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Church rejoices but closure bill could be £5000

It was a joy for churchgoers to be back in St Mary's for the festive services after the dismal three months when the centuries-old church was locked to the public. Happily no asbestos contamination has yet been found in the body of the building, despite a series of tests. It was the consultants' assumption of contamination that led to the closure.

There are fears of dwindling congregations after the Carol Service a week before Christmas when attendance was down with only two-thirds of the total who attended the popular gathering the previous year. It was difficult during the closure to gain the same ambience in the village hall, where services were held.

Church fabric committee leader David Way says: "The tests by authorised companies and other work could cost around £5000 for which the Diocese is unable to offer a grant.

"The organ blower box, known to be lined with asbestos, the original cause of alarm, has been removed and taken by the Health & Safety Executive to its research department in Buxton to find out more information. They are interested in the generic problem with the aim of formulating better guidelines.

"An electronic organ is now being used as the one in the church is out of bounds and unplayable because currently there is no air supply. When the H&SE has completed blower box tests, the contamination status of the organ will be assessed. Every effort will be made to save it."

'Support your club or lose it' warning

Hunton Club, that has been serving villagers for more than 100 years, is in danger of closing if it is not supported. This stark warning has been sounded after officers at a pre-Christmas emergency committee meeting looked at the future through 2006 for the members' club which is the last remaining licensed premises in the parish serving alcohol - Hunton lost its only pub the Prince of Wales in West Street in the 1990s.

The worrying news for the club comes after action was taken last summer to try to revive its fortunes and give it a more 'people friendly' image with improvement plans to make the building more comfortable for members. There was also a change to Greene King as beer suppliers.

Little Angels produce the aah factor



It was hankies all round at the festive Christingle Service in the newly reopened St Mary's Church. The children of Lower School won the 'aah factor' with their nativity scenes in a production of 'Little Angels.' Tea towels stayed firmly on shepherd's heads and only one of the kings pulled his crown down over his eyes and waved at his mum. The older children narrated and sang in the choir.

Rehearsals at school were made much easier now that sound boards have been installed to combat the hall's long-standing acoustic problem.

Earlier in the month a gift service was held at the school for the charity 'Starfish Malawi.' Director Chris Knott spoke to the children about the charity's work in Africa, helping to build schools, wells and supporting orphans.

Your Local Contacts:

Parish Council Chairman: Roger Sawtell	820731	Village Club Doug Redfarn	820495
School: Secretary/Head Teacher	820360	Clerk to Parish Council: David Swan	814445
Under 5's Pre-School:	820309	Village Hall Booking: Jackie Crooks	820226
Maidstone Police:	608186	Under-5s Playgroup:	741951
Pond and Tree Warden: Anne Bishop	820683	Pre-School Supervisor: Pippa Fordham	746829
Associate Rector: Revd Ruth Bierbaum	743866**	Neighbourhood Watch:	608173
also: Revd David Jones	741474**	'Potholes' concern (MBC): Adrian Hygate	0845 824 7800
Hon PCC Secretary: Nicky Grainger	813527	Churchwarden: Alison Ellman-Brown	820288
Rectory:	747570	supported by Joy McLoughlin	820551
		Organist: Philip Moore	749356

**not available on Fridays

Dates for Diaries:

14th January 2006 Bulky Refuse Collection, Village Hall 7.45am-8.45am

All items for the February issue to the Editor as soon as possible, and by 15th January, please

Dear Friends,

Take on 'Angel-Work' and be messengers

' And when they saw it (the manger scene) they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child..' (St.Luke 2:17)

A New Year has dawned and we look forward to all that we can do as followers of Jesus in our parishes over the next 12 months. What message do we have which may attract others to the Saviour born in a stable all those years ago?

The angels told the humble shepherds of the birth of the Saviour, and they went in search of Him. When they had seen Him they returned to their work 'glorifying and praising God for all they had seen'. Those given the message were now themselves the messengers. In their own way they had too become 'angels of the Lord'. The word 'angel' means a messenger – and those shepherds were heralds privileged by God to proclaim the 'good news of great joy'.

What a privilege for us as well. We have heard once again at Christmas the account of God come to earth to proclaim the dawn of our redemption. We have been given the Spirit-given gift of faith to believe that Word made flesh, and to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Lord himself come to redeem us.

As each New Year begins we pray for Peace. We wish others a happy and peaceful New Year. How the world needs peace, how individuals need peace. Every Christian is called to be a 'peacemaker'.

We read about this in the Beatitudes. These are not just eight options from which we pick and mix. Together they are Christ's description of the members of His kingdom and as such we must seek to embrace all those 'blessings' as told us in St.Matthew 5:1-11. Such blessings proclaim God's favour toward those who aspire to live under His rule.

We say or sing at the Holy Communion service a version of the words spoken to the shepherds: 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased'. The shepherds saw and understood the meaning of this having seen the Christ child. And yes, they in turn became angels of God by their faithful witness.

This New Year we are called once more by God's grace to be involved in 'angel-work'. To be bearers of the news of the greatest event in all human history, to witness to our belief to those with whom we come into contact so that others may see in us He who gives meaning to our lives.

With every blessing for a happy and peaceful New Year!

Peter

Director meets trustee at Peace Cottages

Lt Col. Anthony De Ritter, Almshouse Association Director visited Hunton to meet residents of Peace Cottages and to attend the Trustees' Meeting.

The Director met Ruth Porter, Trustee, who said: "The visit proved to be most beneficial for the Trustees who undertake the day to day running of the Peace Cottages charity."

The Peace Cottages, located next to the Hunton School in West Street, are almshouses for the elderly and the building's origin is commemorated with a memorial stone of 1897, the date of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee. The Charity was established by a Trust Deed dated 30th December 1899 and is registered with the Charity Commission and the Housing Corporation.

Almshouses are unfurnished dwellings, usually specially designed with the needs of older people in mind. The aim is to provide convenient and comfortable accommodation in a setting which allows residents to come and go as they please.



A resident with Lt Col De Ritter and Ruth Porter

Make a resolution to add Winter Colour

How is your garden looking in January? Have a look and if there is nothing to inspire or encourage you outside then make a resolution to add something this year that will give you some winter cheer and lighten these dull months.

Winter aconites, snowdrops and hellebores will be starting to show flowers as will Cyclamen Coum and the shrub Viburnum Bodnantense 'Dawn'.

Cornus Alba hybrids have colourful winter stems which look best with a background of an evergreen shrub and placed where winter sun will catch them. Skimmias have coloured flowerbuds in winter and scent later in the year. Phormiums can provide an upright element and will withstand most of our winters.

It is probably best to make a group of winter interest plants to give some impact, and form a heart warming picture. Whether you place this scene within view of the house so it is easily seen or further away so you have to get outside to reap its benefit depends entirely on your own constitution.

Have a good gardening New Year.

Christine McSweeney

John backs cricket club bid to find 'locals'

John Adams, 52, of Campbell Road, Maidstone has 'adopted' Hunton as his second home, for which the people of the village should be grateful.

A former cricketer at Kent league level with Ashford and later with the YMCA team in Maidstone, John took on the voluntary role over a year ago as groundsman to Hunton Wanderers cricket club.

On many a fine evening he could be seen preparing the pitch 'square' through the season - and continuing to make preparations for 2006 through the winter. But as well as the cricket pitch he has also been carrying out a great deal of work to keep the whole of the King George V playing field surrounds tidy.

"When the Wanderers asked me to support the village team I gladly accepted," said John whose son plays for the cricket team and is also a goalkeeper with the village football side.

"And my aim now is to make the pitch one of the best in the area and at the same time back the club in its bid to encourage more youngsters from Hunton to take an interest in cricket.

"The Wanderers has some first class cricketers with many coming from surrounding areas. Perhaps I could help and be one of the catalysts to achieving a more local side for 2006."

Last autumn, at the end of the cricket season, on the steps of the pavilion which is undergoing renovations, John said: "Hunton is a lovely place. Sitting here in the evenings it is totally peaceful. As an outsider I don't see any drawbacks. If I had any choice I would be living here."

One supporter the club may have this coming season is the new Rector the Rev Peter Walker a keen cricket supporter and top level umpire. No doubt he will be persuaded to get involved this summer in the annual East Street versus West Street match.

Ron recalls his playing days ... and friends

While on the subject of sport, it was fitting to see Ron Elliott sitting on the wooden seat installed by the football pitch in memory of one of his old playing buddies Les Packham.

Ron was watching the first team in action with his son Dave in his role as manager while grandson Scott was playing in the frontline attack for the home side.

After 23 years living in Bensted Close and now a Loose resident Ron has pleasant memories of his playing days with Hunton. "I can remember many of the lads having a pre-match beer in the Gudgeon or the old Prince of Wales in West Street which closed down several years ago.

"Some, not naming any names, would have perhaps a drink too many and it was hard work persuading them to leave the pub in time for the kick off!"

Make a record of wildlife in the garden

Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) was established over two years ago as a focal point for wildlife information in the county, aiming to collect and collate species and habitat records.

KMBRC also makes these records as widely available as possible, for example to members of the public, academics and decision makers, while also encouraging recording and appreciation of biodiversity in the community through the support of Recorders and Recording Groups throughout the County.

The centre would like to raise awareness of its activities and also to encourage members of the public to send wildlife records, specifically of species seen in their gardens.

Gardens are a valuable source of records, attracting a great variety of wildlife, from insects and spiders to birds and mammals. Don't worry if you aren't an expert. If you would like any advice about identifying and recording wildlife, contact the Records Centre who will be happy to help with any of your queries and will try to aid the identification of any mystery species you come across!

KMBRC has designed and produced the Kent Wildlife Recording Calendar 2006 to help anyone interested to record in their gardens. Uniquely designed with two sets of dates for each month, one can be kept as an every day appointment reminder and the other used to write in the wildlife seen in garden, which can then be sent to KMBRC. Local artist and KMBRC Recorder, Edward Walters, has drawn six illustrations for every month of the calendar from his own garden. Hopefully these will provide inspiration for anyone to look more closely at the wildlife in their garden and get recording!

This unique calendar can be purchased for £8.00 as a gift or for own use, making a difference to Kent's wildlife by supporting the Centre (Registered Charity No. 1110163). To place an order or for more details, contact KMBRC at Tyland Barn, Sandling, Maidstone, Kent ME14 3BD. Tel: 01622 685646/685780 or email info@kmbrc.org.uk.

At St Mary's Church in January

Notices	Services
<p>Brass cleaning: the Simmons family</p> <p>Flowers: 8th, 15th & 22nd Mrs S. Scott</p> <p>Church Family Service Coffee Rota (11am) 4th February: the Simmons family</p> <p>Church Cleaning Rota: Mr & Mrs Twaite and Mr & Mrs May</p> <p>Hunton Sunday Club : 15th January 5.15pm - 6.45pm at Freelands, West Street. Details David Jones (741474)</p>	<p>Sunday 1st - 2nd Sunday of Christmas 10.30am Holy Communion Benefice Service at Coxheath</p> <p>Sunday 8th - Baptism of John - 1st Sunday of Epiphany 9.15am HC (1662) <i>Revd R Bierbaum</i> Readings: Genesis 1:1-5 Mark 1:4-11</p> <p>Sunday 15th - 2nd Sunday of Epiphany 11.00 Morning Prayer <i>Revd P Walker</i> Readings: 1 Samuel 3:1-10 Revelation 5:1-10</p> <p>Sunday 22nd - 3rd Sunday of Epiphany 9.15am Holy Communion (CW) <i>Miss C Bostock & Revd D Jones</i> Readings: Revelation 19:6-10 John 2:1-11</p> <p>Sunday 29th - 4th Sunday of Epiphany 10.30am Holy Communion Benefice Service at East Farleigh</p>

A month among the French Vines

Andrew Procter spent a month's sabbatical living and working in a L'Arche community in France alongside adults with learning difficulties, in a vineyard.

His says the experience brought him closer to God, whose plans, Andrew learned, do not always match our own. In a new book he invites the reader to join him for a month, reflecting day by day on his experiences and getting to know members of the community. "We share the challenges and surprises of that month and learn more about ourselves, our faith and our God," said Andrew whose book is available from Redemptorist Publications. Alphonsus House, Chawton, Hampshire GU34 3HQ (01420-88222) cost £7.95.

Hunton parishioners are welcome to join fellow Christians to pray for Our Suffering Family during a gathering at 214 Westmorland Road, Shepway, Maidstone, on the first Wednesday in the month at 10.00 a.m. For more information please contact June on 01622-750758.

Maidstone SOS in search for spare rooms

Nightstop UK a national scheme benefiting young homeless people by providing temporary accommodation in the homes of volunteers, is searching for people who might be able to help.

There is no maximum time limit that a young person can stay with a Nightstop scheme, but they can only stay with the same volunteer host for between one and three nights. They would then be placed with a different host within the same scheme. In addition, they must be actively seeking a longer term solution to their current housing problem. Host volunteers provide young people with a room of their own and supply a change of clothes, toiletries and evening meal and a listening ear (if necessary).

Volunteers receive full support and development from Maidstone S.O.S., training from fully qualified youth workers, insurance, all expenses and regular group meetings. Anyone interested should contact Maidstone S.O.S. c/o Info-Zone, 3 Palace Avenue, Maidstone. (01622-755044) or www.nightstop-uk.org

December	1st	8th	15th	22nd	29th
Coxheath	10.30 HC Benefice Service	9.15 MP	11.00 HC	11.00 CFS	
E. Farleigh		8.00 HC 10.30 MP	11.00 Parish Worship	8.00 HC 10.30 MP	10.30 HC Benefice Service
Linton		8.00 HC 11.00 CFS	9.15 HC	9.15 HC	
W. Farleigh		11.00 CFS	9.15 HC	11.00 MP	
Service for all the Benefice at the Heart of Kent Hospice at 3.30pm on Sunday 8 January					
10am every Thursday—Holy Communion (1662) at Coxheath HC: Holy Communion MP: Morning Prayer CFS: Church Family Service EA: Evening Alternative					

For Weddings, Thanksgivings, and Baptisms, please contact Revd David Jones (741474)