



**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING &
ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
AGENDAS**

**ANNUAL REPORTS INCLUDING
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024/25
BUDGET 2025/26**



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2024/25

Following the Maidstone Borough Ward Boundary Review undertaken by the Boundary Commission, all members of Maidstone Borough Council were up for election in May 2024 together with all Maidstone parish councils. Therefore, although YPC had been up for election in May 2023, it went with all others again in May 2024. Councillors Geraldine Brown, Ken Gough, Andy Sanders, Deeann Stead and Joe Westgate were re-elected and four new Councillors, Leila Bates, Tim Chapman, Pip Jamieson and Kelly Woods joined the Council. Following the elections, there was a change of governance at Maidstone Borough Council and we had two new borough councillors.

It was becoming more difficult to pay bills by cheque and it was therefore agreed to open a new bank account with Unity Trust, the bank recommended to parish councils as having all the required safeguards in place. This now gives us the facility for internet banking. The pubs within the Yalding village closed; The George, although having planning permission for a restaurant with bar and farm shop, reopened its doors purely as a retail unit in direct competition with Orchard View Stores next door. The internal staircase was removed and a subsequent planning application was submitted to Maidstone Borough Council to turn the residential accommodation on the upper two floors into a house for multiple occupation. This is yet to be decided.

Since the death of the landlord, the Walnut Tree has remained closed so it was with great excitement that we learned that the pub was under offer for sale. I was contacted by the potential buyers and met the family at the recent street party when I was told of their plans. However, it now seems that the current owners have withdrawn the pub from the market and are looking to install a new tenant. We currently have no update on this.

We now have a draft Neighbourhood Plan that has been circulated to Councillors but it is not yet in a form that can be circulated to residents. We are hoping this may happen in the autumn.

The land to the north and south of Kenward Road adjacent to and opposite the polyhouses was granted planning permission at appeal for 112 dwellings on the north side with the land to the south to be used as amenity land. Hallam Land have subsequently sold the land to a developer who in turn has requested a meeting with the Parish Council.

Building at the former Syngenta site, now Yalding Enterprise Park (YEP), is progressing well and the completed units are gradually being occupied. In March, Councillors attended an open day for the newly completed Aqua Chimp, a water-based activity centre on the site, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who participated and those of us watching from the sides. A planning application has been submitted for the change of use of the former office building to Class F1 Learning and Non-Residential Institution and creation of 65 parking spaces. This is for the relocation of a locally based special needs school.

Safety concerns were again expressed with regard to Twyford Weir (Anchor Sluice) but it was agreed that both the Environment Agency and YPC had done all they could to make people aware of the dangers of entering the water, including the erection of fences and gates, and ultimately, it was the parents' responsibility to supervise their children.

Concern had also been expressed with regard to the increasing number of charcoal BBQs being used at the Lees picnic area and the poor condition that the toilets were being left in. Signs have been erected in an endeavour to prohibit BBQs and the toilets monitored.

September saw our first really wet Annual Parish Picnic but the weather did not deter picnickers who, decked in macks and wellies, turned out as usual to enjoy the beer, cider, wine and BBQ as well as the "Dr Jazz band." Many thanks to Councillors and both Clerks for their help in making it all happen.

The new car park at The Kintons was completed and is now used during matches and practice sessions. Many thanks to Councillor Ken Gough for his work on this.

During last winter, we were fortunate not to have too much adverse weather with little or no property flooding in the Parish. Work is continuing with regard to the Leigh Flood Storage Area and Hildenborough embankments Scheme. This will increase the capacity at Leigh by about one third and the revised operating procedures must take into account any impact on downstream communities. Work is on schedule for completion this Autumn.

Councillors agree to add double yellow lines at Lyngs Farmhouse, a bend sign by Beultside, creation of safe access to Laddingford bus stop and water on Vicarage Road to the Highways' Improvement Plan.

Supported by a local resident, YPC is investigating measures to possibly reduce traffic crossing Town Bridge and through the Parish. This is in its early stages at the moment so watch news through the Parish Magazine.

Following a recent presentation by Ken Scott, Chairman of Building a Dementia Friendly Maidstone, Councillors agreed they would like to make us a dementia friendly parish. Councillor Kelly Woods agreed to take the lead.

Thanks to all the lads who make our villages look so beautiful at Christmas time with the erection of the lights. Our entire lighting stock is now LED and this has considerably reduced the cost of electricity. Thank you to those residents who have allowed us to install connection boxes in their gardens.

It is good to see once again so many clubs and organisations submitting a report for this publication; we are very fortunate to have so many activities to take part in on our doorstep. It is especially pleasing to know that our youth activities are thriving.

A big thank you to our Parish Clerk, Angela Gent, who is a major source of support to the Council; her work has increased dramatically not only from Parish activities, but also changes in legislation; Also, to our assistant Clerk, Abi Stern, who has successfully completed the initial stages towards obtaining a Certificate in Local Council Administration.

Last but not least, a big thank you to all of our residents and to all of you who continue to support and maintain the vibrant community that we are.

YALDING PARISH CHARITIES

YALDING ALMSHOUSE CHARITIES

Over the last year, we had to say a very sad goodbye to one of our residents, Wynn. The trustees agreed to a small increase to the Weekly Maintenance Contribution required from residents to £84 from April 2025. This year we are replacing any baths with walk in showers. We welcomed a new resident who has settled well, into her newly refurbished home. Finally, we would like to thank Yalding taxis for their continuing generous monthly donation.

YALDING EDUCATION FOUNDATION (YEF)

During the past year the YEF organised and financially supported the following.

- Awarded each of the 3 local Primary schools £1200 to provide a 'cultural or educational experience' of the schools choice.
- Higher Education scholarships were awarded to 16 students who had attended local Primary schools to support them with their courses. Each award was for £200.
- Spoken English competitions, judged by the Trustees were, held in the local Primary schools. Prize money of £150 per school was donated from YEF funds.
- £1000 was set aside to financially support where appropriate local primary schools to hold educational or cultural events.
- £200 was granted to Yalding School to purchase materials for the 'Big Draw' event.
- £70 was granted to Collier Street School to award as prizes for competitions held there.
- £500 was granted to Yalding Football Club and the same amount to Yalding Cricket Club to assist with the costs involved in the development of young coaches and officials at the clubs.

It is expected to run a similar programme next year. The current Trustees of the YEF are Kim Keeler(Chair), Mari Mason, Barbara Reader, Sue Gerrish, Paul Kish, David Goff and Nick Arthur. The Clerk is Gary Atkins. The YEF is financially stable, has a full complement of Trustees and does not presently require any support from the Parish council.

OTHER CHARITABLE GROUPS BASED WITHIN THE PARISH

FRIENDS OF YALDING SURGERY (FYS)

The year 2024/25 has been a full year of fund raising for the friends of Yalding surgery and we have been able to support the surgery with the extras they have requested. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Yalding Taxi's for their loyal long-term support, also Sharon Wilford for all her innovative handicrafts she makes and sells for us throughout the year, in the post office emporium. Thanks to Tim and June for all their support. Many thanks to everyone from the village who braved the arrival of Storm Darragh and the rearrangements last minute so the Christmas Faye could go ahead, this did affect the overall amount we raised at the 2024 Christmas raffle. Plans for 2025 annual quiz 26/04/2025. Something mid-summer TBC. AGM TBC. Christmas Raffle TBC.

KENWARD TRUST

The Kenward Trust is an award-winning charity that provides primary and secondary stage residential rehabilitation and recovery services for those experiencing drug and alcohol addiction, also working in school with education and early intervention programmes. Our services have been increasing in demand over the last year following the pandemic and the isolation and mental health issues people experienced during that time. We have also been working in more schools and communities to educate young people on the dangers of drugs and alcohol. We have beautiful grounds of 15 acres and are open to the public, Thursday to Sunday in our Kenward Café and have activities such as alpaca walks, archery and disc golf operating that can be booked at Kenwardplace.co.uk or call 01633 814187. We also offer a meeting room that can be booked and can hold up to 80 people. All these activities help fundraise for the charity's work. Last September our 5th Classic Car Motor Show took place, again as a fundraising event. With over 50 cars and a prize for the best car, it was so good to see some local people bringing their classic car to participate. This year the event will be on 1st June. In December we held our first Art Fair with over 20 people exhibiting their work. It proved to be very popular so we will be running another one this year but in September this time. If you wish to support Kenward Trust by fundraising or volunteering please email Debi.Seabrook@kenwardtrust.org.uk or visit our website kenwardtrust.org.uk or call 01622 814187.

YALDING CHURCH PRESERVATION SOCIETY (YCPS)

2024 was a hugely successful fundraising year. The London Welsh Male Voice Choir sang to a packed church in October. Over 250 people attended and we raised £3800. The YCPS is a charity dedicated to helping maintain the fabric of our beautiful old church. We have raised over £100,000 over the last 20 years or so. We are always looking for people to join our happy band as Trustees. Talk to Tim at the Post Office.

PARISH ORGANISATIONS – LADDINGFORD

LEARNING

ST MARY'S CEP SCHOOL

HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

This year has been a successful one for Laddingford St Mary's Primary School & Nursery. The introduction of our new Early Years team and the renovation of our reception & nursery space has led to a fantastic first year for the children. As we move into the next academic year, we aim to further promote the nursery in the local area. We are also proud to be one of only 750 schools nationwide participating in the Department for Education Early Adopter Free Breakfast School scheme, which launched in Term 5. The uptake has been promising, and we're excited to see the positive impact that it will have on our students. Additionally, we are pleased to announce that we will be welcoming a full cohort of Reception children in September. Looking to the future, we remain committed to the success of Laddingford St Mary's Primary School & Nursery. We greatly appreciate the ongoing support from the local community and are excited for the continued development of our school in the coming year.

GOVERNORS' REPORT

Part of the Head teachers report.

FRIENDS OF LADDINGFORD SCHOOL (FLS) REPORT

The Friends of Laddingford School (FLS) have had another successful year of fundraising. For such a small school, it's always wonderful to pause and be grateful for the incredible support we receive from the school community and the generosity of those around us. This year, the FLS team has seen considerable change, as some valued team members left us, some new members joined. We now have a new Treasurer, and two committee members. With this change has come great teamwork and energy — as well as the inevitable learning curve as everyone settles in and gets to grips with the running of the group. Over the last eight months, we're proud to have raised over £3,000 through a variety of community events and activities, including:

- Break the Rules Day — Always a favourite with the children (and slightly less so with the teachers!), this fun event continues to be a successful fundraiser.
- School Disco — A lively event enjoyed by many.
- Christmas Fair — This was an incredibly successful event, raising over £1,500 for the school. We're so grateful for the wholehearted support from both the Chequers Pub, Yalding and Laddingford communities.
- Christmas Tree Sales – supported by the wider community
- Mother's Day Fundraising Week — Through gift sales, breakfast, and afternoon teas in the week leading up to Mother's Day, we raised over £650
- Presence at the Yuletide
- As well as Ice Lollies and cake sales in the Easter Term.

We're delighted that funds raised have allowed us to support key projects within the school, including:

- Revamping the school library.
- Investing in a new English scheme to enhance the learning in line with the curriculum.

We are looking forward to exploring even more ways we can support the school through improved facilities and experiences. We're excited about the year ahead, with plans to:

- Expand the Summer Fair into a Saturday event, offering more activities and opportunities for the community to get involved.

Thank you to Yalding Parish Council and the wider community for your continued support — it truly makes a difference to our school and its families.

OTHER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

CHEQUERS CHASERS

The Chasers are not currently active. The Chequers still supports the local Paddock Wood Half Marathon by manning a water station on the corner by Laddingford school and there are usually several runners from the Parish taking part which are enthusiastically supported.

CHEQUERS OTTERS

are a group of people in the Parish who like to swim, particularly in open water but mainly just enjoy swimming and the company with other Otters and of course the obligatory cake or burgers after swimming. The group mainly swim at St Andrew's Lake at Halling which is an approved centre and whilst swimming mainly takes place in the summer months a few of the Otters have embarked on the popular cold-water swimming/dipping over the winter months. This is a very informal group and anyone who likes to swim or dip in the open water for enjoyment and health benefits is welcome to join them. In 2024 one of the otters, Tracey took up the challenge to swim the length of Windermere - a full 11 miles in just under 6.5 hours.

CHEQUERS RACERS

The Chequers Racers are a group of people, some who cycle regularly, some who don't cycle much at all, but who all enjoy a social atmosphere at their HQ - The Chequers at Laddingford. Established over 13 years ago by organising an amateur ride from Laddingford to Paris for charity, the group has continued and evolved over the years. Each year they organise a tour where they go away for 5 days to cycle and see a different country and scenery. 2024 took them to Turkey with some big hills and hot weather. In 2025 they will be heading for the Burgandy region of France for some cycling and no doubt wine tasting. There are no membership fees and rides are organised on an ad hoc basis. For further information, please check our website www.chequersracers.com or better still, ask at the pub!

LADDINGFORD CHURCH HALL

St Mary's Laddingford has a small congregation with two Sunday morning services a month. All are welcome for the monthly coffee & cake morning on the 1st Saturday - see the magazine for details. Pilates classes run regularly on Wednesday & Thursday evenings in term time. Relative Minors have twice monthly orchestra practices on Sunday evenings. Laddingford Primary school use the hall Monday to Friday in school hours. The hall is available for public hire at other times, with a kitchen, tables, chairs and a piano too included. Why not hold your next children's party there one Saturday? Contact Digby Danvers for bookings on 01622 873450

POP-UP CAFE AND INFORMATION HUB

Since the original Rural Kent Coffee & Information Project ceased in September 2022 Charles & Tracey Leaver from The Chequers have kindly taken on the pop-up Cafe project with the cafe being held monthly in the garden room at The Chequers. The aim and ethos of the mornings continues to be to provide an environment for anyone to come along and meet other people and provide a support and a social environment for those that may be affected by rural isolation or loneliness or just as a social couple of hours to meet other people from the village and Parish. This has been a great success with often in excess of 20 people attending the mornings. An informal atmosphere allows people to chat and catch up if they want to or just sit and enjoy the environment at a distance. Volunteers have willingly provided delicious cakes and if transport is needed for people to get there this is arranged. Representatives from the Parish council and church periodically attend in case anyone has anything they wish to discuss. In December 2024 the group entered a Christmas Tree exhibition by local groups at the Baptist Church in Yalding and several of the participants handmade items depicting the Pop-Up Cafe group such as crocheted tea cups, cakes and words of what the Pop-Up Cafe means to them. The mornings have a vibrant atmosphere and it is intended that the Pop-Up Cafe mornings will continue for the foreseeable future, providing a positive impact to many of the attendees.

PARISH ORGANISATIONS – YALDING

LEARNING

ST PETER & ST PAUL'S CEP SCHOOL GOVERNORS' AND HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

At Easter, the school bid a very fond and emotional farewell to Mrs Friend, who had served as headteacher for the past 8½ years. During her time with us, she successfully led the school through two Ofsted inspections and a SIAMS (Statutory Inspection for Anglican and Methodist Schools) review. We are deeply grateful for her leadership and dedication, and we wish her every happiness in her retirement. We are pleased to welcome Miss Stiff, who has joined us as interim headteacher while we carry out the recruitment process for a new permanent head. Thanks to our committed and passionate team of staff, the children continue to flourish, achieving their potential while having fun and making wonderful memories along the way. Unusually, we currently have spaces available for our Reception class starting in September 2025. If you know of any families looking for a nurturing, welcoming, and aspirational primary school, please do encourage them to get in touch. We remain incredibly grateful to our hardworking PTA, whose events bring joy and excitement to the children—not just as fundraisers, but as wonderful opportunities for fun and community spirit. Finally, thank you to the Parish Council for their continued support of our school.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

The Yalding School PTA has enjoyed a vibrant and successful year, marked by creativity, collaboration, and strong community spirit. We are grateful for the continued support from the parish council and the wider Yalding community, who helped make these events possible and memorable. We began on a high in July 2024 with our hugely successful Colour Run, a joyful, family-friendly event, the laughter, colour, and sheer joy on display made it a highlight of the summer. A new school year: September we hosted an own clothes day for book donations, where pupils brought in books both to donate and to take home for a small contribution. Donations were shared between the school, pupils, and our ongoing support for our partner school in The Gambia. October saw our first ever Minion Movie Night, hosted inside St Peter's and St Paul's Church. The church's unique setting with its very own Minion turned the event into a cosy, memorable evening for all the children. Christmas 2024 was a particularly special time at Yalding School. At the Yalding Yuletide fair, the PTA and children proudly sold their handmade Jolly Jars. Despite the challenges of working with a now smaller school hall, the staff and PTA came together to create a truly magical festive experience for the children, with the real highlight our Elf Enterprise workshop. Each class crafted a beautiful handmade keepsake item, with every class creating something unique. These treasured items were then lovingly displayed, showcasing at our Christmas Fair. The magic didn't stop there—even snow arrived on the playground as the children celebrated at their Christmas Fair, adding a touch of wonder and joy to an unforgettable few days. We paused for a month in January 2025, to catch our breath before we headed into a new year with lots of plans. In February, another own clothes day helped us raise funds through generous cake donations. March brought back our ever-popular Annual Quiz Night, this time with a new addition: an after-party, which proved a roaring success filled with fun, laughter & dancing. Notably, this year saw a new winning team – the teachers were finally dethroned! In April, the Easter Bunny made a special appearance, delighting each child with Easter egg and joining in the fun. This event also marked a heartfelt farewell to Mrs Friend, who leaves us with many fond memories. Finally, as we move into May, we are eagerly preparing for our next Colour Run, themed around running the rainbow to welcome Miss Stiff our interim Headteacher. This year has truly shown what can be achieved through teamwork, dedication, and a shared love of our school and community. Thank you to everyone who supported these events – we look forward to another exciting year ahead!

SUMMER PLAYScheme

We are pleased to announce the Yalding Play Scheme will be returning this year, we have some great ideas to keep your children occupied this summer and your children will be pleased to know Dodgeball and NERF will be returning. The play scheme will be held at Yalding Village Hall during the first 3 weeks of the summer holidays and is aimed towards children of Primary School ages.

More details to follow as soon as they have been confirmed. In the meantime, if there is something you or your children would like to see on our timetable this year, feel free to get in touch as we are always open to new ideas and working together with our families. Here's to a fun filled summer.

YALDING (RIVERSIDE) PRE-SCHOOL

Play place Riverside Preschool and play scheme have had a successful year. Starting with our Ofsted Inspection which took place in October 2024. The Preschool received a GOOD in all areas. The Preschool have worked very hard over the last 2 years and their hard work was rewarded with the great outcome. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported the preschool especially all our amazing children and their families. Preschool numbers continue to grow each term and with the new funding coming into place in September 2025 we are expecting another busy and fulfilling year. If you are looking for a space for your little one please do not hesitate to get in touch yalding@playplace.org / 07442 275785

YALDING TODDLER, PARENT AND BABY GROUP

We have had a vibrant and successful year, providing a welcoming and nurturing space for local families. Our aim remains to support early childhood development through play, creativity, and social interaction while building a strong support network for parents and carers. We have seen a consistent number of parents/carers throughout the year, with an average of 20 families participating weekly, particularly branching out this year more to those with young babies. Word-of-mouth referrals and positive community feedback have played a major role in our consistent numbers. We continue to attract both returning and new families, reflecting the group's inclusive and friendly environment. The group offers a rich variety of activities designed to stimulate toddlers' development and provide meaningful engagement for parents: Craft Corner: We often provide opportunities for children to explore creativity through colouring, gluing, and sensory play such as play-dough. Sensory Development: This year we have introduced the sensory area! Our large sensory tent, offering sensory lights, blankets and other sensory items, is hugely popular with all our children. Story Time: range of books for the children are displayed for parents to enjoy some reading and learning. Caroline from Usborne books returns once a term, to offer a selection of beautiful books for purchase, offering the school book voucher scheme. Every week, a variety of snacks and drinks are served for the children. While the adults enjoy a choice of hot drink and homemade cake/pastries (kindly made by our volunteers. All funded by the group. Snack time offers the children a social opportunity, where they can also explore different foods each week and share with others. Events: We hosted parties and themed get togethers, such as the Christmas party which was a huge success! Huge thank you to Yalding resident Peter Crompton for his Father Christmas appearance and making the day even more magical for the families. Achievements- Created a safe and stimulating environment for local families, where a community of parents has been formed. Offer an opportunity for parents/carers to reach out for emotional support or practical parenting advice, from other fellow parents, or the volunteers themselves. Our Volunteers- The group has maintained a strong volunteer base, with several parents stepping up to help with setup, snacks, activities and administrative tasks. We have formed the most friendly and supportive group of coordinators, which have the most positive relationship; this has resulted in the continuation of our much-needed Baby and Toddler group! In September 2025, many volunteers will be returning to work or their children will attend school, therefore the group is activity seeking likeminded volunteers to continue the good work. Feedback from parents has been overwhelmingly positive. Comments highlighted the friendly atmosphere, variety of activities, and the sense of belonging the group fosters. Parents have noted improvements in their children's confidence, speech, and social skills. The Parent and Toddler Group continues to thrive, serving as a vital part of the community. We look forward to another year of growth, discovery, and joy with our families.

CHURCH AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

BAPTIST CHURCH

We have continued to see new people join us for our Sunday services in the last year, and new people from the previous year have settled in well and make a valuable contribution to church life. We held a guest Pentecost Sunday service for all ages which was well received and tried Cafe Church for the first time! We also had a Games Afternoon for the community which was fun and well attended and hope to do all of these outreach events again very soon. Our YouTube channel

continues with a small increase in number of subscribers. This enables people to watch sermons that have been preached each Sunday if they missed them but also provides others with an opportunity to gain understanding of the church's theology and biblical emphasis. James, our pastor continues to lead most Sunday services with a visiting speaker once a month or so. We recently covered the theme of Baptism, to explain how and why we do this as Baptist Church! We continued to welcome some residents from Kenward on a Sunday sometimes and value the link we have as James is chaplain there. In our Wednesday evening home groups, we have done a course called "Discipleship Explored" and we are now looking at Tear Fund's "Restorative Revolution" series, with Bible studies written by people from around the world. Our Monday morning "Praise and Prayer" times have also continued through the year, and we have run a number of coffee mornings in support of various charities, which have been well attended by local people as well as church regulars. We are planning coffee mornings every 2 months or so this year, with themes such as flower arranging and money/debt management, supporting charities such as the MND Association and Christians Against Poverty. We are hoping to appoint a new Treasurer very soon- this will be a real answer to prayer as the role has been vacant for well over a year now. We are grateful to all those who have helped manage the finances this year.

ST PETER AND ST PAUL'S CHURCH YALDING AND ST MARY'S CHURCH LADDINGFORD MINISTRY & WORSHIP

The Church bear witness to the enduring love of God in our community through the teaching and example of Jesus Christ. We are part of a larger benefice of Yalding and Laddingford with Collier Street, within the deanery of Paddock Wood in the diocese of Rochester. We seek to remain at the heart of the community where we have been for hundreds of years to both challenge and support the people of our villages, and to be a place for them to pray and engage with their spiritual life in both traditional and contemporary styles of worship and especially at the great festivals of the Christian year.

CHURCHWARDEN

Part of the ministry report above.

BELLRINGERS

You might have noticed that only 3 or 4 bells are rung on Sunday mornings. Your tower needs you! We practise most Wednesdays and welcome visitors and new recruits.

LITTLE FISHES

Little Fishes is currently not running.

CHOIR

The choir continues to lead the singing at Sunday morning services as well as singing for other services such as Evensong and, when requested, at weddings and funerals. Christmas and Easter bring additional services too, which can mean a busy but enjoyable time, with new music to be practiced. Last October we were invited to lead a joint choir farewell service for the Archdeacon of Tonbridge at Penshurst church. We are indeed fortunate to have a sizeable four-part choir in Yalding, something which fewer and fewer parishes can continue. On the Friday before Christmas, we were delighted to lead carol singing at the Woolpack Inn, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all in attendance. It's not all hard work, and last summer we were able to share once again in our annual BBQ, in addition to our occasional post choir practice pizza evenings, and as a group we attend the "Sausage and Beer" and "Pints, Pies and Puddings" events at The Chequers in Laddingford. Our numbers remain reasonably constant, and we are always happy to welcome new members. You don't need to be able to read music, just an ability to hold a tune.

JUNIOR CHOIR

Unfortunately, the group has recently seen membership numbers fall as several families and their youngsters have moved out of the area. However, those who remain are still enthusiastic and committed and we continue to meet as often as possible on Friday evenings. We try hard to prepare a piece for each monthly All Age Service. Christmas once again heard us singing at the Family Nativity and the Christingle Service and some joined in with the Community Carols in Church at the Yuletide Market. A couple of youngsters even ventured along to The Woolpack to help the main church choir lead carol singing one Friday evening. This was a lot of fun and an evening we would be happy to repeat! We are hoping to be able to make an appearance at the informal concert that is marking the opening of the Yalding Church Flower Festival in June. New

members (Year 3 and above) are always welcome to come along and join us. It would be wonderful to swell our numbers again, so do please get in touch if you are interested to know more!

JUNIOR CHURCH

The Junior Church in Yalding runs for the first three Sundays of the month in the meeting room upstairs. On the fourth Sunday the children remain in church for the All-Age Service. We have a strong core of regular families that attend and the occasional visiting family. Numbers each week can range from two to twelve children. The sessions are run by a team of volunteers but quite often the parents come up and help with the activities. The sessions usually include a welcome, some singing, a story, a craft activity and prayers, and follow a theme for the month which then leads into the All-Age Service. During this service photos of what the children have been up to in Junior Church are shared with the congregation, the children may sing a song that they have learnt, and they are encouraged to help lead the prayers. This year we once again entered a Christmas tree into the Christmas Tree Festival held at the Baptist Church. We held our first 'Movie Night' in the church, during which the children watched the film 'The Prince of Egypt' whilst enjoying a tea of burgers, ice cream and a lot of popcorn! We held Easter and Christmas Craft Workshops to which 20 children came and enjoyed an afternoon of cooking, crafts and other activities. Our Junior Church children were also integral to the 'Scratch Nativity' play and throughout the year have also perform a variety of 'role plays' during the All-Age Service, including ones about Palm Sunday and the Conversion of Saul.

CHURCHYARD WORKING PARTY

The Churchyard Working Party are volunteers responsible for mowing the new churchyard along with the general maintenance of both churchyards. We have an excellent group of volunteers but as always, more volunteers to spread the load would be very welcome. We have equipment although the mowers are aging hence, I expect the level of repairs/costs to continue to increase over the next few years.

FLOWER ARRANGERS' GROUP

The flower-arrangements which decorate the church throughout the year are provided by our group of willing and hard-working volunteers. The weekly flowers are donated by the arrangers, not all of whom are regular members of the congregation. Although it is possible for the cost of flowers to be reimbursed, this is very infrequently requested. The cost of flowers for the major festivals of Easter and Christmas is met from the proceeds of our stalls at the Church Fete and the Christmas Market. The items on our stall, in addition to flower-arrangements, are made at a series of workshop sessions, attended by many people who are not part of the regular group. We also raise funds by arranging flowers for weddings in the church, charging only a nominal fee for materials and labour. Flowers must be provided by the wedding couple and we donate greenery and our time. Our group, which is gradually decreasing due to ill-health or family commitments, would welcome new members. No special experience is needed, only an enjoyment of working with flowers! Our main activity will be the organisation of a Flower Festival at the end of June, celebrating our community and its varied activities. Some groups have already signed up – at the previous festival we showcased over 60 interest groups and organisations!

PARISH GIVING

Most of our regular donors have responded to our request to change to a direct debit through the Parish Giving Scheme. This is run by the diocese and is advantageous to us both financially and in reducing our workload. We are working on acquiring internet access in the church, to allow our congregation and visitors to donate electronically as many people no longer carry cash.

PLANT AND FABRIC

We are a sub-committee of the PCC (Parochial Church Council), with an interest in keeping our parish church alive and welcoming to the wider community. We manage all building works and repairs for both the parish church of St Peter & St Paul and for St Mary's Laddingford. We also organise "the Vandals" group that maintains the churchyard (on the first Saturday of the month – *Why don't YOU come along?* We are all volunteers, so do think about joining us). The PCC also desires to make the North porch entrance more accessible for young and old alike thereby increasing the use of this wonderful building. The Welcome project will greatly improve access for people on wheels, young and old alike, and still maintain the heritage feel of our parish church.

Our church was built in 13th & 14th centuries and is Grade 1 listed. Such an old building needs constant maintenance and a detailed report done every five years forms the bulk of our work to plan, fund and schedule. If you have a practical frame of mind and an interest in old buildings, just call Graham on 01622 813771

PRAYER GROUP

Prayer group is currently not running.

OUTREACH

Throughout the year, Yalding Church holds a variety of outreach functions in the community. The fête in September, children's craft workshops at Christmas and Easter are such examples. The church also welcomes visiting choirs and bands to use the church for concerts, which this year included the London Welsh Male Voice Choir and the East Peckham Silver Band. Bellringers also occasionally come to ring the bells. The church is open for the Friends of Kent Churches Ride and Stride event in September. The church is also an integral part of the Yuletide market, organising the carol sing-along and providing stalls and hot chocolate. This year has also seen the launch of The Laddingford Community Coffee Morning, held on the first Saturday of each month at St Mary's Hall in Laddingford. The church is open to the public during the day, providing a quiet place for private prayer and reflection, with pamphlets available on a range of subjects.

SPORTS CLUBS

YALDING AND LADDINGFORD SPORTS ASSOCIATION (YALSA)

YALSA activities have been reduced over the past year. Both football and cricket clubs have taken pragmatic steps to make use of the Kintons facilities work for everyone and fortunately we no longer have to endlessly negotiate over use. Roy and his team continue to work miracles and now have their own water supply to feed sprinklers. There are still some issues to tackle like security so we will still exist for the foreseeable future. We are lucky to have dedicated volunteers in both clubs so that Yalding and Laddingford can continue to enjoy Cricket and Football. Many thanks to all of them.

CRICKET CLUB

Yalding Cricket Club's on field performances were mixed in 2024. After winning promotion two years ago the Saturday XI had a difficult season ending in relegation. The Sunday XI had mixed results while the U11s won most of their games. As a result of a combination of injuries and university attendance the Sunday team will play friendly matches rather than league cricket in 2025. The Club is in a reasonably strong position financially, boosted in 2024 by income from the kiosk to augment other fundraising. This year an irrigation system derived from harvested rainwater will significantly improve ground preparation and playing conditions. The club welcomes new members. We seek players of all ages - girls, boys, men and women; social and volunteer members who would like to get involved in the club, helping with grounds maintenance, serving in the kiosk or just watching cricket at the Kintons. The Club thanks Yalding and Laddingford PC for its continued support through the year.

FISHING CLUB (CALPAC)

I have been informed by The Parish Council that the cutting of our field will resume again this year. This will make a big difference to our members, who struggled last year with the walk to the river. I visited the fishery on Friday 11th April to start brush cutting the fishing swims. This early start always makes the summer cut much easier.

FOOTBALL CLUB - Yalding & Laddingford Football Club

Our community football club has continued to evolve and renew this season, with arrivals, departures, new ideas and traditional challenges. With the generous support of a Kent County Council grant, we are purchasing a defibrillator, which is part of our continuing commitment to investing in safety equipment, alongside our fully subsidised approach to safeguarding training, first aid training and additional DBS checks to ensure there are always sufficient qualified adults present as the club grows. We have continued to participate positively in Kent FA Safeguarding initiatives. We have eleven league-registered teams, playing in four leagues and consisting of nine mixed junior teams (U7 Harriers, U8 Kestrels, U9 Ospreys, U10 Kites, U11 Hawks, U12 Buzzards, U13 Condors, U15 Eagles, U16 Falcons) and two Men's teams. Our Men's First Team has had a full reboot this season and been rewarded with a place in a Cup Final at the Gallagher Stadium in

May. We welcomed new coaches, adding to the number generously gifting their time & expertise and we supported referee training to add to our growing number of match officials. We played home games at the Kintons and Jubilee Field, Laddingford and held weekday Winter Training at East Peckham using our portable floodlights. Thanks to excellent support from Roy Farrier, we have further improved pitch quality. We again achieved England FA Accreditation, confirming us to be run effectively and we continue to implement our Club Development Plan. We have continued with a player fee approach which emphasises affordability, access and tailored support for those unable to pay. We continued to benefit from generous sponsorship support. We sustained our active presence on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and LinkedIn. It rained a lot during the Winter! A massive thank you to the long list of volunteers, players and parents who have supported the club this season. We're looking forward to the year ahead!

RIFLE RANGE

Yalding Rifle & Pistol Club has enjoyed a good year with membership currently full and a waiting list for potential probationary members. The website yrpc.uk has been updated and the club continues to provide training in a safe and welcome environment for our sport.

For queries, please contact secretary@yrpc.uk

TABLE TENNIS CLUB

We usually have between 6 and 11 at our Monday sessions. Fridays are closed sessions, not open to the general public. We have one member in his late 20s who also represents Kent at county level and the rest are MUCH older! Despite the increasing age profile, most are playing at a good level, it is inspiring to see people in their 60s, 70s and 80s still 'running around' and playing competitively. There are still no junior sessions as none of the parents have been able to make the commitment to running these. Our one licenced instructor is giving up his authorisation but the club will remain affiliated to Table Tennis England (formerly the ETTA).

COMMERCIAL SPORTING ACTIVITIES

AQUA CHIMP

Aqua Chimp Kent is a new attraction that offers a fun and challenging ropes course on water, with no safety harness or restrictions. It is suitable for all abilities and ages. It is located at the YEP development on Hampstead Lane.

CIRCLE DANCING

Our group of ladies meet on the first Saturday afternoon of the month and Emma and I enjoy teaching Circle Dancing, which is good exercise for our bodies and brains, as well as the music, good company and laughter. We love the Baptist Hall as it is the perfect size and has a special atmosphere together with the homely kitchen for our tea break. It is all going well and we plan to carry on happily for the foreseeable future. The new window is beautiful. Emma also entered the Christmas Tree Festival on behalf of our group.

LUCY ROBINS SCHOOL OF DANCE

Lucy Robins School of Dance continues to thrive and grow in Yalding! We've been proudly running classes at the Youth and Community Centre for over 12 years and we're still going strong. At our Yalding branch, we offer exciting classes in Musical Theatre, Cheer, and Street Dance. Our school has now blossomed to over 450 students dancing with us each week, from toddlers as young as 1 year old right through to adults. In February, over 200 of our talented students took part in three *sold-out* performances of our biannual theatre show at The Stag Theatre, dancing to a combined audience of over 1,500 people! We were also incredibly proud to raise over £1,000 for local Yalding resident Sidney Cooke through sales of our show programmes and the generous support of our show sponsors. We're so grateful to be part of the Yalding community and look forward to continuing to grow and share our love of dance here for many years to come.

JLP PERFORMING ARTS

2024, was an exciting year as Ms Chloe Spencer took over as principal, thus enabling her to enter many students into their ISTD Ballet and Tap exams, leading to an 100% pass rate. Chloe also entered a talented ballet dancer into Beckenham Dance Festival. This year, as well as organising the school's first big production show in June, Chloe will be rebranding the school under her name, while preparing students for their next exams, and supporting local events. We really appreciate

the ongoing support from the parish in sharing the word about all the opportunities we offer and promoting us wherever possible to support this exciting transition.

KARATE

Everything is fine for my Wednesday evening class. I'm glad that I can still use the side door as that works better for me when handing back some of the younger children as I feel it's safer away from the road.

MODEL CAR RACING

In 2024 Kent Mini-Z continued to be one of the largest UK indoor Mini-Z circuits with racers coming from as far as Bristol just to race on a Friday evening! With ages ranging from 3 to 75 it's fun for everyone! We are looking forward to another year of fun racing!

PETE BROOKS FITNESS

As the owner of PB Fitness and Nutrition I'm very proud to be a part of the local community. My aim is to help as many people from Yalding get to a healthier and more active lifestyle. Many people now know me as PT Pete and I endeavour to keep that name on the tip of the tongues around the village. I run a fitness class at the Village Hall every Thursday evening. It's a fab place to be as a coach to see so many people enjoying getting fitter and having fun at the same time, with such a variety of different fitness levels. The class caters for most level of fitness and as such has become an inclusive place where people can feel confident no matter where they are on their fitness journey. People who may not necessarily have met beforehand all participating and building friendships along the way. I've seen some amazing results during this time, and this is so gratifying as many have said they wouldn't have done so if not for the class. I would like to look into the viability of putting on a regular class during the day aimed at the busy parents who can't get to the Thursday evening class. The support I've had from local residents is great and has led me to convert my garage into a studio gym to help more local residents on their fitness journey, whatever their level of previous experience.

PILATES - BODY CONTROL

This is the fifteenth year of teaching Pilates classes in Yalding and I am delighted that all classes are fully subscribed, both face to face and on Zoom. Participants become hooked; friendships formed with a strong camaraderie aspect. The highlights are always lessons outside in my garden, whenever the weather allows, followed by coffee, cakes and chatter. John Howard Steel wrote the history of Joseph Pilates called "The Caged Lion". In it he describes "Pilates is a system of co-ordinated movement, concentration and breathing that fully absorbs the actor in what he or she is doing, adds grace and efficiency to daily life, relieves stress, increases circulation, augments self-esteem, becomes a habit and most importantly it's fun to do". It is practised around the world and continues to grow in popularity. Movement is like medicine for our bodies and I cannot recommend it enough.

PILATES – HARRIET STEVENS

I run a mixed ability and gender Pilates class in St Mary's church hall Laddingford on a Wednesday and Thursday evening at 7:30pm. They run throughout the year with pay as you go or block payment options.

MOVE WITH EASE

Move with Ease clinic is based in Laddingford and specialises in chronic (persistent) pain management and recovery. Caroline offers the following services either from her clinic, virtually or from Paddock Wood Community Centre: clinical sports massage, Pain Reprocessing Therapy and pain neuroscience education, Buteyko breathing for respiratory disorders, Yoga and fascial movement, mindfulness and meditation. I am currently studying Trauma and Tension Releasing Exercises (TRE) and clinical hypnotherapy. All of my services help my clients to move and live with greater ease! Please look at my website and if you want to discuss how I can help you book a FREE discovery call! www.movewithease.org.uk

YOGA – HAPPY NAT

Yoga in Yalding runs every Thursday evening, welcome to all levels. It really is a lovely community with regulars, who all mostly live in the village and we all know each other. One of my most popular classes and hope to continue for years to come. This year I increased my prices, thankfully it did not put people off and still doing very well.

ZUMBA

Tanya's Total Fitness runs local Zumba classes. Including, 7pm every Wednesday at Yalding Village Hall. I have a wonderful group of varied ages, and everyone has the same goal...To keep fit and have fun. There is always room for new members. Please do come along and try a class. You won't regret it!!

YOUTH GROUPS

LEGO CLUB

After starting up in 2022, Lego Club meets at Yalding Library after school 3.30-4.30pm and it's always a joy to put Lego creations in the window for children (and adults!) to look at as they pass by. There is also a Duplo box now for younger children which comes out during story time from time to time. Lego Club is an after-school club for one hour 3.30-4.30 on a Friday afternoon and we are always pleased to see children making Lego and learning to interact with each other. Everyone joined in making Lego Christmas decorations for our entry in the Christmas Tree Festival and they were surprisingly addictive! We unfortunately, cannot have children who are unaccompanied as the venue is the library and is a public place, but as long as there is a 'go to' adult present, all children are welcome. For the latest Lego made, take a look at www.facebook.co.uk/YaldingLegoClub

SCOUT GROUP

Yalding Scout Group is in trouble and we really need support from the residents of the parish to survive. We are down to only three trained leaders and a couple of parent helpers! We lost our Explorer group last year which means there is no scouting opportunity for young people in Yalding between the ages of 14 -18, Explorers has been invaluable for the personal development of our previous youngsters. In February our Beaver leader stepped down so we haven't been able to run Beavers since then, two parents have stepped up and are currently undergoing training so hopefully we haven't lost out provision for 6 to 8-year-olds. Cub (8 to 10-year-olds) is thriving but only has two leaders both of which no longer have children in scouting. Scouts (10 to 14-year-olds) is also thriving but has only one trained leader and completely relies on parent helpers to be able to run. Yalding Scout Group, founded on the 24th of June 1960, has been a cornerstone of the local scouting community for over six decades and it is a Sea Scout Group, offering a distinctive programme focused on water-based activities. With a rich history of adventure and skill development and has always been a cherished part of the local community and village life, providing a space for young people to grow, learn, and connect with nature in a fun and meaningful way. It is an amazing organisation that offers the children of our community an enormous range of activities which aim to help young people grow into well-rounded independent adults. From crafts to litter picking, cooking, fire building, camping, kayaking, raft building, hiking, den building - you name it and they do it. ARE WE REALLY PREPARED TO LOOSE IT? If not we really need lots more volunteers. You don't have to have had previous scouting experience as training is given. You just need to enjoy working with children and want to see them flourish. Please consider talking to one of the leaders and coming along to see what we do and decide how you can help and what you can offer. It really would be a shame for us to lose the amazing group we currently have but that, unfortunately will happen unless you get involved. If you feel you can help in any way please contact

STORY TIME

Calling all pre-schoolers with your big grownups! Storytime is on every Tuesday afternoon in the library in Yalding during term time. Hurrah! Every week either Anna or June read a selection of stories and then we'll have a sing song of popular nursery rhymes. This year we have regularly welcomed Riverside Pre-School children with their carers and a lively time is had by all! We love having an interactive time with your little one. Storytime is term time only from 2.15-2.45 – so older brothers or sisters can be picked up from school after. We'll do our best to have a storyteller each week, so look out for Joanna from time to time, by popular request! Follow Storytime posts on www.facebook.com/storytime@yaldinglibrary or post your own requests from you little one – we would love to hear from you and we'll do our best to find a story your little one would really enjoy.

BOOK AND LITERARY CLUBS

HOLIDAY READING BOOK CLUB

HRBC is now in its 15th year. 3 new members have joined in the last year or so but we still retain several of the original 12 members. Those that have moved away have stayed in touch virtually. We have embraced technology and around half of us now choose to read digital copies or listen on audible. The Island Swimmer by Lorraine Kelly and The Fair Botanists by Sara Sheridan were our favourites this year. Many thanks to Marion at the library for keeping us supplied with books and for flagging the alternative formats

LITERARY GROUP

Our reading this year has been covered a wide range, from a Victorian murder mystery (The Moonstone, by Wilkie Collins) to a novel about life Ukraine after the Russian invasion (Grey Bees, by Andrei Kurkov). As usual, we have had lively discussions and differences of view. Two books which we all enjoyed and would strongly recommend were Super-Infinite by Katherine Rundell (a biography of the 17th century poet, John Donne) and A Month in the Country by J L Carr. As always, we are hugely grateful for the help provided by Yalding library.

YALDING BOOK GROUP

We have enjoyed a diverse range of fiction and non-fiction over the course of the year and particularly highlight The Slow Worm Song, A Terrible Kindness, Tuesdays with Morrie and Caledonian Road. Our evenings are always lively with stimulating discussions, as well as being convivial, combining our love of books and friendship. It is the twenty-first year of our book club. In August we enjoyed a wonderful outing to Farley's Farm House, the home of photographer Lee Miller and her husband surrealist painter Roland Penrose. We had an excellent lunch at The Gun, Chiddingly and also went to see the film Lee. A special New Year dinner in January at The Bull was a highlight.

YALDING YAFFLES BOOK GROUP

Jenny Gundry, the founder of the Book Group some 20 years ago, has not been involved for a while due to family health problems, but maintains a keen interest in the Group. In order to keep the continuity Annie Lee-Davey agreed to step in. Numbers are a little lower as members have moved out of the area. The selection and range of books continue to be varied, which are chosen at the January meeting each year and submitted to the Library where Sheelagh and Marion continue to provide the Group with the books requested each month, a service which is greatly appreciated. The Group meet each month, excepting August and December, with lively discussion and debate and a mark out of five given for each monthly read, five being exceptional.

OTHER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

The highlight was the opening of the allotment site to all the visitors during the Yalding Safari Saturday. This was the first time we had opened the allotments, and we are looking forward to carrying on with this event. We now have 4 Polly tunnel on the site as recommended by the 1997 amendments of the Allotments Acts. At present, all plots are rented and in a good horticultural condition. We hope to enjoy more social gatherings at the site and also trips to other gardens.

ART GROUP

Yalding Art Group has been going from strength to strength over the past couple of years. We are a long-established group as it was originally started by Anne Telfer in 2001. We are now established at Riverside (behind the Post Office) and at times we are a little crowded, but we always seem to fit! Artists come when they can, which gives the group a great dynamic as you never know who will turn up and we work to a new subject every two weeks. We have been taking requests and then we are all out of our comfort zone! We always look forward to our annual Arts & Crafts Show in May which will be on Sunday the 11th this year. This subsidises our Summer trip which we now go by train as the cost of a coach is just too much. Last year we finally got to Folkestone and our ultimate goal each year is to swim in the sea! This most of us did. In 2025 our trip is to Hastings with the same goal in mind and there is a good art exhibition at The Hastings Contemporary which may also get a look in. We are not a fund-raising group which enables our subs to be used either by subsidising our annual trip or the occasional demonstration and our

Christmas meal which is at The Village Club. Sessions are mostly on Thursday mornings 10-12 with a refreshment break (and cake!). M£3 per person – all welcome. We have a Facebook page www.facebook.com/yaldingartgroup and a WhatsApp group - both of which showcases all the work we do during the year.

BINGO

Bingo is played every Wednesday evening, 7 pm for 7.30 pm start, We currently have 34 members and if anyone else is interested in joining us please contact suegerrish@gmail.com / 01622 814163

BEE KEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Last year started slowly due to inconsistent weather. In March we ran our normal course for beginners and continued to attend events throughout the year with the bees and our honey. In November we held a ceremony at the apiary in commemoration of the British Beekeepers Association 100th Anniversary where a native lime tree was donated to The Gardens Yalding in celebration and the event was attended by Rod Clark and his staff along with several members of the club. Spring has now sprung and I'm glad to report the bees have survived the winter and the club continues to thrive.

DRAMA

Yalding's Drama Group ran very successfully for 20 years offering a variety of productions, indoors and outdoors, until the pandemic halted the momentum and key players retired or moved from the village. Whilst the drama group has still not officially reformed a group of local thespians came together to put on a performance of an episode of Dads Army (Mums Army) at The VE Day 80 Street Party celebrations. The actors thoroughly enjoyed the process as did the audience and it would be amazing if this reinitiation of the drama group, but they need willing directors. If interested please contact Deborah Fury at dobsfury@hotmail.com

GARDEN SOCIETY

Society has had a good year. We held our usual 2 shows, a coach outing to Wisley and 3 interesting winter talks. Our members also enjoyed our social events, a summer picnic and Christmas party. We were delighted to welcome several new members at our AGM in March, bringing our total to over 100. We are a friendly group, always happy to exchange ideas and advice and would love to welcome more members. You don't need to have any special knowledge (or more than a window box and enthusiasm) to enjoy our events. Also, membership entitles you to discounts at Brookside Garden Centre and Sutton's seeds.

Yalding Historical Society

This group was not established

KNIT AND NATTER

The Knit & Natter Group at Yalding Library has taken off in a wonderful way! This is our second year and we have a lively mix of knitters, crochet and other crafts. We meet on a Tuesday morning in Yalding Library at 10.30am until mid-day. There are no tea making facilities, so feel free to bring a drink with you, but preferably with a lid on it. The group is for all kinds of crafts and if you have a project you are stuck with, there is always someone else in the group who is an expert. The knitters/crochet experts amongst us are concentrating on making as many poppies as possible for the WI for the end of WWII celebrations in May. There is a Facebook page – www.facebook.com/knit&natter@yaldinglibrary where inspiration for knitting, crocheting, crafts are posted. Please feel free to post any craft or knitting projects – we'd love to see them. Yalding Library is also allocated a 'warm haven' so even if you are not keen on knitting, crochet or craft, just natter with friends and keep warm!

RELATIVE MINORS (RM) ORCHESTRA

Our director, Rachel, left the area to work as a resident music teacher in Surrey so we have spent the last year without an official conductor. Karen Di Marco (who set up the orchestra/band in the early 1990s) is temporarily leading rehearsals but we would very much welcome a regular director. We continue to meet on the 2nd and 4th Sunday evening (5-7pm) of each month and work together to produce a good sound, so if there is anyone out there who would like to work with us, please contact Heather Haddesley on 07790125791. We play music from many genres: films and musicals, pop, classical, jazz, etc. We held a very successful concert in Yalding Church last July in memory of Andrew Thurston, our previous conductor, and Timothy Oyler, who played the violin

with RMs for many years. We were also celebrating the 100th and 90th birthdays of two previous players, Trevor (clarinet) and Anne Telfer (viola). A few of us played in their garden at their celebration tea party in August. We played the carols and two Christmas pieces at the Laddingford Carol Service in December and we are looking forward to playing at the Flower Festival in Yalding Church on 27th June. We are always looking for new players and anyone who plays a musical instrument is very welcome. Do contact Heather.

REPAIR CAFÉ

We launched the very first Yalding Repair Club with the Mayor & Mayoress of Maidstone cutting the ribbon at 2pm on Saturday, 15th March 2025 and it was a great success. The Repair Café is a fundraising initiative by Friends of Yalding Youth & Community Centre to raise funds for the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the building which is also Yalding Baptist Church. Many community groups use the building and the Friends are keen for the building to be up to standard and the best it can be for all groups (including Church members) to be able to use. We had 25 items to look at for the first Café and they were either repaired or referred onto the next Repair Café meeting due to either needing parts or the repairer needed to take them home to repair. We have set dates throughout the year for the 3rd Saturday of each month at Yalding Youth & Community Centre (Yalding Baptist Church) in Vicarage Road so look out for the posters of the next one should you have an item at home we can look at and repair. Repair Cafes are a countrywide phenomenon with a strong environmental message of saving broken items from being dumped when they could be repaired. After each Café, details of repairs and referrals are sent to Repair Café Org so they can gauge what items keep appearing and which items are the most popular items brought in to be repaired. We will have a Community Table at each Café in the small hall where refreshments are available. If you are a community group and would like to showcase what you do and attract new members, contact chapman.june59@gmail.com to reserve a Repair Café date.

VILLAGE VOICES

It has been an excellent year for our community choir. New members have joined and we are now 25 on the books with always room for more. We were invited to sing at St Luke's church, Maidstone twice in the year and those occasions were mutually enjoyable. We also sang at the Laddingford Carol service where our interpretation of the shepherds' story was highly praised. In February we recorded an African bride's song and sent it to the daughter of the head teacher in Farato, The Gambia on the occasion of her wedding. Village Voices embraces all ages and abilities and there is no emphasis upon reading music. We are a friendly group and enjoy singing. We meet on the first and third Thursdays of the month in Yalding church at 7.30. Do make contact if you are interested in joining. karendimack@gmail.com

WI

We have had another busy year at Yalding & Laddingford WI. We have seen our member numbers grow and have had a variety of workshops throughout the year including gin tasting, cake decorating, the ever-popular wreath making, flower arranging, line dancing and a crochet workshop where we made poppies for an amazing display at the church. We have brought back the craft fayre and recently held a jumble sale and had a wonderful time on our Christmas night out to The Weald of Kent Golf Club. We also ran Santa's Grotto and the chocolate tombola at The Yuletide Market and not forgetting the WI Dance Troop came out of retirement for the VE Day street party. The WI is every second Tuesday of the month and is held in the village hall from 7:30 pm. New members and guests are always welcome. Please pop along for a visit or contact Dee-Ann Stead on deeanstead@aol.co.uk or 07920402052.

MARKETS

YULETIDE MARKET

2024 saw another highly successful Yuletide market despite the extremely challenging weather conditions imposed by storm "Darragh". A yellow wind warning and a spate of late cancellations saw us needing to implement significant contingency plans. During the week leading up-to the market we were glued to the weather forecast and had various plans in place which would be influenced by the weather we had on the day itself. We avoided a total cancellation, and all parties pulled together in true Yalding resilient spirit to make sure we ran the event as close to normally as

possible. On the day we organised the entire event in the village hall. We had Santa's grotto in one area, decked out beautifully. We had Punch and Judy in their own area creating a magical space for the children to enjoy, and the stage was shared between stalls and entertainers. The hall itself was laid out to make the most of every inch of space with some 25 stalls, caterers, the bottle stall and a one-way system in place. Our shiny new PA system was put to good use organising the one-way traffic inside the village hall and announcing each act due on the stage. MC Charles Lister discovered a new talent – watch out Ant and Dec. Outside we had the entertainment in the form of the Old School Samba band who kept the queues happy in the “extreme” wind, and our smaller number of caterers who provided hot sustenance for all in a mini ‘food court’ setting to allow shelter from the weather. I have to mention our ‘on the door’ team who played a massive part in keeping our visitors safe during extreme weather and inside the packed village hall. Very quickly they implemented a system of 20 out and 20 in which managed the potential for overcrowding very nicely. We were very well organised with traffic management and off-road parking, and thanks again to local business LupoFresh for use of their large area of hardstanding. We're also very privileged to enjoy free parking spaces donated by the GP surgery, Yalding school and the Baptist Church – thank you all very much for your continued kind support. Particular thanks must go to the Yalding residents for coming out and supporting in their droves, our superb Yuletide volunteer team, the Parish Council, most local businesses and of course our visitors from near and far. 2025 sees me handing the chairmanship over to Dee Ann Stead who you'll know from Yalding Parish Council and numerous other village organisations. I'll still be involved of course. We always have more things to do than we have people for, especially in the traffic management and parking domains. This event depends on volunteers, and we need more! What about some of our newer residents? Find us on Facebook!

HALLS AND FACILITIES

YALDING VILLAGE HALL

Yalding Village Hall is a charitable community facility which has been used by The Parish for just over 70 years. Current users are Preschool, WI, Parish Council, Garden Society, Zumba, JLP Dance Group, Yoga and Fitness Group. On weekends the hall is let out to private users for parties or fundraising events. I have been involved with the Village Hall for nearly 40 years and feel it is time for me to step down and for some younger blood to take over the day to day running of the hall. If anyone is interested and would like to know more details, please contact me suegerrish@gmail.com / 01622 814163

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (YYCC)

It is probably worth mentioning that YYCC is also known as the Baptist Chapel- this sometimes causes confusion! The building belongs to the Baptist Church but is run by a separate YYCC committee who have a volunteer to manage bookings. Many different groups continue to use the building covering most slots each week. There are some one-off bookings also, mostly at weekends. We are grateful to Martin Johnson who continues to manage hall bookings and is trying out an electronic shared calendar for this purpose. We have been able to replace the front Main Hall windows and are very thankful for the funds which have now come in for the rest of the windows which we hope to have put in very soon. Well done to the Friends of YYCC who held another Christmas Tree Festival in December and have started a Repair Cafe in March- this was a great success and the plan is to run one each month this year. Our next project is the Main Hall Heaters and we also hope eventually to put a cabin in the garden for use as an office and a counselling room.

FRIENDS OF YALDING YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE

Linda and June – the only ‘friends’ for years! As there was only two of us, we decided to do just one fundraising event a year, which is the Themed Christmas Tree Festival which is held the second week of December after the weekend of the Yuletide Market. Put the 13th & 14th December 2025 in your diary for this year! Local groups and businesses pay £10 to put a themed Christmas Tree in the large hall and each one is voted on throughout the weekend by the public. Gary & Lorraine from Oakapple Farm always supply the largest tree to start off the Festival, to which we are always grateful and it is always a show stopper. It's a really ‘feel good’ event and there is always a lovely church service amongst the trees on the second day before we open to the general public for the final voting. We are always entranced by the imagination of our entries and it

is such a warm cosy event. Volunteers offer refreshments, cake and mince pies to visitors and all donations go to the upkeep and ongoing renovation of the Baptist Church. Early in 2025, we expanded our 'Friends' to start Yalding Repair Café' which has become a very ambitious project and has its own report. We are now pleased to say we have many 'friends'.

HELPING HANDS

As many of you may know, Yalding Helping Hands operates to assist members of the parish who need help with transport for doctor's or hospital appointments. Many do not have family or friends to take them for these appointments which is when we are called on for help, particularly from our older residents. Helping Hands has been operating for many years now but as mentioned last year, we desperately need volunteer drivers. Many of our volunteers have either moved away, are no longer in good health or are just getting older. It then becomes difficult for Jenny Scott and I to keep calling on the same people and on occasions we have to refuse requests for help with transport. Transport is provided for local residents to Maidstone Hospital, Tunbridge Wells Hospital or Yalding Doctors' Surgery. If you feel you could help please get in touch with Jenny or me – our contact numbers are listed in the parish magazine. Volunteers are reimbursed for any parking charges and at the moment 50p per mile for fuel costs.

NU-VENTURE BUSES

As in 2024, Yalding's daytime buses to/from Maidstone continue to be provided by Nu-Venture on Mondays to Saturdays, with ongoing financial support from Kent County Council. Yalding Parish Council have again been proactive in prompt notification of flooding and roadworks on local roads used by buses requiring services to be diverted or curtailed. Unplanned works by utilities in the highway have greatly increased in volume, leading to no-notice short-term changes to bus times and routes and consequent inconvenience to our passengers. The Streetworks team at KCC - whose role is to co-ordinate requests from utilities and others to close roads - appear to be unwilling or unable to ensure that bus routes are unaffected, as the utilities can more or less close any road at any time regardless of the views of any local authority. On a brighter note, a revision of bus routes to serve Yalding Station will be facilitated by the creation of a bus turning circle in the ongoing development of the old ICI site.

YALDING LIBRARY

This year has seen a steady number of visitors to the library. This is helped by the regular groups that are held there. Lego Club on Friday afternoons is increasing in popularity, however, the Storytime sessions on Tuesday afternoons got off to a very slow start and we are pleased to see that we now have regular numbers attending the sessions. We are very grateful to the volunteers, June and Anna who have kept these sessions going. Craft and Chatter on Tuesday mornings is now becoming more popular with a regular group of people attending. Thanks to the school, we have a good number of children visiting the library and we had 49 children taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge. This was lower than the 60 for the previous year so we are hoping to encourage more support for the 'Story Garden' themed challenge in the summer. Although the visitor numbers are reasonably steady, the number of books issued compared with last year is down and any support to increase visitors and library use always very welcome!

PATIENTS' PARTICIPATION GROUP - No report received.

INFORMATION

PARISH MAGAZINE

I have been Editor since 2020 and the magazine gives me a great sense of pride in getting all the many events and news to the 1220 residents who read it and our full colour digital magazine can be accessed on the church website www.yaldingchurches.co.uk. The magazine is funded by St. Peter & St. Paul's Church and although it does have Church news etc, we put as many events and community news in as we can and the Community Diary just gets bigger and bigger! We publish 11 copies a year with the December and January issue being combined. We start with asking for a donation for the following year for £5 per household to cover publishing costs and we put an envelope in the February issue. Although we now have a QR code in the magazine to assist and details of the bank account is on page 2. If you would prefer to pay digitally, the account is 11424503 sort code 09-01-53 (Donation Yalding Parish Magazine). The costs of publishing are large so the magazine is printed in black & white with the occasional colour insert which is always

sponsored. We really do appreciate the support Yalding Parish Council give us. The magazine team consists of Editor - June Chapman, Advertising - Lara Franklin, Treasurer – Graham Spillman and Distribution – Paul & Anna Kish who have a large band of volunteers who deliver house to house. We would appreciate any articles to be with us by the 10th or as near as possible as we have to consider the printing and the distribution and it is very disappointing for readers if they miss an event at the beginning of the month due to delays. If you would like to be a volunteer delivering the magazine, please contact mag@yaldingchurches.co.uk but please remember we do rely on our distribution volunteers to get the magazine as near to the 1st of the month as possible so early events don't miss out.

PARISH NEWS

To receive useful information on flooding issues, road closures, lost and found and more; please email chairman@yaldingparishcouncil.gov.uk to be included on the Parish Database.

PARTNERSHIPS

MEDWAY VALLEY COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

Kent Community Rail Partnership is one of over 75 CRPs across the UK. We are hosted by Sustrans, the charity the charity making it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle. We are accredited annually by the Department for Transport.

Highlights for the Medway Valley Line for 2024/25 are listed below.

- We have given a voice to local communities, by responding to the Maidstone Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, Tonbridge Strategic Station Study, and conducting walking route audits around our Maidstone town centre stations.
- Pop-up events took place at Tonbridge and Maidstone West stations, focused on promoting the British Transport police 61016 service to rail users, to help drive down crime and anti-social behaviour on the railway.
- The Maidstone River Festival saw us working with the Kent Downs National Landscape team to promote leisure trips by rail, explaining assisted travel options available from Southeastern and travel discounts available through Railcards, "Kids for a Quid" and Group Save options.
- We continued to support our station adopters at Cuxton, Snodland, Maidstone West and Wateringbury, who keep their local stations attractive and welcoming to visitors and regular users. We gave extra support to Five Acre Wood school with weeding, after growth of climbing plants at their Snodland station garden became a little more than the students could manage.
- Social media posts have promoted our Rail Trail walks from Medway Valley Line stations. We have seen promotion of our own led walks by Visit Maidstone and Yalding parish magazine. Our walks bring tourists into the Medway Valley by train, promoting sustainable tourism and tourist spend in the local economy.
- Kent CRP received the award for "Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail" at the Community Rail Awards 2025. The award recognises the dedication and commitment of our officers, partners, members and volunteers to help community rail to flourish along our lines; and the wider impact we have in sharing skills, knowledge and best practice with other CRPs across the UK.

Kent CRP is grateful to Yalding Parish Council for its funding and support for our work.

MEDWAY VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP (MVCP)

MVCP works across the boroughs of Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling; this brief report showcases work and projects relevant to the Yalding area.

MVCP continues to deliver the project to control giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and floating pennywort across the Medway catchment, locally with funding from Yalding Parish Council, and with further funding from the Environment Agency. We work in partnership with CABI, an international, not-for-profit organisation that applies scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment, using weevils as the biocontrol agent for floating pennywort, with another pilot project planned for 2025. Himalayan balsam continues to be abundant and we are planning further task days in 2025 to pull balsam in various areas. Many thanks to everyone, including Yalding Parish Council, who continue to support the invasive non-native species control project. The two ponds at Yalding Fen restored as part of the Natural England scheme for great crested newts are now looking very good and supporting plenty of wildlife. During the three-month

check, earlier this year, evidence of great crested newts was found in one of the ponds, proving this project to be a great success. Further seed sowing took place in late 2024, with a team of volunteers collecting seed Yalding Enterprise Park from Yalding Fen and spreading it on the banks of the conveyance channel, with the aim to extend the habitat with locally sourced seed. MVCP continues to manage and monitor the community woodland, undertaking aftercare of the trees. With funding from MBC, MVCP worked with Medway Victory Angling Society to plant approx. 1500 trees near the river just downstream of Yalding. With funding from the NHS, MVCP's Woodland Wellbeing programme continues at Yalding Fen. We have ten sessions planned for 2025, for a select signposted audience. Based on Forest School principles, the project aims to improve the mental health of participants, through spending time in nature, learning new skills and social interaction. There are now two barn owl boxes at the Fen, which are monitored annually by MVCP in partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) as part of our ongoing Barn Owl project. Surveys will be taking place, this year, in late May and June. Kathryn Barton, MVCP Manager

SPEEDWATCH

Speedwatch in Yalding had not been operating since 2018, so we had to look at all the equipment and liaised with Kent Police to get volunteers and to upgrade certain parts and held online training via www.communityspeedwatch.org. We have a WhatsApp Group to help get a team together for a session in various allocated points in the village and we have now started! It has been difficult to set up any sessions, firstly due to the terrible weather and as my flood skirt was put up, the main monitor was stuck in the garage! Hopefully, we can now get going as the weather has improved and we can always have more volunteers! If you are interested please email chapman.june59@gmail.com, to be a volunteer, it involves doing an online test and to join our group, look on the website and request to join. It seems that vehicles either speed in or speed out of the village from various places and we just register those vehicles and send the information off to Kent Police. We have no powers to restrain or arrest – we are just information gatherers. We have had a lot of encouragement from local residents as it seems that speeding has been a problem for a while, so we hope we are a little help with trying to reduce it.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS THAT SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

INVOLVE KENT

Involve Kent is a local charity committed to creating healthy, connected communities. Last year we supported nearly 30,000 people across Kent—some in and around Yalding—to live happier, healthier lives. At Yalding Surgery, our Social Prescribing Link Workers and Children's Health Navigators help patients of all ages address non-medical challenges affecting their wellbeing, from managing long-term health conditions to supporting families of neurodivergent children. We take a whole-person approach, connecting people with practical help, emotional support, and local services based on what matters most to them. We also offer tailored support for unpaid carers—those looking after a loved one due to illness, disability, or frailty. Many carers go unrecognised and unsupported. We help people access their rights, get a break when needed, and find practical and emotional support so they can continue caring while looking after their own wellbeing too. In Yalding, residents aged 55+ can also benefit from our Community Navigation and Actively Involved services—offering help with everyday tasks, social groups, and confidence-boosting activities. And for those with limited mobility or no access to transport, our Community Transport service provides affordable and friendly door-to-door lifts for shopping, medical appointments, or social outings. In 2023/24 alone, we supported over 850 people with nearly 8,000 volunteer-led journeys. Whether you're looking for support or want to volunteer, we're here to help.

LOCAL COMMERCIAL SERVICES

CHEQUERS INN

The Chequers continues to be the focal point of Laddingford with the landlords, Charles & Tracey completing 30 years trading at The Chequers in 2024. The customers include locals from the villages of Laddingford and Yalding as well as from surrounding villages such as East Peckham, Paddock Wood and Five Oak Green. It is the meeting place for several local groups and is keen to support all organisations within Yalding Parish. There are several annual events held including ale festivals, sausage and pie weeks and the village flower & vegetable show. While the economic

and trading climates continue to remain challenging The Chequers is committed to supporting the local community and providing a happy and welcoming environment for everyone.

CLOCKHOUSE FARM

At Clock House Farm our mission is to deliver on growing a better tomorrow propositioned by continually producing the finest quality fruit ensuring a seamless supply to our customers. In 2024, our standout achievement was the successful implementation of the tray field project at Linton Growing, the dedicated propagation arm of Clock House Farm. As an integrated plant growing company, Linton Growing plays a crucial role in improving plant quality and ensuring long-term food security. The tray field is a landmark innovation in sustainable agriculture, bringing with it a host of environmental benefits: Water Conservation: A closed-loop system recycles water, significantly reducing waste and overall consumption. Reduced Fertiliser and Chemical Use: The system allows for precise nutrient management, resulting in lower fertiliser use and a drastic reduction in pesticides and fungicides. Lower Carbon Emissions: By transitioning from importing plants from the Netherlands to sourcing directly from Linton Growing, we've significantly cut down on CO₂ emissions and road miles. This project marks a major step forward in our commitment to environmental responsibility, resource efficiency, and sustainable food production. Expansion Near Faversham: We are pleased to share that we've recently acquired an additional farm near Faversham. In light of the current economic challenges facing the agricultural sector, a fellow grower has entrusted us with the management of their business. As part of our integration process, we're replacing the existing caravans on-site and conducting a full review of operations. Our goal is to transform this new addition into a profitable and sustainable arm of our business. Sustainability remains at the heart of every decision we make, and we're committed to enhancing the long-term viability of this farm while respecting the land, environment, and community it supports. We are still very much concentrating on land sharing and sparing initiatives and focussing on our core values: Quality – A dedication to delivering fruit of an exceptional standard and taste to our customers. People – A passionate and ambitious commitment to people to ensure we are a team with motivation and a can-do attitude. Responsible – A pledge to serve as responsible custodians of the planet Future – A drive for innovation, efficiency, and progression to secure our future. We rely on the continued support of our community and try to give back in the form of sponsorship, donations and educational trips and we continue to supply local businesses with our fruit. We are passionate about growing a better tomorrow for everyone.

HAMPSTEAD MARINA - No report received

LADDINGFORD GARAGE - No report received.

LITTLE VENICE

We are proud to be a part of Yalding Parish, we use all the facilities in the village, i.e. shops restaurant, bus services, doctors and post office, also local businesses, like plumber's, carpet layers etc. Thank you for all that you do.

ORCHARD VIEW GARAGE

We are now 22 years on site and have just agreed a new lease with the landlord for a further 15 years. We have plans in place to renew the MOT ramp as it is now 12 years old and We want to keep the site up to date and reliable. Staff are the same with Mark, Lynn, Paul, Alex and George. We also have Bekki helping in the office. We are seeing a few electric vehicles for servicing and tyres mainly. But the main bulk of our work is still all passenger vehicles from 1998 to the present day. Best car in the workshop from the past year would be a 1967 Morris Mini 850. (Just like my very first car). We try to keep the garage and surrounding area clean and tidy, but I am disappointed at the amount of rubbish along Hampstead Lane. Thank you for the support that is shown to the garage. Looking forward to the next 15 years.

ORCHARD VIEW STORES

Orchard View Stores would like to thank our community for giving us the opportunity to be a part of the village for the past 20 years. We aim to serve our customers by providing necessary and sustainable convenient shopping that is essential for the day-to-day basis. Everything we do begins and ends with our customers. By understanding and listening to our customers, we ensure that we can respond to their needs and expectations. Our commitment to sustainability is core to us which motivates us as a business. We aim to continue to grow our business to reach more customers, where our employees are at the heart of serving. As always Orchard View Stores

focuses on delivering excellent value and quality for our customers across our store now and in the future.

YALDING POST OFFICE

Quite a lot has happened in the last year. The Horizon Inquiry finally ended in December. Sir Wyn Williams' report will be published later this year. I think there will be a lot of people in the Post Office management circles (past and present) dreading that day. What will happen to Post Office Ltd? We will wait and see. I'm also hoping that all those waiting for their compensation finally get paid out in full. Our Emporium has settled in gently. Quite a few artists and crafters show and sell their wares with us. Come and have a look. I will be retiring in June 2026. Royal Mail, despite its many problems around delivery times, loss of mail, industrial relations and new foreign ownership will be raising postage prices again...Will there be any improvement in performance? It didn't happen last year. Thank you for supporting our little Post Office branch. Tim and June.

TEAPOT ISLAND

Nothing has changed since this time last year. We closed the café at the end of November 2024 and we do not intend to reopen this year. We would like to thank our loyal customers who have been coming to visit over the years but we have decided that it is the right time for us to retire. Hopefully a buyer will come along soon but until then we will carry on packing the teapots.

THE BOATHOUSE

Our festival last year was a massive hit and so we wanted to extend the fun this year by holding a week-long festival this year starting on July 21st - 27th. The main event being on the Saturday! We have now started our live music on Fridays which involves bands and solo singers, any new channels of advertising that could be sent our way would help with making everyone aware of what's going on at the Boathouse!

THE FORGE

The start of the year at Yalding Forge has consisted of a lot of handrails and railings and looks set to continue that way with a commission for Yalding Church to make a handrail for part of their cobbled path. The current commission that I'm working on is a horse sculpture for the garden of a private client, also in the local area.

THE GEORGE - No report received.

The shop is still with the Planning Inspectorate awaiting the appointment of an inspector and the planning application for the proposed HMO is still undetermined awaiting further information.

THE HOP PICKERS REST

Maria now spends a lot of time in Spain and as such is working in partnership with Twyford Bridge Marina. We are going to start to serving pizza afternoons and evenings and introducing ice cream and adding to the home cooked food range.

THE WALNUT TREE

We were all very excited when the Walnut tree went under offer for sale but it seems that at the moment the sale is sadly not Proceeding.

THE WOOLPACK

Sales have been steady. As in the previous year rising costs have been a challenge, Its three years this year trading with the glamping pods, weekends have been busy, particularly bookings from people attending The Gardens wedding venue with the pods, This year we are promoting to gain more bookings during the week.

TWO BREWERS CLOCKS AND ANTIQUES

Two Brewers Clocks & Antiques has now been in Yalding for 8 years and hope to continue for many years to come. Over time we have come to know some of you. Most of our customers (for clock and watch repairs) though come from outside the area and as far away as Bromley, south-east London and the rest of the country. It's nice to support local business though and in that spirit we have welcomed to our forecourt The Hunton Baker (on a Friday morning 11am to 1pm) also Brigitte's Flower Shed. They both offer their unique quality products and we feel help to enhance the appeal of our village.

TWYFORD BRIDGE MARINA

The Marina is ticking over nicely and we are now working in partnership with Hop Pickers Rest. We will be hiring out canoes and serving pizza afternoons and evenings and introducing ice cream and other home cooked food.

YALDING CLUB - No report received.

YALDING GARDENS

The Gardens had a successful 2024 wedding season and is excited for 2025. A highlight of 2024 was the launch of The Orchard, a second outdoor ceremony area that has become a popular choice for couples. The Gardens now offers four ceremony options in total for couples to choose from on their wedding day. The Gardens and its wedding operator, Glow Events, employ approximately 12 individuals from Yalding and over 140 employees from within a 20-mile radius. We continue to host the Laddingford District & Beekeepers Association on the grounds, with their honey being used in our kitchen and gifted to couples during wedding viewings. Tipis Restaurant has just completed a successful fifth season and will return again in November 2025. Our annual GardenFest open day remains a key event for the local community, offering visitors a chance to explore the venue and grounds. The date for GardenFest 2025 will be announced soon. For updates, follow us on Instagram or Facebook.

YALDING TAXIS

We have had another busy year at Yalding Taxis. Our son Joe passed his taxi knowledge test and is now an integral member of the business and we have taken on additional drivers, to try to keep up with the demand. However, we do still continue to look out for additional drivers in the future. Yalding Taxis is based in the village. We have male and female drivers and have 8, 6 and 4 passenger seat vehicles specialising in local journeys for Yalding, East Peckham, Paddock Wood, Maidstone, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding areas as well as providing Airport Transfers and other medium/long distance journeys. We offer a 24/7 service, 365 days a year (when booked in advance). We also offer a courier service as required. Many Thanks for your ongoing custom and we hope to see you in the future.

YALDING TEA ROOMS

I took over the Tea Rooms from Amy last year and opened the doors for the first time on the 2nd of December. I have always enjoyed baking, especially celebration cakes and it has been my dream to open my own tea rooms. Since opening, it has been non-stop and I have thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. We have held craft activities for the children over the Easter holidays, made the children's afternoon tea boxes for the VE Day street party. As well as being open to serve barista coffees, teas, sandwiches, cakes and savoury items. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of our customers for their patience and support over the past months and I look forward to seeing you all in the future. Helen, Ross, Emily and Alice. The Tea Rooms are open 8:45am till 4pm Monday to Friday and 10am till 2pm Saturdays.

ZARDA COTTAGE - No report received.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

YALDING ENTERPRISE PARK (YEP)

Yalding Enterprise Park is progressing well with the first phase of the built development well underway with interest in a number of buildings and the office building. We have our first occupiers, being Aqua Chimp a new water adventure company and Berkeley Laundry. Works are continuing on the remainder of the site and we are just in the process of tidying up around the entrance in order to open up the entrance and exit as intended to allow normal use. Planning for the next phase of the development will likely be submitted at the date of publication which will see the next phase of smaller business units coming forward, we hope to be on site with this element over the summer period. If anyone has any enquiries please feel free to get in touch via the Parish Council.

HALLAM LAND (KEWARD ROAD DEVELOPMENT)

The land at Kenward Road, Yalding received approval for 112 dwellings and associated open space on the 11 December 2024 via an Appeal. Hallam Land have marketed the parcel of land in Q1 2025 and have chosen a preferred House Builder. The sale of the land to the preferred House Builder will occur in Q2 2025 who will take the Site through Reserved Matters applications and build out the Site. The preferred House Builder will reach out to the Parish Council to further discuss the Reserved Matters application and open space to the south of Kenward Road in due course.

GOVERNMENT AND AGENCIES

KATIE LAM MP

I want to start by thanking the Parish Council for the work they do in Yalding. It isn't always an easy job, and I'm so grateful to those who volunteer their time and energy to improve the village they live in. I've been the Member of Parliament here in the Weald of Kent for 10 months now. It's a privilege to represent our area in the House of Commons, acting and advocating on behalf of all my constituents. It's been a really busy time in Westminster, and my team and I have been working away responding to constituents who have written in about everything from access to fibre broadband to securing secondary school places, from local flooding to the Assisted Dying Bill and, of course, continued support for our farmers in light of the Government's family farm tax, and businesses facing increased taxes and red tape. I am working hard with my Shadow Home Office colleagues on the Borders Bill, and also the Transport Select Committee, of which I am member, is deep into two inquiries, one on rural buses and the other on roadworks. Right now, I'm very focused on the transport side of things! As you'll know, getting around our beautiful rural home isn't always easy. All too often our roads and pavements are closed for works, or there are big lorries on inappropriate country lanes, or there's no longer a bus route where we need it. We rely on the roads to get to work, school, the shops, GP appointments, to see friends and family — everything! The state of our roads and our bus services is fundamental to how well we can live our lives. I want to know exactly how people find the roads and buses — and anything else transport-related — around here to inform my work in Parliament and beyond. I hope that you will have received my survey through the post, asking your thoughts on local transport. You can fill it out and send it back to me or complete it online. It only takes 5 minutes! Outside of Parliament, I've loved getting out and about across the Weald of Kent, especially now that the sun is shining. I've visited primary schools, businesses, farms, hospitals, GPs and charities; it's so helpful to hear first-hand about their achievements but also the challenges that people and businesses across our area are facing. I was especially pleased to come and see the launch of the Yalding Repair Café back in March. It's a fantastic project – fixing what we have rather than throwing something away and buying something new is one of the best things we can do, for the planet as well as for our wallets! I hope to continue to meet lots of you when I am out and about. I wish the Parish Council the very best as you make your plans for the next 12 months. If I can help with anything at all, please get in touch with me on katie.lam.mp@parliament.uk

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL (KCC)

On 1 May 2025 Robert Ford was elected as the County Councillors for Maidstone Rural West.

The report below was provide by his predecessor Simon Webb.

It has been my privilege to represent you at County Hall for the full term of four years. This last year has been dominated by concerns over funding, both in Children's Social Services and Adult Social Service, however, the improvements made in efficiencies and service reductions have given much hope for the future. Kent has moved from the bottom quartile of financial concerns to midway through the mid-quartile. The 2024/25 budget was agreed by all parties (96% anyway) – there is some cushioning of the County Reserves, which will help in the immediate future. The continuing refusal of Central Government to equitably fund Adult and Children's Social Care is disappointing, however, nowhere near as devastating as the removal of the winter fuel allowance. In the next month local businesses will begin to be strangled by the increase in National Insurance costs, as well as the added employment costs due to the minimum wage rising. Within Education some good news with the Home to School transport budget showing a surplus for the first time in 8 years and reduction in the number of SEN(D) EHCPs being awarded brings some respite to our budgets. I am fortunate to have been on both the Governance and Audit and Scrutiny Cabinet Committees for the last two years and both committees have been able to significantly challenge the Cabinet Members with the decision they have made. For the financial year 2024/25 I was allocated a Members grant of £3,600 and I have focused on three projects, Nettlestead pedestrian crossing (replacement of lights and a refresh of the white lines; purchasing new tents and equipment for Coxheath Scouts and more furniture for Yalding Parent and Toddler group. At the current time, I am working closely with: -

- Nettlestead Parish to try to reduce the speed limit through the village.
- Loose Amenities and Parish Council supporting residents in Church Street to rectify the water run-off – work has been ongoing with senior officers – but not yet to a successful outcome.
- All small primary schools to ensure their admissions for 2025 and beyond match the expected birth rates.

I would like to pay tribute to the ex-Leader of KCC, Mr. Roger Gough, who led by example fighting for residents at both a local, regional and national level. The Member Grant is available to assist vulnerable groups, be they of any age.

KCC HIGHWAYS

- Rebecca Bailey stepped in as our new Maidstone District Manager in June, taking over from Sue Laport.
- Freya Kingsland-Joy became our highway engineer in May (From Jamie Cunningham). She's currently on maternity leave until February 26, and I'm covering for her in the meantime.
- We welcomed Rebecca Morgan and Thomas Anderson as our new highway's stewards in May. Major Roadworks - The stewards are with our usual maintenance and emergency responses, but here are some of the bigger projects we've tackled:
 - New Barn Road, Staplehurst: We fixed the subsided road by haunching it back to its original level.
 - A20 Ashford Road, Harrietsham: Resurfaced a large area to resolve extensive edge-of-carriageway rutting.
 - Albert Street, Maidstone: Re-profiled the road to stop local houses from flooding.
 - Lenham Road, Headcorn: Installed kerbs to fix the subsided road surface leading into a ditch.
 - London Road, Maidstone: Addressed surface failure with large-scale patching and lining.
 - Queens Road: Installed new kerbs because successive resurfacing had raised the road level too high.
 - Palace Ave/Upper Stone Street, Maidstone: Carried out two-layer repairs for deep structural damage.
 - Stilestone Road, Linton: Used Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) for deep structural damage, perfect for tight HGV turning circles.
 - Lower Road, West Farleigh: Planning to install new kerbs as the road level has been raised too high.

Looking Ahead - As the weather warms up, our stewards will be focusing on larger projects/repairs using Hot Rolled Asphalt (HRA). This material is more expensive but much stronger, laid to a deeper depth and waterproof. HRA is best laid in warmer weather. We're hoping this will give us better long-term results. Next up is the Pothole Blitz (PHB). We're currently in the recce phase for this project, however, PHB in a nutshell involves extensive patching works on roads that are usually overlooked and are failing. This is a separate project from our day-to-day tasks and is funded to use outside contractors.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Borough Election last May saw Claudine Russell re-elected as a Borough Councillor for the Ward, and two new Councillors elected from the Green Party, Michael Summersgill and Grace Couch. With a change in overall control at the Borough for the next four years (the Council is now being led by a Green & Independent Alliance and Liberal Democrat coalition), Cllr Russell assumed leadership of the Conservative group on the Council after the election and became Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny committee, holding the Cabinet to account on its policy directions; the topics that O&S have worked on this year have included assessing the Borough's Infrastructure provision via S.106 funding & Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies and reviewing the direction of Planning Enforcement. Cllr Summersgill was appointed as vice-chair of the MBC Planning Committee, and also then took on a role as a Cabinet member, with a portfolio covering Climate Transition and Nature Recovery. Mike has spent much of this first year taking forward some pre-initiated projects on the Borough 'estate,' looking at solar panels and biodiversity net gain sites, plus scoping some natural flood management projects on tributaries of the Beult (he was also appointed to the Upper Medway Drainage Board). In March, a review/update of the Council's existing Climate & Biodiversity strategy was agreed, being halfway through its ten year

'lifespan' and now being more firmly targeted to what can be achieved. Cllr Couch has brought her youthful expertise as a council officer (in Swale and London Boroughs) to bear in her role as vice-chair of the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), dealing with climate themes, corporate matters and environmental services. Grace has also been speaking out about Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), working with our Ward police officers on incidents, and visiting local venues to ensure that their 'Ask Angela' and similar policies are up to date and protecting vulnerable citizens. She has also contributed directly to new local initiatives like Plastic Free Marden and the new Yalding Repair Café, as have Claudine and Mike. Across the Borough and Ward, all three of us have been involved closely in dealing with individual issues and problems of many constituents, which have covered a wide range of issues, as well as matters affecting the wider community like last year's 'Bin problems and concerns over Traffic. We have liaised closely with the five Parish clerks and numerous councillors, to facilitate or assist queries that they have brought up, and that may need MBC action. It has also been great to support Borough-wide initiatives such as 'Shaun the Sheep' last Summer, the new Museum extension, the third Eco-Hub last Autumn, various Arts events and the Covid memorial tree-planting last month. Ward Councillors - Claudine Russell (Marden), Mike Summersgill (Hunton) & Grace Couch (Yalding)

COMMUNITY PAYPACK

Yalding Parish Council is currently not using Community Payback but hope to again in the future.

COMMUNITY WARDENS

Yalding no longer has a Community Warden.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Fortunately, rainfall this winter over Kent has been very similar to the long-term average and with only one exception in early January when we saw the highest flows on the River Medway since February 2020. This event highlighted the fact that some PFR measures had not been maintained. It is essential residents regularly check and maintain their PFR measures to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The Leigh Expansion and Hildenborough Embankment project team is continuing construction works. The team has completed the final tasks at Leigh Cattle Arch and Leigh Pumping Station and have now removed all fencing and barriers. At the control structure, the final touches are being completed on the south gate. Work on the centre gate is due to begin in spring. At Hildenborough work has progressed on the main power cable route and control unit base, and construction of the kiosk has begun. We have started to excavate the new penstock and will work on the embankment in the summer. We expect the full scheme to be operational by the end of 2025.

GOLDING HOMES

This year we have been working towards a new offer for our customers and are pleased to share from April we will be launching a new safer neighbourhood teams to continuously improve our service in relation to ASB and community safety. We also have designed a new neighbourhood commitment which will see areas in Yalding supported by a new team of neighbourhood advisors; Lorraine Dent, Richard Acheampong, Owen Moemkem, Shelley Martin. The team can be contacted at help@goldinghomes.org.uk. We have two events for Yalding in our calendar so far including a 'welcome all estate inspection' on 25 September, and a Responsible Pet ownership event on 3 September 2025. More details can be found on our website www.goldinghomes.org.uk.

MOAT HOMES (The Glebe)

As the Neighbourhood Manager for Moat Homes, I note that we have not received any negative reports. There was a matter of a resident parking a commercial vehicle on the development. Recently, there has been a report that some line painting has been completed without any consultation with residents. Moat was not informed this was being done.

KENT FIRE AND RESCUE

For the financial year April 24 – March 25 (ytd): Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) attended **26** operational incidents in the Yalding Parish area. Of these, there were **12** fires and **5** false alarms. Further to this, KFRS attended **9** emergencies other than fire, including road accidents, medical response in support of South East Coast Ambulance Service and water related incidents. In terms of proactive prevention and protection work, KFRS completed **9** safe and well visits with local residents. Safe and Well Visits are a free service we offer to anyone who resides in the property and meets the following criteria:

- Is aged over 70.
- Is living with disability or long-term health condition.
- Has young children (aged five years or under) living in the property or is pregnant.
- Is a smoker.
- Someone feels unsafe in the property.

This service can be requested via our freephone number: 0800 923 7000.

KENT POLICE

You now currently have two neighbourhood police officers which cover Yalding. These are PC Chad Maskell and PC George Head. These officers do not just cover Yalding but cover the whole of the south rural of Maidstone which is from Ulcombe to Yalding. Throughout the last year, we have continued to liaise with parish councillors, who have been helpful in making aware of local issues which we have been able to address. The other part of this year, we have been dedicated in tackling ongoing community issues and crime with the likes of Anti-Social behaviour and a wide range of rural crime. We are aware in the raise of issues with Anti-Social Behaviour especially with Catapults. We plead that these issues are continued to be reported via 999, 101, the Kent Police Website or anonymously via Crime Stoppers. We will continue to show a presence within the village.

KENT RESILIENCE - Emergency Planning and Resilience Team (Maidstone Borough Council)

Since the last report, we have gone into a partnership with Swale Borough Council to deliver the Emergency Planning and Resilience for both districts. The team has also welcomed a new Resilience Officer, Abbie Restell, who joined our team last year. Incidents over the past year: While the past year was relatively a quiet one in terms of emergency incident response, there were impacts experienced from the weather and utility outage. Severe Weather: The storms at the end of 2024 and the start of 2025 brought severe weather impacting Yalding and Little Venice. While parts of the car park were flooded and some residents chose to relocate temporarily, the majority stayed on site, and the situation did not escalate. Utility Outages: Recent years have seen a rise in the frequency and severity of utility outages in the country and the communities in Maidstone are not left out. These outages driven in part by extreme weather events and other factors disrupt essential services like electricity, water, and gas, posing significant challenges to communities. As members of the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum, we work with other members to keep the Utility companies accountable during periods of disruption. We have also supported the water companies by facilitating the identification and pre-approval of potential water distribution sites that can be used during periods of disruption. Ongoing Projects: Building a Resilient Future. The Emergency Planning and Resilience team at MBC is actively working on various projects to mitigate and plan for disruptions, as well as addressing risks that may impact us in the future:

- Major Emergency Plan: We have updated our Major Emergency Plan to ensure it reflects current risks, best practices, and preparedness strategies.
- Threat and Risk Register: Our Threat and Risk Register is being updated to identify and address potential local, regional, and national risks.
- Town Centre Emergency Communications Plan: We are collaborating with Maidstone BID, Fremlin Walk, The Mall, and MBC Community Protection team to produce a comprehensive communications plan for the town centre.
- Resilience Initiatives: One of our key projects involves procuring a back-up generator for our waste depot to ensure the continuity of critical services during power outages.

Community Resilience: Maidstone Borough Council continues to work with Kent County Council, the Environment Agency, and other relevant agencies to provide a coordinated response to flooding within the Medway confluence area. This collaboration ensures that communities are well-informed about the evolving situation, enabling them to be better prepared for potential flooding, and able to mitigate impacts to the greatest extent possible. By working together, we ensure that support is available to communities before, during, and after flooding incidents.

CONTACT DETAILS

PARISH COUNCIL

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Angela Gent

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KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR

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Claudine Russell

ClaudineRussell@Maidstone.gov.uk

Michael Summersgill Tel: 07779 367412

MichaelSummersgill@Maidstone.gov.uk

USEFUL NUMBERS

Yalding & Laddingford Street Lighting 01622 814134

Potholes or other highway damage 03000 418181

Out of Hours 03000 419191

Fly Tipping/bins – Environmental Services 01622 602000

PARISH BUDGET 2025/26

EXPENDITURE				
Post Office Rent	6,550		Parish Activities	10,000
Public Toilets	9,000		Flood Contingency **	13,000
Bank Charges	550		Town Bridge Investigations	5,000
Yalding Village Hall	1,000		Tree Inspection	2,500
Parish Magazine	500		Neighbourhood Plan	1,000
MV Railway	500		Lees Car Park	37,000
Grant Pot	1,500		Defibrillator	1,500
Hire of Halls	600			<u>192,504</u>
Insurance	2,500			
Legal & Accountancy	5,000			
Office Equipment	250			
Printing/Stationery/Postage	500			
Repairs & Maintenance	500		INCOME	
Salary & Clerks' Expenses	39,584		Precept	85,000
Signs & Noticeboards	500		Parish Services Scheme	15,658
Subscriptions	1,500		Income Lees Car Park	30,000
Telephone	2,250		Rent Post Office	4,000
Training	1,250		Miscellaneous	5,075
Website	750		Bank Interest	500
Yalding Church Clock	500			<u>140,233</u>
Churchyards	500			
Play Equipment	2,000			
Miscellaneous Open Spaces	8,000			
Verges	1,960			
Village Green	675			
Fowle Hall Green	320		B/fwd 01/04/25	58,415
Jubilee Field	1,665		Income	140,233
Kintons	5,000		Expenditure	(192,504)
Lees	1,350		C/fwd 31/03/26	<u>6,144</u>
Lees Fencing	1,000			
The Tatt	3,000			
Litter Collection	2,000			
Fen	3,000			
Playscheme	1,500			
Street Lighting Electricity	3,500	**	Chairman's Flood Re	
Street Lighting Repairs	2,000		prize money	
Street Lighting Replacement	3,500		ringfenced to be expended	
Christmas Lights	2,000		on flood issues only	
Floodlighting	250			
War Memorial	250			
Miscellaneous	1,000			
Fingerposts	2,750			

**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL BE HELD ON
TUESDAY 20 MAY 2025 AT 7.30 PM IN YALDING VILLAGE HALL**

THE AGENDA WILL BE

Declaration of intension to record proceedings

1. Election of The Chairman
2. Declaration of Acceptance of Office by The Chairman
3. Election of The Vice Chairman
4. Apologies for Absence
5. Declaration of Interest in any agenda item
6. Re-adopt The Council's Code of Conduct
7. Motion to Approve Regulations
 - 7.1. Standing Orders
 - 7.2. Risk Management Scheme
 - 7.3. Financial Regulations
 - 7.4. The Council's Statement of Internal Control
8. Motion to Re-adopt the existing Council Policies, Procedures and Risk Assessments
9. Motion to Approve new policies, Procedures and Risk Assessments
10. Motion to Approve The Council's Fixed Assets Register
11. Motion to Approve The Council's direct debits and standing orders
12. To confirm the Insurance policy renewal – 3-year contract until 2028
13. Motion to pay The Clerk and Assistant Clerk's salary monthly under The Scheme of Delegation
14. Bank balances as at the end of March 2025
15. Bank reconciliations for March 2025
16. Confirmation of programme of meetings for the 2025/26
17. Confirmation of members of Working Parties
 - 17.1. Yuletide Market
 - Parish Councillors
 - Resident Volunteers
 - 17.2. Parish Wide Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
 - Parish Councillors
 - Resident Volunteers
18. Appointments to Outside bodies
 - Medway Valley Railway Partnership
 - Yalding Enterprise Park - Development Delivery Group
 - Village Hall Committee
 - Kent Association of Local Councils (2)
 - Police Ward Cluster Group (1)
 - Yalding and Laddingford Sports Association
 - Yalding Charities
 - Medway Catchment Partnership
19. Finance -Motion to approve any outstanding Councillors expenses.

Angela Gent

Clerk to Yalding Parish Council – 15 May 2025

**Note: Minutes of previous meeting were signed at a Parish Council Meeting held on 04 June 2024.
There are no Matters Arising**

**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING WILL BE HELD ON
TUESDAY 20 MAY 2025 AT 7.30 PM IN YALDING VILLAGE HALL**

THE AGENDA WILL BE

Declaration of intension to record proceedings

Chairman's Welcome and Introductions

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting held on 14 May 2024
3. Matters Arising from the previous meeting
4. Chairman's report for 2024/25
5. To note the Annual Reports and thank the contributors
6. Finance Review 2024/25
7. Presentation of Budget 2025/26
8. Presentation by South East 4x4 Response
9. Presentation by Aqua Chimp
10. Any Other Parish Business

Followed by the Annual Meeting of The Parish Council

THE AGENDA CAN BE FOUND INSIDE BACK COVER