



DITCHLING

PARISH COUNCIL MAGAZINE



DITCHLING FAIR 2018



SATURDAY 16TH JUNE 2018



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WELCOME TO THE

DITCHLING PARISH COUNCIL MAGAZINE



Hello again and welcome to our third Ditchling magazine.

My name is Don Mcbeth and I am the current chair of Ditchling Parish council. Again, we hope that you find something of interest in the following pages and may even be motivated to submit an article of your own for the next edition in August.



The Parish Council will be holding its Annual Council Meeting on Monday 21st May at 7.30pm in the lower hall, Ditchling Village Hall. Members of the public are very welcome to attend.

A Parish Council must hold an annual meeting each year in May. The first business of this meeting will be to elect a chairman who will usually hold the office for a year. At the moment

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when the new chairman accepts office the previous chairman automatically retires. The vice-chairman is then elected, followed by the financial controller. The vice-chairman acts as deputy to the chairman and the financial controller is responsible for the monthly reconciliation of the bank statements of the council.

Councillors will then elect committee members for the two council committees; the Burial and Recreation Ground Committee and the Finance Committee. Several councillors are appointed representatives of the council serving on other community groups including; the Ditchling Village Hall Management Committee; Ditchling Pavilion Club, The Ditchling Village Association and the Lewes District Association of Local Councils. In addition, the council appoints a representative from the community to serve as a representative on the Oldland Windmill Trust.

It is important that the Parish Council works closely with other local groups and the most effective way to work with group is to have a representative within the organisation. Inevitably this can lead to conflicts of interest and so there are occasions when councillors will have to declare an interest in a group – and take no part in discussions. A good example is the proposed award of a grant from the Parish Council to The Village Hall Committee to assist with professional fees to alter the constitution and become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Members of the Village Hall Committee who were also members of the Parish Council declared an interest in this matter and were not able to take part in discussions.

Councils make standing orders to regulate their business and proceedings and may vary them. The Standing Orders governing Ditchling Parish Council follow the National model and are available on the Parish Council website ditchlingpc.org.uk. The Annual Council Meeting provides an opportunity to review the standing orders and resolve to make changes if required.

The Annual Return of the Council is usually presented at the May meeting, this form is a summary of the financial statements of the council and, once signed by the internal auditor, must be approved by the Parish Council. It is then submitted to an external auditor for approval.

We welcome your opinions and suggestions for improvement in respect of the Parish Magazine!

E-mail: clerk@ditchling-pc.gov.uk

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Ditchling
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CLERK'S CORNER



1st April marks the start of the financial year for all local authorities including Ditchling Parish Council.

We included details of our budget in the February edition of this magazine. Parish Councils do not have capped budgets, if a particular Parish wishes to increase its budget by 100% in order to

say, purchase some land for a playground or allotments it is able to do so. From 2012 the idea of capping Parish Councils regularly crops up in government. Recently, however parish councils have been informed that no cap will apply for at least three further years. This is an important principle in localism, local people should determine what funds are needed and be prepared to justify budgets to their community. If councillors are not supported by their community they will be voted out of office at the next election.

From the financial year commencing 1 April 2012 other local authorities, fire authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners have been required to hold a referendum if they wish to increase council tax by a fixed percentage, fixed by the Secretary of State each year. The threshold in the 2018-19 financial year is 6% of which 3% must be spent on adult social care.

You may recall the furore last year when Surrey County Council announced that it was proposing a 15% council tax increase. The propose increase would have increased Band D council tax bills by almost £200 and would

have cost the Council up to £300,000 to run a referendum. Eventually the authority settled on a 5% increase.

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) supplies a variety of services to Ditchling and the ninety-one other town and parish councils within the county, these include: roads, paths verges, footpaths, education, adult social care, and children's services. The Council has set a budget for 2018/19 and has agreed to spend £371 million on services and £99 million on capital projects. The increase in council tax will be 5.99% including the 3% social care levy.

Savings identified this year by ESCC include a reduction in highway contract costs of £400,000 for grass cutting services from April 2018. Urban grass cuts will be reduced from six per year to two. The verges at South Street, Beacon Road, and Long Park Corner are classified as urban. In order to maintain a regime of 6 cuts per year, Ditchling Parish Council has agreed to pay ESCC for the additional cuts at a cost of £318. It is expected that as budgets are tightened at both District Council and County Council level, Parish Councils will be expected to pay directly for services in order to maintain amenities in the local area.

Other areas where the County Council is seeking to save money or enhance revenues include; waste disposal services where subject to a consultation waste sites may be closed, and charges may be introduced at other sites for recycling of certain materials; registration services, with the cost of a marriage or civil partnership increasing by up to 30%; highways increasing the costs of a variety of licences from skips to road closures by up to 100%.

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Blooming cold!

British weather is always unpredictable, but this year's Spring Bulb Show was the first time anyone on the committee of the Ditchling Horticultural Society could remember actually putting on a show while snow fell outside!



On Saturday 17th March it was winter in the street, but inside Ditchling Village Hall bulbs were blooming and shrubs blossoming. Against the odds, the doughty gardeners of Ditchling had once again filled the hall with springtime. It was a cheering sight.

Cookery and handicrafts are also a traditional part of a village show, and did not disappoint this time, with a fine array of baked goods and jars of preserves as well as knitted and embroidered articles. As usual, the floral art displays were a striking feature. One recently-introduced class is for an arrangement using only flowers from the exhibitor's own garden; the Winter Trophy, for the best arrangement in this class, was won by Shirley Cox for the second time. Laura van Stiphout took both the Herbert Bannister Cup and the Bob Webb Cup for her perfect daffodils and narcissi; and the Crosby Cook Trophy for the best vase of cut flowers from the Spring border went to Lorna Hemsley.

What next for the Horticultural Society? Watch out for posters around the village announcing

forthcoming activities. On Wednesday 30 May there will be a visit to the house and garden at St Mary's, Bramber; this trip is also open to non-members, and tickets will be available from Ditchling Post Office from the beginning of May. Then on Saturday 16 June we will have our usual plant stall at Ditchling Fair. Find us on West Street – and hurry, because we always sell out! On the following Tuesday, 19 June, we will host the Coffee Morning in the Village Hall.

The Summer Show will be held at the Village Hall on Saturday 14 July. Come along from 2.00pm to admire the flowers and vegetables, enjoy a cup of tea and homemade cake, and maybe win a garden-themed prize in 'Muriel's Raffle.'

Members of the Society enjoy free entry to all three shows, as well as the opportunity of a free trip to RHS Wisley each year (the next one is in September) and a complimentary loyalty card at Tate's Garden Centre. Find out about joining, or just keep up to date with all our activities, by watching our noticeboard near the Post Office or at www.ditchlinghortsoc.weebly.com



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Ditchling Fair

The 706th year of the Ditchling Village fair is coming up on **16th June 2018**.

Join the Village of Ditchling on the 16th June for a day of 'Magic Music and Merriment'.

The Wizard will wake us in the early hours, with the fair in West street from 8am this year, not the high street, with the event happening all day along the whole of West Street, the Village Green, as well as the lower field, for Harris' Funfair.

Traditional Fair Favourites, the Jack and Jill race, Wizard, the 'In Crowd' quiz, Tug of War, Village Gems, The Procession, Spoken Word Tent, and of course the Beer Tent, will this year be joined by a street food area, and a climbing wall 'challenge' to the whole village, where we will attempt to climb the Matterhorn as a community.

The night will finish off with the Hoo-Ha! Sound system in the village barn from 8pm.

Thank you to all of you who are already offering

their help and support, this event is such a fondly remembered biannual occasion for the village, bringing people of all ages and backgrounds together in celebration.

We look forward to welcoming you- Visit our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ditchlingfair/>) or our website (<http://www.ditchlingfair.co.uk/>) to sign up to volunteer, or just 'like' us, to keep abreast of fair news.

Copies of the Fair Programme will be on sale in local outlets from the start of May 2018.

All profits from the fair are of course donated to good causes in the Village.

Residents note: West street will be closed from 8am until 8pm with vehicular access to the village from the West being diverted at Keymer via South Street.

Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School

Learning together. Building success.

Following an Ofsted inspection on 6 December 2017, Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary continues to be a Good school, which is fantastic considering recent changes to the inspection regime. Furthermore, they achieved the Outstanding grade for Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare of the inspection framework. There is much to celebrate at Ditchling!

The pupils, staff and governors of Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary are extremely proud that their work and performance over recent years have been confirmed through this inspection. Indeed, the inspector noted the significant change and improvements that have taken place. There is no doubt that this is as a result of partnership working between governors, staff, pupils, parents and carers. The Ofsted inspector recognised that the school is 'at the heart of its local community.'

The report identifies many, many areas to celebrate. Safeguarding, in all aspects of the school's provision, was seen to be robust and effective. The inspector noted that 'pupils are kept very safe in school and have an excellent understanding of how to manage risk. They have a mature understanding of challenges faced by our modern society.' Furthermore, behaviour in the school is exemplary, pupils are considerate, thoughtful and highly committed to learning. Respect for others underpins everyone's experiences at this school. This is supported by the sense of trust, responsibility and commitment from pupils.

The staff team, under the resolute and inspired leadership of their Head Teacher have rigorously rebuilt an engaging and rewarding curriculum which was fully recognised by the Inspector. The staff are proud of the school and use their subject expertise to engage the pupils who 'are excited about coming to school and speak positively about their experiences.' An extensive range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities contribute significantly, consequently 'parents unanimously agree that pupils develop into well-rounded young people.'

The inspectors were impressed with the

teaching they saw in the classrooms, 'Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well. Teachers' effective questioning and guidance deepens pupils' understanding.' Leaders create an environment that promotes a sense of trust, responsibility and commitment from pupils. The continual drive to improve has resulted in increased progress over the past few years resulting in outcomes of Reading, Writing and Maths combined which exceed national figures.

The inspection process has fully validated the school's self-evaluation, and the steps taken since September and planned for this year, to further improve. The school welcomes the opportunity to build on its current success by ensuring that these aspects are fully implemented.

This shows what a fantastic school Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary is. The school has grown in popularity over recent years and parents are unswerving in their support. The school is a caring, lively and vibrant learning community and all staff are committed to ensuring pupils succeed. This report underpins the high aspirations and ambitions of the school community, particularly the leadership team, to provide a learning environment and pupil outcomes which will prepare all pupils for the next stage of their learning journey. They look forward to continuing their journey of excellence as they fulfil their vision of:

Learning Together, Building Success.



New Ditchling Parish Councillor



An Introduction

My name is Paul Farrands and I live on Spatham Lane with my wife Clare who is herself a Town Planner. We first moved to the Lane in 1989 following my training as a Surgeon in Nottingham, Bath, Bristol, Southampton

and London. I worked in Brighton at the RSCH and Haywards Heath at Princess Royal until 2016 when I finally retired from the NHS. I am an NHS baby and a strong supporter of the Health care system but I am also critical of its application and management. Since moving to Spatham Lane our 2 children have grown and left and we now have 2 grandchildren and 2 more on the way. Over the last 25 years I have seen changes in the Beacon Villages

with the increase in the volume and speed of through traffic and its effect on the village infrastructure. I am keen to support the village and the New Village Plan and look forward to helping Ditchling Parish Council steer the village through the next phase of change.

Paul was co-opted to the Council at the meeting of 29th January, 2018.

The process for co-option between statutory Council Elections:

- When a Council has a casual vacancy a vacancy notice must be advertised as soon as practicable
- The Clerk contacts the District Council Elections office for guidance on notice wording and publication
- An election must be called if ten or more electors of the parish or ward make a request to call a by-election within 14 days
- An election must then take place within 60 days
- If a by-election is not called, must co-opt.
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Ditchling History Project is your local history society. We research all aspects of the parish's history: its families; its buildings; its industries; its arts & crafts; its church & chapels; its clubs and societies.

We maintain an extensive and growing database which we aim to make available online. We are 'project' based because we never cease investigating the history of this amazing parish. Historical records, tythe maps, census returns, trade directories, house deeds and word of mouth are some of our many sources. We are always ready to learn from those who know something of Ditchling's history both past and recent. We welcome anyone who would like to join us. Our website is www.ditchlinghistoryproject.org.

Project News

In time for the coming centenary of the end of WW1 we continue to research the lives of residents who, in the 1911 census, were of an age potentially to have served in the forces sometime between 1914 -18 and survived it. Our research is revealing intriguing stories of their service and, in some cases, why they were exempted from service. Can you help us? Our aim is to have ready, in time for the commemoration, a house-to-house trail showing where they lived and what they did.



Do you know?

Then

The Fair takes place this year on the village green as it has in all recent years. But this wasn't always a green. It's only since 1967 that it has been. Before that it was the farmyard for Court Farm – not to be confused with Court Gardens Farm. The farm was, for 400 years, part of the Southdown Estate owned by the Abergavenny family. The yard comprised at least four large barns, a cart lodge and the pond. In 1939 the estate was split up and in 1957 the farm house and pond were sold to one purchaser and the yard and some land to another. In 1962 the yard was offered to the village for £8,500. This was



subsequently withdrawn but in 1964 the 'Friends of Ditchling' charitable trust was formed, raised £10,500, and secured it.

Now

In 1967 the green was opened by Sir Tufton Beamish, MP for Lewes. As part of the fund-raising

effort the largest barn had been sold to the East 15 Acting School in Loughton, Essex where it is now the Corbett Theatre in honour of Harry H. Today it is a fully-equipped performance space with tiered seating for 126 plus two dressing rooms. On a recent visit it was described by our guide as 'the oldest building in Loughton'! Can you see the foundations where it once stood on our green? Only one of the original barns remains and is much used for village functions. Recently the old cart lodge, a Listed building, was converted into the exciting new entrance to Ditchling Museum of Art & Craft.



We share much of what we learn through our extensive range of publications and occasional papers. They range from those which are relevant to residents and visitors alike, such as our best seller 'Walk Around Ditchling Village', a guide to the parish's historic places, to those of more specific interest to residents and families such as 'In Memoriam', a record of those buried in the village churchyard and the lives of some of them. We write about the impact of national and international events on the parish, such as 'For The Fallen', recounting the lives of the residents who died in the two world wars and 'Memories of War', an account of the experiences of the parish during those wars. Our occasional papers address more niche interests such as the histories of the Recreation Ground and the Village Green. For a full list of our publications and for sales see our website. Some are also available for sale in the Post Office and local shops.

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Beacon Parishes Traffic Plan

On September 29th 2017 a dangerous driving incident in Spatham Lane resulted in serious injury to a resident and the tragic death of her much loved horse. It is not possible to express the extent of pain and trauma experienced by Beverley and her family.

For many years there has been public awareness of the effect of rising traffic volumes and higher speeds, increasing risks to users of our road network, damaging residents' quality of life. This incident created much concern and motivation to bring about change.

On 13th October a meeting of interested parties was called to determine what action could be taken. Initially the delegates were Councillors from the Parishes of Westmeston and Ditchling, the Chairman of Streat Meeting and our District and County Councillors. In addition representatives of Neighbourhood Plan, Neighbourhood Watch (Speed Watch) and Ditchling Society were in attendance. We were pleased to have the presence of Lewes M.P. Maria Caulfield.

Early discussions and meetings of this working party produced our Purpose and Structure, as follows;

"The improvement of traffic matters within the Parishes with the immediate aim of improving road safety for all road users. The Parish Councils (this is defined as including Streat Meeting) will be responsible for initiating and managing action through the authorities including District and County Councils as required."

The consensus of members' experiences indicated years of frustration when trying to bring about change, despite comprehensive traffic studies and representations to the Traffic Authority. We were always aware that we could not take action in one location in isolation. Surrounding roads and traffic systems have to be considered as factors affecting our parishes. Previous wide ranging plans, whilst necessary, in practice proved impossible to achieve because of sheer size and cost. In current financial circumstances almost any change, no matter how important it seems to us, is likely to be sidelined by ESCC Highways on cost reasons

alone. We have found when discussing self-funding, or even "match funding" the response improves.

Realising that we can only achieve "a bit at a time", Westmeston and Ditchling Parish Councils have set aside modest funding to improve safety on Spatham Lane. This does not mean we are excluding the other locations.

We have been working with Highways to make minor improvements such as new signage (Horses –warning signs), repainting of road markings and repairs to road surfaces. A speed and volume traffic survey has taken place, giving us firm figures that together with gathered information about lane usage, will be used when applying to have a speed limit applied to the lane. Our M.P. Maria Caulfield has presented a Petition to the House of Commons to make changes to speeds limits and road classifications and we are awaiting progress.

County Councillors and Maria are also looking at tighter controls over HGVs on rural lanes together with amendments to commercial SATNAVs.

The group is looking at funding derived from levies on developments near our northern and western boundaries. Traffic improvement comes under the heading of infrastructure and it is hoped that such money will come our way.

Another line of action is the possible employment of a professional traffic consultant for some or all of our emerging schemes. This would be linked to the aspirations regarding traffic and transport as set out in the Beacons Parishes Neighbourhood Development Plan which goes to referendum on 19th April.

We will keep in touch with parishioners through Parish websites and Facebook.

Rob Mills, Ch. Westmeston Parish Council

Clifford Dann

NEW HOMES

THE DEVELOPMENT

The Walled Garden is a creative development of five two story dwellings set in a peaceful private courtyard in the heart of Ditchling. All dwellings enjoy southerly views of Ditchling Beacon and South Downs.

Two of the houses are refurbishments of period buildings, one of the gardener's cottage, the other previously the framing studio of Sir Frank Brangwyn RA.

Three houses are new, built to exacting standards in the Arts and Crafts Style using hand made bricks, hand made clay roof tiles and purpose made hand crafted wood windows.

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Jubilee Pathway Extension



Your support is needed

As you may know we are part of a group involved in trying to make our Lanes safer for all users, this may take some time but one thing we can do is extend the Jubilee Pathway so that all users of Spatham Lane are safe. This is going to be a massive undertaking by a small charity but with local support we can convince Highways to give us permission for the undertaking.

The new extension will have to be done in stages as we raise money for each section. Starting with a new link running north on the lane from Lewes Road (B2116), this will connect the existing Jubilee Pathway from Ditchling and Westmeston with Hayleigh Farm Road and the path from the recreation ground, creating

a safe passage for the many Ditchling and Westmeston residents who make use of these paths and beyond.

The Trustees of the Jubilee Pathway will be looking for sources of funding but need your support to put the case for the work to East Sussex Highways.

If you agree that this pathway will benefit all local residents can we ask you to sign the petition which is available at the post office in Ditchling.

Rob Mills – Chairman of Trustees

WESTMESTON JUBILEE PATHWAY TRUST

Registered Charity number: 1095561

SO, HOW DOES THE PLANNING PROCESS WORK?

I think that it may be useful to try to expand on some of the rules and misconceptions surrounding the planning process.

We as a council are governed by a raft of planning law that stems from the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

Firstly, do parish councils grant planning permission? Well no, Town and parish councils are not Planning Authorities. Town and parish councils are only statutory consultees in the planning process. This means that they only have the right to be informed of planning applications within the parish. They cannot approve or reject planning applications. They can only comment on planning applications in the same way that individuals can comment. Consequently, the length of time taken to determine a planning application is governed by the local planning authority not the parish council. A parish council can request that it be given extra time to comment on an application. The decision whether this is granted rests solely with the planning authority and its own deadlines for decision making.

How do parish councils comment on planning applications? Well parish councils can only agree to comment on planning applications in properly called council meetings which the public can attend. The comments agreed in the council meeting are submitted in writing by the parish clerk to the relevant planning authority. The process is exactly the same as that of an individual wishing to comment on a planning application. As

was said Parish councils are statutory consultees and have no powers to approve or reject planning applications, they can only comment to "object to", or to register "no comment".

We as council members take planning issues very seriously and we try to review each and every allocation on its merits, as dispassionately and objectively as possible. In doing this we must be constantly aware of the limitation places upon us by the planning system. We in Ditchling have the added complication that we are governed by both Lewes District Council and also the South Downs National Park Authority. If a planning application is "called in" for assessment by a planning committee, it could be heard at either Midhurst for the SDNPA, or in Lewes by Lewes District Council, but the SDNPA delegates most minor planning decision to Lewes.

We have a list of valid reasons for commenting on and objecting to a Planning application. The following are a few (but not all) examples:-

We would consider the Neighbourhood Plan, and any review of the Neighbourhood Plan which is underway.

A desire to retain or promote certain uses, such as playing fields, village shops and pubs

The proposal by virtue of its design and materials, would adversely affect the historic character of the Listed Building.

The proposal by virtue of its sighting, form and size is considered to be detrimental to the Character

and appearance of the Conservation Area

It would represent an unduly prominent structure within the street scene

The proposed roof extension by virtue of its height, form and appearance would fail to respect and integrate with the overall scale and character of the dwelling

The proposal would result in an additional dwelling in a countryside location outside any town or village planning boundary

The extension proposed fails to respect the character of the adjacent properties and would through its bulk, scale and site coverage have a detrimental impact on the character and setting of the existing buildings and a detrimental impact on residential amenity through loss of light and overbearing nature

The proposal would result in an unwarranted intensification of residential development to the detriment of the quiet rural character and landscape quality of the South Downs

The proposed development is unsuitable in terms of the materials used which would be out of keeping with the wider area, especially in this location adjacent to the Ditching Conservation Area.

Increased noise and disturbance to neighboring occupiers to the detriment of their residential amenity.

The proposal would result in a new replacement dwelling in the countryside, outside any town or village planning boundary.

However, there are also certain matters which do not amount to 'material planning considerations' under current legislation and guidance. These matters cannot be taken into account in considering a planning application and should not be included in objections. A few examples are as follows:-

- Speculation over future use
- Unfair competition
- Loss of a private view
- Devaluation of property and other financial matters
- Religious or moral issues, such as betting shops and amusement arcades
- The fact that the applicant does not own the land to which the application relates
- The fact that an objector is a tenant of land where the development is proposed

It should be noted that the person making a

planning application has to provide enough information for the application to be determined. They do not have to provide every single detail before an application can be approved, because certain matters can be resolved by way of conditions imposed as part of permission being granted. These conditions are usually imposed by the planning committee, or by delegated powers given to the permanent officers of the relevant planning authority

Except for minor applications it is always sensible to speak informally to the parish clerk or a council member before proceeding with a formal application process, this will save you time and money, and in doing so, it may help the council understand and assist in the progress of the application through the system.

This application of the planning system described above, means that well over 90% of all planning applications countrywide, are settled by Town and Parish councils making recommendations, which are then enabled by the permanent officers of the district councils using their delegated powers. As a result, very few applications are actually dealt with by councilors on district planning committees.



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Connecting local businesses Business Networking & Support Sessions

Sussex based charity Action in rural Sussex, together with Let's Do Business, are seeking small businesses from Ditchling and the surrounding areas that would like to come together to help form a business network.



With support from Action in rural Sussex, the network could provide:

- Friendly opportunities for you to meet and engage with other local people who run their own business
- Free access to expert support and information on a range of business issues (advice/information/funding)
- Speakers and discussions on local 'hot topics' and key themes

Lewes District Council & SDNPA – news update

Councillor Tom Jones

For the benefit of all our new and future residents to Ditchling and Westmeston I will continue to put my resume in the Ditchling Parish Magazine. Cllr Tom Jones has served as your Lewes District Councillor for the last 12 years during which time he has held the Planning Portfolio for Planning on Cabinet. He also holds the appointment for Lewes District Council (LDC) on the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). He sits on the LDC Planning Service User Group, the Coastal West Sussex and Greater Brighton Strategic Planning Group, the East Sussex County Council Planning Group and is on the Planning Committee for both the LDC and SDNPA. He has been a Parish Councillor for the last twenty years.



1. News from Democratic Services at Lewes District Council is that all our District Councillors have been provided with IT Tablets to conduct our business and my new email address is **Tom.Jones@lewes.gov.uk**. My telephone number remains the same at **01273 846938** Mob No. **07376416277**. My address is **Hampers Croft, 28 Common Lane, Ditchling BN6 8TJ**.

2. Over the last few weeks various groups have been out and about clearing up the verges to our major and minor road system. You might well ask why? The answer is simple as there are numerous individuals who display a total disregard for keeping our roads clear of rubbish but choose to wind down the window of their vehicle and 'Bin It'. In Ditchling and Westmeston teams organised by the Ditchling Society and others venture out and no sooner do they clear our verges when more mindless souls add to the roadside litter pile. The problem is now a Nationwide Issue and I have noticed recently the increasing number of roadside signs telling drivers to keep their rubbish in the car not in the road. I will be pursuing this at District Council level but our own parish councils need to invest in such signage and individuals must report incidents of litter throwing, with vehicle registration, to the police and parish clerks and of course not forgetting myself at < Tom.Jones@lewes.gov.uk >

3. The next Planning Meeting for the South Downs National Park (SDNPA) and Lewes district Council (LDC) is on 10th May in the Council Chamber, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent Lewis BN7 1UE. Residents are invited to attend any of our planning meetings.

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Mary Holman British Empire Medal Investiture

21st November 2017

Mary Holman the retired Clerk to Ditchling Parish Council was awarded the British Empire Medal in Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to the council and the community.

On 21st November 2017 Mary received this important award at the investiture ceremony which took place in the Council Chamber of Brighton Town Hall. The event included being met and shown into the Council Chamber for a reserved front seat; a briefing by the Lord Lieutenant office; being invited forward to receive the medal; a short citation read by Deputy Lieutenant Mrs Deborah Bedford JP DL; the pinning on of the medal by the Lord Lieutenant Mr Peter J Field; and following the National Anthem, a photograph with the Lord Lieutenant and Deputy Lieutenant.

Mary worked as a clerk for an impressive 42 years, starting in 1973 when her husband Brian was appointed Clerk to Ditchling Parish Council, and Mary dealt with matters whilst he was in London. At this time the chairman of Ditchling Parish Council was Jean Ellis. By 1974, having become very interested in Parish Council work Mary applied for the vacancy as Clerk to Hurstpierpoint PC, and was appointed. She lived and worked from her home on Wickham Hill. In 1974 Mary was officially appointed Deputy Clerk at Ditchling, and added to the payroll to give her some credibility when dealing with local authorities while Brian was at work. Following Brian's death in 1980 Mary became Clerk for both Hurstpierpoint and Ditchling Parish Councils. In 1985 Mary married George Holman, the chairman of Ditchling Parish Council, and moved to Ditchling, resigning as the Clerk at Hurst. Between 1973 and 2015 Mary worked with six different Hurst chairmen, and eleven Ditchling Chairmen.

Mary has experienced all the significant changes in working practices which have taken place since



the 1970's, starting with the use of carbon copies at Hurst. She says "Ditchling PC had a Gestetner which we had at our home, Hurst used to pay Ditchling to use it. It was progress to be able to cut stencils and run them off." Papers were delivered by hand for meetings and correspondence was read out at meetings. In 1991 Ditchling acquired a word processor for the clerk and in 1996 Ditchling had its first clerk's computer.

Significant events over the years have included trying to purchase the garden of Lexden following the death of Margaret Charlton to extend the village hall car park but been unable to complete with the more lucrative housing project. The building of Charlton Gardens. The introduction of traffic calming measures in the village. The opening of the Turner Dumbrell Workshops and building of the Dumbrells Court development. Mary was involved with meetings to determine the design of the new school and the subsequent opening of the Old School by Joanna & Hilary Bourne as the Museum.

Mary points to highlights of her career being; Ditchling achieving National Park status, ensuring the recreation ground was maintained to the highest standards. The care and role of the

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recreation ground within the village has always been important to her. The loss of the twin oaks in the recreation ground in recent years she views as significant and marking 'the end of an era'. Community remains important to Mary and the role of Clerk enabled her to contribute to the wellbeing of her community and offer help to others on the way.

Mary remains actively involved in village life and is a Trustee of the Dame Isabella Sprott Eleemosynary Charity; Serves on the Ditchling Village Association executive committee and is Secretary of the Horticultural Society (the Oldest in the UK).

Ditchling achieving National Park status. Community remains important to Mary and the role of Clerk enabled her to contribute to the wellbeing of her community.

The Society of Local Council Clerks congratulated Mary on her award on 20 June 2017 with Chief Executive Rob Smith saying "I am also very conscious that Mary represents countless colleagues who contribute so much to their local communities for little reward other than knowing they are providing a vital contribution to local community life".

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Write to: Ditchling Parish Council, Ditchling Village Hall, Ditchling BN6 8TT

Ditchling Morris Dancers

Morris dancing is widely recognised as an essentially English tradition. Its origins are vague & theorists believe that some forms of Morris may derive from the French Moresque or the Spanish Morisca dances of the 15th & 16th centuries as they share some characteristics, while others speculate that the Morris dance is the remains of seasonal pre-Christian agricultural fertility rites. The earliest documentary reference to Morris dancing in England is in the 1400's but by the 16th & 17th century many of the towns Guilds had adopted it, mainly as a stage performance at festivals, & for public enjoyment. Morris became an integral part of church festivals and Ales & it is recorded that some churches kept elaborate costumes & hired them to other sides to allow them to perform - much to the disgust of the Puritans. By the end of the 16th century, Morris had become established as a form of entertainment, often accompanying the seasonal celebration of the coming of spring & the autumn harvests. There are some references in the 16th & 18th century to men, women & children performing.

Ditchling Morris, are Members of the Morris Federation and were formed in 1985, as a mixed family side. There are regional styles of Morris dance in the country,

from the North West Morris, North East Rapper, Molly dancing from East Anglia, Border Morris from the Welsh borders & Cotswold Morris. Ditchling Morris perform in the Cotswold style typified by hankies, bells just below the knees, baldricks, white shirts and britches. Our aim is to support village activities & to promote our heritage & traditions. We also support children's activities in the local schools & have been involved in the East Sussex Schools Dance Festival since 2009. Within the side there is a Mummers team (folk art play) usually performed during the Christmas period at which we raise funds for charity. All our plays are taken from the 17 plays recorded in Sussex.

The team practice from September through to the end of April the following year and practice in the URC Church Hall in Hassocks on Thursday evenings. We always utilize live music. Our Membership is about 25 dancers and 5 musicians and newcomers are always welcome to join us in the practice season.

Ditchling Morris has a website (www.ditchlingmorris.co.uk), Facebook and Twitter accounts.



20th March 2018 –

Celebration & Tree Planting in commemoration of Dame Vera Lynn's 101st Birthday.

The planting ceremony took place on The Green, Lodge Hill Lane, and was very well attended by both invited guests and other interested visitors. Active ceremony participants included the Chair of the Green, Deputy Lieutenant of East Sussex, and the Royal British Legion Standards. Children of St Margaret's Primary School also attended and sang. This was followed by the planting and blessing of the tulip tree. The sun also managed to peek out from behind the clouds overhead just in time too.



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Have you ever painted a windmill?

We now have a fully restored windmill which is one of the oldest regularly milling windmills in the country! The Oldland Mill Trust now needs YOUR help to maintain our Milland keep her in good working order.

The sweeps (the Sussex term for sails!) are taken down for refurbishment every seven years and this year two sweeps will be removed. When they are on the ground they will be thoroughly checked for any rot or infestation, cleaned, rubbed down, any defects repaired or replaced and repainted. In addition, this year we will be modifying some of the shutter fittings to improve the efficiency of the sweeps-that is to make them produce even more power for a given wind speed.

As in previous years, we invite our members, friends and neighbours to help with the repainting; you'd be surprised what a large

area there is to paint when you see the sweeps close up on the ground! The whole process will take place between May and June and we will be organising small working parties at the mill on week days. If there is sufficient support this year, we are also contemplating running a few sessions at weekends to enable supporters working during the week to take part. There is no need to be an expert as guidance will be given and every group will be led by an experienced mill volunteer. All tools and materials will, of course, be provided. We will soon commence contacting those of you who are 'regulars' from previous years. Please keep an eye on our



website – www.oldlandwindmill.co.uk – for up-to-date information about the timetable, or if you're passing the Mill any Thursday (the volunteers regular working day throughout the year) do please drop in to register your interest in painting. Why not make 2018 the year when YOU painted a real windmill.

Notwithstanding the sweep refurbishment this year, we are still running our usual three Special Event Days on the first Sunday in the relevant month. May will be 'Music at the Mill' including Morris Dancing, July will be 'Wind and Steam' and we will have once again have a Traction Engine driving the Mill (a feature which we believe to be unique amongst surviving Post Mills) and September will be a 'Milling Day' where we will have milling equipment on display (Such as our Quern and Winnow) and samples of bread and cakes of all descriptions made from our own stone-ground flour, together with the recipes. We even hope to have a portable oven on site-you can't get fresher than that!

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People at risk in rural areas

People living in rural areas of the country may be just as vulnerable as those living in towns and cities to identity crimes, a new report has warned.

Traditionally people were thought to be more at risk of being targeted if they lived in major urban areas as it gave fraudsters more opportunity to operate under a cloak of anonymity.

The latest research, however, warns that the internet is allowing people to target victims remotely from around the world. Figures there were more than 55,000 cases of personal fraud, including identity theft, recorded at homes across the Yorkshire region last year. Personal fraud figures showed urban areas including Sheffield and Leeds are being hit especially hard.

They were supplied by Cifas, the UK's fraud prevention service, which has published its latest report, Identity Crime: On Your Doorstep, in collaboration with Ordnance Survey, highlighting how criminals are changing tactics.

Richard Hurley, Cifas communications manager, said yesterday: "The findings of this report confirm that everyone is vulnerable to fraud and that anybody can fall victim."

The report shows that in Leeds and parts of North Yorkshire there were between 3.79 and 6.18

frauds per 1,000 victims – a figure that is higher than many other parts of the country including Edinburgh, though victim numbers in areas such as London and Birmingham are higher.

The fraud watchdog says analysis of frauds in 2012 shows a shift in tactics with criminals now able to successfully target people living in rural communities with data they have found online

Previously, crooks raided bins outside apartment blocks for discarded bills or other information, or intercepted post for addresses and the personal details they needed to pose as somebody else and buy goods and open accounts in their name.

The report warns that rural areas, are particularly susceptible to some identity crimes such as those where criminals hack into a person's bank or another person's account to launder money or steal cash. Organised crime is frequently linked to the scams but the watchdog – which collates fraud figures from banks, mail order and savings companies – says in some cases the con artists are known to their victims. Advice about how to avoid being a victim is at:

www.cifas.org.uk/avoid-being-a-victim



HAVE YOUR SAY

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Prayer Spaces in Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School

Between 6th and 8th February, Gary Pickett, the Church Youth Worker, planned and set up a 3-day Prayer Spaces event for the children.

There were 7 spaces altogether: 3 with which the whole school to engaged; 2 with which the Infants engaged; and 2 with which the Juniors engaged. As a result, every student experienced 5 out of the 7 Prayer Spaces.

Each space had a different theme which linked with a school value; was supported by a Bible verse; and had an activity in which the children participated which encouraged reflection. The themes included: thinking about self-worth, friendship, forgiveness, the amazing natural world, unfair world, homelessness.

We had all 145 students engage with the spaces; it was lovely to see how the children used them.



They thought deeply about the stimuli and responded sensitively to the opportunity for prayer, mindfulness and reflection.

The feedback from the time in the spaces has been phenomenal with so much positivity from both students and staff alike.

"It gave me time to learn more about ourselves and time to be our true selves."

"The children engaged really respectfully with the spaces and made insightful comments."

"It was fun."

"We empathised with what it felt like to be homeless."

The event resonated with the oldest children so much they have asked to do a sleepover outside to raise money for a charity working with the homeless.

This is one way in which we support the mental health and wellbeing of our children and staff. We hope that this event will become a regular feature of school life as it so important in our busy lives to take time to pause, be still and reflect.



OLDLAND WINDMILL 2018 EVENTS

6th May
Special Event Day: Music & Morris

13th May
National Mills Weekend

3rd June
Open Afternoon

1st July
Special Event Day: Wind & Steam

5th August
Open Afternoon

2nd September
Special Event Day: Milling Day

7th October
Open Afternoon

Sisters Celebrate their 150th Anniversary at St. George's Retreat, Ditchling Common

It was a truly memorable occasion. For on 19th March 2018, exactly 150 years after the Augustinian Sisters started their mission of care under the guidance of their founder Canon Peter John Maes, a celebration of their life and work was held at St George's Park, the home of St George's Retreat.

The newly decorated chapel sparkled, the sisters, village residents as well as members of the local community who worshipped there on a regular basis were delighted to be back in their beautiful, familiar surroundings.

Among the 180 guests were His Lordship Bishop Richard Moth: Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, His Grace Archbishop Bernard Longley: Birmingham diocese, the Mayor of Burgess Hill Ms Jacqui Landrini, the Mayor of Haywards Heath Cllr. James Knight, Cllr. Tom Jones, Lewes District Council accompanied by Mrs. Virginia Lewis-Jones and the Chair of Ditchling Parish Council Cllr. Donald McBeth.

The Chief Celebrant of the Mass was the His

Lordship Bishop Richard Moth, who reminded us that this day was the Solemnity of St Joseph and linked this to the ministry of the Sisters over the years. Indeed, the original statue of the Saint brought over by Canon Peter Maes still stands in the Chapel and was carried in procession by Sister Miriam.

During the service Sister Mary Thomas was presented with the Benemerenti Medal, an honour awarded by the Pope for service to the Catholic Church.

The congregation was invited to lunch in a splendid marquee set up specially for the occasion. On display was a selection of memorabilia shedding further light on the history of the last 150 years.

The guests were treated to an excellent three-course lunch after which Philip Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Augustinian Care read out letters of congratulations to the Sisters from HRH Princess Alexandra and our close and popular neighbour, Dame Vera Lynn. An Apostolic Blessing was received from His Holiness Pope Francis.

Later on, the marquee was the setting for an informal reception attended by residents of St. George's which included the cutting of three beautifully decorated commemorative cakes.


Sister Mary Monica said "We are delighted that the celebration went so well and were pleased to have His Lordship Bishop Richard Moth Concelebrate Mass in our newly renovated Chapel which has been restored back to its original splendour. The Order has been here a very long time and we are proud to still be offering care for the elderly here after all this time".



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Sewer flooding avoidance advice from Southern Water

Did you know that in the last year, Sussex residents experienced **6,740 blockages**?

Stop it happening to you

The most shocking thing is, nearly two-thirds of these blockages are preventable; simply put all your unflushable items – like wipes, tampons, condoms, nappies etc - in the bin instead of down the toilet. You can also cool leftover cooking fat, oil and grease and then either scrape it into a container, such as a used yoghurt pot, or pour it into an empty bottle and throw it in the bin.

Southern Water also removed 2,043 tonnes of unflushable items from wastewater sites in Sussex alone last year; that's the equivalent weight of 161 double decker buses.

But what's the problem?

"Sewer flooding can be a really upsetting experience for our customers," Tim Bagnall, Southern Water's Waste Services Manager, explains. "Everyone in the water industry knows that fat, oil, grease and unflushables are some of the biggest causes of internal flooding, but it's amazing how few of our customers make the link between what goes down their toilets and sinks and what comes back up if they're unlucky enough to experience an internal sewage flood.

"And there's also the financial costs to consider. The average amount to clear a blockage is around £85 but can vary depending on the work required; complex jobs can easily run into hundreds of pounds."

Fat, unflushables and the environment

And as Tim goes on to explain, incorrect disposal of fat, oil, grease and unflushable items can also have a huge impact on the environment.

"Sewers and drains blocked by rubbish can

create a build-up of fat, oil and grease, and will eventually overflow. If this happens in gardens, or in areas close to water, it risks the pollution of those water courses and is a danger to wildlife."

What Southern Water is doing

In 2015, Southern Water established a five year, £1.4million investment programme in an effort to reduce blockages across its region, and helps customers understand how they can prevent flooding in their homes, gardens and businesses.

Southern Water is also contributing to the national agenda on this issue, by regularly presenting at the national Sewerage Network Abuse Partnership group, discussing their growing success and industry-leading ways of working.

Fighting The Unflushables

In addition, Southern Water has teamed up with the Consumer Council for Water joined forces in order to fight 'The Unflushables'.

The campaign helps people understand how to properly dispose of fat, oil, grease and unflushable items and also aims to highlight the impact a sewage flood in people's houses can have – as well as providing advice on how people can stop it happening to them.

And it's an approach that seems to be working; the number of blockages fell from 23,000 in 2015 to just over 19,000 in 2017.

"The only three things that can safely go down the toilet are the three Ps – pee, poo and paper," says Tim.

For further information about The Unflushables, please visit the website:

www.southernwater.co.uk/the-unflushables



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What to do in the garden in **Spring**

There's always something to be doing in the garden, whether it's pruning, tidying or sowing, so we've put together our top gardening tasks for April.

Flower garden

Plant lily bulbs now in pots! If you want to get ahead with your summer lily display, start planting now! I'd always recommend planting in pots. You can simply move them around the patio or into gaps in your borders as they come into flower! Use a good, multi-purpose compost and half-fill a container at least 30cm (12") in diameter and is sufficient for 3 bulbs. Cover with more compost and water in. Once the plants begin to shoot, move them to a sunny position. Feed with a liquid plant feed each weekly from the beginning of summer.

Dig in a 5cm (or more) layer of compost or well-rotted manure into your beds to prepare for the growing season. You can also work in a general-purpose fertiliser such as pelleted chicken manure or fish, blood and bone.

Apply a layer of mulch around your perennials, trees and shrubs before the hot weather arrives. Use organic matter such as well rotted manure.

Lift and divide perennial plants now to improve their vigour and create new plants for your garden.

Divide Hostas before they come into leaf.

Divide Primroses after they have finished flowering.

You can start to move evergreen shrubs and trees now provided the soil isn't frozen or waterlogged.

Plant summer-flowering bulbs such as Lilies, Gladiolus and

Ranunculus into beds, borders and containers.

Feed trees, shrubs and hedges with a balanced, slow-release fertiliser by lightly forking it into the soil surface. Roses are greedy plants and will greatly benefit from feeding as they come into growth.

Apply a balanced slow release fertiliser to trees, shrubs and hedges

Forced flower bulbs such as hyacinths and daffodils, which have now finished flowering, can be planted outdoors in garden borders.

Hardwood cuttings taken last year may need planting or potting on now.

If any of your garden plants will need supporting this year, put the supports in now so the plants grow up through them. Adding supports afterwards is difficult and may damage the plant.

Tie in climbing and rambling roses to their supports.

Honeysuckle and Clematis will now be putting on growth, tie in new stems to train the plant along its support.

Check any tree ties to make sure the tie is not cutting into the trunk. Loosen any that are tight to allow the trunk room to expand.

Prune your Penstemons now - cut all the old shoots back to the base provided there is new growth at the bottom of the plant. If there are no new shoots at the base, cut just above the lowest set of leaves.

If you haven't done so already,



Dig in compost or manure to prepare for the growing season



Continue to plant herbaceous perennials.



Tie in climbing and rambling roses to their supports

finish cutting back any dead foliage left on your perennials and ornamental grasses to make way for new growth.

Prune Forsythia as soon as they have finished flowering, cutting back to strong young shoots.

Trim winter-flowering heathers as the flowers disappear, to prevent the plants becoming leggy.

Continue to remove any faded flowers from your winter pansies to stop them setting seed. This will encourage flushes of new flowers throughout the spring.

Deadhead daffodils and tulips as the flowers finish but leave the foliage intact allowing it to die back naturally.

Direct sow hardy annuals outside or in pots or modules.

Check that your container plants are not drying out - warm weather will quickly affect soil moisture levels.

Vegetable garden

Dig in a 5cm (or more) layer of compost, well-rotted manure or green waste into your beds to prepare for the growing season.

Plant your chitted potatoes outside in the ground or in potato grow bags. To find out more about growing potatoes in bags or in the ground, take a look at our potato growing guides

Harvest asparagus spears when they are no more than 18cm tall.

Growing potatoes in grow bags - top up compost as the plants grow

For quick and easy pea supports push some twiggy sticks around your pea plants now.

Thin your carrot seedlings to achieve good-size carrots - do this in the evening when fewer carrot flies are around.

Many crops can be direct sown into the ground now including parsnips, cabbages and radishes (see our What to sow and grow in April page for more vegetables to sow now).

Prepare vegetable seed beds by removing all weeds and forking in plenty of compost. Cover prepared soil with sheets of black plastic to keep it drier and warmer in preparation for planting.

Build raised beds to take the bending out of growing vegetables.

Fruit garden

Plant out strawberry beds, making sure you enrich the soil first with plenty of well-rotted manure. Place cloches over your strawberry plants for earlier crops.

Protect your fruit blossom from late frosts by covering them with fleece on cold nights.

Spray the emerging leaves of peach and nectarine trees to prevent peach leaf curl. Sheltering your plants from the rain will also reduce the risk of peach leaf curl.

Mulch fruit trees with well rotted manure or garden compost taking care not to mound mulch up around the trunk. Top-dress patio dwarf fruit trees with fresh compost and a slow-release fertiliser

Apply a slow-release fertiliser around the base of your raspberry canes, fruit bushes and fruit trees to encourage good crops this season.

Try hand-pollinating your peaches and nectarines with a soft-bristled paint brush for better crops this year.

Greenhouse

If you haven't already, give your greenhouse a thorough scrub with hot soapy water to get rid of pests and diseases and to let more light in.

Start to sow tomato seeds indoors, ready to plant out after all risk of frost has passed. If you're struggling for growing space buy ready-grown tomato plants. Take a look at our tomato selector guide for inspiration.



Growing potatoes in grow bags



Many crops can be directly sown in the ground



Plant out strawberry beds and cloche for an earlier crop

Continue to sow half-hardy annual seeds under cover - take care not to expose them to frost.

Keep an eye on your seedlings - as soon as they have their first true leaves, prick them out into pots or modules for growing on.

If your greenhouse is heated, plant up your summer hanging baskets with plug plants now and keep them under cover until all risk of frost has passed.

Pinch out the tips of fuchsia shoots and sweet pea plants to encourage bushy plants this summer.

Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Inter-Village Sports

Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Sports (DSWS) is a two-day event that happens over the first May Bank Holiday at Ditchling Recreation ground.

The three villages are divided by location into three teams, North Ditchling, South Ditchling and Streat and Westmeston. All residents, their relatives, and pupils of the local school and preschools can compete in the sporting events, earning points on an individual level, for their family and their location team.

On the **Sunday evening, May 6th at 5pm** all ages meet outside the cricket pavilion to join in the 'Chase' to Streat Church and back. This event is very special as the route takes the competitors through beautiful countryside, it is open to all ages and abilities willing to walk, skip or run. Every entrant earns a point for their area team and the winners receive cups in the following day's awards ceremony.

The following day on **Monday 7th at 1pm** the main Sports event is held on Ditchling Recreation Ground. Again, all ages and abilities are welcome to join in the fun there are over 40 races from egg and spoon to the 1500m – bring your trainers (or spikes!) Dick Morley, who first attended DSWS in 1935, sets off every race ensuring rules are followed and everyone has a sporting chance.

Refreshments will be served by the PTA of Ditchling Primary School and the Pavilion

Club will be opening the bar for the afternoon. Everyone is also encouraged to bring along a picnic and a rug to enjoy the atmosphere.

DSWS history dates back to the 1800's when the Ditchling Horticultural Society ran this event including competitive sports as part of their annual shows. Mr. Morley remembers attending the event in 1935 when the society decided that sporting events for children were also to be included, popular events were 'tossing the hay-bale' and the original 'Chase' which took runners up to the top of the Beacon. Although not all these events remain on today's schedule the whole weekend has a feel of timelessness as it brings together the local community in the enjoyment of sport, food and drinks.

This is a free community event that is supported by the Ditchling Village Association and the Ditchling Parish council. Programmes will be on sale during the day and beforehand at Ditchling Post Office. DSWS is run by a group of friendly volunteers who are always keen for new people to join in, if you are interested in helping out either with putting up posters, selling programmes, marshaling, setting up or first aid please contact Hannah at hannah@tedman.co.uk



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2.30PM: First Ball, 35 Over Match

4PM – 6PM: Kids Entertainment * **SHARKY & GEORGE**

4PM (approx.): Tea (Players & Supporters)

7PM: Hog Roast **

7.15PM (approx.): Prize Giving & Auction

* Kids Party & Picnic Tea £15 – over 4s only Limited Spaces!

** Hog Roast £10 per head

We would be grateful if you could purchase your tickets in advance. Please email memorialditchlingcricket@gmail.com for details about how to purchase online or to make a donation.

Tickets are not required to simply come along and enjoy the day and the cricket. We'd love to see you there!





Ditchling RFC 55th Anniversary

Ditchling Rugby Club is celebrating its 55th anniversary in 2018, having been founded in 1963 in pretty much the spirit we've tried to maintain ever since. Five blokes sitting in a pub with nothing much to do thought it would be a good idea to start a rugby club. So, they did.

They persuaded their friends to play, found a field and took on all-comers. In fact, the club's facilities in those early days were not so much limited as non-existent and this, in turn, led to Ditchling gaining many lasting friends.

At the end of every game, as there was no pavilion or clubhouse, each player took his opposite number home, gave him somewhere to wash and change before entertaining him to tea. They then repaired to the late and much lamented North Star pub at Ditchling where they re-joined their fellows.

We still try to maintain that same level of hospitality towards our opponents – except Burgess Hill, obviously.

As our fixture list grew, we played hotly contested 'friendlies' against everybody from Chichester to Hastings and Crawley to Hove. Then along came league and cup competitions and, in truth, for all our size, we flourished.

By this time, we were fielding two and a half teams (the other half was often made up of friends from the surrounding village teams) and our 1st XV was proving something of a handful for most of our opposition. Indeed, in the national Pilkington Shield competition, we came within three games of a Twickenham final!

We have never lacked ambition and Ditchling's touring side 'The Wild Pigs' has besported itself everywhere from Cambridge to Barcelona and Holland to the USA.

In Holland, we won an international vets' competition by beating an extremely fit but vastly over-trained French XV in the final. When they had recovered their sense of humour, they admitted that they had never come across a team like Ditchling.

But even Holland does not compare to some of our more exotic away fixtures in Sussex, like Seaford, where a good south-westerly can have the beach shingle coming across the pitch like

shrapnel. Or Plumpton, where it was possible to kick a drop goal from your own half when the wind was behind you – a feat once achieved by Ditchling's great full back Brian Rogers, even if he had to ask the referee where the ball had gone because he'd lost sight of it.

Like all village sports clubs, we have waxed and waned over the years, at times having more players than we knew what to do with and, at others, barely having enough to cover our fixtures.

Top class players have joined us as they've come towards the end of their rugby careers and we've sent on younger players to bigger and better clubs at the start of theirs.

As we start 2018, Ditchling Rugby Club enters a new phase in its history, but one that appropriately echoes its past. The field that was originally found in 1963 became the pitch at Ditchling Recreation Ground which, in recent years became unplayable because of drainage issues.

But through the unstinting efforts of current club president, Justin Wallden, Ditchling has found a new field and transformed it into a high-quality pitch, nestling in the shadow of the South Downs.

And while, as in the early days, the team is without its own clubhouse, it maintains the provision of changing rooms and its traditionally warm hospitality to visiting opponents through the facilities of St James's & Montefiore Cricket Club, adjacent to the new ground on the road between Ditchling and Keymer.

The 1st XV currently competes in Sussex Division 1 but is on a renewed recruitment drive, looking for new players to display their talents on the pitch, and to maintain the club's reputation for sociability and hospitality off it.

If you'd like to join us, you'll be made very welcome and if you can play rugby, then so much the better.

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