

The Hartley Herald

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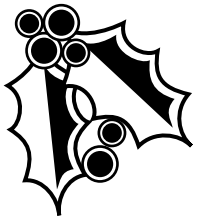
December 2005

A MERRY CHRISTMAS and A HAPPY NEW YEAR

is wished to everyone in Hartley from your Parish Councillors. In the season of goodwill we would ask that everyone keep an eye out for their neighbour. At Christmas time many of us will have a tree surrounded by presents for our family and friends, so to help make sure they go the right person check your home security, thieves love Christmas too.



We have been threatened with a very cold winter so please remember those around you who may have difficulty getting out to the shops. Perhaps you could offer them a lift or maybe just pop in for a cup of tea and a chat.



It may be wise to check that you have either a torch [with batteries!] or candles [plus matches or a lighter to light them], in case of a power failure.

QUALITY PARISH STATUS

We are delighted and proud to announce that Hartley Parish Council has gained Quality Parish Status. You may have noticed the addition of the logo to our newsletter. Members of the Council have been working together with the Parish Clerk for some time and in September a portfolio containing our application together with supporting documents was submitted to the County Accreditation Panel. Our application was described as, "Very impressive" and we were duly awarded Quality Parish Status - only the third Parish Council in Kent to achieve this. The application demonstrated good practice in several areas including council meetings, communication, annual reports, accounts and the ethical framework. Part of the criteria is that 80% of the Councillors have to be elected and the Parish Clerk has to be qualified. Many of you will remember reading last December that Mrs Hoad gained her AQA qualification. We can now look forward to taking on a more enhanced role in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council, our Principal Local Authority.

Highways

The Highways Working Group has been working hard to solve some of the highway problems that exist in the Parish. Following on from earlier work this year on the Ash Road we now have the speed camera signs deployed and the mobile safety camera van will be present at various times to ensure speed limits are abided by, specifically around the Wellfield and Ash Road junction.

The Working Group is also pushing hard for the provision of an interactive sign to be located on the Ash Road beyond the junction of Chantry Ave approaching the dangerous bend before St Johns Lane. Whilst the Parish Council has raised independent funding for this sign we have been informed at this stage that the location does not meet the crash criteria, they only record the injury accidents. As we know this junction is the scene of many (collateral) accidents, with a major one waiting to happen. The Working Group is pressurising Kent Highways to ensure they will allow us to provide this sign.

The issues surrounding Castle Hill (and its use as a diversion route) have been raised with Kent Highways and there has been consultation with the residents and a site meeting to see if there are any practical solutions to the problems. Kent Highways are reviewing all the options open to them and will hopefully come back with some suggestions in the near future.

Your Parish Councillors are: Larry Abraham, Chris Alford, Alan Barnett, Jane Burns, Yvette Coutts, James Gaywood, Malcolm Harris, Anne Oxtoby, Brian Ramsay, Vince Sewell, Margaret Solman, Andrew Tremain and Chris Ward. They can be contacted via the Clerk, Julie Hoad at the Parish Office, Hartley Library, Ash Road, Kent, DA3 8EL, by e mail: mail@hartleyparishcouncil.org.uk or by phone 01474 709441.

Getting to know you!



Continuing our series of getting to know you in this edition we are putting Jane Burns in the spotlight. Jane was born in Charlton, South East London in 1960, the fourth of five children. She attended schools in Charlton, Eltham and then Westminster College in Kensington where she trained

as a Home Economist. After finishing college Jane went on to work for London Electricity in various departments before accepting voluntary redundancy in 1993. During this time she met and married Richard

and had their only child who is also called Richard. In 1996 the family moved to Hartley to be near to Jane's parents who have lived here since 1984.

Jane works for the Schools Personnel Service and has a keen interest in education and young people. She serves on the youth committee and the HAWK [Hartley Ash and West Kingsdown] committee promoting projects and the interests of young people in the parish. At the other end of the spectrum, Jane is also on the Burial Ground and Garden of Remembrance Committee as well as being chair of both the Community Facilities Working Group and the Communications Working Group.

Jane was surprised and delighted to be elected to serve on the parish council in 2003 as she considered herself to be a relative newcomer to Hartley. She feels that it is important for us all to feel part of the community we live in, to take part in village life, to treat others as we would like to be treated, with respect for all, young and not so young and those with different cultures and beliefs to our own.

VILLAGE PLAN FOR HARTLEY - Report on Open Day 22 October 2005

On Saturday 22 October, we held our second open meeting at All Saints' Church Centre. Readers may recall that during May 2005 we distributed over 2100 questionnaires to all households in the village of which 750 were returned. The results of this village wide survey were displayed throughout the day. Also, on display were draft copies of Hartley's Parish Plan and Hartley's Village Design Statement. Visitors to the exhibition were asked to comment on these and many did so. During the day over a hundred residents came.

As a bit of light hearted entertainment, everyone was invited to take part in a small competition entitled "How well do you know Hartley?" Visitors were asked to identify 16 photographs taken from main roads or public places in Hartley.

The competition was won by Emma Thomas of Chantry Avenue, a pupil at Leigh City Technology College. Emma was able to identify the sites from the walks she has taken around the village with her parents. For further details contact Gerald Cramp on 01474 704849

A FEW WORDS FROM THE HAWK YOUTH PROJECT

2005 is nearly at a close - most people are focused on what Santa might bring, perhaps some of you are wondering if you've been good this year? Well we have some good words to say about the young people of Hartley.

Back in April a group of young people began to take part in a graffiti project and helped with the wall in Hartley Primary School, which gets the thumbs up from all the children and most parents, some real talent around. It was also a Hartley young man who won first prize at West Kingsdown's Graffiti competition during the summer holidays.

It was wisely reported in June that a strange man was noticed hanging around on Tuesday nights talking to teenagers etc. This man was also seen getting them to board a mini bus. Well done for being vigilant and reporting back I can only encourage that. In this case that strange man was me!

We took a group of young people to the dry ski slopes of Chatham to partake in Snowboarding lessons. They were very daring and within 6 weeks were seen going down at some speed from the very top of the slope.

Also over the summer a number got involved in our summer scheme and we took them paintballing, trampolining, and on the London Duck. Their behaviour on all these events was impeccable. Two of the girls also attended a weeks residential at the mountain centre in Wales along with other young people from around Kent.

In late October we took a group to Thorpe Park's fright-night event. Unlike other groups from around Kent, (who I won't mention) the Hartley young people once again demonstrated a high level of maturity. They kept in contact with the youth workers throughout the day, kept to all the timed meetings and when challenged by another youth group - outnumbering them dramatically, they kept calm, cool and collected. Hence there was no trouble at all. Actually they were the only group that thanked the youth workers for organising the event. We think the young people from Hartley are OK and a pleasure to work with.

If you would like to know more about the HAWK project please ring Glenn on: 01474 702760 (we are always looking for volunteers.

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

In our last newsletter we asked for comments regarding a proposed plan for improving the garden. Several residents came along to our last meeting and put forward their views, for which we are grateful. After an interesting discussion it was agreed by all present that it would not be appropriate to change the layout of the garden but some plants would be moved and some more added. Bark will be laid to retain moisture and keep weeds at bay.



COUNCIL SURGERY DATES

Once again two of your Parish Councillors will be available in the Parish Office on Saturday 14th January between 10 am and noon.

It seems that word is spreading as more residents are taking advantage of the opportunity to discuss matters of concern on an informal basis. So if there is something going on [or not going on] in the parish that is of concern to you please call in and see us. No appointment necessary!

SPEED WATCH SAFETY CAMPAIGN

In the February 2004 issue of the Hartley Herald we included an article about SID, a Speed Indicator Device. We asked for volunteers to operate the equipment but only one resident came forward. The scheme has been re-launched as Speed Watch. The initiative by Kent Police is designed to give rural communities the opportunity to help make their villages safer by monitoring traffic speeds on their local roads. The strategic aims are to:-

- A, Reduce deaths, injuries and collisions on public roads.
- B. Improve safety and quality of life for local communities.
- C. Increase public awareness in speeding.

Speed Watch is designed for Parish Councils around the county to sign up to a scheme, either singularly or shared, to record the speed of vehicles travelling through their area. Each parish that signs up to the scheme will have a designated Police Liaison Officer. Ours will be PC Steve Ridley from North Kent Police. The Parish Council will appoint a Speed Watch Liaison Officer and Team Leader. They will recruit local volunteers to operate the equipment. Training on the operation of the equipment, recording of data and dealing with any conflict that may occur will be given by the police.

The speed indicator device will be put up at the roadside temporarily and if the driver is exceeding the limit it will display the speed. Registration numbers will be logged and if the vehicle is recorded as speeding twice within a twelve-month period the registered keeper will receive an advisory letter from the police. If the same vehicle is caught three times there will be a further warning and possible follow-up action by officers. From our surveys it would appear that the number one issue within the village is that of excessive speed, specifically the Ash Road. Well here is your chance to do something. Unfortunately the Speed Watch rules preclude the use of Parish Councillors as operators of the system although the Liaison Officer could be the Parish Clerk. So if you think there is a speed problem we are looking for volunteers to be part of the team, the more we have the less time commitment individually

Remember the aim of the new scheme is to educate drivers as to the consequences of speeding and make them more aware of their own driving habits.



PLANNING

The Planning Committee continues to deliberate over planning applications within the parish and has made many comments on these applications in its aim to maintain the equilibrium of the Green Belt and the environment of the village.

The Committee is pleased to report the withdrawal of the Orange appeal over the refusal of the application to place an 85ft mobile phone mast on land behind Old Downs. Whilst it may initially be seen as a success we must remain vigilant as to any further application. Representations have been made on the planning application to extend the Milestone School which includes more buildings and increased parking facilities. Whilst the Committee has supported the extension of the school it has raised concerns regarding the requirement to improve the access arrangements and to consider the impact of traffic on the Ash Road.

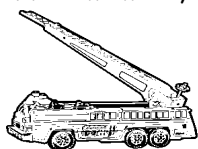
KENT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Kent Fire and Rescue Service have produced a booklet entitled Home Fire Safety Check. In it they give advice regarding prevention, detection and escape plans relating to fire safety.

In addition they are offering to visit your home to do a FREE Fire Safety Check. Not only will they provide individual advice you will also receive a free smoke alarm. The leaflet is available from the library and to arrange a safety check telephone the local fire safety office on 01322 278729. Remember, in the event of a fire in your home

Get out

Call the Fire Service out
and stay out!



KENT WILDLIFE TRUST - Gardening for Wildlife Award Scheme

Kent Wildlife Trust in association with Sevenoaks District Council recently held a Gardening for Wildlife Award Scheme which aimed to encourage people to garden with the needs of wildlife in mind. A total of 38 entries from across the district were received by Kent Wildlife Trust of which three were from Hartley. Kent Wildlife Trust visited each garden and awarded the entrants either a gold, silver, bronze or highly recommended award certificate.

In addition to these awards, each Parish Council was invited to sponsor a prize for an overall winner from their own parish as chosen by Kent Wildlife Trust. Hartley Parish Council was very pleased to donate a £30.00 gardening voucher to our overall winner.

NEW HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS CLINIC FOR HARTLEY

Hartley residents will soon be able to take advantage of a new benefits clinic that will open in Hartley Library in the New Year,

Sevenoaks District Council will be carrying out a six-month trial that will offer benefits advice to the local community avoiding the need to travel to the Council's offices in Sevenoaks or Swanley.

Customers will be able to have their Council Tax and housing benefit application forms checked, make general enquiries about benefits eligibility and how to claim. Original documents can be taken to the clinic where they will be copied and verified by one of the Council's Benefit Officers, then returned to the customer.

There will be three half-hour appointments available from 2pm every Wednesday afternoon which can be booked by calling the Council's Benefits section on 01732 227000, selecting option two for benefits followed by four for 'other benefit enquiries'.

Customers are advised to book an appointment to have claim forms checked or if they need help with more complex benefits advice.

There will be a drop in clinic from 3.30pm to 4.30pm where customers can have documents copied and simple questions answered. If the customer is unsure of whether they should book an appointment they can phone the above number where an assessment officer will help them.

The opening date will be publicised on the SDC website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk in local newspapers and on Parish Council notice boards.

For more information, call the Council on 01732 227000 or e mail benefits@sevenoaks.gov.uk

CASHLESS PAYPHONES

The Parish Council has been contacted by BT regarding the three payphones situated in Hartley. BT report that due to the decline in useage of these pay phones they intend to convert two into cashless payphones. BT quote the cost of providing payphone services for two of the pay phones as 109 and 857 times greater than the revenue generated. The cashless proposal would allow the phones to be used to make emergency, operator controlled, reverse charge, credit card and chargecard calls.

COUNTY LENGTHSMAN

Please remember that we have a County Lengthsmen system working at present which allows the Parish Office to initiate minor repairs to the local highways at relatively short notice i.e. potholes, overhanging hedges etc. Please notify the Parish Clerk of any problems.



THE PAVILION

The Pavilion at Manor Field is available to hire for one off bookings or regular weekly or monthly events. Charges are very reasonable with reductions available for regular bookings. If you would like more information please contact the Clerk at the Parish Office.