



# NEWSLETTER

December 2007  
Vol. 1 Issue 6



Well here we are at the end of a busy and interesting year. The Councillors have completed their basic New Councillor courses and in addition attended numerous other consultations and seminars all for the benefit of Hartfield and surrounding villages. Some of the consultations have been on the NHS, closure of A&E and maternity wards, Biodiversity in rural areas, consultation on the Ashdown Forest, Housing, Planning controls, Traffic speed controls and others. We feel it is vitally important that we keep in touch, particularly as the government pass directions down through the District Council and this in turn affects all of us, so we have to keep abreast.



I am sure that all of you have heard of carbon foot prints and bio-diversity, some groan and others say great. Over the coming months we will attempt to pass on information that will help explain it and what the financial savings and benefits can be. We intend to apply for a grant sponsored by the BBC to encourage biodiversity projects and hopefully to include the children and youth.

We regularly receive reports from the Sussex Police District Commander, and I am happy to report back that Hartfield is a safe place to live with a low crime rate and the number of traffic accidents is also low. I'd like to thank all of the Councillors for their work and time that they give up and also the many parishioners who have worked closely with us on projects and work parties.

*On behalf of all my fellow Councillors may I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Safe and Prosperous New Year.*

*John Chalke - Chairman of Hartfield Parish Council.*



## CLERK'S REPORT

I have now completed just over a year in my role as Clerk to Hartfield Parish Council – a year which has been hugely interesting, sometimes frustrating, mostly fulfilling and certainly very challenging! The work carried out by the Council is very diverse, but it is mainly about trying to fulfil the needs of the community as a whole. Some issues are always close to parishioners' hearts – drainage being one of them! Cllr Tom Mitchell has reported that just last week, Steve Fitch from the Highways Department of East Sussex County Council attended to drains running down Newtons Hill and used no less than 28 ft of piping to remove obstructions.

Other drains are also being attended to. Community Transport – only two parishioners were making use of the Easylink Bus service which was costing over £600.00 per year.

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Hartfield Parish Council reluctantly, therefore, took the decision to stop making contributions to this service. However, a new service - the North Wealden Community Transport Partnership – is being formed and the Council has asked to be kept informed and involved. Policing – although crime rate figures are down, parishioners are concerned by the lack of police presence in the village. We have requested an increase in police presence and patrolling around the back of the pavilion and on the Town Croft where there has been some evidence of vandalism. If there are any issues which are causing you concern, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**May I take this opportunity to join my Council in wishing you a very Happy Christmas and an equally happy and healthy New Year.**

**Deborah Little - Clerk to Hartfield Parish Council**



## A BALANCING ACT



Joining the Parish Council in May and expressing an interest in the accounts, launched me rapidly into the preparation of accounts from the previous year, submission to auditors and getting to grips with the dreaded VAT! Although I imagined I had joined at the worst possible moment, I have since discovered that there is never a quiet time when it comes to money –

**SPRING**

**Closure** of previous year's accounts and setting up the new.

**SUMMER**

**Local auditor** inspects books and makes any recommendations before submission of accounts to the County auditor. Public may view accounts and balance sheet.

**AUTUMN**

**Forecast** of the following year's income and expenditure to ensure, as far as possible that the books will balance!

**WINTER**

**Wealden DC** is informed of estimated future expenditure and how much money the Parish require (the Precept) to be raised through the Council Tax.

Budget setting for the following year, allocating funds to each budget heading.

Debbie Little, the Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), manages the day-to-day running of accounts and bookkeeping. Debbie was appointed in the middle of the previous financial year so we are on a learning journey together. This has included mastering Excel spreadsheets which are fiendishly clever but cannot replace judgement and experience.

Accounts might not be everybody's "cup of tea" but I count myself lucky to be involved in this aspect of the Parish Council which is both demanding and interesting.

**Jo Edwarde – Chair of the Playschool Trustees**

## NOTES ON PRECEPT – DECEMBER 2007

Last year there was no increase in Parish income raised from Hartfield residents but, owing to the rise in the cost of living and increased demands on available funds, it has become necessary to increase the amount of money available to the Parish Council, for the next financial year. The total amount to be collected for the Parish, through the Council Tax, will rise by £5000. This is an increase of £4.74 per Band D household – that's under 40p per month and nobody will have more than an 80p per month increase. It is not yet known by how much Wealden will increase their element of the Council Tax.



## RIGHTS OF WAY

Since our last Rights of Way Report in the Parish Newsletter, we have had good news on the footpath front. First, FP15 which had been obstructed by a sandschool, is now reopened. A lot of publicity surrounded this obstruction; however there is now a path across the sandschool on its proper route. Secondly, ESCC have agreed to put Robins Lane on the Definitive Map and is numbered FP79. A lot of footpaths have been lost over the years, for many reasons, so it is a delight to have Robins Lane re-opened and on the map for future generations to enjoy.



Our Working Party met twice in August. First meeting we worked on FP18B stile by the churchyard, clearing undergrowth and cleaning the steps. On this lovely day, we then walked to Culvers Farm and much work was carried out on the bridleway (BR36D) along to the bridge which was cleared and, with another visit from Mike Parcell, a member of our WP, made passable and enjoyable. Second meeting, we worked at the stile in Mottefield (FP23) and continued, on a really hot day, to the east end of the village, tidying as we went. Another event in the ROW diary was the training of some members of the WP which then enabled seven of us to carry a 9' solid oak post across a couple of fields and dig a 3' hole making sure it was firmly embedded in the ground at the back of Hethe Place Farm. It was not the easiest of tasks but we have a photograph taken by Janet Littleford to show you.

On 4 December, I attended a meeting to launch the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. We have great hopes of this Plan which will help to improve walks in and around Hartfield village with the disabled in mind and the Parish Council hopes to produce a walks leaflet next year. Happy Christmas and enjoy walking on our Parish footpaths.

**Clair Park - Chair of Rights of Way**

## TREE WARDENS REPORT

In October this year (2007) the Ancient Tree Hunt was officially launched by Alison Wright of Sussex Wildlife Trust and organised by the Woodland Trust. The aim is to locate and record as many of Britain's largest and oldest native trees, e.g. oaks, beeches, Scots pines and yews. As well as playing a vital part in the country's ecology, many of these veterans are full of character with burred or hollow trunks and contorted branches.

As I am a keen tree recorder and a member of the Woodland Trust, I contacted Alison Wright to volunteer for this project and in October, I attended a training day, with others, in Withyham Village Hall, run by Alison. She gave us an introductory talk citing old deer parks and ancient woodlands as strongholds of really old trees. Owen Johnson, tree expert and author of Sussex Tree Book, also outlined what features to look for and how to measure. We visited Penns-in-the-Rocks at Lye Green and we each measured and recorded a large tree from big oaks, sweet chestnuts, yews and birches growing on sandstone outcrops in the grounds. We looked at general health, signs of decay and bird or animal life using the tree. Alison then gave us a local map covering 2km to explore and record any notable trees. Then they would be added to the database of Ancient Tree Hunt. Since the training day, I have already recorded and photographed over a dozen trees in Hartfield/Chuck Hatch/Colemans Hatch area. There is always a chance of finding a really old tree, a polard oak or sweet chestnut tucked away in the woodland areas of Ashdown.

*The photograph is one of Hartfield's fine old oaks on northern edge of the Town Croft and recorded for the Wealden Ancient Tree Project.*

**Stephen Young - Assistant Tree Warden**



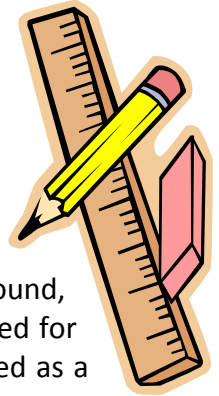
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Ashdown forest is a sensitive area, as we all know, and as questions were raised recently about work in Kidds Hill area, I spoke to Chris Marrables, Head Forest Ranger, who explained they would be coppicing this area and clearing rhododendrons. This will allow any rare species of flower to thrive. Any trees over 15cms in diameter need a felling licence. The licence in this case was applied for on the grounds of establishing heathland. Public notices are put up and the Forestry Commission either grants or disallows the licence. This licence was granted. **N.B. Correction:** last Parish Newsletter under Tree Warden report, please read Withyham Parish Charities not Withyham Parish Council.

**Clair Park - Tree Warden**

## PLANNING

Wealden District Council makes decisions on planning consent and enforcement based on government and local planning policies. These include special controls on development in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in the Hartfield Conservation Area. The Parish Council is invited to comment on all planning applications and can provide feedback based on local knowledge. We are also consulted as Wealden sets out its vision of the future in a Local Development Framework (LDF). The "Draft Settlement Strategy for the Villages", part of the LDF Core Strategy, shows Hartfield is well provided with services, including a primary school, playschool, health centre, village hall, playground, sports facilities, shop, pubs and churches. Other villages with these services will be targeted for housing growth, but as we are further than 5 km from a town or station, we are designated as a settlement with "Limited Growth Potential". Over the ten year life of the LDF we should expect to see some infill and small scale developments to meet local needs, with affordable housing a priority, but should have planning policies that protect us from major new housing development.



**Kevin Hawes - Chairman Planning Committee**

**SEE PLANNING APPLICATIONS STOP PRESS AT THE REAR OF THIS NEWSLETTER**

## ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

The Committee has been quite busy since the summer. We have discussed and nearly agreed a policy for the Parish Council to take action to combat climate change. The focus of work will initially be to help households reduce their carbon emissions and to work with, amongst others, the District Council, to help us all improve energy efficiency in our homes and thereby reduce carbon emissions and fuel bills. Many suggested actions will be easy to implement and will have short pay back periods.

We are discussing biodiversity (i.e. the birds and the bees) early in December and hope to set up a plan to enhance the biodiversity across the parish. Watch this space!

In March we hope to host a talk from the District Council for their plans for recycling within the Parish.

### LONELY HEARTS CLUB SID\*

SID is a lonely middle aged piece of equipment that likes to be taken out and loves the countryside, fresh air and watching traffic whizz by. Currently he is feeling unloved and rarely gets out and about, but is in fine fettle and it doesn't take much to get him excited when his lights start flashing (usually any speed over 40 does it). He has a group of dedicated chaperones but is really in need of a soul mate to plan his outings. It would help if you lived or worked locally. Interested? If so you could help enormously to reduce the speed within the Parish which worries so many people.

Please call Mike (01892 770919) or Debbie Little on 01342 834409 if you think you can help

\*SID is of course a Speed Indicating Device!

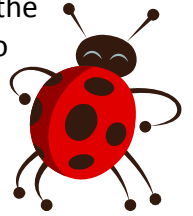
**Mike Burbridge - Chairman Environment & Transport Committee**

## BIODIVERSITY

You might think that, living in a village biodiversity lobby would only Parish Councillors attended a to discover how Parish Councils in the towns and cities the emphasis the natural world to flourish, in the countryside our emphasis is on protecting and developing what we have and encouraging future generations to understand that *nature is our life-support system*.



and surrounded by beautiful countryside, the have a tiny voice – not so. In August, two Biodiversity briefing session at County Hall can support and promote biodiversity. While might be on creating opportunities for the



We are asked to consider the impact on the natural world in all we do whether that is cutting the hedges, expanding the Playschool garden, renovating the Pavilion or recycling our rubbish. The recent addition of bat boxes (now occupied) on the Town Croft is one good example of how simple and rewarding it is to encourage biodiversity.

Our increased focus on the “South East in Bloom” competition, which now includes the promotion of biodiversity, will help Hartfield to raise the profile of this vital aspect of modern living.

## Town Croft & Pavilion



We are moving forward with our major refurbishment plans for the Pavilion, an action that came out fairly high on parishioners’ wish list from the parish questionnaire. A big thank you goes to the Village Fete Committee who gave us a wonderful cheque for £1000 which is safely in the fund for refurbishment to the pavilion. We have consulted widely involving parishioners and are narrowing down a choice of architects who will translate the essential wish list of the sports clubs, and TC Committee into a design for refurbishment of the pavilion that will meet current legislation and future needs of the sports clubs and other users. Chris Hardy is in charge of major fundraising and grant applications which is expected to take at least 18 months to 2 years. Events booked so far are junior cricket coaching in the Easter Holidays, a Golf day with dinner at the Royal Ashdown and a major concert on the Croft in the summer. Watch out for further announcements.

As an interim measure Cllr. John Smith and Mike Brunsdon headed up two very successful working parties on the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> of December and under the direction of Alan Beard who is a professional painter and decorator a great deal was achieved and the changing rooms and showers are now much smarter. Another working party will take place early next year. We were delighted that so many members of the sports clubs turned up and members of the Town Croft and Parish Assets committee were there in force too serving up bacon and sausage butties and providing tea and coffee for the workers as well as getting down to some serious clearing and cleaning.

## OH DEAR THERE’S BEEN “TROUBLE-ONT’ CROFT “ !

Yes we have been invaded and war has been declared. We think we may have won the last battle but don’t count your moles! Yes, those sweet, innocent- looking velvety creatures have wreaked havoc with our recreation ground and even had the audacity to stick two paws up and plant a hill or two on our sacrosanct cricket square.



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With the aid of a smooth talking Irishman who deprived us of some of our precious Croft budget, we hope we now have the situation under control. Ground maintenance work has continued throughout the year with reported improvements to the drainage.

Unusually ending on a negative note, youths have been lighting fires on the Croft and leaving bottles and cans littered around and causing minor damage, let's see if we can provide more worthwhile things for them to do in the near future which may include re-opening the youth club building if we got sufficient helpers coming forward.

**Nancy Holmes – Chair of Town Croft & Parish Assets**

## PROFESSIONAL CRICKET COACHING COMES TO HARTFIELD

**14<sup>TH</sup> – 18<sup>TH</sup> APRIL**

Age 9 – 15 An excellent opportunity for youngsters to receive expert coaching in a beautiful setting on the Town Croft. For bookings or more details please ring **Chris Hardy 01892 770759.**



## BLOOMING HARTFIELD! & THE MEMORIAL GARDENS



Why not start the New Year by helping to create an even more beautiful and bio-diverse setting within our stunning environment?

Just turn up at the Village Hall on Saturday 12 January 2008 at 6.00 pm to discuss suggestions and ideas, over a glass of wine and a few festive nibbles, to help make a plan for Village in Bloom 2008.

Following our achievement of winning Silver Gilt and the Best Small Village in 2007, there has been a surge of enthusiastic support for this event. Particular thanks are due to – Perryhill, Wych Cross and Casablanca Nurseries, Charlie Munn for delivering the most splendid “muck” for the Memorial Garden, Big Jim Lusted and his truck and all the incredibly willing volunteers who have turned out in all weathers to keep the momentum going.

We are also planning to refresh some areas in the village with new shrubs and plants and would welcome any offers of sponsorship. We already have a sponsor for a Liquid Amber tree and some Lavendula Hidcote for the Memorial Garden.

**Sheila van Maurik**



### Calling all Photographers

We are always looking for interesting and attractive photographs of the parish, please send us a copy of your snapshots for inclusion in future newsletters or for display at the village shows.

Prize of a digital Camera for the one considered to be the most original or most beautiful.

## PARISH MAINTENANCE

Whilst Barrie Dickens carries out certain repairs on behalf of the Parish Council we were delighted when Tom Mitchell, (Jack of all Trades & Master of them all) was re-elected last May and now carries out routine maintenance of property belonging the Parish. The ROSPA inspection found the playground generally in good condition and well maintained but Cllr. Mitchell has carried out a few recommended repairs. He has spent considerable time renovating the park benches situated round the village, many of which are placed in memory of past Hartfield residents. Recently, Tom has been working to improve the bus shelter near the Memorial Garden in response to a request to make it more wind proof. Many residents express their appreciation to Tom while he is working which makes his contribution to the community all the more worthwhile. Keep up the good work, Tom!



## NOTES FROM A NEW RECRUIT – A VIEW OF THE FIRST FEW MONTHS AS A PARISH COUNCILLOR

**A**fter the excitement of the Hustings and the actual Local elections in May, reality set in with the first Parish Council Meeting, not only are there procedures to navigate, but also councillors are asked to nominate which committees they are willing to sit on.

Optimistically, I plumped for Planning, Town Croft and Parish Assets and Playschool Trustees, thereby ensuring that there are not many weeks in the month when there is not a meeting to attend, sometimes two or three in a week!! The Planning committee in particular, has to meet with a quorum once a fortnight in order to meet the timescale of 21 days from notification to the Council to give its views back to the District Council.

The Town Croft and Parish Assets would normally meet quarterly, but currently more meetings have had to take place in order to progress the projected refurbishment of the Pavilion.

Initially I booked myself on the residential course offered to all new councillors, Chairmen and Clerks run by SALC (Sussex Association of Local Councillors) down at Midhurst where you meet a lot of other "NEWBUGS" also feeling their way around all the rules and regulations, best practice etc. The agenda looked quite daunting and memories of school came flooding back, but in fact the whole two days proved really stimulating and interesting. It certainly helped to meet other new councillors also learning the ropes.

There is obviously so much more legislation and procedure to be aware of now compared to even 20 years ago, some of which seems sensible and other very bureaucratic. Common sense is still a required qualification! Hartfield is very very lucky in having some extremely dedicated councillors who put in many hours a week. As a learner I am full of admiration. Stamina and a sense of humour seem to be a prerequisite.

**Anne Higgins**

### **STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS**

Time is short to make your comments on two planning applications and an appeal that have aroused a great deal of interest in the Parish and can be viewed on line.

- 1. WD/2007/3143** Our long awaited Health Centre Doctor's Surgery & Health Centre at Old Crown Farm.
- 2. WD/2007/3238** Affordable Housing/Farm Shop and offices at Old Crown Farm – Withyham Estate/Town & Country Housing.

For further details or to make your comments in writing contact Wealden District Council Pine Grove Crowborough TN8 1DH - 01892 653311 or the Hartfield Parish Clerk on 01342 834409.

- 3. APP/C1435/ C/07/2057969** Faircote Hall – Mr. B. Van Praagh The Planning Inspectorate has received an appeal by the above-named against an Enforcement Notice served by the Council relating to an alleged breach of planning control, namely, "the construction of a sand school" without the grant of planning permission.

*Comments in triplicate to The Planning Inspectorate, Room 3/21 Temple Quay House 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007.*

## YOUR COUNCILLORS

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