

ETCHINGHAM

Annual Report 2016



Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 21st April 2016

at

8.00pm

**in the Parker Hall, Parsonage Croft
Etchingam**

Etchingam Parish Council

Chairman's Report 2015-2016

As a result of the Parish Council (non-) election in May 2015, the Parish Council found itself with only five Councillors and two vacancies. John Barnes was the only new Councillor. The Parish Council co-opted Sid Barrow and Frank Brophy to fill the vacancies. At the Parish Council AGM John Barnes was elected Chairman and Annette Childs, Vice Chairman. A full list of portfolio holders is published on the website.

The Parish Council has met a dozen times this year, two of the meetings being specially summoned. It has dealt with twenty planning applications, and has also been pursuing its own application to change the use of the Cricket Field from agricultural to community recreation. The expectation is that this will be resolved by the end of the month.

Two applications merit comment. While the Parish Council had no difficulty with the proposal to fell Oakridge in Sheepstreet Lane and replace it with a house in traditional design, it had objection to some of the features of the proposed design, which was scarcely traditional. In the end a satisfactory design was forthcoming. The Parish Council also had major concerns about the application for New House Farm, also in Sheepstreet Lane. This was less about the principle of holiday lets, of which there are already a significant number in the area, than about the ramifications of the full proposal, which has already been subject to change. The prospect of intrusive light and noise on an unspoilt stretch of the Rother Valley was of major concern, as was the amount of traffic likely to be engendered. The Parish Council thinks this last has been grossly underestimated by the County Council in its response. The Parish Council finds it difficult to understand how a business generating a six figure sum in profit could be based solely on holiday lets and the Parish Council is firmly against this becoming a venue for events. It would be fair to say that the more the Parish Council looked at the proposal, the greater their doubts. The Parish Council understands that the proposal is being further modified and has been re-submitted. Since it has not yet been validated, the Parish Council has yet to have an opportunity to comment on these modifications.

In the course of visiting the site, the Parish Council was made aware of an existing planning permission for three holiday lets which had never been implemented, the agricultural building concerned having been left derelict. The owner was now seeking to turn it into a private residence. Given that it looks to be thirty years since the original permission was given, the Parish Council would wish to encourage Rother to look at making that change, subject of course to an acceptable design and plan.

We have also been made aware that a site on the corner of Church Lane and the High Street is to be the subject of a planning application to shift from the currently agreed single dwelling to two, probably semi-detached. Since the application has yet to be validated, again we have not yet had a chance to comment.

The Parish Council has made provision to meet the full costs of providing the new sports facilities at the Cricket Field, but progress has been delayed while planning consent is obtained. It is aware of some concerns have been expressed about the potential run-off and would like to make it clear that it has taken professional advice in designing a drainage scheme that should diminish rather than add to any risk of flooding.

In the last few years the Parish Council has successfully held down its share of Council Tax, but it can no longer avoid a rise. Quite apart from the projected cost of establishing the new playing field and associated drainage scheme, it has had to agree repairs to the play area in the Queen's Gardens and it has agreed in principle to take over the Viper play area from the YES Trust to ensure that it continues to be available to the community. There has also

been a substantial increase in demand from village organisations for grants to help maintain their activities. Hence we have agreed an increase which will amount to under £2 a year on a band D property, in effect enabling us to spend £3,000 more than would have been the case had we held the precept. The details of spending are set out in the financial report.

On behalf of the Parish Council I would want to thank in particular Colin Boylett and his Speedwatch team for their unstinting effort to reduce the speed of vehicles using the High Street. They could do with more volunteers.

The village continues to have some serious parking problems, especially at the entrance to Church Lane, and the issue has been taken up with the County Council, the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner. We are glad to report that our five day bus service to Heathfield and beyond has been maintained, but we would encourage more people to use it as it was not an easy task to persuade County to continue its subsidy. Parsonage Croft is now complete and swelling our Council tax coffers, and our Clerk was able to resolve some problems over street signing. Concern has been expressed over the lighting of the village square and we believe that ETSR is seeking ways to address this.

My thanks go to all my colleagues on the Parish Council, but I want to make particular mention this year of two: Colin Boylett maintains the website, liaises with the police and in innumerable other ways is testimony to the voluntary spirit that makes Etchingham such a lively community; and Frank Brophy walks our footpaths to ensure that all is well with them. I can hardly thank our County Council representative, but I would like to thank Mary and Robert Elliston for their excellent work on the District Council. Finally Paulette Barton has now been more than a year in office. She is up-to-date with her training and has in every way lived up to the expectations that the last Parish Council had when appointing her. I know that all my colleagues on the Parish Council will join me in thanking her for being our proverbial tower of strength.

That concludes my report for the year 2015-16.

Cllr John Barnes

Chair of Etchingham Parish Council

Etchingham Parish Council 2016:

Mr John Barnes – Chair

Mrs Mary Barnes

Mr Colin Boylett

Mr Geoffry Lucas

Mrs Annette Childs – Vice-Chair

Mr Simon ‘Sid’ Barrow

Mr Frank Brophy



Rother District Council Report, April 2016

Government funding for local government is steadily reducing. By 2019/20 the funding Rother receives from Government will have been reduced by £6M since 2010. This year into next the reduction is £800,000 but we are still able to deliver a balanced budget and, as you probably know, Council Tax will increase by 1.94%. The shortfall will mean cutting into Reserves up to 2020.

Staffing cuts, reduced funding and reserves will mean a reduction in services and the impact will be noticeable in the coming year. However, Rother still has the lowest Council Tax in East Sussex and now one of the lowest staffing levels, delivering over 60 services. For example, 100% of planning applications were determined inside 13 weeks; the target on recycling waste is 50% and is constantly improving year on year and is currently 40%. Parish and Town councils can help here by suggesting ways to increase recycling rates.

Rother has devolved car parks and public toilets, and also share services with neighbouring authorities to achieve savings wherever possible.

The Hastings-Bexhill Link Road opened in December and 1,500 new homes and 50,000 sq. metres of business space will be created.

An improved phone system at the Town Hall now has 98% of customers getting an answer on their first call.

The Community Grant Scheme continues to run. This year it approved a grant of £20,000 towards the new facilities to be created, once the Planning process is completed, at the Etchingam Cricket Field for both cricket and football.

Mary Barnes & Robert Elliston

Rother District Councillors



County Councillor's Report April 2016

Local government is facing major changes in its role and its funding. While the Nation continues to run an annual deficit, further downward pressure on local government to reduce its spending is inevitable. East Sussex will almost certainly have to find something of the order of £80 million in economies over the next three years. However, we are also likely to expand our responsibilities, and budget, as powers are devolved from Central Government to Council partnerships. We are working closely with Surrey and West Sussex and in active discussion with central government with the focus on gaining more powers over housing, planning, and the transport infrastructure. However, we have not been waiting on that. The Bexhill-Hastings link road is complete, the Queensway link and what is in effect the Sidley northern bypass approved and the first of the new industrial premises in N.E. Bexhill is fully occupied. We are lobbying hard for the new high speed rail link to Ashford. Working closely with the local economic partnership and the new skills partnership we are having success both in bringing investment into the County and driving up its educational standards. The results are perhaps best measured by a faster rise in household income than is taking place nationally. Obviously that not only helps our citizens, but it also helps us as business rates are going to play a key part in future local government finance.

The Revenue Support Grant is being phased out rather faster than we expected and will be gone by the end of the decade. Its place will be taken by business rates although we still have no details of the final scheme. Some additional monies were given to us this year but only on a one-off basis; they have been allocated to contingency as Adult Social Care (by far our largest net spend at £ 164 million) tends not to deliver its savings at the pace required . We face increasing demand for our adult social care and there are massive pressures on the health service. The work that we are undertaking to integrate the commissioning of health and social care is vital if we are to avoid financial meltdown in the NHS. Public health measures like Healthcheck where we are getting good results, driving down teenage pregnancies and getting people to stop smoking are major preoccupations, but the real task is to keep people out of hospital wherever possible, treated in the community, and helped to stay independent in their own homes. It is a massive task. That is why we are being allowed to raise an additional 2 per cent on Council Tax this year. We were due to make £40 million reductions in our Adult Social Care spend over the next three years. The additional tax will bring in about £15 million over those years, but roughly £10 million of that will be absorbed by increasing demand. It has also been agreed that we can draw on the Better Together fund to help. That is why the task of integrating health and social care is by far our greatest challenge and we are looking to help build resilient communities to cope.

There is some good news, the proposals for a national funding formula for schools from which they are likely to be gainers. However relatively small schools like Etchingam face funding challenges in the coming year and they will be expected to have plans in place soon

to leave local government control altogether. Although local authorities will retain some part in the overall structure, notably with special needs, school transport, and provision of school places, very largely today we simply passport the available cash to schools and therefore have a steadily diminishing part to play if they are doing well. We have helped drive up standards and been praised for that work, but effectively we are being phased out of all but the really tricky bits of managing the schools sector.

Our Children's Service is among the very best in the country and because it is tackling problem families very successfully, we have fewer children than in the past that we need to look after. That enables some savings to be made without pain, but not all the savings that have to be made. Our fostering and adoption services are jewels in the East Sussex crown, and we are achieving much better educational results for those who we do have to take into care.

While we shall not find it at all easy to deliver further cuts, East Sussex has built some strong partnerships with Surrey and with other authorities which will help. Not only will our joint business organization, Orbis, deliver services to ourselves, but it has successfully marketed itself to others, thus creating an income stream to support our other services. Digitisation has revolutionized the way in which we work, and telecare is a fast burgeoning reality. If we can no longer afford to do all that we would wish to do, we are still able to meet our statutory responsibilities and we are getting far better value for each of your pounds that we spend.

We have a new contractor to maintain our road system, taking over on 1 May, and by making a capital investment in our roads we can now report that 90 per cent of the entire A, B & C road network is in good condition. We have also for the first time in years invested £10 million in our unclassified roads. Water is our big enemy and we are appealing to landowners to look after their drainage ditches. There is still a good way to go before we can be satisfied, but at a time of financial stringency, East Sussex County Council remains a go ahead Council with a great deal of which it can be proud.

John Barnes

East Sussex County Councillor

April 2016

Etchingam Parish Council – Finance Report

The Parish Council at the January 2016 meeting agreed the Budget and Precept for 2016/2017. After much discussion it was decided that, however reluctant the Council might feel, there was no option but to increase the Precept in order to fulfil various obligations, including the provision of the new sports facilities at the Cricket Field and the upkeep of the equipment in the children's play, a major unit having failed its annual safety check and having to be taken out of use until proper repairs were made. Additionally, expected income shown on the previous 5-year plan will be less, as it had been determined that the rental on the Shop & Deli should remain at the initial level to assist the handover period to the new business partners.

With regard to the new sports facilities at the Cricket Field it has become necessary to budget in the repayment cost for a PWLB loan – a major factor in increasing the Precept – as, despite all efforts, it has not proved possible to raise sufficient funds through grants from other organisations to cover this. There is, however, no question that, once appropriate Planning conditions are met to allow us to proceed, this will happen. Thanks are due in no small part to the landowners for their continuing support in providing the possibility of such an improved facility for the community.

The Parish Council also decided that it would not cut the overall grant provision made to of local organisations to cover operating costs and/or for special projects, although creating a condition of 'match funding' has now been applied to larger grants. This grant provision does not cover all the requests made however so difficult decisions have again had to be made here.

Apart from the major project at the Cricket Field various smaller projects are also underway. The junior football goal and the basketball post in Queen's Gardens are to be replaced or repaired very shortly and in addition a new bench, dedicated to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday, has been ordered to go into Queen's Gardens (a grant has been sought to help with this cost but we await the outcome of that request).

Be assured that the Council has maintained adequate reserves for general operating costs and towards the special projects planned.

The Accounts of the Parish Council are subject to an Internal and External Audit each year, copies of all financial information are available from the Parish Clerk.

Paulette Barton

Etchingam Parish Council Responsible Financial Officer

COMMUNITY SAFETY

One of my areas of activity on the Parish Council is Community Safety, this covers quite a wide area including Police related matters as well as others things which might affect the safety of residents.

Police Liaison:

I keep in contact with our local PCSO's and Police Officers at Battle Police Station. I receive regular updates from the Police on incidents in the area, any that are of importance to village residents are sent out on the village e-bulletin and posted on the village website.

If residents are unsure of who to contact about a Police matter I will do my best to direct them to the correct person. During the past year there have not been too many incidents in the village that Police have had to deal with, mainly oil thefts, a few shed break-ins and the two old post boxes that were stolen. And of course parking and speeding traffic continues to be a concern.

Currently PCSO cover is not good, if you would like to speak with a PCSO or PC about any issues call the Police Non-Emergency number **101** and request that the local PCSO contacts you.

Neighbourhood Watch:

Although we do not currently have an active NHW scheme in the village I am still listed as Co-ordinator with the Rother Association and receive information when it is sent out, any appropriate items are sent out on the e-bulletin and posted on the village website.

Community Speedwatch:

See the separate item for Speedwatch.

Flood Warnings:

We have been lucky this winter and only had a couple of Flood Alerts and no warnings, a marked contrast to some previous winters when we have had numerous warnings.

If any alerts or warnings are issued I can then make sure residents in parts of the village that are at risk are aware of the current situation. The emergency Planning Officer at Rother District Council keeps in contact with me when warnings are issued so that we can ensure help is provided where needed.

If you have any queries on community safety issues please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Colin Boylett
Portfolio holder for Community Safety
April 2016



COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

Co-ordinator; Colin Boylett 01580 819532 etchingham-speedwatch@gmail.com

The Etchingham Community Speedwatch group continues to operate regular sessions and since starting on a cold and wet 15th January 2014 the group has run 632 roadside sessions up to the end of March 2016 and reported 6,247 speeding vehicles.

Approx. 75% of those will have received warning letter from Police via Operation Crackdown.

In March 2016 24 sessions were run recording 227 vehicles, the fastest speed was 54mph, 190 have received warning letters.

Thanks to the Parish Council and de Etchingham Community Interest Company (CIC) sharing the cost, last year the group was able to purchase its own radar device, this means no longer having to collect a device from Battle Police Station and it has also enabled the group to run sessions at times that best suit the volunteer operators and target the times when the worst speeding is identified.

The group currently has 7 volunteer operators, **but we need more volunteers**, more volunteers mean that each person is called upon less often, and sessions can be spread out to cover more hours during the week.

Instruction for new volunteers is now done online, anyone wanting to volunteer for the group should first go to www.communityspeedwatch.co.uk and use the Register button to apply to join the group, then follow the instructions. When registering be careful to select the correct group, Hurst Green and Burwash both have Etchingham in the title!

After the online instruction has been completed the details will be sent to the group co-ordinator and the new volunteer will be able to join sessions.

If you are interested in volunteering and do not have a computer please contact the co-ordinator, the telephone number is at the top of this page.

More information on Speedwatch can be found on the village website and regular updates are posted on Facebook (www.facebook.com/etchingham-speedwatch) and Twitter (@etchspeedwatch).

Cllr. Colin Boylett
Portfolio Holder for Community Safety
and Speedwatch Co-ordinator



www.etchinghamvillage.co.uk

The village website is provided by the Parish Council as a way to communicate Parish Council and village activities to village residents, potential new residents and visitors.

The agenda for all Parish Council meetings is published on the website about a week prior to the meeting, minutes of all meetings are also on the site and these are archived so the visitors can look back on what happened at previous meetings.

Details of Councillors and how to contact them can be found along with details of all the Council's policies and procedures.

Information about village organisations and events can all be found as well as details of events in the area, links to photos of village events, Police reports and links to many organisations offering various forms of help can be found.

The website is provided by the Parish Council, but in order to keep costs to a minimum I update the site details on behalf of the Council.

The contact email address for the website is etchinghamvillagewebsite@gmail.com

The website also has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/EtchinghamWebsitePage) and a Twitter account (@etchweb)

The Parish Council also has a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/etchinghampc and a Twitter account (@etchinghampc)

Colin Boylett

Portfolio holder for Council Communications



Children, young people and the recreation areas

In my capacity as Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and the Recreation Areas in the village, I provide a brief report to the Parish Council at monthly meetings.

The school is now enjoying the beautiful new building which has given them larger classrooms, a very large hall, a well- equipped library, a games court and a full size playing field. The outdoor learning spaces are currently being developed. There is an excellent family atmosphere and children learn to love learning. They are all encouraged to be the best they can be.

During the past year, the children have experienced many different learning opportunities through the bi-termly 'Learning Journeys'. These are planned by the staff across the Partnership with Bodiam C E School. The rationale of Partnership is 'Better Together'. The arrangement is a key driver in the pursuit of excellence so that it meets the needs and aspirations of all the pupils.

The Partnership which has been embedded in the schools for five years is taking a step further in collaboration later this year and will become the 'Riverside Federation'.

The Under 5's, now known as 'Barn Owls' is enjoying the purpose built facility and secure outdoor play space. Their play area is alongside the older children's, they use the School Hall for lunch and at the age of transition into Reception are integrated more easily into 'big school'.

There is also a thriving Mother and Toddler group who meet weekly in the Parker Hall.

The Queen's Gardens and the VIPER play areas continue to be well used by the village children (and the not so young village children!) as well as visitors from the surrounding area.

We have had an issue with minor vandalism in the Viper grounds and this has been repaired at minimal cost; thanks to two of our handymen Councillors.

The play equipment in the Queen's garden will shortly be repaired and back in action for children to use in the Spring.

All the equipment is checked regularly by the Parish Council and annually by a professional company to ensure that the equipment conforms to rigorous safety standards.

Annette Childs
Chair of Governors
Etchingam C E School



Etchingam Annual Report 2016

One year ago, having moved successfully to our new building, we reported that we planned to recruit more parents and their children, using our strengths – the ability of our staff, the warmth and enthusiasm we have for the children in our care and a smart new building. Helen and her staff have achieved this, to their credit, our numbers rising to 37 and, of this number, 21 children moving up to primary school, most of them to Etchingam.

We will continue to work hard to raise money not only for the extras but also to fill the substantial gap between our income and costs – we continue to manage our costs closely but there is a substantial gap between private fee rate for the two year olds and particularly the EYEE voucher rate of £3.60 for three year olds, on the income side, and the cost per hour of providing childcare with application of Government-imposed staff to child ratios. The gap is approximately £1.00 under what we need to survive.

The Parish Council kindly awarded us a grant of £1500, matched by our own fund-raising to raise £3000. We have written to our MP, Huw Merriman, about under-funding of the EYEE voucher rate, and he informs us that the Government are considering a UK-wide increase in the EYEE voucher rate which if implemented will close the £1.00 gap and enable us to continue. In 2016/2017, our running costs will increase – business rates, utility costs, building maintenance costs, alignment to the National Living Wage and pension costs in 2017 and so on.

We are all agreed that a well-run pre-school is an amenity that we all want for our village. Now is the time to rise to the challenge of “ownership” of one of our key amenities – please lobby your MP and local councillors and tell them what you want – please talk to Helen, Alan or any of the trustees to ask what you can do to help.

We welcomed both Harriet Knowles and Miranda Booth as new trustees and we thank all involved in running Barn Owls for their support and hard work.

Alan Davies

Chairman of Trustees, Barn Owls



Etchingam Trust for Sports and Recreation (ETSR)

Report to the Parish Assembly 2016

At the last Parish Assembly, we were able to report the successful opening of the village halls.

Since that time, ETSR has concentrated its efforts upon three key areas:

- Post completion snagging and design issues
- Completion of the Lease
- Successful management of the halls.

In general the southernmost bay (within which the halls are located) has been less affected by faults than other parts of the building. We have reported all issues to East Sussex County Council and have a strong on-going relationship with them to investigate and resolve all building related matters. Most matters have been satisfactorily resolved; however the blinds in the Parker Hall are still giving problems and high temperatures continue to be recorded in the hall itself. Discussions are continuing with Balfour Beatty (the main contractor) as to whether this is a design fault, the effect of the wrong glass being used, or even faulty installation. Both ESCC and ETSR are committed to resolve this problem as soon as possible. In the meantime we have been advised that until then we should not seek alternative blinds. Regarding our external space, the Village Square, we are seeking final confirmation that the paved areas will be sufficiently robust for occasional light vehicle traffic, so that we can initiate activities such as Farmers Markets.

Although we were allowed to move in and have taken bookings since 1st March 2015 we are disappointed to report that as yet the lease is not in place. The difficulty seems to rest in one clause only, which deals with what happens if the school moves or closes. Naturally we are not expecting that to happen, but we have to secure that if it does, the southernmost bay passes into the ownership of the village and that there is an option to purchase the Ahrens Hall or compensation paid for its loss. ETSR has a fundamental commitment to ensuring that the village continues to benefit from the availability of both halls since it was on that basis that all parties agreed to a shared scheme.

Patrons

Tom Avery

Robert Bathurst

Harry Hill

The Lord King of Lothbury, GBE

Charles Moore

Sir Frank Sanderson Bt. OBE

Rt.Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham, DL

Trustees: John Barnes – Chairman, Caroline Moore, Nicky Menzies, Steve Millea, Paul Stott;

Catherine Richards - Administrator, contact: Email: admin@etchinghamtrust.org.uk Tel: 07855 239848

Correspondence Address: Etchingam Trust for Sports and Recreation, Etchingam Community Hall, Parsonage Croft, Etchingam East Sussex TN19 7BY

Registered charity number: 1076642

Since the school site has yet to be transferred to the Diocese, effectively we operate under licence from the County Council. This is not an altogether satisfactory position, not least as council tax payers, and it is in the interest of ESCC to resolve it. ETSR has worked very positively with the Council and at the time of writing we believe matters are reaching the concluding stages with the Diocesan lawyers who are acting on behalf of the School Trustees.

The good news is that the village now enjoys two very fine halls which can be used singly or in combination. When used together, the two halls offer an altogether magnificent venue for major celebrations like Golden Weddings, wedding banquets or simple parties. Greg Coleman and Steve Millea have established a website that is a superb marketing tool and which shows the halls at their best.

It was decided to call the hall used by both Trust and School The Ahrens Hall in recognition of the generosity of the landowner and his ready co-operation throughout what amounted to a decade long lead in; the smaller hall has been christened The Parker Hall in recognition of David Parker's contribution to the original working party and the early work of the Trust.

The Ahrens Hall has now been equipped with the curtain tracks and curtains that enable it to be used for dramatic performances. We have acquired a PA system and with the spectacular tiered seating in place we have arguably the finest village halls in East Sussex.

The halls are being put to good use by the badminton club, the netball club, the pickle ball club, martial arts and Fitsteps - all of them new to the village.

The Parker Hall is also being well used for everything from local elections and parish council meetings to yoga, the Baby Barn Owls and mindfulness classes, and the kitchen is proving a great success both in design and function. There is a third smaller room that can be used for meetings or music practice, which has not yet been brought into use, and we shall need to make progress with the proposed recording studio.

Bookings have been good and the income and expenditure account is nearer to balance than the Trustees dared hope during its first year of operation.

The formal opening of both the school and the village halls took place on the 3rd July 2015. The Bishop of Lewes conducted the earlier ceremony and the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Colin Belsey the latter and we were blessed with a fine day and a large attendance. As Chairman, John Barnes had the difficult task of recalling all those involved and the much easier task of thanking them!

It is right to record here the backing we have received throughout from the Parish Council and its Chairmen – in terms of both financial and moral support; the enormous amount of work done by the previous Chairman of the Trust, Sasha Hunt, who worked with the landowner to secure the inclusion of the site in the Rother Local Plan; the hard work also of those who have served as Trustees over the last 17 years, whose only reward is the knowledge that Etchingam now has facilities second to none; and of course the people of Etchingam who rallied around when the planners looked as if they might turn down the scheme, who have always given it their support, and a great many of whom have been extremely generous donors to ETSR.

The Trustees continue to work tirelessly to provide the best possible facilities for the village and special thanks go to Catherine Richards, our administrator and now also bookings manager for the halls. At our AGM on Monday 12th October 2015 John Barnes, Caroline Moore, Nicky Menzies, Steve Millea and Paul Stott were elected as trustees. The Trustees elected John Barnes to continue as Chairman, Paul Stott as Vice Chairman and Steve Millea as Treasurer. Paul Stott and Steve Millea are the nominated trustees from the Parish Council.

Thanks were given to Caroline Moore, who had served as Vice Chairman, Jill Driver who had briefly joined the team as a co-opted trustee, Andrew Morton who has decided to stand down as a trustee and Annette Childs, who served as a co-opted trustee, but has resigned in view of the fact that she is now Chairman of the School Governors. We are actively seeking to fill the remaining vacancies for co-opted members of the Trust.

As we enter our second year of operation, we are looking to make the running of the halls self-financing as soon as possible. Some fundraising will be necessary to keep the Trust itself viable. However the increasingly regular use of the halls by villagers and others fills us with optimism about their future.

John Barnes

Chairman of Etchingam Trust for Sport & Recreation

Etchingam Improvements Committee

AGM Report 2015

This year has been an unusual one as at the AGM last year both myself as Chair and Lucy Tooke as Secretary decided that due to the lack of support and the increasing work and home commitments that we were both experiencing we decided to have a sabbatical. Also Paul Gilbert as Treasurer stood down without a replacement. This resulted in there not being a Fete, however thanks to the dedication of Philip and Phillipa Hinde we still managed to have the Flower and Dog show and thanks to Helen and Frank Brophy there was still the fireworks.

Financial Report

There were sufficient funds in the account as at April 2014 to be able to run the Flower & Dog and the Fireworks without having the Fete to raise funds to run them.

Flower & Dog Show - September 2015	
Outgoings	£431.76
Income	£557.43
Profit/Loss	£125.67
Bonfire Night - November 2015	
Outgoings	£2,290.13
Income	£1,905.21
Profit/Loss	-£384.92
Account Balance @17.04.2016	£3,626.73

Below are brief reports of the events.

Etchingam Flower and Dog Show 2015

Once again Etchingam pulled together to get the show on the road! It wasn't without some hitches though. It was the first big event since everything had been shunted around the village after the old village hall had been cleared and with only 18 hours to go we had 'lost' the teacups. They were eventually traced to the new hall.

The show wouldn't have happened at all if it had not been for those who helped set up and clear the site, organise the dog show and the refreshment tents and bring with them years of experience, like how to erect the marquee in less than 30 minutes.

The measure of success though was not how many dogs turned up or how many entries were made in the show, but the fact that so many people commented on what a wonderful afternoon of good 'old fashioned' fun they had.

Etchingam Fireworks 2015

The fireworks were held in the same field courtesy of Mr & Mrs Dear again this year and fortunately the weather held for a clear bright evening. Having had very wet weather in the run up the access to the field proved to be the most difficult part of the arrangements, but once everything was set the bonfire was lit and the hot dogs, soup and mulled wine started to warm the crowd, which was as usual, well attended. The village was treated to another amazing display worthy of a large town.

A big thank you goes to all those stalwarts who helped yet again to set up and take down the event.

I am pleased to confirm that Lucy and I are both back and involved with the Improvements again this year and am really encouraged by the level of support we have received and the number of people attending the recent meetings helping us plan the events for this coming year.

Events 2016

AGM - 15th May 2016 at 7.30pm in Etchingam Club

Summer Event - 'Day at the Seaside' - June 25th 2016

(combined Fete and Flower & Dog event with live music in the evening)

Fireworks – to be confirmed

Charles French – Chair

Lucy Tooke - Secretary



Update from the Etchingham Community Interest Company

It's fair to say the CIC was busier than expected in 2015. Due to a change in personal circumstances Neil and Sian Cotterill suddenly decided to close the Shop & Deli in August 2015. The CIC worked hard to keep the shop open but events overtook and it was forced to close.

The good news is that within 90 days the CIC had advertised the business opportunity, talked to approximately 8 well qualified candidates and started to work with James and Jennie Thiele to re-launch the Shop & Deli.

Focusing on food and quality, James and Jennie have now been trading for about 4 months and we are pleased to say the Shop and Deli is back in action and has been well received. As expected with the re-launch of a "new" business there have been extra start-up costs in terms of new and replacement equipment and to support new initiatives.

Fortunately, the Bistro went from strength to strength during the year. We renewed the outside signage and extended the garden as planned. Other than a few repairs to the coal yard car park the Bistro costs should be limited during 2016.

Etchingham Duck Race 2016

In order to manage costs and make the popular Etchingham Duck Race an annual event, the CIC has joined forces with the Etchingham Improvements Committee (EIC), Friends of Etchingham School (FES) and the Shop and Deli to stage the race on Sunday 1 May. For the first time the Duck Race will be sponsored by a few generous individuals and local businesses to ensure its financial success. Remember to buy your ducks!

Finally the CIC was nominated for a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service during 2015. This award was created by The Queen in 2002 to mark the occasion of her Golden Jubilee, it recognises excellence in voluntary activities and is the MBE for volunteer groups. Whether we are successful or not will be announced on 2 June by Buckingham Palace in the London Gazette – wish us luck!

CIC Directors, April 2016
Colin Phillips – 01580 860121
Sue Westbrook
John Morris
Peter Benn

Bistro@the station

The Bistro celebrated its 5th Birthday on Saturday 25 July in the newly extended garden. The party was attended by over 40 villagers who enjoyed dancing to live music long into the evening. Friday Night is Pizza Night remains incredibly popular with the Bistro often being booked a week in advance. To meet demand during the coming summer months we will be opening earlier on Friday nights and serving Pizza one Saturday evening each month.

The Bistro continues to enjoy the support of village residents, visitors from Burwash and surrounding villages and regular commuters.

Here are a few more highlights from 2015:

- There were a total of 16 private hires including christenings, birthdays, anniversaries, funerals, Christmas and family parties
- Quiz Nights were full to capacity every month with team entry monies going to the Station Garden Project
- The Bistro Bridge Club, led by Geoff Lucas, meets every Tuesday and Thursday lunchtime upstairs in the Conference Room
- Tom Marsh's artwork continues to grace the walls of the Bistro and generates interest and sales. Tom's annual exhibition in July 2015 was the most popular yet
- Staff Development – Lucy Kneller and Gemma Blades both embarked on their NVQs in catering and continue to study on a weekly basis. The CIC kindly purchased a new laptop computer for Lucy's studies which is proving invaluable
- The garden remains a major feature of the Bistro it is hard to believe it was once so neglected



- Thanks to Peter Baldock and his team from English Heritage Gardens and Charlotte Molesworth and her amazing topiary we continue to receive compliments and positive comments from regulars and visitors alike
- Press coverage for the Bistro hit new heights in 2015 appearing in the Sunday Telegraph, Waitrose and SouthEastern's Magazines

Paul and Julie Collins – 01580 819262

bistroetchingham@gmail.com

GARDENING

A platform for the community

Francine Raymond



At Etchingham station, no one minds the delays these days

About five thousand rail travellers pass through Etchingham station every week. It's just a small stop on the main Hastings to London railway line, but the local villagers use the station building as their community centre.

with bistro and garden. The stationmaster's house had been derelict for 30 years, and the garden was overgrown and infested with mare's tail, but somehow an inspirational group of volunteers, working together, has turned the handsome listed building into a venue to hold meetings and classes, as well as enjoy locally sourced food and drink. And those wanting to dine al fresco can spill out into the garden, where morning commuters drink their coffee, local mums tuck into lunch and pubgoers enjoy a pint outdoors in the evening.

What a nice surprise it must be for weary travellers to eschew the usual railway fare and experience good catering – even the loos are pleasant



Well worth the wait: the garden at the station has become a social hub for locals and commuters alike

– but the cherry on the cake is the chance to wait for your train with a bite to eat, out in the sunshine in among the flowers, with a view of the church through a willow plantation. Even the platform

is ranged with large planters packed full of blooms, while the car park (next to the village *boules* pitch) is set in a wildflower meadow filled now with primroses and wild daffodils.

The driving force behind this green goodwill is Peter Baldock of English Heritage Gardens, who has lived in Etchingham all his life. After training at Wisley and working at nearby Pashley Manor

Gardens, he has started his own company and is now giving something back to the village. "I was asked by Colin Phillips, the community chairman, to help after I'd worked on his garden, and got happily sucked in." The whole project has been enthusiastically carried out on a shoestring, with help from volunteers (some totally unexpected: a gang of lads missed their train and so moved soil in return for a lift to their destination). Plants and materials, meanwhile, have been swapped or kindly

What a nice surprise it must be for weary travellers

donated by local gardens and businesses. The sandstone terrace was partly donated by local quarry Philpot's (lambstricks.com) and the rest came from the now defunct village school site.

After five years, the mare's tail has been eradicated (by digging down a metre, covering with a double layer of Mypex weed control membrane and bringing in

new soil that was donated by a local farmer). The beds are packed with colour-blocked annuals with perennial thalictrum, scabious and phlox at the back of the borders, and an outdoor oven has been built by volunteers, with the resulting Friday pizza night a huge success.

The yew hedging that gives the garden its character and structure was planted in the first year to create compartments for shelter and privacy. So the idea to create a topiary fantasy was born – and who better to bring to reality than topiary artist Charlotte Molesworth? She sees shapes in hedges everywhere and turns them into the usual birds and geometric shapes, but she'll turn her snips to anything should the opportunity arise (her own garden is well worth a visit, see right).

Incorporating a catering theme, Charlotte has fashioned teapots and jugs, using leaders and strands of plaited green fencing wire to represent the handles, then tying branches of yew to the wire and training them until the wood ripens. She has clipped wineglasses and mugs, birds and buns, and tells me she sees Duncan Grant jugs in among the twigs and needles. There are also



Clipped to perfection: Charlotte Molesworth's topiary adventures are on display at the station



Better than the buffet car: the popular new bistro@the station

plans to create a train that will run along the back hedge, so different height yews have been planted to give the engine a head start. Charlotte says it will take another four years of constant snipping, before the train is ready to leave the station.

As a village, Etchingham was losing its identity. Today, this project has made it a destination. Villagers are thrilled with their new facilities and the project has won awards. Network Rail, Railway Heritage and SouthEastern were happy to help fund the project then pass responsibility for the care of the building to the locals. The station has

even been visited privately by royalty – the bistro's cake was, apparently, much admired and purchased in bulk. The Community Interest Company and their volunteers have ably responded to local needs for a pub, shop and meeting place, and as a result have put the heart back into their village.

• **Bistro@the station**, Station Approach, Etchingham, East Sussex, TN19 7PA. For menus and opening times, see bistroatthestation.co.uk.

• **Charlotte Molesworth's** topiary garden and studio in Benenden, Kent, will be open as part of Open Art Studios during weekends in June, see seos-art.org.

Etchingam Shop & Deli

The Etchingam Shop & Deli had a change of management during 2015.



Following a change in personal circumstances of the previous managers the shop closed briefly in the second half of the year only to re-open again just before Christmas!

James and Jennie Thiele took over the reins in early December and the new style shop & Deli was launched with a sponsors' evening attended by our local MP, Huw Merriman.

James Thiele said, "I'm not sure whether it was sensible or crazy to open just before Christmas but we survived. We have loved every minute of it despite all of the challenges and hard work involved."

James and Jennie live in the village and while Jennie continues to work in the City James is a trained chef and works tirelessly with his team of "foodies" in the Shop & Deli to serve the residents of Etchingam and the surrounding villages.

Highlights of the first four months of the re-launched Shop & Deli

- The birth of the Etchingam Egg – a perfectly cooked free range scotch egg
- Freshly cooked meals available daily including fish pie, lasagne and veggie options
- Re-launch of Take-out-Thursdays with bigger and better portions
- Newly launched Family Friday dishes – larger cottage pies etc for hungry families
- More gluten free products
- Tasting Saturdays at least once per month
- Pana Chocolate – handmade organic and raw "healthy option" chocolate with no dairy, no soy, no refined sugar, gluten free and a low GI!
- An improved selection of wines from the Secret Cellar in Wadhurst and a wider selection of local ciders, ales and beers

Foods Standards Agency Hygiene – 5 Star Rating

On its first inspection under new management the Shop & Deli was awarded the highest 5 Star Rating from the Foods Standards Agency. A lot of hard work went into achieving this in terms of updating facilities in the kitchen area and a massive amount of cleaning throughout the shop both upstairs and downstairs. It's great to know that all the hard work to provide customers with delicious food in a clean and safe environment paid off.

Major investment in British Charcuterie

The CIC has recently invested over £1000 in a deluxe ham slicer for the Shop & Deli. There has always been a strong history of preserving food in this country although we tend to associate charcuterie with further afield. James is keen to revive interest in British charcuterie and is introducing the Cotswold Curer which specializes in curing meat to rival the best Europe has to offer. However to maintain choice Italian salami and Spanish chorizo will also be on offer.

Extended Hours and Plans for the Future

After a few months of uncertainty before the shop closed in August and when it first re-opened the opening hours have now settled down to something similar to the first few years. James and Jennie believe the best hours for the village are as follows:

Monday to Wednesday 7.30am – 6pm

Thursday and Friday 7.30am – 7pm

Saturday 8.30am – 6pm

Sunday 9am - 1pm

With the continued support of the CIC and the Parish Council, the Shop & Deli has plans to go from strength to strength. Under the slogan of "Live the Good Life" Etchingham remains the envy of surrounding villages for having such a beautiful and well stocked Shop & Deli.

Etchingham Shop & Deli

James Thiele – 01580 819055

james@etchinghamshopanddeli.co.uk

De Etchingham Community Interest Company

Colin Phillips – 01580 860121

colin@gospaplanning.com

Rother Valley Ladies

The Rother Valley Ladies Group meets at 2.30pm on the first Wednesday of each month.

Over the year we divide our meetings between talks given by visiting speakers, discussions on varying topics and outings. Subjects covered in the past year have included the history of a local house, garden birds, Elizabethan life in the country and Uppark House. Visits were made to Polesden Lacey, Penshurst Place and Hole Park.

A garden meeting was held in a member's garden and we enjoyed a Christmas lunch at a local pub. We also had a discussion on current affairs. New members are always welcome to our meetings, which are usually held in the village hall. For further information please contact Greta Crane on 01580 819304.

Alison Vernon

ETCHINGHAM DARBY & JOAN CLUB

The Club was formed in 1958.

Members meet on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 2.30 in The Parker Hall, where we have illustrated talks etc., followed by a good tea.

There are usually three outings during the year and a coffee morning to help raise some money for the Club, as we are self-funding. New Members are always welcomed, anyone over the age of 55 is eligible to join.

Please contact Julia Barrow 01580 819475 for more details and a copy of the 2016 Programme.

ETCHINGHAM MUSIC FESTIVAL

Report on Etchingam Music Festival 2015

The Music Festival had a very good year artistically in 2015. Our opening concert featured our first evening of piano duets given by the highly talented Emma Abbate and Julian Perkins. We finally managed to procure a wind quintet, Cavendish Winds, who performed a thrilling concert with Florian Mitrea, our favourite young pianist. Florian has played for us on many occasions over the years.

Our final supper concert featured young opera singers from the Royal Academy of Music performing songs from musical theatre. This concert was particularly popular with village residents.

On the final Sunday we held an afternoon choir concert with the Ashdown Singers in aid of the Church Fabric Fund. Thus we were able to raise £300 for the Parochial Church Council as a small thank you for the use of the church.

In financial terms we did not fare so well due to rising costs on every front and made a small loss. Therefore we have asked the Parish Council for a grant this year and have asked our supporters for increased donations for 2016.

Mary Newington.

April 2016



Etchingham Parish Church

The Assumption of Blessed Mary and St. Nicholas

The long consultation process being finally completed, as from 1st December 2015 the Assumption of the Blessed Mary and St Nicolas Etchingham, St Bartholomew's Burwash and St Philip's Burwash Weald became a United Benefice.

With the creation of the United Benefice I now hold the position of Rector with overall responsibility for all three churches, a position that I will strive to fulfil prayerfully, humbly and with care and love for all. It also means that both the Assumption of the Blessed Mary and St Philips are no longer in interregnum.

As the main Sunday by Sunday and pastoral responsibility of St Bartholomew's and Burwash remains under my care it is imperative that continuity of service cover and pastoral responsibility is maintained for both other churches.

During the long period of interregnum Etchingham have experienced, we are extremely grateful for the hard work of the Church Wardens which has meant that cover was provided for all the services whilst ensuring that the church building continues to be maintained and cared for.

We also give thanks for the clergy who have given of their time in ministering on a Sunday by Sunday basis. Most of you will be aware that amongst these has been Rev'd Jean Manning who, along with providing regular Service cover, has also been building a strong relationship with both the local community and the school. We are thrilled that Jean will be continuing her ministry in Etchingham.

Changes are often difficult to accept but I hope you will be re-assured to know that the Church in Etchingham will retain its individuality, parochial church council and financial responsibility. The coming together as a Benefice will enable all three churches to pool ideas and human resources to equip us more fully to be able to take God's love and word into every corner of our communities.

Sally Epps
Rector

And Finally, from the Parish Office.....

After my first full year as Parish Clerk I can confirm that there is certainly never a dull moment.

When Bob Hodgson planned his retirement date he did so with due regard to seeing the final legalities to the new School and Community Halls being complete and the new sports facility at The Cricket Field well underway.

A year on and we're nearly there!

Fortunately Bob is still very much available for advice and 'corporate memory' for which the Parish Council and your new Clerk in particular, are really grateful and appreciative.

Etchingham is an amazingly vibrant and lively village for its size. The variety of societies and number of residents inclined to come forward and make things happen is the envy of many other communities as I have heard on more than one occasion when attending events in the Rother District and beyond. So thank you Etchingham.

I'm taking this opportunity of expressing thanks to all the councillors, Parish, District and County for all the hard work they undertake throughout the year – and their patience and help in supporting the new Clerk. I'm sure that these thanks are also echoed by Etchingham at large.

There is another full year ahead of us – projects to complete and new ideas still to see the light of day. Watch this space as they say, and the Notice Boards, and the website, and not least E-Bulletin, for all the latest news and information.

Paulette Barton

Clerk to Etchingham Parish Council