

**HUNTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
20TH MAY 2019**

REPORTS OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

**Huntonwatch
By Sue & Steve Wyles**

We are fortunate to live in a village where the crime rate remains low compared to those around us, however we are seeing more incidents than in previous years. Whilst it is difficult to be precise about the number and types of incident, for reasons I will address in a moment, we have noticed some worrying signs.

Firstly, there appears to have been an increase in likely drug activity, with two locations in the village potentially being used for sale and/or distribution of drugs – the most worrying being the village hall car park, where we believe drugs were being sold during the daytime when pre-school was in progress.

Secondly, there have been a couple of periods lasting a week or so, where the village was targeted either for burglaries, or thefts from and damage to vehicles. This pattern has been seen in other areas and is thought to be the work of gangs from Greater London.

We have found this year to be challenging for a number of reasons. In order to work as efficiently as possible, Huntonwatch needs official information from the police about crimes, scams etc to disseminate to our members, as well as relying on reports from those members about local incidents that we can pass on to the police. Sadly, these two-way channels of communication have broken down this year to the point where we may have to rethink the entire concept.

Starting with the former:

When Huntonwatch was first set up there was a neighbourhood watch co-ordination role within the police and we received regular (almost weekly) emails detailing the latest scams, recent crimes and other relevant information that we could review and forward to members as appropriate. We no longer receive these emails and we believe this co-ordinator role no longer exists.

One of the things we set up in the early days was regular meetings with the PCSO. This allowed us to talk through any concerns, sharing information about the village (where the vulnerable are etc) and seeking advice on the best ways to maintain contact. We have made this offer to the last 2 PCSOs but neither has responded and it is a sad fact that we have not spoken to our current PCSO in person, apart from a short handover from the previous lady which lasted less than a minute. We have not received any emails or calls from him other than in response to our enquiries.

Moving to reports from the village:

Our Huntonwatch co-ordinators continue to feed information to us as they receive it, but many residents now seem to use the Hunton Facebook page to discuss matters, or not to bother reporting incidents at all and often we only hear about things by word of mouth many days or even weeks after the event. Examples include the flasher apparently seen in the village, to which the police were called and a major burglary which was reported on Facebook (containing information that should not have been made available on social media). This latest trend seriously affects our ability to help keep us all safe and may even compromise that safety.

Going forward:

Our concerns were discussed at the last Parish Council meeting and we have written to the PCSO expressing our disappointment in no uncertain terms. We have received an apology from him and an undertaking that he will mail us

with any information that is relevant. It seems that the handover from the previous PCSO did not even include any details about Huntonwatch and our need to receive this information. We also know that the Parish Clerk is writing to the PCSO to re-enforce this message and has agreed to forward any information that the Parish Council receives to us as well – and for this we are extremely grateful. Hopefully this will resolve the first part of the problem and we will be able, once again, to keep our members informed.

Re-engaging the village is more of a challenge and, to be honest, we do not know how best to address this. On several occasions when we have seen reports on Facebook about incidents we have asked people to mail Huntonwatch with more information or to notify us if they see further incidents – with little success. We have also heard the view expressed on many occasions that ‘there is no point reporting this because the police will not do anything anyway’. Whilst we can fully understand why people may think this, it does show they do not appreciate the importance of information being passed to the police, however small or insignificant it may seem, as this builds ‘the bigger picture’.

We would like to thank our local co-ordinators for their continued support and would welcome any input from the Parish Council and residents as to how, or indeed IF, Huntonwatch moves forward.

Hunton Herald
By James Forster

The most significant development this year was the need to replace Helen Ward as Editor who, having completed 5 years doing an outstanding job, felt it was time to hand on to someone else. As no one felt able to step into her shoes, we instead have a team of about 15 who have agreed to edit the Herald on a rota, one month at a time. This arrangement would not be possible without the continued effort and technical capability of Dudley Farman who, quietly behind the scenes, has managed the layout of every issue for about the last 10 years!

On the financial side, happily Sue Pinks kindly agreed to carry on arranging the advertising, raising a gross £1,809 last year (ca £1,500 net) with even more projected this year.

This has allowed us to donate £1,600 to the village club to pay for a cooker, dishwasher and fridge freezer, £235 to cover the costs of some WW1 project booklets and £50 to provide some better cleaning equipment, polish etc for the Church. Our current balance is healthy and we look forward to supporting other village causes in the future.

Finally, our thanks especially to Lisa Halliday, but also to her entire team, who as we approach our 200th issue, continue to distribute the Herald to every home in the village, every month.

Overall, the Herald now relies on volunteers to carry out approaching 50 tasks, so this is a real village effort and, we hope, a valuable resource.

Traffic & Road Safety Working Party
By Jonny Goddard

Verbal report given; written report not provided.

King George V Playing Field Committee
By Simon Taylor

The management committee meets every 2 months and comprises trustees made up from the sports clubs, the parish council and occasionally co-opted members who have an interest in the playing field. Each year we walk the field

before our AGM in July and set targets for the coming year. Our purpose is to keep the playing field tidy, safe and improve its amenities each year if we can.

This year we were lucky enough to receive sufficient grant funding to cover most of the cost of safety fencing around the multiplay and infant swings, thus, we hope, improving the safety and security of young children using the play equipment and allowing their parents to enjoy a more relaxed time at the field. I think that the reaction to date has been positive.

My thanks go out to my fellow trustees – without your involvement at our sometimes quite entertaining meetings, grass would go uncut, bins unemptied, moles would go unmolested and fences and tress would, I am sure, fall down. I'd also like to thank Roger Ward who keeps an eye on the field, waters the hanging baskets and reports any suspicious goings on. An especial thank you goes to the committee secretary Sharon without whom, as I'm sure everybody would agree, nothing would ever get done. Anywhere. Possibly globally.

Hunton Litter Picking Team
By Di Martin

Over the last year the litter picking team have been kept very busy with the substantial amount of rubbish dropped. We have completed three clean ups during the year mainly comprising beer cans, McDonald's containers, toilet paper, and various bits of clothing and car parts. Not so many tyres this time though.

During the year Hunton has had various road closures and during these James and Andrea Forster took advantage and cleaned Hunton Hill whilst closed which produced several sacks of rubbish. Nigel Parsons and Allen Kitchenham also took advantage of the road closures collecting from the Hill and East Street. It is so dangerous litter picking when the traffic is flowing.

The September litter pick was a large ask when, besides the usual collection, 50 sacks were collected from the top of Hunton Hill and the woods beyond that. Special thanks to James who enlisted the help of Andy Sharp and David Heaton to help bring the rubbish from the Hill down to the Village Hall for collection by the Council.

Fly tipping is still a huge problem and this year Foremans Barn Lane was particularly bad at one point with a huge pile of builders' debris dumped. Eventually the Council closed the road and came to collect it all.

The collection in April this year saw a collection of over 70 sacks of general rubbish (40 of these being from Hunton Hill). If that wasn't enough, a three-piece suite and two double mattresses plus bags of children's toys had been tipped at the top of Barn Hill which the Council came and collected when reported by myself. I must say the Council are liaising more with volunteers to try to minimise the amount of rubbish being dumped.

The village is fairly litter free at the moment and hopefully this will continue.

Thank you to all the people who strive to keep the village tidy between clean ups. This includes Sue Martin who hangs sacks along Amesbury Road for people's use. It is hard work but satisfying when you see the results.

Hunton Village Hall Committee
By Annette Trought

The Village Hall continues to pay for itself. We do not have finalised figures for last year's activity available as yet as we postponed our AGM from May 22nd to a later date. This was because of a clash with another event in the village on the same date.

We had the floor of the hall renovated in August 2018. The Parish Council, as trustees of the building, had agreed to fund some improvements to the external decoration of the hall to include the commission of a new sign. The committee is awaiting quotes for the work

The Village Hall handyman, Phil Kessel, left at the end of 2018. A new one started at the beginning of the year but was unable to undertake his duties, so the committee are once again looking for someone to fill this role.

Sue Pinks is set to join the committee and has submitted an application to the Calor Gas community grants fund for £1,000 to purchase a new electric cooker for the kitchen. The village needs to vote for this project by registering at the Calor website. Once a voter has registered, they have 10 votes. The projects which receive the highest number of votes will receive the funding. The voting period runs from 2nd May to 17th June.

Community Orchard By Annette Trought

The Community Orchard project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Kent Orchards for Everyone. The funding for this project ended at the beginning of 2019.

The land was given in perpetuity by the Parish Council for the benefit of the village and its residents.

The project funding provided the trees: a mix of apple, cherry and cobnuts. It also funded the provision of the chestnut fencing and 3 gates. Several wildlife events were also funded including a bat survey, a moth evening and a dawn chorus walk. In part these events provide valuable data on Kent's wildlife and habitats as well as being fun and informative.

The Community Orchard group will continue to maintain the orchard and hope to be able to hold more wildlife events next year.

Peace Cottages Charity By Reverend Peter Callway

Peace Cottages Charity was established in 1899 as a charity to provide housing for the elderly people of Hunton. The row of five cottages was built as an attractive single-story building on the corner of West Street and Bishops Lane, opposite the village primary school. They are surrounded by pretty gardens and the back garden overlooks fields. About 30 years ago the then trustees secured a grant of some £149,000 for refurbishment of the cottages from the Government department responsible for housing. This grant requires that we maintain membership of the Housing Association and are overseen by the regulations regarding social housing. We sought to deregister last year but discovered that we would have to repay the loan, so we are continuing to pay the annual fee!

The cottages are held in trust by the Diocese of Rochester and are currently occupied by five ladies.

The charity is run by a small number of volunteer trustees who meet every two months. The trustees are Mr Roger Sawtell, Mrs Alison Ellman-Brown, Mrs Liz Oliver, Ms Fay Joyce, Ms Celia Kennedy-Stone, Ms Lisa Halliday and myself (Rev Peter Callway).

The premise is that housing is made available for those who wish to stay living in Hunton but who are not able to finance it themselves. This provides a degree of community cohesion, as a requirement of the charity scheme is that residents of the cottages must have been previously resident or have a strong connection to the Parish of Hunton. In

addition, as the residents are generally elderly, the cottages provide the benefit of enabling them to retain their independence in their own homes as the cottages are closely supervised by the trustees.

The residents' weekly maintenance contribution is reviewed each year and because we are a charity and have a reasonable reserve fund to cover future repairs and developments, the contribution has not increased again this year.

The properties are in excellent order, and regular maintenance and minor improvements are carried out as necessary. Future plans under consideration include a new heating system to replace the individual cottages storage heaters; and supply of some parking spaces for residents and visiting care staff and relations.

There is a register of interest for those who might wish to become residents at some time in the future, and we hope that the provision will continue for at least another 120 years whilst there is still need.

Hunton WI **By Jane Langdon**

2018/19 was something of a watershed year for Hunton WI. The high proportion of membership subscriptions going to Federation and National, leaving insufficient funds to run the group without significant fundraising efforts, left many members questioning whether it was worth continuing. However, after much discussion over an extended period during the year, a secret ballot held at the end of 2018 resulted in an overwhelming vote to remain under the WI umbrella, largely as no one was prepared to volunteer to set up and run an alternative.

We again had a full year with a wide range of activities and interesting speakers. Membership is slightly down at 20 members, with an average of 15 attending each meeting.

Some of our most memorable meetings were:

There was a colourful start to the year with local artist and WI member, Jennie Boatwright leading a watercolour 'class'. Under her guidance everyone produced their own unique seascape using a variety of watercolour techniques (including a novel use for clingfilm!), and we all enjoyed the mini art exhibition at the end of the evening.

In contrast, a talk highlighting the ability of Medical Detection Dogs to alert diabetic and epileptic patients to changes in their body chemistry which precede an episode was completely fascinating. Dogs are now being trained to detect very early signs of cancer, with an incredibly high degree of accuracy.

Another 'hands on' (quite literally) evening was a welcome return of Alison Surridge and her West African drums. We all left with ears ringing but exhilarated!

The Craft evening led by committee member Chris Summersgill is always popular and achieved the highest attendance of the year. This year's challenge was to decorate a silk scarf using inks from a carefully selected palette of complimentary colours. A wide variety of designs and patterns were produced by members, all of them beautiful.

A Christmas meal at The Bull at Linton gave us all a chance to relax before all the hectic preparations, and for someone else to do the cooking!

In the Spring, Simon Ginnaw from Kent Wildlife Trust opened all our eyes to the diversity and abundance of wildlife in our home county. His stunning photography and enthusiasm for all aspects of ecology was really engaging.

Our Open Meetings are very well supported by residents of not only Hunton but also the surrounding villages. 30 guests came to hear Hunton resident Megan Dolman give an enthusiastic and very entertaining account of her Journey

on the Appalachian Trail, all 2,190.9 miles of it. She hiked through 14 states of the USA, taking 162 days in all weathers from sub zero temperatures to drought conditions, from sea level to altitudes of 2,025m.

Our fundraising efforts this year have had limited success. A District walk organised in June, turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year so far and fewer participants came along than had originally signed up. Consequently, we had over-catered on the cream teas and just about managed to cover our costs. It was such a shame as the ladies who had prepared the delicious teas on vintage china had worked so hard. Lesson to be learned: collect all money before the event!

For the Hunton Christmas Market, the WI was asked to produce home-made sweets and chocolates. Despite being absolutely delicious, they did not sell as well as we had hoped and were costly and time-consuming to make. Lesson to be learned: WI's cakes are better received by people and are a much greater money maker.

Our little WI continues to inform, entertain and socialise many of the ladies of Hunton, but we would warmly welcome new members. If you know of anyone who might be interested, just invite them along to one of our evenings as a guest so they can see what we are all about!

Hunton Gardening Club

By Lesley Lee

In 2018, at our first social evening in February, we enjoyed hearing from Hunton resident Andy Sharp about 'Supermarkets, Fresh Produce and Packaging' when he told us about control of the food industry by supermarkets so that today 90% of fresh produce is bought from them. He also explained about the importance of packaging extending shelf life and so reducing waste.

Generous residents again grew plants for, and ran, Hunton Fete Plant and Produce stand whilst others bought items so raising over £550 for village projects.

Gardening Club volunteers continued to maintain St Mary's Church and Churchyard and organised another visit to Saltwood Castle for those who had been unable to take advantage of earlier trips.

At our second social event in October, retired farmer and Hadlow College lecturer, Malcolm Withnall talked to us about 'Gardening for Senior Citizens' and gave us tips on how to stay fit but reduce hard work in the garden, for example, by using raised beds which require minimal digging and provide easy access.

Everyone is welcome to join this group whether they are experienced professional gardeners or just interested in maintaining their own gardens or simply visiting ones created by other people.

Hunton CEP School

By Reverend Peter Callway (on behalf of Stewart Murdoch)

The current leadership team of Head Teacher (Stewart Murdoch) and Assistant Head Teacher (Ed Ming) have been in post since March 2017 (interim basis) before both becoming substantive in October 2017. During their tenure, alongside the major focus on improving the environment and education of the children, they have sought to improve opinions of the school and relationship with the community. During the last 2 years the school has held annual Macmillian Coffee Afternoons dedicated to one of our Governors, Ron Porter's late wife, Ruth; had a series of pupil articles written for the Hunton Herald and worked closely with the Church.

The school has worked diligently on improving parental engagement and links with the PTA, as a result of this improved relationship, the school has benefitted from a number of new outside areas including a quiet area for seating; a sensory garden; and a vegetable patch for Devas class.

Stewart has met Annette Trought during his time as Head Teacher and most recently last Wednesday 15th May. This is to re-establish links between the community and the school so there is continuous good communication between both parties.

During budget planning the school had planned to convert a small patch of grass next to the existing car park to extend the area to enable all staff to park on site, resulting in fewer cars parking on West Street. This idea is still in its infancy and recent budget cuts has proved that this project maybe improbable. Notwithstanding any planning permission required, we ask the Parish Council if they think the fruition of this project would be beneficial for the community and ask, if so, would the Parish Council be willing to support the project financially or with any other skills or resources.

The SLT of Hunton CEP School would like to reaffirm its commitment to having a purposeful and positive relationship with the community that can benefit both in the future.

Hunton & Linton Pre-School
By Sarah Horlock

I'm Sarah Horlock and I am the Manager at Hunton Pre-School, here in the Village Hall. We operate from here 5 days a week and currently have 42 children on role and 7 members of staff.

We take children from the age of 2, up until they start Primary School and we have a large catchment area, this year we are feeding to 13 different Primary Schools from East Peckham all the way over to Thurnham. We have a good relationship with Hunton Primary School and we work closely with them to get involved where possible, we even join forces for Sports Day.

Our Pre-School is an un-incorporated Charity steered by a strong Management Team and enthusiastic Trustees and as a Charity we need to do a lot of fundraising in order to buy new equipment and toys for the children. In April we held our annual Easter Bazaar whereby we raised just over £450 and this money has been used to pay for a trip to the Rare Breeds Centre for all the children.

We recently held a sponsored bounce during which our children raised an amazing £607. The children all put together a list of toys and equipment they would like to buy for the Pre-School with the money and we are in the process of buying what we can from their wish list. Although we are still not sure where we can source a real-life unicorn from....

Meeting the individual needs of all children in our care lies at the heart of Hunton Pre-School Playgroups ethos, and we are therefore committed to providing high quality care and education for children. We ensure that we provide an environment that is safe, secure and welcoming. The children's learning and development is recorded, ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of every child, socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically and we are fully committed to work in partnership with parents to help children learn and develop.

We aim to nurture self confidence and self-esteem and encourage independence. We do this by providing a rich play environment that promotes children's rights to explore, question and learn. Each child is given care and attention, is encouraged to participate and learn together.

We envisage that the 2019/2020 academic year will be just as busy as this past one and we would like to thank the families and village community for their support in continuing to hold our lovely Pre-School in such high regard.

St Mary's Church
By Alison Ellman-Brown

Verbal report given; written report not provided.

Friends of St Mary's
By David Heaton

The Friends continue to be an active charity. Along with regular membership donations we continue to provide bars and BBQs at village events.

Last year the Friends were able to respond very quickly to the damage caused by rotten timbers in the south aisle of the church: the Trustees pledging to pay for the survey report on the damage after the request for help by the PCC. Once this was completed the Trustees agreed to fund the repairs, which came to around £13,000. As the Friends had the money available the work was able to commence as soon as the builders were free. This meant the church was clear of scaffolding and the south aisle open for use at the Christmas Fair and for all the events over the festive season.

As chairman, I would like to thank all the Trustees for their support, and their spouses and children for supplying an eager workforce when needed.

Hunton Bowls Club
By John Apsey

Hunton Bowls Club is a small village club of about forty to fifty loyal members that put in a lot of work to keep the club running well. We have a full fixture card for 2020 and play league matches in the week and friendly games against other clubs in Maidstone and the Weald of Kent at weekends.

We are always looking for new members so if anyone would like to give it a try, they will always receive a friendly welcome. We have practice on a Thursday evening at about six o'clock.

The last three years we have been to Cyprus for a week in February and played three games against their local clubs and had a great week's holiday. It is already being arranged for next year (2020).

It is still our club's ambition to build new changing rooms as the ones we have are getting beyond repair. The bowls club was formed in 1936 and the changing rooms seem to be about that age, so for Hunton Bowls Club to be viable in the years ahead they need to be replaced. We have had quotes for them and we have been working hard to get enough funds to start on them. We have held events such as quiz nights and race nights in the village club and have had BBQs after our games. All these bring in quite a lot, but we are still a bit short of what we need. As well as these events each year, we are also arranging a Christmas Concert of carols and popular songs performed by The Kent Police Male Voice Choir on Sunday 1st December, so make a note and support us with this event. We will be advertising it later in the year.

If anyone has any ideas or can help in any way to raise the extra funds we need, please get in touch with us and don't forget to come along and give bowls a try. It is a good way to relax and keep fit and mobile.

Hunton Wanderers Cricket Club
By Simon Taylor

For those of you not familiar with the club, we can trace our roots back to the late 30s and we have played as Hunton Wanderers on a continual basis as the playing field since, I think, the mid 1970s.

We are predominantly a social cricketing club, where participation is more important than winning, but like most clubs these days we play the majority of our cricket in local leagues, which guarantees us at least one fixture a week throughout the season, and generally 2 or 3.

Our standard is very mixed; sometimes we are capable of putting out a strong side that is equal or better than almost any other team in our league, but more often than not we put out a team with varying capability and there are half a dozen games a year where if you can limp on and off the field you are in the side. Being able to throw a ball or wield a bat is generally optional. I myself played in a Saturday 2's game last year where the average age was 59, the youngest player was in his 40s and the oldest 74. He was the wicketkeeper.

On a serious note, club cricket is going through a cruise at the moment with fewer and fewer youngsters coming through to the adult sides and a frightening number of clubs in Kent simply disappearing. We ourselves conceded our first Sunday league game this season, fielded an exceptionally weak team this week and were thrashed, and I think we will be lucky not to withdraw from the Sunday league at the end of this year. The reasons for this decline are complex, but if the powers that be are going to attempt to resolve these problems, from my perspective they could start by returning at least some international and first-class cricket to terrestrial TV and by funding an initiative to start teaching the sport properly in secondary schools again.

Fortunately, at the moment we still have a core of Saturday players and can generally field 2 sides comfortably; bizarrely at the moment our Saturday 2nd team are top of their division due to a fine win and one concession, and all have a haunted look in their eyes due to the fear of promotion.

Finally, not only has Steve Jones, who also serves on the Playing Field Management Committee, volunteered to be our ground manager this year (and so far has made a splendid job of it), but he is also being sponsored by various club members, in aid of the British Heart Foundation, to score runs and take catches. In the sure knowledge that his highest aggregate score for the whole season was previously 68, we have been lured in to make generous sponsorship arrangements, only to find that he is in fact a complete bandit who has already scored 42 runs with only 3 games played. I have personally sponsored him 50p per run and £20 per six hit and I am living with trepidation of visiting a ground with a very short boundary.

Hunton Village Club
By Gil Robertson

Hunton Village Club has had a very successful year welcoming many new members.

Our bar is open 4 nights a week and at lunchtime on Sundays. We have two darts teams who play on Wednesday nights. Our winter and spring lunches continue to be a great success with often more than 40 members coming and it is a good way to meet people for a sociable chat. Huge thanks to Lesley and Roger Lee who do an enormous amount of the cooking for these and many of our other events.

Liz Ridgeway organised another beer festival in September which in spite of the heavy rain was well attended and the live music and dancing proved to be as popular as the traditional beers and the very fashionable gin cocktails.

Very popular events are the many wine tastings organised by Graham Ashlin. They are now so well-known that we have to limit the numbers attending to 80 as we cannot get any more in the club.

We have this year started a film and supper evening and have had two such events showing well known golden oldies. Attendance at over 40 was higher than expected. Providing supper gives everyone a chance to socialise before the film.

We had two quiz nights organised by Phil Nichols. Nick and Tania Davis and Sharon Winter kindly put on two evening entertainments. In December we had a New Year's Eve party where the whole family was welcomed. On Easter Monday an egg hunt was organised for the children and again attendance was very good.

On top of all this we have had 4 local walks at the weekend followed by lunch. There are also regular needles and natter nights and a gent's beer night and a book club. The premises are regularly used by Yoga and Pilates groups. We were delighted to welcome a group from the school at Christmas for a wreath making evening. The Hunton Gardening Club also meets at the club and the village bowling club had two of their fundraising events here. Our members often use the club facilities for their private parties at times when the club is not normally open.

We have now completed the work on the kitchen and we now have a cooker and oven and in addition to our glass washing machine we have a commercial dish washer which is a great help given the number of events where we serve hot food – now on average nearly every other week. Our thanks to Roger Ward for doing all the plumbing and carpentry required.

We had an attempted break in which fortunately failed and we are very grateful to Serge Demarais who kindly gave us CCTV.

All in all, the club is proving to be a very successful community hub and we very much welcome new members. We are entirely run by volunteers and I would like to thank all the bar staff and the many who contribute to our events. All this does not just happen – it is only possible because of the dedicated and active support of so many of the members. More volunteers for manning the bar would be very welcome.

Hunton Tree & Pond Warden
By Mike Summersgill
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

Continued membership of the Kent Tree & Pond Warden Partnership, the only County which has an organised volunteer body seeking to assist and train Parish volunteers. Training this year in Tree Inspection/Liabilities, TPOs and Pond Management (the last one at Vinters Park Nature Reserve). The Parish funds a membership annually at £25 per Warden, which provides for the free training.

The national register of heritage/ancient trees is being re-energised online, and we expect to add several from Hunton into the Register in 2019; currently just the Church yew and two Cork Oaks are registered for the Parish. Mike continues to monitor the spread of Ash Die-Back (chalara) which is slowly infecting mature trees and restricting new sapling growth; it's a big national problem now.

In April, the biennial inspection of Parish trees took place, covering the playing fields and Hall area. Recommendations to fell two diseased small trees (Cherry behind old pavilion and Willow near the play area) and to remove deadwood from an oak on the playing fields and two limes at the front of the Hall (for public safety reasons) are currently being put into force. After some major surgery on the Turkey Oak near the new pavilion, a follow-up aerial survey will be done in the Autumn to check that the tree remains viable; it is a landscape feature on the field that we don't want to lose.

Recent removal of trees in the 'old' orchard at the rear of The Square is to be checked against the Kent natural heritage database, as it is thought this was a 'registered' orchard of some relevance.

Pond warden work has been quite limited, being basically checking that remnant/overgrown ponds are not being used for fly-tipping and garden debris, while continuing to research ownership and the potential for any of them to be cleared/regenerated for wildlife purposes. We don't appear to have any invasive weeds or much wildlife, although a few stands of Himalayan Balsam continue to regenerate in certain ditches. This pretty pink plant is a menace, and has explosive seed pods that love to float off – so please join in with 'Balsam Bashing' in early Summer (they uproot quite easily, with a satisfactory tug revealing the shallow root stock) – if uncontrolled, it takes over whole sides of streams, slopes and wetlands preventing plant diversity, as is happening along parts of the Medway at Tovil-Farleigh (as also recently seen by Mike in the Calder Valley and at Yorkshire Sculpture Park).

Hunton Walking Group
By Ann Sawtell
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

I can report that the Walking Group is still taking regular exercise on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month. We have a membership of 20 active Hunton village folk, along with a contingent from East Farleigh. Along with our rambles through Kent, eighteen members swapped their cross-country boots for more casual footwear as they embarked upon a guided tour of The City of London led by Phil Nichols. We walked through Hay's Galleria, past HMS Belfast and across Tower Bridge to St Katherine's Dock. The tour continued to the site of the old Royal Mint and around part of the moat of the Tower of London. We were reminded of home when it was pointed out that the Roman London Wall, part of which can be seen at Tower Hill Station, had been built from stones from Boughton Monchelsea quarry!

While enjoying a welcome break for refreshments at the Community Gardens at Aldgate, walkers learned from Iain Simmons, who has recently retired from working in the City and led the Aldgate project, how a £25,000,000 traffic scheme had completely turned around the air quality there from being one of the worst in London to one of the best. From here we walked to 120 Fenchurch Street to marvel at spectacular views of Greater London from the roof garden there. We continued past Lloyds of London and into Leadenhall Market, then past The Monument to the Great Fire of London, the old Billingsgate fish market and the Customs House buildings. We ended the tour in Borough Market having had an enjoyable, informative walk under clear blue skies, which made the day!

Anyone who would like to join the Hunton Walking Group should contact Ann Sawtell on ann.sawtell@btinternet.com.

Hunton Book Club
By Sue Gunton
(unable to attend the meeting but report provided)

The Hunton Book Club meets on the second Thursday of each month in the Village Club at 8pm.

Every few months we compile a reading list and one of our members passes it on to Yalding library, who endeavour to supply us with the books.

The book of the month can sometimes be a surprise and not from our lists at all, but these surprises have often been a good read and enjoyed by all.

We currently number 8 members and would welcome new keen readers to join us for lively discussion and maybe a tipple or two.