SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-21



View from Footpath NS316 looking west (BL, May 2021)

As a Parish Council, we are required to hold an Annual Parish Assembly once a year, to report to our parishioners on what we have been doing over the past year, and to answer your questions. As last year, due to the coronavirus epidemic, the usual meeting in the Village Hall could not take place and instead we held a smaller on-line meeting. This published Annual Report contains the same reports from the Council that were made available on-line and would have been presented - if you have any questions about the content then please do not hesitate to address them to the author of the particular report.

The Annual Report likewise contains the reports from parish organisations, providing an opportunity for them to report on their activities and to encourage people to join.

We hope that you will find this 2020-21 report interesting and informative.

Chairman's Report



This has been a year dominated by COVID-19. After the cancellation of last year's Annual Parish Assembly, we were hoping that we would be able to hold this year's assembly in the Village Hall, but unfortunately, we were unable to do so. We have spent the past year conducting our business remotely online, but I hope that we will be able to resume our meetings at the Village Hall as soon as we possibly can. I sincerely hope that you will all be able to join us at the Village Hall next year when we can once again report to our parishioners in person.

Shorne Village Hall

It is not just important to me that we can resume our business at the Village Hall, it is vital for the continued solvency of the Hall itself. As one of Shorne Parish Council's Trustees on the Village Hall Management Committee, I am acutely aware of the financial impact that the pandemic and the resulting closures have had on the Village Hall. The Village Hall has had to rely on Government grants and depletion of its reserves in order to survive. But this on its own is not sustainable in the longer term, and it is essential that the Village Hall is able to reopen for business as soon as possible.

The Parish Council recognises that the Village Hall is essential to the vitality of the village, and we have therefore agreed in principle that the Parish Council would be prepared to provide financial support to the Village Hall if there is no other alternative, in order to ensure its survival. But this would not be without its consequences. The Parish Council's reserves are not inexhaustible so this would affect our ability to invest in other projects and is likely to have an impact on the parish precept.

Parish Precept

The parish precept was increased by just under 2% for 2021/22, and once again we find that the property charge for Shorne is the lowest of all the parishes in Gravesham. A total income of £38,000 a year leaves little for any discretionary expenditure after fixed and ongoing operating costs are met, and we are dependent on grants for any significant investment in the parish. Difficult choices need to be made, but if the Parish Council is to be able to invest in the parish, then it is inevitable that the precept will need to be increased by more than inflation in future.

Shorne Common Children's Play Area

The children's play equipment on Shorne Common was originally obtained second-hand over 25 years ago, but it is no longer compliant with safety regulations, so it was decided to look into the cost of renewing and upgrading the play equipment. Whilst we were prepared to invest in its replacement, even a relatively

modest scheme would have been beyond the means of the Parish Council without entering into long-term loans, and it was therefore necessary to apply for grant funding.

I am pleased to report that we have been successful in obtaining a £5,000 KCC Member's grant sponsored by Bryan Sweetland, County Councillor for Gravesham Rural Division, a £15,000 grant from Veolia Environmental Trust, and a £10,000 contribution from Gravesham Borough Council. With investment from the Parish Council and kind offers of donations from local residents we hope to have new play equipment installed in time for the summer season.

Lower Thames Crossing

Despite the withdrawal of Highways England's Development Consent Order application, the prospect of the commencement of the construction of the Lower Thames Crossing looms ever closer. I will leave Susan Lindley to cover this and our ongoing meetings with Highways England in more detail, but I cannot over-emphasise the impact that the construction work will have on our environment. The scale of the construction work will be immense, stretching from Lower Higham Road in Chalk to the north, to Singlewell in the west, and to beyond the M2 junction 1 in the east. When it is completed, we will have a minimum of 14 lanes of traffic between Shorne Woods Country Park and Ashenbank Woods, a 6-lane expressway between Thong and Shorne West, and no direct access from Brewers Road to the M2. Our environment will be changed forever.

Gravesham Local Plan

Also looming on the horizon is Gravesham's Local Plan, in which it is intended to accommodate up to 2,000 new dwellings on land currently designated as Green Belt. Whilst the Parish Council will oppose any plans that significantly impact on the strategic gap between the built-up areas of Gravesend and the Medway Towns, we do not have the power to prevent it, and it is quite possible that the Borough Council will seek to accommodate some new dwellings within the Parish.

Telecommunications Mast

Last year, I was able to report that the unwelcome proposal to erect a 25-metre high communications tower on Shorne Common had been put on hold whilst the infrastructure provider investigated a potential alternative site. In September last year, they informed us that they are now proposing to install a 15-metre mast on private land. This is instead of their original proposal but will of course be subject to them reaching agreement with the landowner, and to any planning considerations and consultations that may be applicable.

Parish Council Personnel

I would like to welcome our new Councillor Allison Franks, who joined us in February, and thank all my colleagues for their work on behalf of the Parish over the last year. My particular thanks go to Robin Theobald for supporting me as Vice Chairman, to Susan Lindley for her continuing diligent work as Chair of the Planning & Highways Committee, and to Pauline Clifton who took over last year as Chair of the Footpaths, Properties, & Greens Committee. Pauline's help and support in selecting the play equipment extended to visiting other play areas to try out the equipment herself, which is a sign of her true dedication. Last but not least, I would like to thank our Clerk Sarah Poole, particularly for making sure we were able to continue with our meetings online. I would also like to congratulate her on passing her Introduction to Local Council Administration, and she is well on her way to obtaining her full certification.

Bob Lane
Chairman of Shorne Parish Council

Council Committee on Planning and Highways

I would like to thank for their assistance: Vice-Chairman John Bugg, Sarah Poole our Parish Clerk, all the members of the Committee and specifically Robin Theobald for all his help and advice.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not have much impact on the work of the Committee, which if anything has been increased as residents had more time to think about their homes and neighbourhood, with a view to undertaking or seeking improvements.

Planning

This year the Parish Council was consulted by Gravesham Borough Council (GBC, the decision makers) concerning 85 planning applications of various kinds affecting the Parish, which is a little higher in number than last year. There were five applications outside but close to our boundary. These are important as they can also impact on the parish. Examples are development at Knights Place Farm in Cobham and East Court barn in Chalk, and changes to operation of Milton Rifle Range.

Five applications were non-residential: there was continuation of the application for an enlarged industrial estate at the Nuralite site, which despite strong opposition from both Shorne and Higham parishes is heading towards being permitted; two were at New Green Farm where they want to plant caravans for their seasonal workers as well as apple trees; and two were applications for a barn building on farmland adjacent to Park Pale Yard, which has twice been refused permission.

There were seven Appeals to the Planning Inspectorate over previous decisions of refusal, of these four were dismissed (i.e., were refused permission), one was withdrawn before determination and two are still pending. The Appeal regarding the land adjoining the See Ho public house was dismissed – application had been made to build two houses but the site is outside the official boundary of the settlement and is classified as Green Belt land. A new and unwelcome feature of the Appeals process is that Inspectors can decide to hear cases under a "householder process" which prevents both GBC and Shorne Parish Council from submitting additional comments.

That leaves 68 applications on residential properties. As reported previously there are often several applications on the same property, and a new record of 10 was set this year by one property on Pear Tree Lane where the existing house is to be demolished and replaced with a large new, but traditional design. Of the 68, one was withdrawn, nine are pending decision, 41 were permitted and 17 were refused.

All applications are examined very carefully, and generally some kind of comments, of varying levels of detail, have to be submitted. All comments sent in by SPC can be viewed on the GBC website plus are recorded in the Planning and Highways Committee minutes, as is information about individual planning problems. Some areas of the Parish cause a lot more difficulties than others. Most applications are reasonable and proportionate to their sites but, sad to say, some are "over-the-top", inconsiderate to neighbours and the rural environment and to the Parish as a whole.

Over the last few years there have been relaxations of planning rules (e.g. eight-metre deep rear single-storey extensions are permitted without full consultation). This was initially temporary but has now been made permanent. Increasingly, it is also the situation that some householders are not applying for straightforward planning permission but using the Lawful Development process to bypass this and to legalise proposed very large outbuildings without neighbours or the Parish Council officially being able to object, although we send in our comments to GBC regardless.

Planning matters particularly worth mentioning:

- **Lower Thames Crossing**: Having undertaken a "supplementary" consultation in January 2020, Highways England (HE) then held a "design refinement" consultation in July 2020 so the Parish Council

once again had to review thousands of pages of documents looking for changes and making detailed comments as required.

HE then submitted their Development Consent Order application (the equivalent of seeking planning permission but a much longer process) to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2020 so we were expecting to have to go through the process all over again when, to everyone's surprise (and no small amount of relief), HE had to withdraw their 40,000 page application as the Planning Inspectorate had indicated that they would not accept it as presented. We are aware that since then HE have continued working towards resubmission, which was originally expected to happen by the end of March but that date has gone by. We have heard suggestions that there may be another "focused" consultation before the DCO application is then submitted later in 2021.

Meanwhile HE has been working on archaeological surveys (no very interesting finds yet), more detailed geology and investigating the location of utilities – they have spent a long time searching alongside the A2 for a very elusive large gas pipe.

Parish Council representatives have had on-line meetings with HE staff to discuss some of the objections and concerns that we have raised in the past, most of which are still valid. We continue to press for improvements to landscaping, minimisation of tree loss, visual and noise screening and many other aspects on behalf of Parish residents and the wider local communities.

More detailed information can be found in the Minutes of the Planning and Highways Committee meetings, on the Parish Council website.

- **"Future Hoo" housing developments and London Resort Theme Park at Ebbsfleet:** We continually keep a watch on developments in the wider area that might impact on Shorne, so have submitted representations on both these projects, which are of concern due to potential increase in local traffic levels.

Highways

It has overall been quite a successful year for resolving some longstanding Highways issues. I am very pleased to be able to report that, after several years of lobbying Kent County Council (who are the Highway Authority), two long-term improvement aims (the reduction of the Pear Tree Lane speed limit to 30mph throughout, and the installation of double yellow lines on corners of Forge Lane that are adversely affected by School parking), have been achieved during the past year.

Highways matters particularly worth mentioning:

- **Lorries ignoring statutory signs**: We have continuing problems with lorries ignoring the statutory "road less than 6'6" wide" signs although they are allowed to pass them for access to particular properties. Our monitoring shows that problems do not actually happen very often but occasionally a single lorry can cause significant problems and damage. After prolonged consultation with KCC they have agreed to install new signage aiming to protect Thong Lane and Shorne Ifield Road, and at Park Pale and Higham traffic lights for Pear Tree Lane.

- **Village gateway sign**: We have been in discussions with KCC over getting a Village gateway sign installed on Brewers Road, to warn drivers that they are approaching a residential area where there may be pedestrians. It is proving difficult to achieve agreement about where such a sign would be located but discussions are continuing.

- **Bollards on verges outside Shorne Woods Country Park**: When the Park is very busy people inconsiderately and in fact illegally park vehicles fully on the pavement where there are double yellow lines near the Country Park entrance. This causes pedestrians to have to walk in the road and prevents access to the bus stop and dropped kerb crossing points. The Parish Council is funding, with a kind contribution

from the Country Park, for wooden bollards to be installed along the edge of the pavement areas so as to prevent this nuisance.

Susan Lindley
Chairman of the Planning and Highways Committee

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Council Committee on Footpaths, Properties and Greens

This is my first year as Chair of the Footpaths, Properties and Greens Committee, having been Vice Chair for one year. My thanks to Lisa McCluskey for her support as current Vice Chair and also to Robert Hardy who has accompanied me on footpath checks.

Footpaths

There are 13 miles of Public Rights of Way (PROWs) within the parish and most of these are maintained by Kent County Council. Maps showing tracks and pathways can be downloaded from the Parish Council website (under the heading Our Parish). The maps are divided into various locations within the parish.

Although KCC have schedules for cutting back vegetation encroaching on the PROWs, it is important that the paths are walked regularly in order to ensure that they are kept clear. If you notice that a path is overgrown or blocked it can be reported directly to KCC. There is a link to the KCC reporting page on our website.

Footpath NS171 runs from Green Farm Lane across part of the new orchards (New Green Farm) to the original Green Farm. Poles and wires have been erected in order to support the new apple trees and the path now runs between the poles. The KCC Public Rights of Way Officer for Gravesham checked the path and, after requesting the farmer to move a couple of poles, is satisfied that all is now in order.



New Stile on Footpath NS169

Properties

If affordable, we are considering options to improve the two brick-built bus shelters on the Gravesend Road in order to reduce the anti-social behaviour which occurs there. It will probably be more appropriate (and less costly) to adapt the existing shelters rather than replacing them with new shelters.

The iron railings in The Street are due to be re-painted shortly.

Earlier in 2021 we arranged for the war memorial in the churchyard to be steam cleaned. This has made a considerable difference to the appearance.



War Memorial – before and after cleaning

Greens

Kent County Council is responsible for the maintenance of our roadside greens and verges which are cut periodically. Where bulbs are planted (Tanyard Hill, Post Office Green, and Chestnut Corner) KCC do not carry out any cutting until the flowers have died back. The Parish Council supplements this by arranging for additional spring cutting where bulbs are planted. We are planning to do some planting in the autumn on one of the verges in Tanyard Hill which currently has no bulbs.

Common Land that the Parish Council owns and is responsible for maintaining:

- The **Recreation Ground** in The Ridgeway is leased to a local football club and the grass is maintained by Gravesham Borough Council. A new gate at the main entrance was installed in January this

year. We have recently introduced licensing permits to control and charge for commercial activities on the Recreation Ground and other parish-owned land.

- **Shorne Common Rough** lies between The Ridgeway and Woodlands Lane. The grass in the small picnic area near Woodlands Lane is cut by Gravesham Borough Council. There are currently some missing butts around the edge of the common, resulting in motorised vehicles being able to enter. Our contractor will shortly be replacing the butts. Last summer it was necessary to prevent trail cyclists from digging in the woods and constructing additional ramps.

- **Shorne (School) Common** in Mill Hill Lane now has two benches. We purchased a new bench made from recycled plastic in memory of our former Clerk, Theresa Martin who sadly passed away in May 2020.



Memorial bench for Theresa Martin, former Parish Clerk

The old bench has been pressure washed, treated with oil preservative, and has a new plaque explaining how the Common was gifted to the Parish Council.







The grass on the common is cut by Gravesham Borough Council. It was necessary this year to cut back a small number of dead trees and branches following the survey done by the arboriculturalist. We have this survey carried out annually in rotation between the Recreation Ground, Shorne Common Rough and Shorne (School) Common.

- **Crabbles Bottom** is an area of 27 acres of footpath, bridleway, woodland, meadow, and orchard. It is a very pleasant area for walking and can be reached on foot from Bowesden Lane or by parking in the lay-by in Crutches Lane. The ancient orchard has many Bramley apple trees which continue to yield very good crops. We encourage you to pick as many apples as you wish for your own use. This year we have had repairs carried out to the fencing alongside the bridleway. The Parish Council employs contractors throughout the season to cut back the footpath and bridleway and also to cut the grassland in the orchard.





Views of Crabbles Bottom 2021

- **Michael Gardens Play Area** in Shorne West is part of Shorne Parish but is owned and maintained by Gravesham Borough Council. GBC are planning to install a couple of picnic tables in the area at no expense to the Parish Council.

Litter Patrols

24 volunteers braved the rain on 3rd October 2020 to collect litter from all parts of Shorne. Another 10 volunteers picked litter separately, either on the day or shortly before or after.

On 27th March this year 60 volunteers collected over 100 bags from Thong Lane in the west to Pear Tree Lane and Crabbles Bottom in the east, from Green Farm Lane in the north to the A2 in the south. This included Gravesend Road, Shorne Ifield Road and the A2 slip roads at Brewers Road. We are very

grateful to all the volunteers as well as those individuals who regularly pick litter when out for their daily walks.





Some of the litter collected on the A226 Gravesend Road

Trees in The Ridgeway

At the end of 2020 The Parish Council was obliged to fund the cost of cutting back overhanging branches along The Ridgeway. This resulted from a request from Kent County Council, claiming that it was in the interest of public safety as they had received reports from pedestrians and road users, including bus operators.

Pauline Clifton
Chairman of Footpaths, Properties & Greens Committee

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Gravesham Borough Councillor's Annual Report

Like many other organisations, Gravesham Borough Council's activities have been dominated by COVID-19 over the past year. The lockdowns meant that office-based staff have had to work from home, but Council services still had to continue, as it is a provider of essential services. IT and telephone services had to be rapidly upgraded to allow staff to continue to provide services from home uninterrupted, while demands on their services increased dramatically.

Housing stock has still had to be maintained and repaired irrespective of the pandemic, and the Council's refuse collection service has continued uninterrupted, despite the closure of the recycling centres and an increase in fly tipping. Gravesham has always performed well in terms of fly tipping clearance, but they have now established an investigation and enforcement unit, and this has resulted in a significant increase in penalties to offenders.

In terms of COVID support, the Council has had to administer 15 different government grant schemes concerning businesses and business rates and has distributed around £22 million in Covid-related grants in the last year. It was in the top four Local Authorities in the country in terms of the speed that they distributed the grants. In addition, they have paid out nearly £900,000 in Council Tax credits and hardship payments to around 600 households badly impacted by Covid.

I don't often praise the Borough Council, but it's actually been a remarkable achievement.

But the impact on the Borough has been profound. The decline in the town centre has accelerated, with footfall during the first quarter being just 68% compared to a year previously, and vacant town centre properties increasing from 9% to over 12%. Unemployment has risen from 2,300 to almost 5,000, and is

now at 7.6% of the working population, while Youth unemployment (18-24) has increased from 455 to 965, now running at 12.7%.

The pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the Council's revenues, in terms of council taxes, business rates, car park revenues, and investment income, which has made it necessary to dip into reserves. There is no guarantee that the Government will make up the shortfall.

In terms of planning, this last year has seen the approval of major developments on brown-field sites in the town centre, including Clifton Slipways, the old Maternity Block, and the Market Square redevelopment adjacent to Queen Street, with more likely to follow. Although opinions on these are mixed, my own view is that they may bring increased footfall and regeneration to the town centre and will go some way to reduce the pressure on the Green Belt and local green spaces.

Like the Parish Council, we have held all our meetings remotely for the last year, but we expect to return to the Civic Centre for the Annual Council Meeting on 18th May.

Bob Lane
Gravesham Borough Councillor

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County Councillor's Annual Report

We have not been in County Hall for just over a year now. It has been a tough year, all Councils have had a really tough year and so have all communities. Kent County Council has certainly played its part in doing what we can to support people throughout Kent, whether grants for businesses or just to ensure that food parcels and the necessary support are there. Most of you know what sort of work the County Council, the Borough Council, and the Parish Council have all done, and I think that everybody is pulling in the same direction.

In my job as the County Councillor I am lucky as I have six Parish Councils and a couple of Community Associations, and they are all really good which makes my job that much easier. Although it's not a big part of my budget, highways nevertheless causes most of the e-mails that come into my mailbox, and I would particularly like to thank Cllr Lindley & Cllr Lane for their help whether it's on local issues or on something like the Lower Thames Crossing. With regards to local issues, we have managed to get a lot of things done through their expertise and persistence.

One of the nice things about being a County Councillor is that I get some grant money. I try to be fairly equal with how it is distributed around the Parish Councils, so it was good to see that the Playground scheme is going ahead. This was something I suggested to Cllr Lane some months ago after visiting the area and thinking it really needed an upgrade, so I found £5,000 to get the scheme kicked off, and it's great that you have got other grants as well. I was fortunate to be able to do the same with Higham and Vigo Parish Councils - with the good open space and exercise for youngsters it's really great and the way to go.

Some of the other things I have used the grant money for previously are the 30mph interactive speed sign on The Ridgeway that we put in with the Parish Council, the speed indicator and monitoring device, and also the CCTV at the Village Hall. These are the sort of things we can put in place from that grant money and some of the things we have put in over the last few years.

Kent County Council is also the Public Health Authority, and at every Cabinet meeting I go to on a Monday morning we have the Public Health Director there, and he gives us an update on where we are with COVID. The numbers are looking a lot better than they were, and that's down to the work of the NHS, Kent County Council, and Gravesham Borough Council, and the Public Health team have done a really good job. Since Woodville Halls started as a vaccination centre, my wife and I have been there volunteering, trying to get

people to the right area, and asking if they have been tested positive in the last 28 days. It does give you a big shock when two or three people say "yes, we have", so you quickly show them the exit and ask them to come back when they are feeling better! Nevertheless, the Woodville Halls centre has been a great success.

On the Green agenda we have got a really good Cabinet member called Susan Carey who has been pushing this. As you probably know, over the past several years it's all been about LED lighting, and we have now converted over 120,000 streetlights to low energy. When I first joined the County Council 12 years ago, about 20% of rubbish used to go to landfill, so it's great to report that now less than 1% of all the domestic rubbish/waste goes to landfill, with some going to a more environmentally friendly incinerator which then produces electricity as well. We're making some inroads there as well, and we aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. That's an ambitious date to aim for, with all our vehicles and everything else.

County Hall is a fine building in Maidstone, we have not been there for a year and I do not know when we will be returning, but we're hoping to have our Annual Kent County Council Meeting there. But the big problem is we have 81 County Councillors and if you add another 20 Directors and staff, it's simply not big enough to be socially distant. It's a very old building and the costs are colossal to try to put in the social distancing measurements required, so we have got to make some plans as far as that's concerned, as Government has only given us a certain amount of time to use things like Zoom and Microsoft Teams.

Bryan Sweetland
KCC Councillor, Gravesham Rural

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CHURCH, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:

The Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul

As I sit to write the report it is just about a year since I was required to lock the church door and suspend all services. Apart from a short time in the middle, when things were nothing like normal, that is how things have remained. But as has been said many times in the past, the church is not a building, but a group of people, and our church community continues to thrive and support the community here in Shorne.

We may not be running all our usual services, events and activities, but we have been very active. We continue to meet weekly via zoom, for Sunday worship and prayer as the PCC thought that it was too risky meeting in church as we have a high percentage of more senior parishioners and the heating system has completely failed.

Although outside of church we are not permitted to gather and meet physically, we also stay in touch through social media, neighbourly support and of course the good old telephone.

We have continued to support the community through running errands, shopping, collecting medication etc., being a friendly voice on the end of the phone, and sadly, because of the times we are going through funerals and end of life care. In the middle of it all we managed one wedding last August.

Our church building has stood at the centre of village life for hundreds of years, and quite recently we had a new roof, but the building has suffered during the lockdowns as bits of it are crumbling, and the heating which was troublesome a year ago has completely ceased to function. Part of the celling which was repaired during the roof refurbishment collapsed and smashed the organ, causing an estimated £20,000 of damage (which we are hoping will be covered by insurance). We are looking forward to getting these

failings rectified so the church building can once again resound to the joyful sounds of praise and worship, alongside the chatter and clinking cups at times like coffee mornings.

We are looking forward, hoping, and praying, and in faith we have started planning for some of our regular events to resume. We have provisionally booked 3rd July for the very popular Vicarage Garden Party with the band '5 In The Bar'. We are also planning to have the church open again for services before Easter.
I look forward to being able to give a healthier and happier report next year.

Reverend Ted Hurst
Vicar

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Shorne Bell Ringers

When we are allowed to do so, we will welcome anyone interested in giving bell ringing a try in the tower on a Wednesday night at 7.30 p.m., and afterwards in the pub!

What an interesting year it has been! We have met to ring on several occasions, always ringing a maximum of four bells in order to meet the requirements of restrictions in place at the time. We have managed one more bell than many 6 bell towers because we have been able to use the fact that some ringers come from the same household and so haven't had to distance from one another; we can get closer together than others!

In the same way that many societies have had to over lockdown, we have met socially online and enjoyed a laugh and chat as friends. We have also been able to 'ring' in online ringing rooms that allow us to practice methods but these are, in reality, very different to ringing for real and no replacement for the bells. We have missed the bells terribly. It is some consolation to know that many residents have too.

Churches are large inanimate structures brought to life internally by the myriad groups and individuals that work to make them a living place of worship, friendship and support. Externally the flag, blowing in the wind at half-mast during mourning for His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and back in its usual place thereafter, provides movement and gives a sense of connection to all that see it. The other sign of church life that extends outwards is, of course, the bells; heard throughout the village when we practice or ring for services, occasions and events. It was for this reason that it was important to us that the tenor tolled on April 10 this year, as it did on 11 November last year when the government asked us to stand on our doorsteps for a minutes silence rather than attend the cenotaph. Hopefully we allow many to experience the church in their midst whilst forced to stay away. Ringing in the New Year was an omission from our 2020 diary but, as restrictions lift through 2021, we hope to return to ringing all six of the bells in Shorne once again. Ringing will be earlier on Sundays with the new service times and a quarter peal starting at 8.40 a.m. will mean early rising for some young ringers that might have got out of the habit!

It is pleasing to report to the Parish that, despite a year of restrictions, our band is in good condition having held together socially online and at the pub on occasions when we could! Our tower is structurally sound, albeit in need of some lime plaster work internally and in want of decent decoration and lighting. Our bell frame could use a clean and repaint but the eight bell pits are otherwise solid and three quarters full (we have two empty treble pits that would make the full octave if ever the money was found for augmentation). And our bells, although in need of turning due to clapper wear, rehanging due to being on very worn, plain bearings and generally overhauling due to corrosion of crown bolts and other fixings are safe to ring and, as we have come to appreciate, better than no bells at all!

As a group of church workers we are drawn from all faiths and none. We welcome anyone interested in learning to ring the bells regardless of personal belief and ask only that, once competent, some return is given to the church by supporting service ringing. We meet on Wednesday evenings at 7.30 p.m. and

retire to the Rose and Crown at 9 p.m. or shortly after. You can also ask about ringing by emailing us at shornebellringers@gmail.com if that is easier.

Hopefully next year we will report the return of our annual Christmas curry, Easter meal, tower outing and possibly even a refurbishment project, but who knows. The future seems to offer so much!

Richard Farmer
Ringing Master

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Shorne Village Pre-school

Due to the Pandemic 2020/21 has been a challenging year at Shorne Village Pre-school. We reopened in September under Government guidelines and strict conditions, with a robust cleaning regime and new routines in place. Trying to keep things as normal as possible has been challenging but our children have been fantastic, and we thank our families for their continued support in these very uncertain times.

We have continued to provide sessions full of activities and experiences for all children to enjoy. Also supporting families not able to return through our Facebook parents group and Class DoJo. In return our parents have kept in contact and up to date by sending us photos and messages.

Going forward, hopefully things will return to normality and the children here at Shorne village Pre-school will continue to progress, grow and learn with the support of our great team of practitioners.

Jenny Bennett
Owner/Manager

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Shorne Church of England Primary School

When our report was written and submitted this time last year, Shorne Primary School had just been forced to close due to the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020. Nobody had any idea of how things would eventually turn out and how COVID-19 would change our lives forever.

The school, our children, staff, parents and carers adapted to that change with determination and resilience amongst much uncertainty in the ever-changing landscape during the year.

The school remained physically open for the whole year for children of key workers and vulnerable children with support staff continuing to come in on a rotational basis.

A new way of teaching began with lessons being set online and both teachers and children working remotely from home and adaptations were made along the way. Needless to say, it wasn't without hiccups and challenges including wifi issues, equipment issues, finding quiet spaces to work at home with many parents (and teachers) trying to work whilst supervising their own children's home learning.

The whole school reopened again in June with a new Risk Assessment in place and 'bubbles' of classes so that we could keep children as socially distanced as possible. Unfortunately, all usual school activities such as clubs, sporting/musical/dance activities, residential and day trips, church visits and visitors were cancelled.

After Lockdown 3 eased, we were delighted to reopen fully again in March, and it was so exciting to welcome all the children back once more and to see their smiling faces. It was lovely to hear chattering and laughing in the classrooms and playground and for the children to have the opportunity to catch up with their friends.

As a school we have been so proud of our resilient, flexible, caring children and of the ways in which they have adapted during the Coronavirus Pandemic with such positivity and enthusiasm to the new 'normal'.

Tara Hewett
Head of School



Harley and Miss Hewett on the first day back to school in March

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1st Shorne Scout Group

Covid has hit Scouting hard, with no camping and very limited face to face activities over the last year. However, the Cub Scouts in Shorne (girls and boys aged 8 – 11) have met virtually throughout the year. Online activities on Zoom have included escape rooms, games (pictionary is a favourite), quizzes, cooking (pizza from scratch, mug cakes, tarts and pancakes), experiments, drawing (Disney characters especially), karate and making things (pen pots and gifts). Cubs have been encouraged to go on walks, leave painted stones and even take part in a virtual sleepover.

There is learning behind the fun – Cubs have learnt what to do if there is a power cut or fire at home, about different insects and birds, kitchen hygiene and healthy eating as well as about the solar system and the Countryside code. We have celebrated Thanksgiving and Shrove Tuesday and taken part in Remembrance Sunday.

Attendance has averaged just under half the pack each week, but over 80% of the cubs have taken part in some activities. The Cubs have earned 164 badges this year, from Animal Carer to Physical Recreation, including seven Chief Scout's Silver Awards, the highest award they can attain.

The Phoenix explorer unit has manged some on-line activities (Bingo being a favourite), and its one in-person meeting achieved 100% attendance.

Neither the Beaver Scout (6-7) or Scout (10-14) sections were able to continue meeting during lockdown, and both sections now need adult (18+) and young leader (14-18) volunteers to help re-open. If you know of anyone who might be willing to help (or you might like to join the adventure yourself) please contact Suzie Patrick, Group Scout Leader on 07970 677831 or gslshornescouts@gmail.com.

Suzanne Patrick
Group Scout Leader

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LOCAL AMENITIES/SOCIETIES:

Shorne Woods Country Park

The park saw an extremely busy year with lots of new visitors during the covid 19 lockdowns. The park remained open throughout the lockdown ensuring we followed the government guidelines for what we were able to open safely. Park staff remained on site throughout carrying out health and safety work and conservation work on site. We thank all the visitors who supported us through this challenging year and who respected the social distancing guidelines when visiting the park.

We successfully retained the Green Flag and South and South East in Bloom gold award.

Our annual management of the 4km network of rides and glades through the coppice woodland continued and this year we also supported the Butterfly Conservation Trust's surveys by submitting a weekly butterfly record to their national survey.

In the winter we carried out ride widening work in Randall Wood, opening up zone 2 and 3 on wider rides. This allows lots of light into the wood which encourages biodiversity. Many Sweet Chestnuts unfortunately died from a tree disease so we felled them and stacked many as invaluable deadwood habitat and shelter for small mammals.

We are investing in improving the seasonal access to the park by surfacing more of the paths so visitors can avoid the mud in the autumn/winter if they wish. During the last year many paths were so well used that they need a repair. Also this summer we will be adding a changing place and improving access around the visitor facilities.

Some of our community archaeological volunteers have now also become regular volunteer gardeners in our volunteer garden and have done a marvellous job.



Neolithic hand-axe found in the Country Park by a parishioner

We were unable to host volunteers during the lockdowns but they have now returned and are raring to go. Volunteers help us carry out conservation tasks every Tuesday from 9:30am until 3:30 pm. We also have volunteers who help run the park run every weekend and volunteers who help us to manage the Volunteer garden. Archaeological volunteers continue to meet weekly at the park and carry out activities all over the local area focusing on Cobham. If you want to get involved in volunteering please call 03000 414747.

You can keep up to date with all the work the team do and upcoming events on our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/ShorneWoods/

If you have any questions or queries, please call 03000 414747 and one of the team will be happy to help you or alternatively come and find us at the visitor centre.

Tim Bell
Ranger Services Ranger

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Dicken's Country Protection Society

The coronavirus situation has meant that the Society has been unable to hold physical meetings this year but has instead developed an on-line method with e-mail discussions. We have been very busy as usual, continuing the basic work of monitoring and commenting on (when considered appropriate), the various local planning applications being submitted to both Gravesham and Medway councils. The Society also continually keeps under review major plans affecting our area of interest and makes input and representations as and when possible. More detail can be found in our Newsletter sent out to Society members.

The Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) consultation:
Highways England (HE) held a further "design refinement" consultation in July 2020. The Society again studied the thousands of pages of information that had been published in order to formulate our response. HE then submitted their Development Consent Order application (similar to seeking planning permission) to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2020 but had to withdraw the application one month later as further work was going to be needed in order for the application to be evaluated as satisfactory. The Society continues to keep a watch on progress of these plans.

"Future Hoo" housing and infrastructure developments:
The Society is also monitoring these proposals as they develop. The plans to build tens of thousands of new dwellings will regrettably change the Hoo Peninsula forever. Passenger trains will be introduced on the "Hundred of Hoo" line, and there are threats and proposed changes to footpaths that cross the line. New access roads and layout changes to existing junctions are also proposed, which are in some respects an example of proactive planning but will still put increased pressure on the A289 Wainscott Bypass and the A2/M2.

Other items that are particularly worth mentioning are:

- **Local Plans:** Both Gravesham and Medway Councils are continuing their work to produce finalised Local Plans, but both Authorities are now very vulnerable to developer proposals as a result of Government penalties for failing to meet imposed housing targets. The Society comments on the documents and proposals as they become available.
- **Central Government planning reviews:** The Society also responded to national consultations such as "Planning for the Future" in October 2020.
- **Nuralite redevelopment:** DCPS opposed the redevelopment of the Nuralite site because of the expansion of buildings into the Green Belt, potential contamination risk to the North Kent Marshes and the likely traffic impacts from the redevelopment.

- **New Green Farm:** The Society has been concerned about the proposals at New Green Farm which could have landscape impact and cause increased traffic on the Lower Higham Road.
- **Shornemead Level Crossing:** The footpath crossing remains closed at present but we understand that Network Rail are progressing their designs for a new footbridge.
- **Planning Appeals:** The Society has submitted representations to several Planning Appeals, which contributed to decision outcomes defending our area from potentially damaging development.
- **Barn Dance cancellation:** Due to the coronavirus situation the Society has again been unable to hold the popular event this year.
- **Society contact details:** Mrs P Lippiatt, 01322 275389

Susan Lindley
Committee Member

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VILLAGE HALL AND HOSTED ORGANISATIONS:

Village Hall

2020 was a very different year for the Village Hall, it started off very good with lots of bookings coming in, but then Coronavirus took over our lives with Lockdown starting in March, we had to shut our doors and await advice from the Government to when we could reopen. We put everything in place to reopen the Hall in September with social distancing to make the Hall a Covid-19 Secure venue, unfortunately this meant that the Clubs could not return due to numbers being allowed as this was restricted to a maximum number of 32 is the Large Hall and 16 in the Small Hall.

The Pre School carried on when they were allowed but all the other clubs have not been able to meet since March 2020.

The Large Hall floor was repaired in April 2020 while we were in lockdown as we were hoping to reopen later in the year.

We have had to use our Reserves last year for the Hall to continue to operate as well as the Treasurer securing some Government funding but unfortunately, we still require more funds, and we are now going to be setting up a fund-raising page to help secure the future of the Village Hall. Please contact the Treasurer for more information about how you can make a donation.

I would like to thank the Secretary/Treasurer and Booking Secretary for all their hard work in making the hall Covid-19 Secure in 2020/2021 to keep the hall going as it has been an extremely difficult year. Also, my vice Chairman John Bugg for his support; The hall's cleaner for keeping the hall to a high standard, the Caretaker and the Committee for all their support in 2020 especially Mr Lane.

I would also like to Thank Mrs Ashby, who has sadly deceased, for all her years she did at the Village Hall - she was like a Manager rather than a Chairman. The time and dedication Mrs Ashby gave to the hall was truly appreciated by all the Trustees.

Mr Michael Fitzsimons
Chair, Village Hall Management Committee

Cottage Garden Society

Due to the Coronavirus restrictions the past year has been somewhat challenging for our Society.

We were able to hold our AGM in February 2020 and our first Speaker Meeting in March before the lockdown. Brian Nobbs from the RSPB gave us a very interesting talk entitled 'Gardening for Wildlife', an insight into the life of the wildlife we may find in our gardens.

From then on, following Government guidelines, we had no option but to cancel our Shows and other Speaker Evenings for the remainder of the year. This was very disappointing as our Flower shows are always such a success being very popular and well attended. Our Spring show especially being a bright and cheerful beginning to the warmer weather and the year ahead. Followed by our Summer Show in June and finally our Autumn Show in September. All the Shows are well supported and have become quite the Village meeting place for tea and cake and catching up with friends.

Our Society was formed approximately 70 yrs. ago and as far as we are aware this is one of the only times our Annual Supper and Presentation of Trophies has not taken place.

The only two prize winners this year were:

- Hilary Moore, winner of the Snowdrop Competition at our AGM
- Paul Hopkins, winner of the Daffodil Competition at our March Speaker Evening

Paid subscriptions for 2020 were rolled over to 2021. Despite this being a very quiet year, we have periodically sent Newsletters to members keeping them up to date with our plans for the future. Schedules for 2021 have been distributed and we are very much hoping to resume with our programme of events sometime later in 2021.

We are a friendly Society and welcome new members. We have three Speaker Evenings throughout the year together with three Shows: Spring, Summer and Autumn. Our Shows are not only for exhibiting flowers and vegetables - we have classes to enter for cookery, flower arranging, art and craft, photography etc. so something for everyone. If you would like to join, our membership is £7.50 p.a. - please contact our Membership Secretary Celia Burns on 01474 397887 or email shornecgs@gmail.com

Maureen Morten,
Chairperson

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Early Retirement Club

During this last year 2020/2021 we have been unable to hold any meetings and do expect to recommence before June.

Throughout t the year I have spoken to every club member on their birthday and I, our current Secretary and other committee members have communicated on many other occasions to keep them up to date with how the pandemic has progressed.

Sadly, we lost 2 members during the year, but all of the other members continue to stay safe and keep well.

Hopefully I we will be able to offer you a comprehensive report for 2021/2022

Jim Pearce
Chairman

Local History Group

The Group has not met since February 2020 due to the covid pandemic but hopes to be able to resume meetings in October 2021.

It usually meets on the third Thursday of the month from October to April at the Village Hall to hear talks on, mostly, our local history. The meetings start at 7.30 and usually finish by 9 pm. New members and visitors are welcome, just turn up to receive a warm welcome.

For more information and our next programme please contact Andrew Moffat on 01474 822280 email aimoffat@btinternet.com.

Andrew Moffat
Chairman

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Probus (Northfleet and District)

The PROBUS movement was formed in 1966 for retired and semi-retired PROfessional and BUSinessmen, hence the name PROBUS. It is a non-political, non-religious and is non-fundraising, although some clubs may occasionally arrange a fundraising event. The Northfleet & District club is the oldest in Kent. Our club invites to join us any men over 60 who have had some measure of responsibility in a field of worthy endeavour who are of good character and respected in the community.

We meet on alternate Tuesday mornings at Shorne Village Hall, from 10.00am until Noon. The annual fee is £12, plus £3 per meeting, for which you get a guest speaker, tea/coffee, biscuits and a free raffle for a bottle of wine. We organize day trips and an annual 5-day break. Our break in June 2020 was postponed until November 2020 but then cancelled, both due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We very much hope to get away this year. There are normally 4 lunches a year, organized by our Luncheon Secretary, and held in the Village Hall. Members are able to invite partners and guests to this function.

The pandemic has overshadowed the last 14 months, and we, like all similar clubs, have been unable to meet. We have kept in touch by way of a WhatsApp group, emails as well as telephone calls. Our hard working Almoner, Peter Donoghue, has 'phoned members who are unwell or live alone and has reported to the club members with a monthly email update. Sadly we have lost 7 members during the pandemic period, and our membership is now 43 members. The Chairman Vic Hughes and Almoner attended the Remembrance Day Memorial Ceremony at The Hill, Northfleet in November 2020, and Vic laid a PROBUS wreath on behalf of the club.

Our Speaker Secretary, Mike Fitzsimons has produced a draft 'running List' of speakers, who have agreed to continue, once restrictions are removed. We cannot wait to resume our activities.

We were unable to hold an Annual General Meeting in 2020 but the Chairman and all the committee members agreed to continue in office for a further year. We intend to hold this year's AGM as soon as practicable following the commencement of our regular meetings. Following the recent indications from the Government we are hoping to commence our regular meetings in July 2021 and welcome new members to our very friendly group. Contact our Club Secretary, Robin Friday, on 01474 363135 or visit www.shornevillagehall.org to arrange a visit and for general PROBUS information, including start date, topics etc.

Vic Hughes
Chairman

Shorne Active Retirement Association (ShornAra)

ShornARA is a 50+ Club for Men & Women, which has now been running for 20 years.

Unfortunately, in 2020 we were only able to have 2 meetings, in January and February because of the Covid-19 virus. Since then we have been closed. It's been a very bad year for everybody but we hope 2021 will end better.

Our holiday to Wales that should have taken place in September 2020 has been transferred to September 2021. All being well we will be able to go.

Maureen Horsham
Chair

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Shorne Flower Arrangers

As with most clubs and organisations, our 2020 calendar was badly affected by the lockdown.

We were able to meet in January and February, and had good attendance at both meetings, but we have not been able to meet since.

Under the Government regulations we hope to restart on June 24th 2021 and welcome our members back to enjoy the facilities at Shorne Village Hall.

Linda Hutcheon
Chairman

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Short Mat Bowls Club

As you all know, it has been impossible over the last year for the Shorne Short Mat Bowls Club to meet up, which has been very hard for a lot of people.

Hopefully the Club will soon be able to re-open its doors and members can get back to meeting up with friends and enjoying a game or two of bowls.

We will be happy to welcome new members with all equipment supplied and anyone wishing to just come along and "have a go" will also be more than welcome.

Nick Trice
Chairman

STAGES (Shorne Theatre Appreciation & Group Entertainment Society)

2020 was a very disappointing year for everyone, with the Coronavirus taking over all of our lives with the lockdown. However, we did manage to hold some events before lockdown began.

January - We visited the factory where they make all the costumes for Strictly Come Dancing. We also went to two shows at the Orchard Theatre.

February - We had our Annual General Meeting followed by cheese and wine. We also went to a show at the Orchard Theatre plus a visit to The Three Mariners at Oare, Kent, for a meal. The following week we went to Brick Lane Music Hall for an adult panto and an excellent meal.

March – We went to The Mountbatten Festival of Music at the Royal Albert Hall for our annual visit. Our final event before lockdown was to the Orchard Theatre to see the Absolutely Fabulous Comedy Show with a meal.

For the rest of 2020 up to October we had arranged 25 events which all had to be cancelled. Also, two short holidays had to be re-arranged for September and October 2021. Fortunately, we were able to obtain refunds for everyone on all the events and shows that had been pre-paid.

We try to offer something varied to members with recommendations and suggestions coming from our dedicated Committee and also from members.

As I am writing this report our 2021 programme is on hold waiting to see if the Village Hall is allowed to reopen and whether events can take place after the 21st June, as the Government has laid out in its four-step plan.

Our membership is open to residents of Shorne, Higham, Chalk or Cobham. If you are interested in joining please ring our Membership Secretary Adrienne on 01474 822875.

Richard Moore
Chairman

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WI: Shorne and Thong Women's Institute

Sadly, we have been unable to hold our regular meetings this year due to the Covid 19 pandemic. However, members have been able to keep in touch via telephone calls and a WhatsApp Group. Our members have reached out to each other by helping with shopping, prescription collection and by taking members to doctors' appointments.

Marjorie Clark, a long-standing member of the Club, died recently at the grand age of 100. Unfortunately, we were unable to give her the send-off she deserved because of funeral number restrictions. We will remember her at our first meeting back.

We are hopeful that the Club will be able to meet later in the year. We have a full programme of speakers planned and new members will be warmly welcomed. Please contact Helen Ansell, Secretary, on 07969 091330 for more information.

Susan Muckley
President



View from Shorne Ifield Road looking east (ACL, December 2020)

The Shorne Parish Council Annual Report 2020-21 was edited by Susan Lindley.

Please contact 01474 823179 or susan.lindley@shorneparishcouncil.org *if you have any questions about the content.*

Contact details of People and Organisations contributing to this Report:

County Councillor for Shorne	Bryan Sweetland	07976 309171
St Peter and Paul Parish Church	Rev. Ted Hurst	01474 822239
Shorne Bell Ringers	Stuart King	01474 823804
Shorne Pre Shcool	Jenny Bennett	07895 981423
Friends of Shorne School	Lisa Sewell	01474 740538
Shorne School	Tara Hewett	01474 822312
Shorne Scouts	Suzanne Patrick	07970 677831
Shorne Woods Country Park	Tim Bell	03000 414747
Dickens Country Protection Society	Pat Lippiatt	01322 275389
Shorne Village Hall (bookings)	Andrea	01634 254755
Cottage Garden Society	Celia Burns	01474 397887
Early Retirement Club	Jim Pearce	01474 355816
Local History Group	Andrew Moffat	01474 822280
Probus of Northfleet	Robin Friday	01474 363135
Shorne ARA	Maureen Horsham	01474 363285
Shorne Flower Arrangers	Linda Hutcheon	01634 325540
Short Mat Bowls	Penny Edwards	01474 822076
STAGES	Adrienne	01474 822875
Women's Institute	Helen Ansell	07969 091330

Shorne Parish Council 2020-21: (see website for latest personnel information)

Chairman: Bob Lane	01474 822680	bob.lane@shorneparishcouncil.org
Vice Chairman: Robin Theobald	01474 823674	robin.theobald@shorneparishcouncil.org

Members:

John Bugg	01474 823547	john.bugg@shorneparishcouncil.org
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Lisa McCluskey	07801 287298	lisa.mccluskey@shorneparishcouncil.org
Clive Rea	01474 568702	clive.rea@shorneparishcouncil.org
Steve White (until October 2020)		

Clerk:

Sarah Poole	01634 243157	clerk@shorneparishcouncil.org

The next ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY will be held on a Thursday evening at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, date in 2022 TBA, see website. All village organisations are most welcome to present their annual report at this meeting. All reports will form the basis of contributions to the Annual Parish Report for 2021-22. Copy of more than 250 words in length may be edited to fit available space.

Other information on Parish Council matters:

Parish Council Website: https://shorneparishcouncil.org
Parish Council Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/shorneparishcouncil
Reports on Parish Council issues also feature in every issue of the Shorne Parish Magazine.