough Beech Reservoir and studied hedges and bats.

I am still learning, but what I am sure of now is how everything is interlinked: ponds, wild flowers, hedges and trees provide cover and food. Break the chain and species will be lost. You can help encourage and preserve what we have by making a pond, leaving heaps of logs to rot, composting and allowing your garden to have an untidy corner.

### **PLUCKLEY WITH EGERTON GARDENING SOCIETY** (from Pat Morss)

There is a significant change for Pluckley Gardening Society in 2016. After decades of 'going it alone' PGS formally acknowledged the value of the involvement with neighbours in Egerton to the Shows, trips and meetings which are a feature of our annual calendars. At the AGM in Pluckley Village Hall last October the motion to rename our society as 'Pluckley with Egerton Gardening Society' was unanimously carried. It was also hoped that this would help to forge close links with Egerton Primary School to encourage pupils there to enter the children's classes in the Spring & Autumn Shows. We believe that such gentle competition can sow the seeds for a love of plants, the seasons and the countryside so we can get 'em young and give them a gift for life!

The cost of a family membership is still £7.50 per annum which is the gateway to a variety of events (details below). We hope there will be something for everyone and welcome members from outside the boundaries of Pluckley & Egerton too. Informality is the order of the day and members new and old are always assured of a friendly welcome.

We are very proud of the unique format for our AGM which combines business with some gentle competitions and a fish and chip supper accompanied by a glass of wine. If you want to know more we are on both Pluckley and Egerton websites, you can phone me (Chairman & Membership Secretary) on 01233 840686, or email us at [pluckleygardeningociety@gmail.com](mailto:pluckleygardeningociety@gmail.com). We'd love to hear from you.



Date	Gardening Society Events Diary 2016	Timings + cost
May 25 Wed 2pm	<b>Wheelgate Nursery Visit.</b> Nursery and garden specialising in perennial plants and ornamental grasses. Very pretty garden designed in rooms, good to see plants growing in situ before buying. Refreshments available.	Depart 2pm from Pluckley Village Hall. Free entrance. Minibus £5. Ring Sue 840320 to book before 6 May
June 9 Thu 6pm	<b>Pimms Evening with an Artistic Twist.</b> Come and visit David and Janet East's quirky garden with its fabulous ferns, and also view their beautiful paintings while sipping a refreshing Pimms. Both ferns and paintings are available to buy	6pm-8pm. £5. 1 Highfield, Pluckley Rd. Bethersden, TN26 3DD
July 7 Thu 6pm	<b>Wine &amp; Wander with Michael &amp; Diana Wallis.</b> Small but delightful, this lovely, shady woodland garden is a great example of dedication and Michael's knowledge of the right place for the right plant.	6pm-8pm £5. Malmaison Cottage, Rushbrook Road, Pluckley.
July 14 Thu 6pm	<b>Tour of Gravetye Manor Gardens nr. East Grinstead.</b> Gardens that once belonged to the Plantsman William Robinson who started the 'Wild Style'. Now part of a posh hotel. Tom the head gardener will take us on a tour of its exuberant borders.	12pm Pluckley Village Hall coach. Tour then tea and biscuits. Home 6pm. £28
August 23 Tuesday 2.00pm	<b>Garden Tour of Oak Cottage with Rachel Castle, Elmstead, Nr. Ashford..</b> Rachel who talked to us about Auriculas will give us a tour of her beautiful ½ acre cottage garden filled with interesting and unusual perennials including a wide range of salvias. Plants to buy.	Meet up at Pluckley Village Hall at 2pm. £3.50 includes tour and cake. Car sharing.
Sept 3 Saturday	<b>Autumn Show – see schedule for details.</b>	Pluckley Village Hall
Oct 20 Thursday 7pm	<b>AGM – Photographic competition, subject sunrise or sunset. Quiz and fish &amp; chip supper.</b>	Pluckley Village Hall, Doors open 7pm. Meeting starts 7.30pm.
Dec 12, Monday 7pm.	<b>Christmas Flower Arranging Evening: an excellent evening with our very own florist Val Smith who will show us how to create a lovely arrangement for Christmas.</b>	Pluckley Village Hall. 7pm. Ring Sue below to book. £15,

### ***PLUCKLEY PANTO UNLIMITED*** (from Judy Pool)

Once again we would like to say a big thank you to all our supporters for keeping with us and clamouring at the door each year for tickets. Without you we would be nothing. With you I think we are a village pantomime force to be reckoned with. We hope you will continue to enjoy our shows for as long as we are able to produce them.

This year's production re-told the traditional Cinderella story but added into the mix a brief appearance of Elvis Presley and some dastardly attempts to poison the Baron and anyone else the Baroness wanted to get rid of! This was Pluckley's 31st Pantomime (the group was established in 1985 with a first production in 1986). We have seen many treading the boards, cast have come and gone, but we still have four original members! We're delighted to have several teenagers with us now, who, together with those twenty somethings, we hope will be with us for some time to come to take us into the future when the grannies amongst us have gone to tread the boards and direct proceedings in that grand theatre in the sky! They have remarkable talent, courage and goodwill and some even have wonderful voices, which enhance our singing dramatically! As producer, my thanks go to each and every one, children, teenagers, adults and grannies who work so hard to maintain the quality of our productions and our standing in the community.

If you think you would like to join us either on stage or in the wings please contact any of the cast members, or give me a call on 01233 840280, and let us know how you might like to be involved. We especially need lots of help with costumes, props and scenery, advertising and publicity. All we ask is your commitment to the show. We rehearse from October through to January, (Sundays 3-5pm and Tuesdays, 7-9pm) with a short break for Christmas. Do come and join us!



This year's pantomime was dedicated to the memory of Sue Russell, whose death was announced on January 30<sup>th</sup>. After she had fought a long battle which left her exhausted and scarred, she left this world peacefully with her family surrounding her. Outside the weather changed and the sun came out (as it always did whenever she was around). Sue, through her business, Disguise and Gowns, had costumed every one of our 31 performances and had even taken part in a couple, (she had a lovely voice!). A lady of many talents, her secretarial skills were well tested when she typed up our second (and longest) pantomime script on a manual typewriter, declaring at the end "the first and the last time, never again!"

Sue had a great zest for life, love and laughter which she dispensed in enormous volumes, together with the wonderful patchwork quilts she created in such quantities to the delight of so many recipients. We celebrate her life, treasuring the memories she has left behind which ensure she will remain in our hearts forever. Rest in peace Sue.

### ***PLUCKLEY QUILT AND CRAFT SHOW***

Last September saw us stage the second Pluckley Quilt and Craft Show which again drew amazing exhibits and crowds. We were fortunate to have an exhibition of Canadian Red Cross quilts brought by Anna Mansi who stayed to talk about her collection. There were other exhibits by Rosemary Marozzi which were greatly admired and many other wonderful quilts created by local quilters, full of inspiration for the visitors. Together with our regular traders the whole package made for a wonderful show. Tea and cake were enjoyed, the weather was magnificent and thanks go out to everyone who helped to make the event such a success. We raised another £1,000 for the hall. Wonderful!

Thanks to Dave Clements and Pete Farris we now own our own quilt stands for displaying the amazing collection loaned to us. Our 2016 show will be on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September, from 10.30am to 5pm each day.

### ***HONORARY RESIDENT OF THE YEAR***

The recipient of our 'Honorary Resident of the Year' award this year is Judith Pool. Judy has, for many years, been leading Pluckley Panto. Recently, she has kept things going despite the loss of some dearly-loved colleagues. Her report on this year's panto shows how successful she has been. In addition, Judy took on the role of 'Chair' of the Village Hall Management Committee a couple of years ago, and thanks to her efforts, the hall is now busier than ever, and breaks even financially, and the committee is a broader based group of hall users. The charity chosen by Judy to receive her donation is 'Dogs For Good' (formerly 'Dogs for the Disabled').

### ***PLUCKLEY ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY***

The annual Parish Meeting/Assembly will be held on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2015, at 7pm in Pluckley Village Hall**. The meeting gives you an opportunity to find out what has been going on in Pluckley over the past year and to look forward to what will be happening in 2016. We're planning the same format as previous years:

- Informal presentations from the Parish Council, Borough Council and guest speakers
- A 'mini-exhibition' of village life with representatives from village organisations
- A free glass of wine or soft drink and a chance to meet your Councillors

Please come along if you can and help make it a successful event!



Please note that Annual Statutory Meeting of Pluckley Parish Council will follow this Meeting at 8:30pm. This meeting is, of course, also open to the public.

### **YOUR PARISH COUNCIL FOR 2016-7**

<b>Chris Housman</b>	<i>chris.housman@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 840139</b>
<b>Martin Newman</b>	<i>martin.newman@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 840231</b>
<b>Tim O'Connor</b>	<i>tim.o'connor@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 840843</b>
<b>Paul Smith</b>	<i>paul.smith@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 840037</b>
<b>Carol Washer</b>	<i>carol.washer@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 840078</b>
<b>Mike Whatman</b>	<i>mike.whatman@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 840044</b>
<b>Sue Beattie</b>	<i>sue.beattie@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 840029</b>
<b>Clerk: Caroline Levett</b>	<i>parishclerk@pluckley.net</i>	<b>01233 770739</b>

Please note that monthly date on which the Parish Council meets has changed. Meetings will now be held on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30pm in the Village Hall. All residents are welcome to attend.

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