



Annual Parish Assembly

23rd April 2024

Present

Cllr Mike Booth, Cllr Steve Dyer, Cllr Robert Pryor

PC Jo Hammond, Charles Amis (Clerk) & 11 Parishioners

The Chairman opened the meeting by reminding everyone present that the Annual Parish Assembly is not a Parish Council Meeting but it is a meeting for residents of the village organised by the parish council and it is an opportunity for parishioners to give their views and air their grievances.

Community organisations are invited to report on their activities over the previous 12 months and their plans for the future.

1. Apologies for absence - Cllr Rosemary Dymond, Cllr Russ Nichols, Cllr Kirsty Lane, Cllr Matt Mason and Cllr Ben Smith.

2. Chairman's Report –

We have built a refurbished the playground and equipment for the for the **Children's Corner at Cobham Playing Fields**. Thanks to Mat Peterson-Pearce who managed the project and

The total cost for the new playground was £71,493.60.

CPC received the following grants: £10,000 National Lottery, £1,000 Groundwork UK, £10,000 GBC. GBC contributed £368 for removing the old playground. CPC claimed £11,915.60 VAT from HMRC.

CPC paid £38,210 for the new playground if all of the grant and VAT payments are included. The precept had increased by £10,000 from £35,000 to £45,000 in 2023/24. The new playground is a great improvement to the previous playground.

TRAFFIC

Ongoing work for traffic calming at Sole Street

- Traffic data – ATC tubes have been installed by KCC and CPC continue to use the Speed Indicator Device. KCC Highways recognise there is a problem in Sole Street.
- Traffic Group, which is led by Cllr Nichols, has been discussing with KCC measures to slow the traffic – 20mph signs, chicanes, mini roundabout. This is an ongoing challenge for our Traffic Group. – CPC obviously recognise that there is problem and we need to challenge KCC to tell us what they will do about it.

- Round Street bus stop buses not stopping picking up or dropping off – KCC decided that could not condone a bus stop at the corner of Round Street and Sole Street despite protestations from the residents and KCC’s only suggestion was re-routing the bus route through Sallow Shaw which was not practical.
- A new Footway from Scratton Fields to Round Street is the only real answer. Local school children have to walk along a dangerous road. It has been discussed over the years whether local residents whose properties front on to Sole Street would be willing to give up some of the garden for a new footway.

Youth Club – general support for the GRAND

Numbers have picked up again.

CPC spent £945.49 on the youth club in 2021/22

CPC spent £2,652 on the youth club in 2022/23

CPC spent £3,468 on the youth club in 2023/24

Total: £7,065.49

In 2023/24 CPC received a donation of £200 from the Two Women EV Party in the Park and Esther Dryland passed on £524.83 subscription money from the old youth club. Total amount received £724.83.

The attendance for most weeks has been 3 to 5 children. The busier sessions have included 13 children and up to 23 children. Are these numbers viable and should CPC continue to subsidise the youth club.

Police & Crime Commissioner Meeting with local landowners on 13th July 2023

The subjects covered at the meeting included:

Farm watch, Police Staffing Levels, Public Space Protection Order – Dartford has one and Medway may have one by now.

Other subjects included Motorbikes, Scooters and E-scooters, Cold Calling Zones and the Rural Task Force. Cobham and Sole Street are in a better position since the recruitment of our own PC, Jo Hammond.

Speed Watch Group is due to restart – Can you become a volunteer?

Public Toilets at Cobham Playing Fields

Considerable discussion with concern about the annual cost to CPC culminating at an open meeting at the St Mary’s Church Rooms where local people were given the opportunity to share their views.

Cleaning (including sundries)	£8,679.80
Water,	£2,924.16
Repairs & Maintenance.	£1,549.20 (including footfall counters)

CPC were considering closing the public toilets but a lot of people want to keep them open. The costs are a lot of money from a fairly small precept. An agreement has been reached with the Cobham Sports Association running the toilets which has been supported by a £5000 grant from CPC. CPC will continue to monitor this situation.

SMCR

- Cobham Parish Council gave a grant of £2,500 to the Local Funding Group supporting the Mary's Church Rooms refurbishment project and were instrumental in gaining £150,000 of funding from the Lower Thames Crossing designated funds.

Defibrillators in the Parish

CPC are responsible for 4 defibrillators and spent £618 on replacing parts for the defibrillators.

The Round Street defibrillator had its pads and battery replaced for £426 after it was used in an emergency.

The Meadow Rooms defibrillator had its battery replaced for £192.

The defibrillator at the St Mary's Church Rooms had its battery replaced for nothing as it was just outside the warranty period.

Lower Thames Crossing

- Held regular meetings with the Lower Thames Crossing Team to get the best for Cobham and Sole Street
- In December 2023, the revised Development Consent Order (DCO) was submitted to The Planning Inspectorate Examining Authority. They then had 3 months to review all the documentation.
- This had input from over 70 stakeholders, Cobham Parish Council being one. Our main document was the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) and our biggest focus was the potential impact of the traffic.
- On 21 March, the Planning Inspectorate confirmed that the Examining Authority has sent their recommendation report on the LTC DCO application to the Secretary of State for Transport. The recommendation report summarises the findings of the DCO examination and gives a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport on whether to give permission to build and operate the new crossing. At this point their report is confidential. The Secretary of State now has up to three months to decide on whether to grant the DCO. We therefore expect the planning decision outcome and any conditions (if approved) to be announced at the end of June 2024.

Planning

- Met with GBC Planning department to try to resolve planning issues including Gold Street vineyard and lack of enforcement in other areas.
- Gold Street – Cobham House Vineyard. GBC have now overturned their early approval under Permitted Development rights for this. Meetings held with landowner, Cllr Dyer and Adam Holloway to discuss a more appropriate location for the building on this land. The

Landowner has been co-operative and is expected to submit a new plan in the next week. Planting of vines now under way.

- CPC and GBC Planning team are now having a bi-monthly meeting in place for the rest of 2024 to discuss concerns and hope to improve communication on planning issues. White Post Farm with Planning Inspectorate.

Proposed Spend

CPC has increased the precept for 2024/24 as there is still a lot to do in Cobham and Sole Street.

Going forward and planned for paid for within this year's budget

- Village signs for Sole Street and Cobham £10,000
- New village gateway sign at Halfpence Lane £4,000
- Repairs to the flint wall behind the pump £10,000 set aside initially but could increase to £100,000 to complete all of the repair work
- All weather path to the Children's Corner and replacing current fence. £10,000 has been set aside.
- Viewing Seats at the playing fields £3000 has been set aside.
- New wooden posts at the war memorial green One quote has been received for £2,470.

3. PC Joanne Hammond – Rural Beat Officer

PC Hammond became the rural beat officer in June 2023 and covers the rural areas of Gravesham from Higham to Vigo. Once a month PC Hammond sends CPC a report on any crimes of note that the parish should know about within Cobham, Shorne and Luddesdown parishes.

Kent Police's main focus is nuisance motorbikes and the main problem areas are Gravesend Road at Shorne crossroads and Park Pale. The motorbikes generally don't have number plates and the police are not allowed to pursue them. Kent Police attempt to identify the perpetrators and to seize the motorbikes.

Parishioners are encouraged to report the motorbikes and to take photographs but not to put themselves at risk. These should be emailed to PC Hammond.

Kent Police will be running Operation Paradiso to seize the nuisance motorbikes.

Fly tipping is less of an issue in Gravesham and several offenders have been prosecuted. PC Hammond photographs any lorries with large amounts of rubbish in case the owner intends to fly tip.

4. Reports from village groups and organisations

- a. Local Funding Group, St Mary's Church Rooms** - In this year, 2023/2024, the community has raised £6,764.58p. Cobham Parish Council applied to The Lower Thames Crossing for a grant towards our project and we were granted £150,000. The LFG has now held over 70 fund raising events since the Local Funding Group was formed. We realised that our project should have charitable status and the PCC (Parochial Church Council) kindly agreed to apply.

It is the responsibility of the PCC to appoint, instruct and supervise their approved contractor to start work. The previous Priest in Charge did not renew the earlier architect's contract to completion. Therefore it was necessary to appoint an architect to oversee the work to ensure it meets the criteria of the grant giving trusts and sign certificates for payment.

The Task Group was formed on the suggestion of Rev. Pam Davies, with members of the PCC, rev. Pam Davies, Hilary Morgan-Savage, Ron Chamberlain. Cobham Parish Council with Mike Booth, Steve Dyer and Rosemary Dymond. The LFG with Sally Rice and Su Rowe and they have met six times. Lisa Brooks was appointed Project Manager.

Lisa Brooks has updated the tender specification. The following items are now listed as 'Provisional':- Kitchen; Fire Door re-alignment; window over storage area; removal of stage; replacement door in stage to be replaced by a window. Items to improve usage of the hall to make it self-sufficient.

While the Local Funding Group had considered our fund-raising work to be at an end, these events were already thought about and will take place this summer:-

1. 'D-Day Fortitude South'. A talk by local author, John Reymond, explaining the deception which convinced Hitler that the Allies main assault was a feint. Two-course Dinner at the Meadow Room on Friday 7th June. Tickets: £25.
2. Strawberry Tea
3. Accompanied Walk with BBQ and Ploughman's Lunch
4. Scavenger Hunt;
5. Friends of Kent Churches Ride and Stride
6. Christmas Wreath Workshop.

We are a community group and have continued to hold monthly Coffee Mornings in the Church Room. We have been able to make donations towards The Alzheimer Society, Ukraine and Water Aid.

So very many thanks to all those who helped us in the background – none of this would have been achieved without you. We especially mention the Meadow Room Management Committee, Cobham Parish Council, the Women's Institute and Ron Chamberlain who has been working tirelessly on our behalf.

Thank you. Su Rowe, Chairman, Local Funding Group, St. Mary's Church Room.

- b. Cobham Bell Ringers** – Over the last 12 months we have continued to ring for the Sunday Services, now only a single morning service held at Cobham once a fortnight. As usual we have held our Wednesday evening ringing practices. Most of our ringers are busy working and family people but they are loyal to Cobham tower.

We rang for one wedding and hosted a gathering of ringers from our Rochester District of Change Ringers.

Hopefully of some interest I write a monthly article in the Parish Magazine loosely based on bell ringing. I often hope others might write reports or articles in the magazine on a range of topics.

We rang a couple of 45 minute Quarter Peals, one for a birth and one for some birthdays.

The Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla was celebrated across the Nation and bell ringers were part of the celebration. On Coronation Day all our Cobham ringers, including learners, had a ring so that all could say 'We rang on Coronation Day'. The next day six of us rang a Quarter Peal for their Majesties.

Peter Hartley

- c. **Friends of Cobham Church** - 2023/4 has been another successful year of fund-raising. The quiz in April raised £649, followed by teas on August Bank Holiday yielding £378. It was a pleasure – and a relief! – to be able to use the refurbished church kitchen at last and to see transformation brought about with the help of our donation of £5000. 2024 started with a “fish and film” night, generously supported by the Silverhand Estate, which raised £956 and proved a highly convivial start to the year.

Our expenditure has been modest – a further £576 for repairs to the church boundary wall by the front steps and £185 for a new ladder for the church tower. (It may not be generally known that the Friends take responsibility for the maintenance of the church clock and the ladder provides access to it.) The Friends now also receive generous donations specifically for the maintenance of the lower churchyard and made their first payment, £150 to cover grass strimming in the lower churchyard, in the autumn of 2023.

On two occasions we have welcomed students from Cobham Hall gaining experience of volunteering in the community. In the summer they helped Jonnie Pye clearing the front flower beds and in February a second group, armed with soft brushes, dusters and sponges helped to spring clean the brasses and statuary in the chancel.

While we appreciate that the PCC has this year inevitably been pre-occupied with the planned development of the St Mary Church Room, we very much hope that in the near future they will be able to focus on projects within the church for which the Friends would be able to provide financial support.

The Friends are facing something of a crisis as we look to next year. We desperately need more younger members and particularly people who are willing to become trustees. It is not desirable for a charity to be run by a bunch of octogenarians even if they felt able and willing to continue to exercise that responsibility!

Geraldine Cracknell
Chairman

- d. **Luddesdown & District Rights of Way Group** - My name is Ian Sheridan acting chair of the Luddesdown & District Rights of Way Group. Luddesdown & District Rights of Way Group was launched in June 1969 by our founders, Ray & Eiley Bassett who lived at Ha'penny Cricket in Henley Street.

The tranquillity of the whole village came under threat in 1982 when the MOD purchased large swathes of Luddesdown's farmland for mine-laying exercises. After a year or so of intensive campaigning, the Action Group was victorious – the farmland was sold on again and became an organic farm, now the Silverhand Vineyard own a lot of the land affected.

The Group's objectives are to foster the caring enjoyment of the countryside by walkers and riders using the lawful rights of way; the promotion of better relations between path users, land owners and farmers; the solution of local rights of way difficulties through active liaison with similar non-statutory bodies and with the Highway Authority and community service through voluntary clearance and way-marking of local rights of way as approved by the Highway Authority.

One of our committee members is retired KCC Public Rights of Way officer Pat Luxford. Pat can address any issues with the Paths and consult with KCC, to take necessary action. We understand the KCC Team have been having some difficulty this year finding Contractors to do the regular path clearance work.

We used to be heavily involved in the clearance of foot paths but due to a change in regulations a few years ago, we as a group were not able to continue but we will be monitoring and reporting.

Our membership currently stands at 59 members.

We walk primarily in the Luddesdown and Cobham areas and meet every Wednesday at 1100 usually at either the Cock or the Golden Lion pubs.

On average 15 to 20 members do a two mile walk on the local footpaths of Luddesdown ending back at the pub for lunch. We also do a monthly longer walk at the weekend usually covering Luddesdown, Cobham, Cuxton and sometimes further afield.

Sadly, this year we lost our Chairman Gerry Minister who passed away just before Christmas after a short illness. Gerry was well known in Luddesdown, as before retiring, he was manager of the Organic farm which is now The Silverhand Vineyard.

We hold four social events a year. At our socials we hold quizzes and raffles etc and occasionally we have Speakers. At our last event one of our members gave us a talk and slide show of her 'Solo'! trip around Europe and the Balkans.

Last September Gerry gave us an extremely interesting talk regarding the Organic farm at Luddesdown regarding the fields, crops and soil management over the years that he and his wife Jill managed the farm. This in turn has paved the way for the excellent condition of the land for the grape harvest.

Our next meeting is our AGM in June. At the September social, one of our members is giving a short fact-based story regarding a family's struggle in Ireland during the first part of the 20th Century.

We also produce a twice-yearly magazine called Signpost which details our group's activities plus contributions from members and non-members on all sorts of subjects including many (fine and wet) photographs.

If anybody is interested in joining our group, please see me at the end of this meeting or contact me on 07951 927517

Thank you.

- e. **Sole Street WI** - Sole Street W.I. have enjoyed a busy and productive year as usual. As well as our monthly meetings with visiting speakers, we held a Coronation Cream Tea Event in the SMCR to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. Producing an array of cakes and many scones for the public to enjoy. We were able to spill out onto the concrete area as it was a glorious day. The whole event was wrapped in bespoke homemade bunting depicting the Kings new cypher, produced by our members.

Our Annual Garden Meeting was held in Kathy's shady garden this year with almost 100% attendance of our members enjoying sandwiches and cakes on the lawn in glorious sunshine.

In December we held two functions, Our CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA was the first of these. Which despite the terrible weather was very well attended and supported. Through the combined efforts of our members the S. M. C. R. was transformed into a Christmas Grotto! This event was closely followed by our Christmas Luncheon where we enjoyed the company of members from Meopham and Southfleet as well as our Sole Street gang, all enjoyed a convivial social occasion.

We have also made use of the SMCR to produce a range of crafted goods including a memory quilt as a reminder of the variety of crafting that has taken place over the recent years. Following a presentation from a Company called Fancy Tat a group of us went to Sittingbourne to learn how to re-invent old bottles and jars into vases, glasses, candle holders etc. A range of objects were produced during a fun session with the tutors at hand to advise us. Many of which were displayed and sold at our Christmas Extravaganza.

Speaking on behalf of the entire W.I. I would like to conclude my report by adding that the Sole Street W.I. look forward to resuming our meetings in the newly renovated SMCR. With a facility to be proud of post improvement project.

Thank You

Y. Martin. President of Sole Street W.I.

- f. **Cobham & Luddesdown WI** - By the end of March 2024 we had 40 members and we are delighted to welcome some really enthusiastic new members who have helped us to continue providing an exciting and interesting range of activities that we hope everyone has, and will continue to, enjoy.

At our AGM in May we elected our new President, Jan Dickson, who has injected her own personality and is always looking for local events that are of interest to our members. Jan has taken over the reins from Janet Cherrison, who was also instrumental in providing us with ideas for outings and events.

During the past year, thanks to Jill Beety's unstinting efforts, we have enjoyed talks from a number of speakers on a wide range of subjects. In September, one of our newer members gave a talk entitled 'Magic of the Pyjama Fairies'; a charity which supplies special hand-made pyjamas for young people undergoing hospital treatment and we were able to see examples of her sewing skills. In January, we welcomed back Christoph Bull, with his talk entitled 'The Griffin the Horse and the Harp', which gave us an intriguing insight into the perhaps lesser-known links of the Darnley Family with Ireland. In February, Sharon Lynn introduced us to the world of medical detection dogs, and in March, Delia Taylor kept us all awake with her extremely enlightening review of 'The Fabulous 50s'. In fact, some of us even burst out into song when we heard some of our old favourites from that decade.

Other activities in 2023 included our Annual Strawberry Tea in July, a Ploughman's Lunch and craft 'make' in October (which this time was 'quilling', or scrolling narrow lengths of coloured paper to form artistic designs), and at our Christmas Festive Tea in December we

were entertained by children from Cobham Primary School, who sang for us and were an absolute delight. In May we celebrated our 104th birthday with a lunch at Bartellas. Our Autumn Show in November took us all by surprise, with the sheer volume of entries, many more than the previous year. In fact, it took the judge two hours to assess the craft work, about which she had nothing but praise.

Our Spring Show earlier this month was also a success but most of the daffodils were unfortunately over by the time of the show. There was still, however, much to enjoy in the floral section, including some delightful arrangements 'for a lady's boudoir' one of which was contained in a glass shoe. (We never did manage to find Cinderella!). The baking entries, which this year were Glamorgan Sausage Rolls (vegetarian ones made with leeks and cheese), raspberry and coconut slices, and a coffee drizzle cake. Kaye Wren, who won the enamelled box for most points in baking and preserves, commented that her husband reckoned that she couldn't cook. No doubt he had to eat his words! Anyway, our members were able to sample some of the entries in the afternoon and make their own assessments.

In addition to our monthly meetings, our groups get together regularly in various venues. The largest one, the Craft Group, used to meet at the National Trust barn in Lodge Lane but have recently moved to Luddesdown village hall. They are now looking to expand their craft projects to include those they were unable to do in the barn. The Lunch Club is also very popular. They like to keep as local as possible, regularly using the village inns. The 'Knit and Natter' group has again helped to decorate the village, with its colourful post-box toppers and shop window displays and continues to produce blankets and 'twiddle-muffs' for dementia patients at Darent Valley Hospital. Our president runs a monthly crochet group and there is a small Needlework Group, which meets fortnightly. Our long-established art group continues to meet twice a month and our 'Read and Rabbit' book group continues to read a book each month and rabbit about it a month later. The gardening group has visited Cooling's Garden Centre, at Knockholt and enjoyed the beautiful rhododendrons and azaleas last May at Reuthe's (the Lost Gardens of Sevenoaks).

In summary, Cobham & Luddesdown WI has continued to flourish and has become ever more popular, thanks to its hard-working and pro-active committee and group representatives, and a warm and welcoming membership who are helpful and supportive. We are confident that we can continue to provide an important facility for the residents of the parish and the wider area and we will strive to carry forward the WI's motto of "Inspiring Women".

- g. Cobham Gardeners Society** - Our Society is probably the oldest organisation in Cobham. The records we hold go back to 1904 which means we shall be celebrating 120 years of gardening in Cobham this year. However, I believe the Society was formed in the late 1890's but I have no records to support this.

Our Society is flourishing with some 70 Members from Cobham and the surrounding areas. We organise 7 meetings and 3 Shows each year. An annual outing is also organised and this year we have a large coach load of members and friends going to RHS Wisley Surrey in May.

Our annual subscription is a very reasonable £10 which we believe offers excellent value for our Members. The Society is active on social media regularly recording and advertising our events on Facebook and Instagram. This has proved very successful as numbers of visitors at talks and Shows has increased.

Finally, at the end of the year we hold our AGM and Christmas get together where our magnificent silverware comprising 23 Cups/Trophies are awarded to the prize winners for the year. I would like to thank everyone who supports our Society and makes it as successful as it is.

Liz Jardine
Chairman

- h. Monday Club** – A club for elderly retired. ‘A social club’. Began in 1985 and folded. Reformed in 1997. Alan Rowe chaired the meeting and 30+ members attended. I joined in March 1997 and became treasurer and organiser in 2010.

We meet in St Mary’s Church Rooms (Tin Tabernacle) from 2pm - 4pm every Monday except Bank Holidays and August. Tea and biscuits are provided and the cost is £3. We have outside speakers, visits, games sessions, seated exercises, quizzes, bingo and on the last day of term a subsidised lunch.

Our membership at the moment is 23 and our oldest member being 92. We have been lucky in the past to have help with entertainment from local parishioners namely Su Rowe, Rosemary Dymond, Peter Hartley, Margaret Haig and Eric Gander.

We raise money for the Tin Tabernacle by organising Raffles, Bring & Buy Sales and donate to various organisations such as Air Ambulance, Fire Service, Mercy Ships, Friends of Kent Churches etc.

Brian Williams

Cobham Bowls Club - Sadly, I have to start this report by mentioning that our past captain, Wally Collings passed away on 21 May 2023. Many of you would have known Wally. Has was a true character and a wonderful servant of Cobham Bowls Club. He will continue to be remembered by everyone.

Cobham Bowls Club at the moment is struggling to attract new members. This is not unique to Cobham BC and is a problem for the game of bowls nationally. We are taking steps to attract new members and you will probably see some flyers popping through your letter boxes soon as we try to find a solution for the fall in membership numbers.

If you, or anyone you know might be interested in joining a friendly and welcoming bowls club, please contact our captain, Linda Newton on 01474 398000, e-mail lnewton24@icloud.com. You can play as relaxed as you like, or as competitively as you want to. We welcome members of all abilities and disabilities – novice and experienced. Come and give it a go.

During the 2023 season, our captain, Linda Newton raised over £700 for our charity of the year, The Ellenor Hospice. The Bowls Club made up the final total to £1,000 and we presented the cheque to representatives of Ellenor Northfleet at the end of the season.

On the green we had a successful season competition wise:

- Kentishmen League – runners up
- Gravesend and District Triples – winners

- RACS knock cup – winners.
- RACS league – runners up
- Medway & District Triples League – runners up

I would like to thank the Parish Council for giving Cobham Bowls Club the opportunity to provide this update. I am sorry that I cannot present it in person, but I will be on holiday at the time of the parish assembly.

We are open throughout the year, so if you see the lights on in the pavilion please drop in for some liquid refreshment and a chat. Our bar prices are very attractive, and we would enjoy your company.

Best wishes to you all,

Ken Gipson

Secretary

COBHAM BOWLS CLUB

- i. **Cobham Amateur Dramatic Society** - Last May we performed two one act plays. The first play “Café Fear” by Paul John Matthews was about two reporters searching for an escaped patient from a local secure hospital, they stop at a café to ask for directions. The waitress is less than polite and they are soon joined by a number of unusual and strange customers. What happened next brought fear to the cast and entertainment to the audience.

The second play “Heavens Waiting Room” by Gary Dimond, concerned a Martin Dexter who was confused to find himself in a waiting room. He remembered breaking up with his girlfriend and....oh yes, falling to his death. But where does he go from here?

CADS submitted this play into the Duncan Rand One Act Play Festival at The Medway Little Theatre and the entry was very well received. Martin Harris received an outstanding actor in a supporting role award for his performance as Spode (a demon) and David Horton received a Certificate of Merit for his part as Martin Dexter (the recently deceased).The company were also in the running for Best Costume Award, but narrowly missed out.

CADS Autumn one act plays were “Wine Tasting” a thriller, by Ronnie Dykstra and “Rambles on the Radio” a comedy, by Robert Scott.

Wesley the host in “Wine Tasting” harbours a grudge against his fellow neighbours and acquaintances. The evening does not quite go as expected.

Christopher, the producer in “Rambles on Radio” is excited to be performing his play on the radio. However, others in the cast are less than happy and as the play progresses there is more drama happening behind the microphone than going on over the air. Many “rave” reviews were received from regular support for this fun performance.

Rehearsals are now well under way for our May 2022 Spring Production. Once again it is a Murder Mystery Evening with supper. “A Murder has been Arranged” is written by Patricia Gay and performed in arrangement with Lazy Bee Scripts, Performances take place on Wednesday 15th, Thursday 16th, Friday 17th and Saturday 18th May 2024 at the Meadow Room, at 8.00.p.m. Tickets are now on sale, Box Office 07552 665588

Cobham Amateur Dramatic Society Centenary Year

CADS was formed in 1924 and has been prominent in the village ever since, In the early years before WW11 and the widespread ownership of radios, it was the principle form of theatrical entertainment in the village. To mark this occasion a script is currently in progress to tell the fascinating story of 100 years of trials and tribulations of an amateur dramatic society. To help to tell this story, we are looking for new members, whether acting, reading, singing or helping backstage, they are all important parts of a dramatic group.

If you would like to be part of this production, the performances will run from 21st ,22nd 23rd November and rehearsals will start around August/September meeting twice a week on a Monday and Thursday. To join or for any further information please contact, roger.hodge@sky.com.

Looking forward to meeting you.

Ron Chamberlain

Hon Secretary.

- j. **Cobham Cricket Club** - The cricket season in 2023 went pretty well although the start of the season was delayed due to the wet weather. Our first team who play in the Kent league division 5 finished in the top half which for a club of our size is pretty impressive. Our 2's play in division 8 and also finished in the top half. On Sundays we only had one side who only played friendlies but still had some very entertaining matches. Our youth set up was also very successful with over 100 children registered on a Monday evening training. We ran teams in the u10's softball, u11's hardball, 2 teams at u13's and one at U15's. Results were mixed but everyone seemed to enjoy it! The Ladies also had a good season with them playing league hardball for the first time along with softball matches.

Cobham Football Club - The football season is nearing completion and from what I've seen it's going from strength to strength. We now have 13 junior teams including 3 girls' teams which will be increasing to four next season. I think most teams have won more than they've lost with a couple in cup finals and a couple looking likely to win their leagues. With so many teams we now hire Thamesview pitches on a Saturday to train at so we can protect our pitches for Sundays. This year also represents 50 years of Cobham Colts so we are planning a celebration in May.

Jim Jackson

National Trust – Cobham Wood & Mausoleum –

- Busy year for Cobham Wood & The Darnley Mausoleum
- Dominated by National Highways funded projects
- In October we began the harvesting of just short of 4 ha of chestnut coppice between the path (NS196) to the Mausoleum & the Darnley Trail.
- The chestnut is a silvicultural product & as such requires harvesting every 15 years or so. This product then goes into the manufacture of cleft chestnut post & rail fencing as well as stakes & strainers for stock fencing.
- However in this instance with the backing of Natural England & the Forestry Commission we decided that it was preferable to replant with a lowland deciduous mix of trees mirroring those found in the rest of CW.

- To make this possible it is necessary to mulch the remnant stools & brash which will happen later this year.
- Given the problem of growing numbers of deer a 2m deer fence has been erected. This will protect almost 2000 newly planted trees. This will take place next winter.
- The other major project was designed as a response to climate change & the loss to CW of a number of mature Oak trees.
- Acute Oak Decline has been a growing problem at CW resulting in the relatively rapid decline & ultimately death of some of our most important trees.
- To try & redress the balance further funding enabled us to engage the services of a company employing tree spades of up to 2m in diameter.
- Operated using a specialist truck & 20t excavator 52, 20-30 year old Oaks were relocated from unfavourable locations next to existing trees & into open areas vacated by deceased specimens.
- It is hoped that this activity will broaden the age diversity of trees within the wood as we look to replant with old & new introduced species.
- It's disappointing to say the least that we have had to do this but also exciting to try these new techniques. With Natural England's input CW is fast becoming a lab to trial new practices in response to a rapidly changing environment.
- Work to manage Ash Dieback continues year on year. Sadly there is no sign of this abating which means that the appearance of the wood is changing quite rapidly.
- Last summer saw the end of a protracted period of renovations & cyclical maintenance work on the Darnley Mausoleum.
- There was a great deal of repointing of stone together with the replacement of failed blocks. The monument was thoroughly cleared of vegetation & comprehensively redecorated inside.
- General estate maintenance.
- Working closely with our neighbours & AONB/NE to designate the wider landscape as a Super National Nature Reserve.
- This designation would assist in greater partnership working as we develop a more overarching strategy across our patch. Resources could be shared & joint initiatives engaged upon. Importantly the raised status of our locality would also help leverage vital conservation funding.
- At this stage all partners are meeting on a relatively frequent basis to develop the strategy under the guidance of NE/AONB & hope to achieve full SNNR status later this year.
- This will further cement the future, if there was ever any doubt, in our community landscapes.
- 2024 is shaping up to be an exciting year as some of these projects reach completion.

Jonathan Ireland

Lead Ranger Ightham Mote & North Kent

5. Parishioners comments

Junction of Henhurst Road/Jeskyns Road – The chevron sign is still missing following a previous accident. The damaged telegraph pole has been replaced but the new telegraph

pole is in the same position and could be vulnerable to any possible future accidents.

Action: Clerk to report missing sign to KCC Highways.

St Mary's Church Rooms - The Parochial Church Council thanked CPC for helping to obtain the £150,000 grant from the Lower Thames Crossing mitigation fund. Tomorrow is the last day for the contractors to submit their tenders. Two tenders have been received and there may be a third tender soon. The original specification has amended by Lisa Brooks, the project manager and will be decided when the tenders are all received. GBC have extended the building regulations to enable the St Mary's Church Rooms to be used as a polling station on 2nd May. Garfield Weston have given a grant for £10,000 and the PCC were waiting to hear back from Acre the village hall charity for a grant £40,000.

Cobham College – The work started on the roof but nothing had taken place since Christmas. The scaffolding and the plastic are still place and residents can only access through Stonehouse Yard. **Action:** Cllr Booth to check the current situation. CPC to write a letter to the trustees.

6. **AOB** – nothing to report.

7. **Next Meeting – Annual Parish Meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday 14th May at the St Mary's Church Rooms.**