

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of Bearsted Parish Council held at Bearsted Golf Club on Wednesday 29th March 2023 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllr David Hall (Chairman)
Cllr Denis Spooner (Vice Chair)
Cllr Richard Ash (MBE)
Cllr Clive English
Cllr Frank Jagger
Cllr Mark Peters

Cllr Alan Rowe
Cllr Val Springett
Cllr Carolyn Smith
Cllr Sean Turner
Cllr Christopher Waters

Also, in attendance were The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Derek Mortimer, The Administrators Amy Bush and Joanne Upton and approximately 65 members of the public.





Bearsted Annual Parish Meeting 2023

Minute Ref: 949

Welcome from the
Chairman Cllr David Hall



Cllr Hall welcomed the Mayor and members of the public to the Annual Parish Meeting and introduced himself.

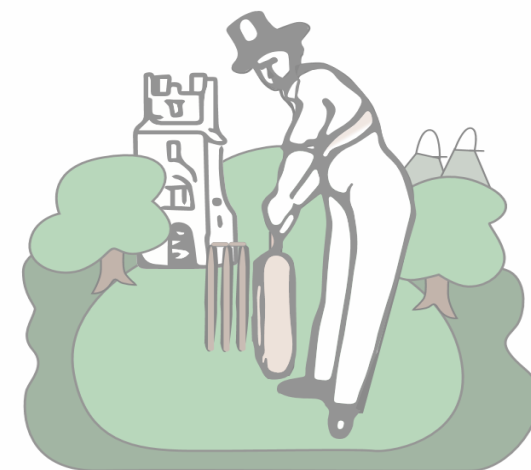
Each Councillor introduced themselves to the residents.

Cllr Hall thanked the office staff for their hard work and assisting the Council through a difficult period.

Cllr Hall announced the resignation of Cllr Graeme Hannington and thanked him for his hard work over the years.

Cllr Hall advised apologies had been received from Cllr Marshall and Cllr Harris.

Cllr Hall thanked all the Councillors for their support since becoming Chairman in January.



Your Parish Council

Minute Ref: 951



Chairman
Cllr David Hall



Vice Chair
Denis Spooner



Cllr Richard
Ash MBE



Cllr Clive
English



Cllr Graeme
Hannington



Cllr Mike
Harris



Cllr Frank
Jagger



Cllr Pat
Marshall MBE



Cllr Mark
Peters



Cllr Alan Rowe



Cllr Val
Springett



Cllr Carolyn
Smith



Cllr Sean
Turner



Cllr Chris
Waters

Precept: £132,343

Population: 8353

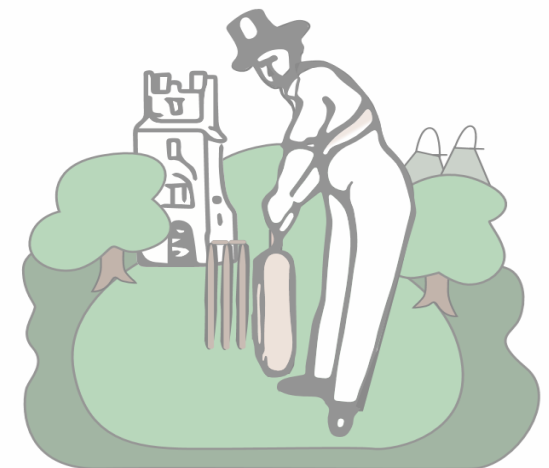


A Parish Council

A Parish Council is a local authority that makes decisions on behalf of the people in the parish and has an overall responsibility for the well-being of its local community. It is the level of government closest to the community, with the district authority above it in the hierarchy. As it is the authority closest to the people, parish councils are invariably the first place people will go with concerns or ideas. For this reason they are a vital part of any community.

Its work falls into three main categories:

- Representing the local community
- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Striving to improve quality of life in the parish



Cllr Hall explained the role of a Parish Council and how it can best serve the community. The role of a Parish Councillor and the Chairman.

Cllr Hall explained how a Parish Council fits into the hierarchy of Government and how it can support residents in lobbying other departments to resolve issues within the community.



A Parish Councillor

By becoming a parish councillor you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support a community leader with the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve.

Seeing your community change for the better, as a result of decisions you have helped make, is something that can give you a sense of achievement and pride.

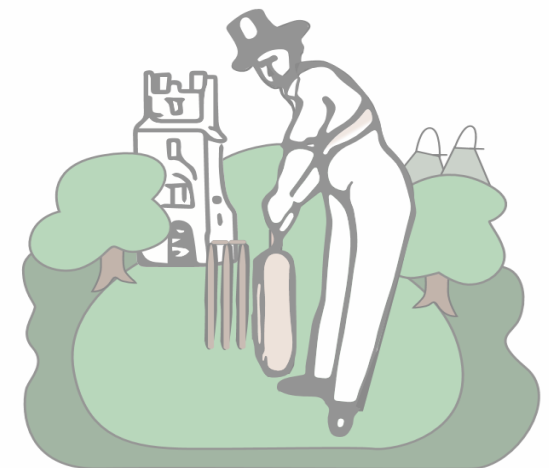
Government Hierarchy

Government – National policy and budget

County Council – Strategic Authority

Borough Council – Planning Authority

Parish Council



The Environment Committee



Chairman
Cllr Mike Harris



Vice Chair
Cllr Carolyn
Smith



**Cllr Richard
Ash MBE**



**Cllr Clive
English**



**Cllr David
Hall**



**Cllr Mark
Peters**



**Cllr
Denis Spooner**



**Cllr Sean
Turner**

Maintaining and improving our open spaces and facilities.

New children's play equipment has been installed at the Bearsted Woodland Trust Play Area. BPC look forward to seeing our smaller residents enjoying the new park over the coming months.

Update on donated land and allotments.

Future works - Elizabeth Harvie Field fencing, car park drainage.



Cllr Smith read a statement on behalf of Cllr Harris, Chair of the Environment Committee, which confirmed the Council's decision not to proceed with Project A, that the current Church Lane Allotment site would remain where it is.

Cllr Smith advised the new play equipment has now been installed in the Bearsted Woodland Trust play area and there has been positive feedback received from residents.

Cllr Smith advised that new bike racks have been installed on the village green.

The Committee has developed an improved grounds maintenance schedule for the village Green with assistance from the Cricket Club.



Cllr Hall acknowledged the division in the community that Project A caused, and advised that himself and Cllr Jagger have attended meetings with the donor, who is looking to develop two tennis courts and will consider the remaining land for a community project, which BPC have pledged to assist with.

Cllr English spoke as Chairman of the Finance & Policies Committee and stated that policies are fundamental to the Parish Council running well. That BPC strive to be open and transparent.

The Committee is currently reviewing and revising the Standing Orders and several other policies, including our Media policies to improve communication and transparency with our residents.

Cllr Hall reiterated the importance of good governance.



Finance and General Policy Committee

Minute Ref: 958



Chairman
Cllr Clive
English



Vice Chair
Cllr Frank
Jagger



Cllr David Hall



Cllr Denis
Spooner



Cllr Carolyn
Smith



Cllr Chris
Waters

Overseeing the Council finances and developing our policies and procedures.



Traffic and Transport Committee

Minute Ref: 959



Chairman
Cllr Richard
Ash MBE



Vice Chair
Cllr David
Hall



Cllr Mark
Peters



Cllr Denis
Spooner



Cllr Val
Springett



Cllr Alan
Rowe

Working with the community and KCC Highways to improve the safety of our roads.

The committee are currently working with KCC to implement a gateway on the A20 to reduce speed. They are also working on a pedestrian crossing opposite the train station.



Cllr Ash spoke as Chairman of the Traffic & Transport Committee. He thanked ex Cllr Joanna Tribley who worked tirelessly as Chair of the Committee.

Cllr Ash advised that the Committee is working with other Parish Councils to address and resolve issues that effect our Parish. The Committee has a positive relationship with two members of KCC. The Committee continues to add concerns raised by residents to the Highways Improvement Plan, but that KCC only review this once a year, next due for review in October/November.

The Committee has had two gateways installed, one on Ware Street and one at Roundwell to encourage drivers to reduce their speed. BPC are working with KCC for a gateway to be installed on the A20 to reduce speed at Roundwell/Lilk Hill and to install a pedestrian crossing by Bearsted Train station. BPC are also looking at reducing all roads in Bearsted to 20mph.

The Committee have been working with MBC Parking Services to address the issues residents are facing in the Cavendish/Copsewood/Shirley and Yeoman Way area by introducing a restricted parking zone from 2-3pm.

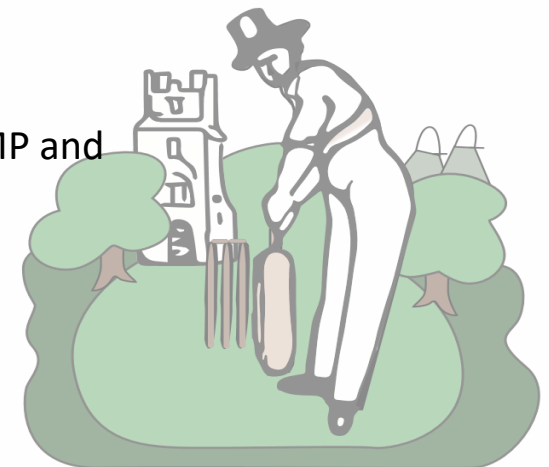
Double Yellow lines are imminent on Ragstone and Greensand Roads and on the corner of The Landway and the Ashford Road.

Cllr Ash thanked Cllr Hall for his hard work in achieving a £14k grant towards a community bus service.

The Committee will be working with Otham Parish Council to discuss Otham Lane.

BPC are working with our MP to prevent the closure of the ticket office at Bearsted train station.

Cllr Hall mentioned that South Eastern have downgraded the train services but after trying to work with our MP and South Eastern they will not consider improvements to services at this time.



Communications Committee

Minute Ref: 961



Chairman
Cllr David
Hall



Vice Chair
Denis
Spooner



Cllr Clive
English



Cllr Carolyn
Smith



Cllr Pat
Marshall MBE



Cllr Sean
Turner



Planning of our local events and sharing Council news through our website, Facebook and Newsletter.

BPC would like to thank Vanessa Flanagan for her commitment and hard work running the Bearsted Market and hope the community are enjoying visiting.

Our annual events including the children's Playscheme, Old Time Music Hall and the Fireworks display are all planned to go ahead in 2023.

The Green and The Elizabeth Harvie field also host external events. These include productions from the Hazlett Theatre, Classic Cars on the Green and the annual Bearsted Fayre.

Football and Fitness Clubs also take place on our open spaces.



Cllr Hall spoke as Chairman of the Communications Committee. Which he stated is the fun Committee involved in the many events hosted by BPC.

Cllr Hall thanked Amanda and June for the incredible success of the annual Playscheme and that should it be viable BPC would like to increase capacity or add additional weeks. The Committee is also responsible for the annual Fireworks and the Old Time Music events.

The Farmers Market run by Vanessa has been a huge success.

Cllr Hall acknowledged that BPC needs to improve its communication with residents and mentioned the Newsletter and upcoming Elections and encouraged residents to engage in the May elections.



Planning Committee



**Chairman
Cllr Richard
Ash MBE**



**Cllr David
Hall**



**Cllr Mark
Peters**



**Cllr Frank
Jagger**



**Cllr Chris
Waters**

Providing recommendations to MBC on all planning applications within the Parish.



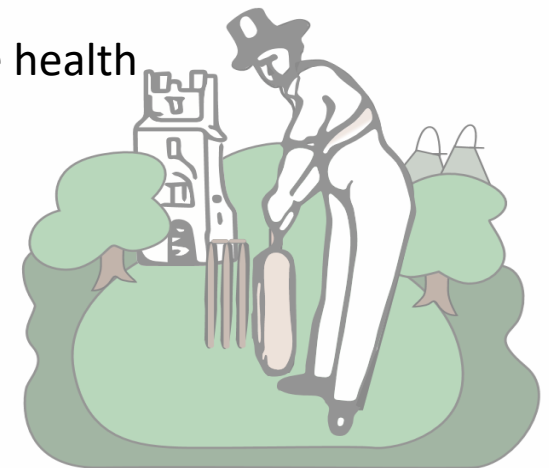
Cllr Ash spoke as Vice Chair of the Planning Committee advising residents that the Committee provides recommendations to MBC on individual planning applications. BPC are consultees only and that decisions are made either by Planning Officers at MBC or via the MBC Planning Committee.

Cllr Ash confirmed the Committee has supported the Bearsted & Thurnham Society in its objections to the windows at the Old Library as this is in breach of their planning application.

BPC are in agreement with MBC on approximately 75-80% of application decisions.

Cllr Hall mentioned the Classic Car event, which will take place on the 23rd July 2023.

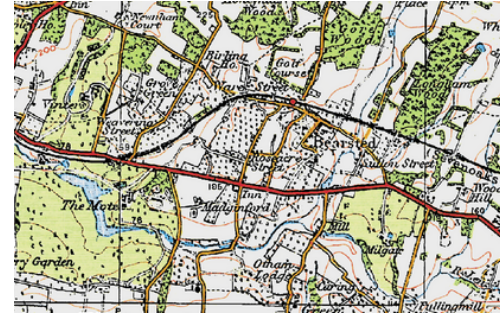
Cllr Hall advised that BPC also has a HR Committee that meets when necessary and looks after the health and wellbeing of the office staff.



The Bearsted & Thurnham Society



The Residents Association for the Civil Parishes of Bearsted and Thurnham



Bearsted and District Local History Society

Minute Ref: 965



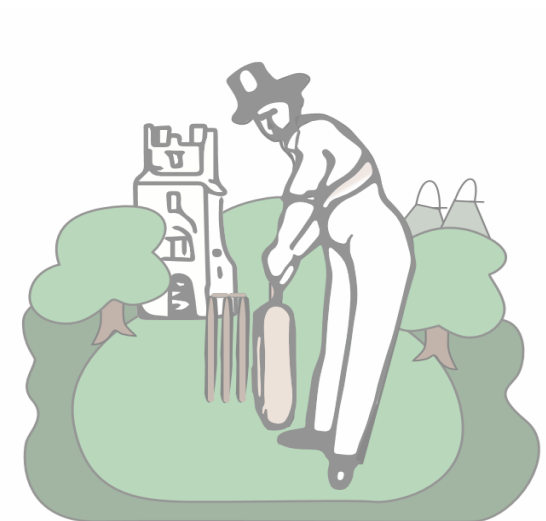
Girl Guides

Bearsted Woodland Trust



Local clubs and societies

Roseacre raiders



Bearsted Cricket Club



Bearsted & Thurnham Bowling Club



Bearsted & Thurnham Women's Institute

Cllr Hall read the statement provided by some of the local clubs and societies.

BEARSTED AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY September 2022 to May 2023

The Society continues to have good support; we have 175 members which includes 17 new members and our meetings are well-attended.

We continue to meet at the Memorial Hall and follow the guidance on Covid19 issued by the government but members no longer have to indicate their intention to attend a meeting.

This season's programme has included talks on the following:

- The Strange Career of the Statue in Modern American History
- Villages of Vision on Either Side of the Thames
- Bearsted Families through Eight Decades
- Sheds on the Beach: Three Centuries of Beach Huts
- The World of Tutankhamun: an Archaeologist's View
- The Spy and the House of Windsor
- The Old House Project at Boxley and other Conservation Work in Kent

BEARSTED & THURNHAM BOWLING CLUB

2022 was another strong year for Bearsted with many of our players entering Club and County competitions. This year in particular the ladies excelled and made the club proud.

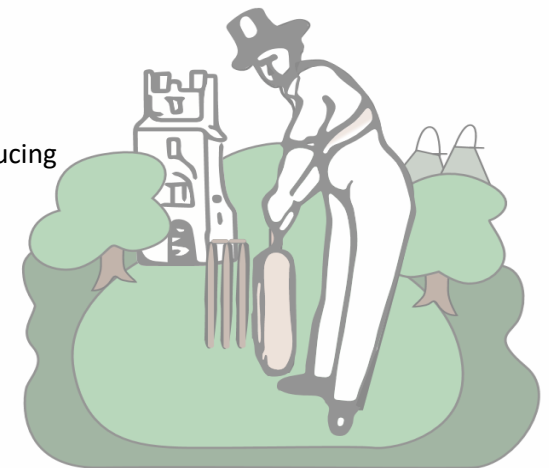
Two of our ladies achieved their County badges against strong competition and along with a third lady went on to become Kent Triples overall champions, playing some strong opposition along the way. This we believe is unprecedented as far as the ladies at this club is concerned. They then went on to represent Kent at the Leamington Spa national finals, reaching the quarter finals. A great team achievement.

Bearsted ladies played in the Kent County 2 wood competition with one of our ladies narrowly losing in the final. That's not the end of the story though as this lady also went to Leamington Spa as Kent's runner up and reached the final, only losing narrowly by 2 shots. Gaining a Silver medal for her efforts.

Bearsted ladies won the Kent Walker Cup for the first time and in another County competition "The Molly Cleggett" reached the division 3 final.

The club continues to benefit from a strong and inclusive membership with our internal competitions, friendlies with other clubs and external competitions producing an exciting and busy bowling season for all.

We look forward to more successes in the future, welcoming new members both Seniors and Juniors.



BEARSTED & THURNHAM WI - HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022/23

This year our WI Hall was 100 years old and we celebrated with an afternoon tea. Each month we have speakers who come from a wide range of organisations and charities including “Around the World in a Bus”, Pestolozzi, Past, Future & Present”, “Rochester Bridge Trust” and the “Magic Man”. We supported Bearsted Fayre by having a stall, and collect each month for the Salvation Army Food Bank. We held a Gardening Event which was open to family & friends and local WIs. Each month we have a walk which includes husbands & partners and two Book Clubs meet on a regular basis. Our Art and Craft Groups meet weekly and produce the most amazing pictures and craftwork. We celebrated the Queen’s Jubilee at our May Meeting and decorated our bench on the Green. Each year we support the Resolution which is agreed at the Annual Meeting of the National Federation and in 2022 it was to highlight the needs of “Women & Girls with ASD & ADHD”.

Cricket Club

A good season of cricket for the club. The men’s first team maintained their division one status after looking a little precarious at one point, the seconds finished second in division 6A and have been promoted and the Sunday XI finished second and have been promoted to division one for the first team.

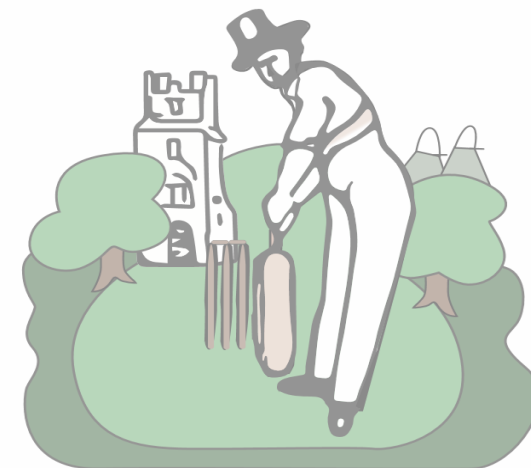
The ladies played competitive soft ball cricket for the first time and managed to finish third in the COUNTY!!!!

The under 11s and 13s had a "challenging year" with the majority playing hardball for the first time and being at the younger end of the age groups. Hopefully experience will help to improve results in 2023.

The under 9s were successful too, winning second place in the Kent Forty5 and they also won the Weald of Kent 8 a side!! Well done to all involved.

We unfortunately lost some vice presidents this year, Mrs. Jean Corps and Ted White and we also found out about the passing of Colin Fleetwood. A moving tribute was made to all three on the club website by the Chairman. The club has purchased a replacement bench for Ted and has placed plaques onto our memorial bench for Colin and Mr. and Mrs. Corps, Mr. Corps being a former playing member. More recently we lost Ray Jeffery who looked after the pavilion and was awarded a certificate for his efforts by the parish council a few years back.

The club continues to look to improve facilities and thank you to the parish council as they have approved our request to have covers on the wicket this season for the first time ever. There are ideas about trying to improve the pavilion and, as always, the thought of replacing the building entirely continue to be talked about, after all the current pavilion is 66 years old and, with the advent of women’s and mixed cricket, the changing facilities are not really adequate for the modern day. A more attractive building on the village green wouldn’t be a bad thing in my opinion!!



Girlguiding Bearsted District Report for 2022/23

2022/23 has seen Girlguiding Bearsted's activities return to pre-Covid levels, including long awaited Residential trips. The leader of 5th Bearsted Brownies gained her "Going Away licence at Easter, when her Brownies enjoyed a weekend at the PGL site at Marchants Hill, Surrey. Then during the heat wave at the end of July, Bearsted Guides and Rangers joined in the Kent Scout International Jamboree...at Detling Showground! A fantastic week of adventurous activities and evening entertainment and of course a chance to meet Scouts and Guides from around the world. During the week, 2 of Bearsted Guides were selected to show the Chief Guide around the camp and were able to bring her to our sub-camp where she then enrolled 4 Ranger Guides who had yet to make their Promise, and gave Long Service Awards to 2 of our Leaders: a most memorable occasion.

At the end of February, 100 girls participated in a most successful Activity Day to help celebrate "Thinking Day": this was at Lower Grange Farm, Sandling and they had a chance to try Archery, Bushcraft, Cavebus, Circus Skills, Fencing and Pedal Carts. Although there was a wide age range (5 – 15 years) all the girls thoroughly enjoyed the amazingly dry day, thanks to the skills of the Kent Scout's instructors, tailoring each session to age appropriate activities.

Our fundraising activities have also been successful, with an amazing day for our Plant & Cake Sale in May, which also celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. It culminated in a raucous "Royal Carriage Race" (which the girls had made), along the Church Landway...a crowned teddy had to remain in the carriage to the end of the race!

The village fayre refreshment tent was less successful, due to the sudden cold snap in the afternoon, resulting in a lot of unsold stock. However some of this was later sold at the Village Fireworks Display and at our Christmas Fayre, both events adding to our fundraising efforts.

The main improvement to our hut this year has been the upgrading of our lighting to use LED lights, which are more eco-friendly and should prove more economic to run. We wonder if a Council Grant might be available to help off-set the cost?

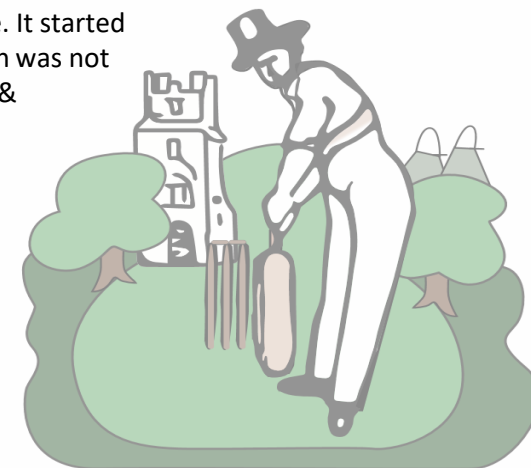
This report highlights the key events of the year, but of course the weekly meetings have continued, thanks to the dedication and reliable delivery of the Guiding programme by our fantastic volunteer leaders and helpers. We are very grateful for the time they give, especially when it includes weekend and residential activities. IF you would like to join our friendly team, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

Bearsted Friendship Group

This is a new group which has started up in the past year, after several comments about lonely or isolated seniors in our community on the village Facebook page. It started out as being part of the charity "MHA Communities". MHA launched it in May 2022, at Bearsted Methodist Church, but it soon became apparent that the location was not ideal so they relocated to the small hall at Madginford in September. The aim is to offer friendship, activities and fun for the over-50's and always includes lunch & refreshments.

Due to the fall in charitable giving, MHA had to withdraw from running the group, which now continues with the support from Bearsted Methodist Church. They continue to meet on a Wednesday, from 11.30am to 2pm and charge £5 per session. Recently a KCC grant has been given to support a lunch club, so once a month a hot meal (usually fish & chips) is enjoyed.

If you are interested in joining the group, please contact the organisers via the church email address: beastedmethodistchurch@gmail.com.



Bearsted Woodland Trust: Report to APM 2023

This has been another excellent year for BWT, now in its 19th year since formation. Our maturing site is seen as a major community asset for all ages, with daily footfall continuing to increase. A new Maintenance Plan has been implemented with continuing emphasis on creating habitats for wildlife. The website has been updated and another excellent Newsletter produced for our Members.

We hosted a visit by Thurnham Year 2 pupils in April 2022, their first outing post-COVID; their enthusiasm was infectious!

The Green Flag Award assessment in May 2023 placed BWT yet again in the highest category, the external judge being hugely impressed with the site and the commitment of Volunteers and Trustees., Jubilee Wood tree planting of native trees, on a very wet Sunday in November 2022, involved 26 families from Roseacre and Thurnham schools. Despite the weather the event was a great success.

To encourage wildlife, further sections of dry-hedging have been built, and bat boxes have been installed The bird hide has been rebuilt twice and fencing renovated following repeated vandalism and criminal damage, sadly a regular occurrence during 2022.

We have recruited and trained new Maintenance Volunteers, and a separate twice weekly litter picking group is to be established in Spring 2023.

Bearsted and Thurnham Society

As many of you will know the Bearsted & Thurnham Society is non-political and non-sectarian and has been in existence for some 50 years in one form or another. Its formal aims are listed in a constitution but in short relate to promoting schemes for the benefit of both civil parishes, opposing inappropriate development, and representing residents' views to the appropriate authorities on matters relating to their general well-being. Like any other organisation run by volunteers, the amount and type of work its committee of eight can do depends on their individual skills and the issues faced by the community at any particular time. Unlike local authorities the Society is not answerable to the public at large, only to its membership of well over 400 and this enables us to react more quickly if needed. Having said that, the Society recognises and appreciates the often thankless task of being a Ward or Parish Councillor and the enormous amount of work that is required to undertake their roles effectively. We all face the challenges brought about by housing development and increased traffic on our local roads and for many years commenting on, or objecting to, inappropriate proposals has been one of the main objectives of the Society. This year we will be represented by our Chairman when the Government Inspector hears evidence relating to new sites currently included in Maidstone Borough Council's draft Local Plan Review. We are hoping that he can be convinced that the proposed site for 67 properties opposite Averanches Road should be removed from the plan. Located within the setting of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, if it were to remain in the plan it would create an unwelcome precedent. In addition the Society keeps its members informed on roadworks, security scams, Doctors' surgery updates, local events and other important issues that might affect them. We recently purchased a bench commemorating Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee, which has been installed on Bearsted Woodland Trust land, and are in the process of obtaining another bench to commemorate Her Majesty's 70 year reign. This bench will be installed within the grounds of the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Thurnham, later in the year. The Society is currently awaiting a decision from Historic England after submitting a request to have the School and Master's House, which faces The Green, included in the National Heritage List for England. If successful this iconic building would be added to the 63 listed heritage assets in Bearsted and therefore safeguarded from inappropriate future development. Last year we organised a guided tour for our members of Stone Court House, Maidstone, followed by one to the World War I trenches on Detling Aerodrome. Earlier this year Councillor Richard Ash kindly arranged a members' visit to Maidstone Town Hall and we hope to visit another venue later in the year.

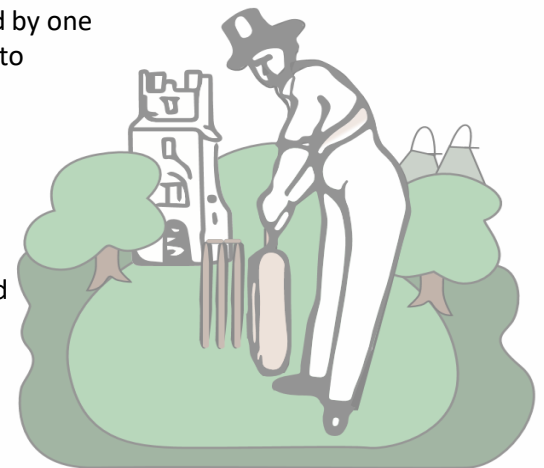
Roseacre raiders

Over the last 12 months the club has grown by 3 teams and now has around 24 teams competing in local leagues, both boys and girls teams.

The club continues to grow and thrive thanks to all the young children that attend our Junior Raiders & Girls Development sessions held at the Elizabeth Harvie field on Saturday mornings.

The club continues to be a major presence in the Bearsted area and we are proud to be a club that can offer fantastic opportunities to all children who wish to play football.

We'd like to say a huge thanks to Bearsted Parish council for their continued support over the years and we hope that we can continue to grow with the support of the local community.



Cllr Hall also read a report from Sally Williams the Community Warden and thanked her for her continued hard work and commitment to tackling antisocial behaviour and rogue traders and invaluable support she provides to vulnerable members of our community.

AGM Report from Sally Williams KCC Community Warden Bearsted. March 29th 2023

This last year – has certainly been a challenging year with lots of welfare/isolation/anti-social behaviour etc throughout the Parish. However, I am very lucky to have received the support of the residents and Bearsted Parish Council.

It's been a busy year for me in Bearsted and the surrounding areas, dealing with numerous issues that at times have been very challenging but also very rewarding.

This last year has also seen a lot of activity from rogue doorstep traders – and with the public's help in informing me of these traders – I am able to challenge and pass the intelligence to Kent Trading Standards and Kent Police.

Constantly visiting the vulnerable, some of which have been completely cut off from the outside world – I now receive Social Services referrals for Bearsted and the surrounding areas.

As usual I have gained a lot of support from the local community and no doubt this will continue in the future.

The Bearsted & District u3a (The University of the Third Age) is a registered charity and has over 1,035 u3a's and more than 400,000 members in the UK, that provide the opportunity for those no longer in work to come together and learn for fun.

The U3A has a national body – the Third Age Trust – founded in 1982, that looks after all u3as in the UK and provides educational and administrative support.

Since our inauguration in 2013, Bearsted now have 273 members, living mainly in the Bearsted area but some in the wider area stretching from Rainham, West Malling and Lenham.

Our **Speakers' Secretary** arranges a wide range of excellent speakers on a variety of topics. On the afternoon of the second Thursday each month, around 100 members meet in **Detling Village Hall**. After the Speaker is a time for members to chat over a tea or coffee.

Special Interest Groups are the lifeblood of our u3a. They are organised by our **Groups' Co-ordinator** to pursue shared interests in a subject. Groups meet to study the subjects they find interesting, and learning is interpreted in the broadest sense.

We currently have 43 groups for our members to choose from.

They range from Current Affairs, History, Music, Languages, Book Groups, Exercise with fun, Social Interaction, Crafts, Geology, and many more.



The Mynn Awards



Bearsted Parish Council look forward to running the annual Mynn awards later in the year to celebrate outstanding contribution within the community.

CLlr Hall advised residents that BPC have made the decision to present the Mynn Awards later in the year.



Questions to the Council.

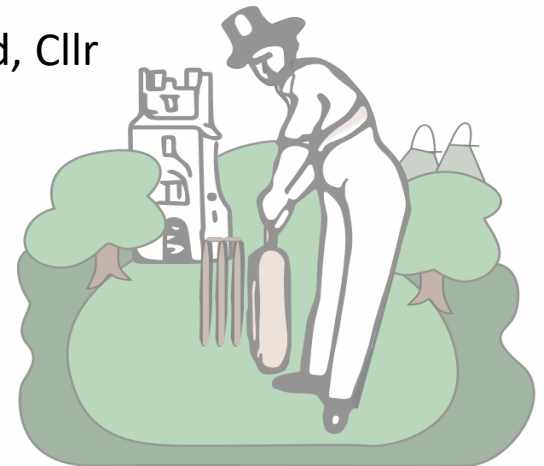
One member of the public, praised and thanked the Parish Council then mentioned that as Bearsted is surrounded, many developments and concerns affecting other Parishes will inevitably have an impact on Bearsted particularly the Church Road development in Downswood. The resident also mentioned that Bearsted used to be the train stop for Leeds Castle, which no longer seems to be the case. A second resident noted that they used to offer a combined ticket but since the Castle introduced the annual ticket, less people use the train to visit. Cllr Hall agreed to contact Leeds Castle.

A third resident was very positive about the Council and asked if we are working closely with local Parishes to reduce the roads to 20mph as the larger the area the lower the cost would be to implement these changes. Cllr Hall confirmed KCC are struggling with funding. Cllr Springett confirmed BPC are working closely with Hollingbourne and Thurnham to reduce the speed on the A20 and from that collaboration they can approach KCC jointly to consider reducing all roads in Bearsted to 20mph.

The first resident asked about remuneration for elected councillor and not for those co-opted, Cllr English explained this is legal legislation.

Cllr Turner, asked about communicating with the residents about consultations and Cllr Hall confirmed BPC need to improve its communication process regarding this.

A fourth resident advised the Council she is hard of hearing and requested speakers use the microphone in future.



Thank you for attending

Cllr Hall thanked the Mayor, members of the public, Councillors and the Administrators for attending the APM and the presentation finished at 20:28.

