



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

**ANNUAL REPORTS INCLUDING
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025/26
BUDGET 2026/27**



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2025/26

During the year, Joe Westgate and Leila Bates resigned their roles as Parish Councillors and were replaced, by co-option, with Jason Buckland and Ian Simmons. Following the 2024 elections, there was a change of governance at Maidstone Borough Council and a similar occurrence took place at Kent following the County elections in 2025. However, extensive changes are likely to occur over the next two years if the Government's proposed Local Government Review (LGR) proceeds.

Both the District and County authorities would be replaced with one or more Unitary Authorities covering the whole of Kent and Medway. It will be July 2026 before Government decides on the format for Kent but it is possible that Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells could form a West Kent Unitary. In preparation for this, Community Governance Reviews are being undertaken by the district authorities and for Maidstone, it has been agreed to parish the entire borough and one town council will be formed to encompass most of the unparished area, some small parts being moved into existing parishes.

Elections for the new unitary authority councillors will take place in 2027 with a shadow authority operating in conjunction with the district and county councils until May 2028 when the district and county councils will disappear and the unitary authority goes live. Parish elections due in May 2028 could be moved forward to 2027 in line with the unitary elections. Parish Councils are being encouraged to adopt public assets in their area and there will be a greater opportunity for them to become more involved with the governance of their parish.

During the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Review, plans for extensive housing were submitted for land north and south of Kenward Road. However, at a public enquiry, it was agreed that 112 dwellings could be built on the northern parcel but that the land to the south would become public open space. This land is being sold to Yalding Parish Council (YPC) for the grand sum of £1 and will be known as The Hop Garden. The chosen developer is Fernham Homes and building work has started. We are keeping a watching brief on the lorry movements as the fence at the Walnut Tree has already been hit and I am not sure regarding wheel washing facilities.

We are fighting a losing battle with KCC and the developer as KCC is insisting on street lighting along Kenward Road for 67 metres either side of the junction with the new entrance. KCC will only permit heritage style lights if YPC adopts them (which we have agreed to do) but the developer will not pay for heritage style lighting and is only prepared to fund KCC's standard highway lights. They are also putting other obstacles in the way.

Good news from Yalding Enterprise Park (YEP) in that planning permissions have been granted for a Padel court, which is now under construction, and conversion of the office block for use by Quest School (see YEP's report).

Stonegate pulled the plug on the sale of the Walnut Tree and there is no positive news on the reopening although the rent has been reduced and there appear to have been several viewings.

The HMO at The George was granted planning permission but we are still concerned with regard to the state of the garden area and car park.

We will be sad to see the post office move from its current premises after 126 years but we wish Tim and June a very happy retirement. However, YPC will renew its lease in June and the Emporium area will become the Parish Office. We are looking at other uses for the post office area.

May 2025 saw the 80th Anniversary of VE Day and Yalding celebrated in typical Yalding fashion with a street party in the High Street. We had several extremely good bands, our own Pearly Queen Maria, Yalding WI performed their version of a sing-along and, thanks to Kelly Woods, volunteers had got together and enacted an episode of the popular wartime comedy "Dads' Army". YPC ran the bar itself and the £2,000 profit went towards the cost of the entertainment. Many thanks to Brian and friends for bringing along the WW11 military vehicles and to Mark for

bringing the "Steamstress" heavy steam roller. There was plenty of food on offer and despite the weather turning a little chilly towards evening, a great time was had by all.

September saw another dismal day for the 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.

From the cast of the VE Day play, Yalding and Laddingford Entertainers (YALE) was born and after months of rehearsals, much costume sewing and scene painting, Yalding Village Hall saw its first pantomime in sixteen years. Three performances and many "look behind you" produced a truly excellent rendition of Dick Whittington and who could forget the Cat!! The group are planning something for the Autumn.

During last winter, we were fortunate not to have too much adverse weather with little or no property flooding in the Parish. After some delay caused by flooding (I am serious) 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 is scheduled for completion this Summer.

KCC has installed the bend and slow signs on Lees Road and has completed its survey work on the double yellow lines outside Lyngs Farmhouse ready to report to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board. Potholes continue to be an issue but this seems to be the case Nationwide.

YPC is still investigating measures to possibly reduce traffic crossing Town Bridge and through the Parish. Apparently, KCC has no process for the creation of a toll bridge and we are therefore seeking ministerial assistance.

Thanks to all the lads who make our villages look so beautiful at Christmas time with the erection of the lights. We managed to get the lights back into the tree on the village green before the leaves took over. 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 again; we are very fortunate to have so many activities to take part in on our doorstep.

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 now Deputy Clerk, Abi Stern, who is working hard to complete the final stages towards obtaining a Certificate in Local Council Administration by August. I am sure we all wish her good luck.

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

It has been a very settled past year, with no change in tenancy. We replaced 3 bathrooms in the Almshouses. We made quite a few donations from the in need fund. David Gerrish continues to maintain the grounds for us and keeps them looking beautiful. We welcome Andy Sanders as our new trustee representing Yalding Parish Council.

YALDING EDUCATION FOUNDATION (YEF)

During the past year the YEF organised and/or financially supported the following:

- Awarded each of the 3 local Primary schools £1500 to enhance the educational experience of the children.
- Higher education scholarships were awarded to 17 students who had attended local Primary schools to support them on their courses. Each award was for £250.
- 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.
- £100 was awarded to a Yalding scout as part of his fundraising so he can attend the World Scout Jamboree which he has been selected for.
- One off grants of £2000 were awarded to the following organisations:
 - Yalding school for specialist computer equipment for some children.
 - Laddingford school for materials to develop a garden that the children are creating.
 - Friends of Collier Street School to support fundraising for their solar panel project.
 - Laddingford Forest school to purchase equipment to enhance the activities they offer.
 - Yalding Cricket Club to buy in coaching for their junior teams and to train their young coaches.
 - Yalding and Laddingford Football club to enable them to train their young coaches and referees.
 - Yalding Library children's section to purchase books, Lego for their after school club and to finance holiday activities.
 - Yalding Scouts to purchase paddle boards to broaden the range of activities offered.

The current trustees are Mari Mason, Barbara Reader, David Goff, Paul Kish, Kelly Woods, Sue Gerrish and Sandra Grace. 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)

As many of you know the Friends of Yalding Surgery raise funds to help provide the finance to purchase equipment etc. that the NHS do not provide. Enabling the doctors, nurses and other staff to give the service we are lucky enough to have here in Yalding. On behalf of both the Surgery and the Friends of Yalding Surgery, thank you for your generosity. Over the past year we have purchased larger sized cuffs for the Blood Pressure Monitors and a new Check In Screen, thanks to funds raised with your help and kind donations from loved ones in the way of bequests. We also pay for the water machine in reception for the benefit of patients and staff. Our 2025 Christmas raffle raised a total of just over £1,200 which was a brilliant result. This year our quiz raised £650 and was a very successful and enjoyable evening – Peter Camrass and his team won again for the second year. Thanks go to our quiz masters, Martyn & Annette, who every year come up with different categories of questions to test our knowledge. Also, a big thank you to Roma and her team for once again providing a delicious ploughman's supper. Finally, our thanks to Sharon Walford for her continued work in her "sewing den" in producing beautiful handmade gifts, which at present are sold in the Post Office, and also at the annual craft fayre. We look forward to your continued support in the future.

KENWARD TRUST

The Kenward Trust is a nationally recognised charity providing primary and secondary stage residential rehabilitation and recovery services for people experiencing drug and alcohol addiction. Alongside its residential work, Kenward also delivers Think Differently, a substance misuse prevention programme for schools. The team visits schools across Kent to inform young

people and answer their questions about the risks and consequences of drug and alcohol misuse, dependency and anti-social behaviour. We were honoured that one of our long standing members of staff, John Shanley, received the prestigious High Sheriff's Award in recognition of his outstanding service to the community. The award was presented by Jonathan Neame, the current High Sheriff of Kent, at our recent fundraising ball for Think Differently. The event raised £25,000 for the new Think Differently – Junior programme, created in response to the worrying rise in children under 12 becoming involved with drugs. This early intervention initiative will help us reach children sooner, giving them the knowledge and support they need to stay safe and avoid long term harm. We are also delighted to announce that Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe has agreed to become a Patron of the charity, reaffirming his long standing support for our mission to transform lives affected by addiction. At Kenward Place, the Kenward Road Café is now open Wednesday to Sunday. We are pleased to offer a range of experiences including beekeeping, alpaca walks, archery and disc golf. Our Classic Car Show returns on Sunday 31st May. A special request: we warmly welcome volunteers from the community who can offer a few hours on a regular basis. We are particularly looking for people who enjoy gardening, are handy with DIY, could drive residents to appointments, play a game of chess at weekends, or help in our on-site café. If you would like to support or volunteer with Kenward, or are interested in fundraising for us, please contact Penny Williams at Penny.williams@kenwardtrust.org.uk, visit our website kenwardtrust.org.uk, or call us on 01622 814187.

YALDING CHURCH PRESERVATION SOCIETY (YCPS)

2025 was a quite successful fundraising year. We couldn't match 2024's hugely successful London Welsh Male Voice Choir, but we held a grand raffle at the Yuletide Market which helped keep the fundraising ticking over. The YCPS is a registered 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

We continue to be oversubscribed in Reception and are very happy to welcome 13 new pupils into our Reception class in September 2026. Our bespoke Early Years provision (mixed age Nursery, 3+, and Reception class) goes from strength to strength and our nursery is attracting new families to the school. We still have some 15 and 30 hour fully funded spaces. Any enquiries to the school office please. We are happy to be supported by the FLS to develop our outside garden space which will complement our new sensory room. This space was funded by Yalding Yuletide. We are currently working with KCC to secure funding for the development of a new outdoor space and potential external door so that our Key Stage 1 children have free-flow access to an outside space.

GOVERNORS' REPORT

In this academic year, two new governors have joined the board and two existing governors have stepped into the role of co-chairs giving the board a new shape. The board still has foundation and co-opted governor vacancies and has been looking to recruit recently. Anyone interested can contact the school office for more information. With school finances increasingly under pressure nationally, the school's nursery, presents an opportunity for the school to achieve greater financial security. Any support signposting the nursery's provision and ensuring it operates at capacity would be greatly appreciated. The school will be moving into the Ofsted window soon and we are working hard to ensure we are all well prepared when the time come.

FRIENDS OF LADDINGFORD SCHOOL (FLS) REPORT

Fundraising Highlights - Successfully held our first Summer Fair on the Jubilee field in June 2025 raising over £1000. Planning is underway for this year's Summer Fair this year to further increase fundraising capacity. Thank you to the Parish Council for your support of this. The Christmas Fair at The Chequers was another great event raising £1,600.

School Lathams Project - Significant effort this year has gone into fundraising for a site development project the project is co-funded by the school and the FLS and the project aims to

revamp an area of the school grounds to enhance usability for pupils with groundworks and gardening and sensory equipment. Works are expected to commence in May.

Forest School Investment - Invested £1,500 into improvements related to the Darman Lane forest school access enhancing safe access for pupils, staff and visitors. Minimising disruption to residents. We also have provided new waterproof clothing and additional equipment to enable all children to use the forest school in all weathers.

School Support & Enrichment - we funded a Fun Science Workshop (March) in support of National Science Week, including a whole-school assembly and class-based experiment sessions.

New Co-Chairs appointed were appointed at the AGM held on 20th January at The Chequers. Gemma Doherty and Bodene Martiz were elected.

OTHER GROUPS AND SOCIETIES

CHEQUERS CHASERS – running group

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 – swimming group

Established several years ago a group of regulars at The Chequers began enjoying open water swimming. This is a very informal group with several swimmers enjoying summer swimming and a couple enjoying the winter cold water swimming. Swimming or just dipping anyone is welcome to come and find out more about open water swimming which takes place usually at their regular venue of St Andrews Lake, Halling.

CHEQUERS RACERS – cycling group

Formed mainly of middle aged men in Lycra, 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. The group was established over 14 years ago as the result of a charity ride from Laddingford to Paris, a challenge for most as they had never cycled before! 14 years later some are still cycling and new people have joined who mainly live in The Parish and enjoy the social comradeship of meeting at The Chequers. Each year they organise a tour away for 5 days which involves cycling, eating and the odd drink. The 2026 tour is to Lucca in Italy. There are no membership fees and rides are organised on an ad hoc basis and the most important element is social enjoyment, then cycling. For further information, please check our website www.chequersracers.com or better still, ask at the pub!

LADDINGFORD CHURCH HALL

The Hall is only really used by the school for their lunches/catering and for P.E. during inclement weather. We have one regular booking for 1 hour of Pilates per week. To date this year, we have had just 2 bookings for children's birthday parties/activities. The general consensus is that the price although competitive, is just too expensive for most of the people who don't have space at home and need the extra room that the Hall provides. It is a stalemate as we cannot run the Hall at a loss.

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. 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. They are held generally monthly on a Tuesday from 10.30-12.30 and everyone is welcome.

PARISH ORGANISATIONS – YALDING

LEARNING

ST PETER & ST PAUL'S CEP SCHOOL

GOVERNORS' AND HEAD TEACHER'S REPORT

Yalding Primary School has seen some important changes this year. We welcomed Ms Stiff, who joined us as interim Head Teacher and while we carried out the recruitment process for a new permanent head; she did a sterling job of ensuring that the school ran smoothly and our pupils were safe and thriving until our new Head Teacher, Mrs Jackson took up position in January 2026. She has settled in well and the school is already benefitting from her effective leadership. We are grateful for the support from the Parent Teacher Association, who once again have worked tirelessly for the benefit of our children. Highlights of how pupils have benefitted from PTA commitment and funding in the spring term include a trip to The Forge Blacksmith (making links with our local community), the Easter event organised by the PTA and we even had a visit from a local farmer with some lambs! Further playground equipment has been purchased to enrich lunchtime experiences and the playground has been zoned to support a wider range of activities. Following the departure of our previous catering provider, one of our parents (who is a chef) has established her own company and is now supplying our school meals, which have proven to be both nutritious and delicious. Further trips and clubs have been planned and more members of the local community have shared that they would like to support our pupils and staff with these. Some news has been shared in the Parish Magazine. Plans for the coming year include continuing to make links with the local community; making links with the pre-school group; a sensory garden to be developed for the children across the school to use; a reading shed to be added on the playground for a reading area outside; a forest school pilot to take place with year 1 children. Mrs Jackson is working hard to increase the pupil roll so that all classes can once more take single age groups; we have already seen increased interest in pupil places. If you know of any families looking for a welcoming, open door approach and staff who are nurturing and aspirational for their pupils, then this is the primary school for them, please do encourage them to get in touch with the school office. Finally, thank you to the Parish Council for their continued support of our school.

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

Part of the above report.

YALDING SUMMER PLAYScheme

Planning for the Yalding Summer Play Scheme is well underway, and we're working closely with the Yalding Parish Council to provide a fun, inclusive, and affordable programme for all. We always welcome ideas, if there's anything you'd love to see included, please do get in touch! We're also on the lookout for anyone interested in summer work this year, so please reach out if you'd like to get involved.

YALDING (RIVERSIDE) PRE-SCHOOL

Another fantastic year at Riverside Preschool! We've seen our numbers continue to grow each term, allowing us to expand our Play Place team and welcome both new and familiar faces. Everyone has settled in beautifully and brought great energy to the setting. We're incredibly proud of our apprentice, who achieved her Early Years Educator Level 3 qualification this year, an amazing accomplishment. Our team continues to train and develop, including introducing our Communication and Language Makaton programme, which the children have taken to like ducks to water! With recent government funding changes, we now welcome children from 18 months and accept all available funding, helping us support even more local families. This year also sees our biggest group of children heading off to school, graduation will certainly be an emotional one! With this in mind, it's wonderful to still have so many of our younger children continuing with us, alongside new families joining in September. If you're looking for a preschool where your child can grow in confidence, build independence, spark curiosity, and develop strong communication skills, we'd love to hear from you: 07442 275785 yalding@playplace.org

YALDING PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

We have had a very successful year at Yalding Parent and Toddler Group, welcoming many new faces alongside our regular weekly visitors. Our Christmas event was a great success, with over 30 families joining us, and our Easter event marked the exciting opening of our new outdoor

space. We are very grateful to Maidstone Leisure Trust for their generous grant, which enabled us to safely fence the area and purchase new equipment, and also to the YYCC Committee for allowing us to use the grass area. As we look ahead, we are seeking new volunteers to help run the group from September 2026, as two of our current volunteers will be returning to work following maternity leave. If you are interested in supporting this friendly and welcoming group, please get in touch at Yaldingtoddlergroup@gmail.com.

CHURCH AND ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES

BAPTIST CHURCH

Attendance at our Sunday services has remained stable with 2025 having a small increase on average on 2024. We have continued our coffee mornings, some Games Afternoons and done another Cafe Church in the last year, and we plan to continue all of these this year. We held another guest Pentecost Sunday service for all ages, with a drama sketch, and we plan to continue this annually, in addition to our Christmas Nativity Carol service. The latter was packed in 2025, as we welcomed a dance group from Shine School of Performing Arts who danced as the wise men, and their families joined us for the occasion, which was lovely. Our YouTube channel continues with another small increase in number of subscribers. James, our pastor, leads most of our Sunday services with a visiting speaker once a month or so. We are very pleased to welcome some residents from Kenward on a Sunday and James runs a weekly Tuesday evening faith group there for the residents, which is well attended. He also helps run Kenward Thanksgiving Services several times a year. Our Wednesday mid-week groups have now moved to the church building at 8pm, anyone is welcome to attend. We completed Christianity Explored during 2025 and are about to start studies in the Bible book of Revelation. We have a local walk on the first Sunday afternoon of the month and anyone is welcome to join us for this. We are very thankful that we now have a Treasurer who is doing a grand job of managing our new bank accounts and budget. We currently have a survey open to Yalding residents – asking locals what they would like the Baptist church to be doing in the community. There is a QR code in the April and May Parish magazines and paper copies available at the Post Office. Please do complete one if you haven't already. We are part of the South East Baptist Association and are now one of their "Partners in Mission"- We are grateful for their support towards our finances.

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

The Church is here to share and make known the love of God the Father through the teaching and example of his Son, Jesus Christ, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in our own time and place. St Peter and St Paul's church in Yalding and St Mary's church in Laddingford form our benefice together with St Margaret's church in Collier Street. We've been at the heart of the community for hundreds of years in many different generations to be both a challenge and a support to the people of our villages and to let them know that they are loved and cherished by God, to be a focus for their prayers, and to be a place to celebrate and commemorate important milestones in their lives, as did their parents and grandparents before them. Our worship and our mission is both modern and traditional, weekend and weekday, as we seek to interpret the Bible message in our own time and place, to play our part in village life, and to invite you to join us from time to time to lend your voice and your presence to the worship that we share. Fr. Paul Kish, vicar

CHURCHWARDEN

It is a pleasure to report on a highly successful and productive year for the church. One of our most significant developments is that we now have two Churchwardens in post, Henrik Hansen and Kate Owbridge, allowing us to better manage the church's affairs and strengthen our connection with the villages. We are thrilled with the completion of our "Welcome" project. The new entrance is a highlight, featuring a permanent ramp that ensures the church is accessible to everyone. The addition of glass doors now showcases our beautiful interior from the porch, providing a visual invitation to passers-by and creating a much more transparent, inclusive atmosphere. General repairs around the church have been carried out systematically to

preserve the building's integrity. We remain committed to maintaining this historic asset for the whole parish and thank the villages and particularly the Yalding Church Preservation Society for their continued support enabling a vibrant community spirit. Our fundraising efforts and community events have been met with wonderful local support. Highlights included a successful flower festival, various high profile concerts, the ever present hot chocolate stall at the Yuletide market and of course our fabulous Summer Fayre. The monthly Community Brunch at Laddingford also continues to be a success. These events have been vital for both social connection and contribute in a small way to the church's financial stability.

BELLRINGERS

We are still struggling with a few members and are not able to ring for every service. Wateringbury ringers help us on Wednesday practices and for weddings and funerals. New recruits are most welcome.

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 June we took part on the Flower Festival concert, which allows us the opportunity to sing music we wouldn't usually include at a Sunday morning service! 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. We are indeed fortunate to have a sizeable four-part choir in Yalding, something which fewer and fewer parishes can continue. Our numbers remain reasonably constant, and we are always happy to welcome new members. You don't need to be able to read music or attend every week, just an ability to hold a tune and enjoy singing.

JUNIOR CHOIR

Unfortunately, although the Youth Choir's dedicated few continued to meet to practice and sang at as many services as possible throughout 2025, we decided that out of necessity, the Christingle Service would be our last performance for a while. Sunday football along with school or other club commitments meant that at most we had become a trio! We are hopeful that this will change at some point and that YCYC can be revived, so please do get in touch if you know of any budding singers who are Year 3 and above who might be interested.

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. The sessions are run by a team of volunteers and include a welcome, 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 the children are encouraged to do the reading and to help lead the prayers. Photos of what the children have been up to in Junior Church are shared with the congregation. This year we once again entered a Christmas tree into the Christmas Tree Festival held at the Baptist Church. We held Easter and Epiphany Craft Workshops to which 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 performed a variety of 'role plays' during the All Age Service, including ones about Palm Sunday and the Conversion of Saul.

CHURCHYARD WORKING PARTY

The team of volunteers continue to cut the new Churchyard grass and generally maintain the hedges and trees and other tasks in both churchyards. The hedging along the Kinton's path was cleaned up and cut where necessary and new hedging of five native species planted which have taken and are thriving. Most of our mowers are getting very old and parts for repairs are becoming unavailable so at some point we will be requiring some replacements. We really do need some more volunteers and would welcome any support the Parish could give us with finding these volunteers.

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! The highlight of last year was our community-based Flower Festival. The church was filled with over 50 floral displays produced by the interest groups, social and sporting clubs, businesses and charity groups in the villages, and the opening evening was celebrated with a concert by a range of local musicians and singers. Over £1000 was raised, shared between the church and Kent and Sussex Air Ambulance.

PARISH GIVING

At last, we have Wi-Fi in the Church. This enables donations to be made electronically at services and at any other time by casual visitors. Regular donors are encouraged to use the Parish Giving Scheme which saves us a lot of work and means we get the reclaimed tax more quickly. However, some people are averse to using direct debits.

PLANT AND FABRIC

This year our "Welcome Project" at last came to fruition, and was completed just before Christmas 2025, thanks to support from six charitable trusts (Marshalls Charity, Friends of Kent Churches and the local Congelow Trust), plus church savings and fundraising to meet the overall project cost of £58,672. Our church now has level access into and around the building to benefit all future users. There are new glazed oak entrance doors and a new ramp to replace the old hidden steps. The scheme was designed and planned by the committee (especially the late Bert Boxall), with Derek Hudson as architect. It was built by local firms, TJM Builders of Ditton, Sylvan Joinery and New Ash Electrical. Meanwhile, there has been other urgent work needed to keep the building watertight. Repairs to the roofs and stonework of the South transept have been completed. This was partly funded by Friends of Kent Churches and their annual Bike Ride Appeal. It is sad to report that we have had incidents of theft of lead and of damage to windows committed by local vandals. We can always use local tradesmen skilled in building conservation trades to help us with suitable DIY tasks. If you are willing and have skills, please contact the vicar.

PRAYER GROUP

Prayer group is currently not running.

OUTREACH

Throughout the year, Yalding Church has held a variety of outreach functions in the community, including the fête in July, children's craft workshops at Epiphany and Easter, a 'Food and Fellowship' summer course, Lent Pilgrimages to the National Art Gallery, Taizé services, Fireside Carols and choir-led carol singing at The Woolpack. The church also welcomes visiting choirs and bands to use the church for concerts, which this year included a concert by Apollo 5 in May. Bellringing groups also occasionally come to ring the bells, and the church was open for the Friends of Kent Churches Ride and Stride event in September. The church is an integral part of the Yuletide market, organising the carol sing-along and providing stalls and hot chocolate. The church was also used to host the wonderful Community Flower Festival and Concert in June and the very successful School Gambia Art Exhibition in August. The Laddingford Community Coffee Morning held once a month has continued to thrive. 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)

No recent meetings but continue to manage the finance for the shared upkeep of the pavilion.

CRICKET CLUB

Yalding Cricket Club's First XI had a decent season last year finishing mid-table. The new season starts on Saturday 9 May. Unfortunately, we had insufficient players to field a Sunday XI last year, but we have arranged a number of friendlies for this upcoming season to allow some game time for younger members who might not play on Saturdays. The junior section continues to thrive at Under-11 and Under-13 level. This year The Kintons will also host some home games for Kings Hill CC. The Kiosk is open on match days and continues to provide a valuable revenue stream for the club, and has attracted more social memberships from local villagers, who come to support the club. Over the winter, there have been some significant renovations to the pavilion, including a new roof, new plumbing and a total repainting, inside and out. The grounds continued to be maintained to a high standard. by a dedicated group of local volunteers. The Club thanks Yalding Parish Council for its continued support.

FISHING CLUB (CALPAC)

Last year we introduced Night Fishing on our Yalding Two fishery for members only. This is also subject to the member buying the correct Night Permit for this fishery. The night fishing is not for all CALPAC members. I have also just received permission from the Environment Agency to apply weedkiller to this fishery. This is because we now have the following Invasive Non Native Species growing: Himalayan Balsam.

FOOTBALL CLUB - Yalding & Laddingford Football Club

We place a strong emphasis on safety to ensure there are always sufficient qualified adults present. We again achieved England FA Accreditation, confirming us to be run effectively. We have eight league-registered teams, playing in four leagues and consisting of six mixed junior teams (U8 Harriers, U9 Kestrels, U10 Ospreys, U12 Hawks, U13 Buzzards, U14 Condors) and two Men's teams. We played home games at the Kintons and Jubilee Field plus winter training at East Peckham using our floodlights. We continued with affordable player fees and benefited from generous sponsorship & grants. A massive thank you to the long list of volunteers, players and parents who have again supported the club this season.

RIFLE RANGE

Yalding Rifle & Pistol Club, established in 1907, continues to thrive and has enjoyed another good year. Membership is currently full with the club operating a waiting list for potential probationary members. For further information please visit our website yrpc.uk For queries please contact secretary@yrpc.uk

TABLE TENNIS CLUB

We seem to be a shrinking club with no more than 8 players at our Monday sessions. Fridays are closed sessions – not open to the general public. We have one member in his early 30s who used to represent Kent at county level and the rest are MUCH older! Despite the increasing age profile, most are playing at a good level and it is inspiring to see people in their 60s, 70s and 80s still 'running around' and playing competitively. There are still no junior sessions and we are no longer in a position to accept junior members.

COMMERCIAL SPORTING ACTIVITIES

AQUA CHIMP

We are pleased that Aqua Chimp Kent had an encouraging first year with a wide variety of schools, sporting and scout groups taking up the challenge of the Jungle Ropes Course. The record summer temperatures ensured admissions were strong particularly for this new water based concept. We are looking forward to reopening on the 25th April and will be launching the Gorilla Slip n Slide for the May half term. This giant slide of 410 feet will be another first in the south east and will be a great addition to make Aqua Chimp Kent an amazing family day out for the upcoming summer months! We look forward to welcoming you !

CIRCLE DANCING

Our Circle Dancing Group really enjoy our monthly Saturday afternoon session in this Hall and will happily be continuing to do so. Our group are a friendly and caring bunch and the dancing and music are good exercise, fun and uplifting. The Youth and Community hall is a beautiful

space and we love the new windows and heating. We are always glad to welcome new members.

LUCY ROBINS SCHOOL OF DANCE

Lucy Robins School of Dance is pleased to continue thriving within the Yalding community. We have been proud to run weekly classes at the Youth and Community Centre for over 13 years and remain committed to providing accessible, high-quality performing arts opportunities locally. At our Yalding branch, we currently offer classes in Musical Theatre, Cheer and Street Dance, welcoming students of all abilities and experience levels. Across all locations, our school now supports over 450 students each week, ranging from toddlers aged one year through to adults, demonstrating the strong and growing interest in dance and performing arts within the local area. This year, our students also had the opportunity to perform in our annual showcase, held in a professional theatre for family and friends. We are proud that this event is provided completely free of charge for both participants and audience members, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to experience performing on stage regardless of financial circumstances. Each participant receives a medal in recognition of their hard work and achievement. We are already looking forward to returning to the stage at The Stag Theatre in Sevenoaks in Spring 2027 for our next production. We are extremely grateful to be part of the Yalding community and look forward to continuing to contribute positively to local life for many years to come.

SHINE SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS

It has been a landmark, and busy but fantastic year for our school. From our first full-scale production show in June to students performing in local pantomimes, our dancers have really excelled and grown in their performance skills and confidence. Most notably, our students' talent led to them being scouted for a performance at a local 70th birthday celebration—a testament to the high standard we uphold. Looking Ahead - This year, we are focusing on technical growth and recognition by entering students for official Ballet and Modern dance exams with the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. We are also opening our doors to new families and would love for the Parish to help us spread the word to anyone looking for a vibrant, creative community performing arts school for their children (or themselves!). Our Request - We ask for your continued support in sharing our success with the village. If you know a family who would benefit from the arts, please point them our way. We are proud to be part of this community and look forward to another year of standing ovations!

KARATE

The new heating system in the main Youth and Community hall is much quicker to heat up on cold evenings. I still haven't used the front door as it's much easier for parents to come around the side to wait when the front area may have cars parked on it. The toilets are kept well stocked with soap and tissue but the soap has a weird greasy feel to it so I always wash my hands more than once to really feel clean. The hall is perfect for my students to train in.

PETE BROOKS FITNESS

As the owner of PB Fitness & Nutrition, I'm proud to continue supporting the health and wellbeing of the Yalding community. Over the past year the business has continued to grow, with more local residents taking part in personal training, nutrition coaching and our weekly "Total Body Thursday" fitness class at Yalding Village Hall. The class has evolved into a fun, welcoming community session for all ages and abilities, combining fitness, movement and social connection. It has been especially rewarding to see so many people build confidence, improve their health and form friendships through regular exercise. During the past year I have also expanded my home studio gym facilities, allowing me to support more clients locally with tailored one-to-one coaching and rehabilitation-style training. Looking ahead, my aim is to continue growing inclusive fitness opportunities within the village, encourage more people to stay active regardless of age or experience and explore additional daytime or small-group sessions for those unable to attend evenings. I'd like to thank the Parish and local residents for their continued support of local independent businesses and community wellbeing initiatives.

PILATES - BODY CONTROL

It has been another good year for Pilates classes in the Yalding Youth Centre and the continued refurbishment has been appreciated with new windows and heaters being installed. The venue has improved greatly over my fifteen years of teaching there. Another class has been added on

Wednesdays at 12.00 noon with participants coming from a wide area. Numbers are very consistent with face to face classes and those on Zoom all being full. Pilates is a deeply personal practise, but that does not mean solitary, the power of a shared class, moving together with others greatly enhances wellbeing and has multiple benefits. Pilates is literally exploding all over the world and is now over 100 years old.

PILATES – HARRIET STEVENS

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

MOVE WITH EASE

Move with Ease is led by Caroline Miller, an integrative therapist specialising in chronic pain recovery, based in Laddingford and online, with group classes and workshops running from Paddock Wood Community Centre. Over the past year, the practice has continued to support the local community through 1:1 wellbeing and chronic pain recovery sessions, clinical massage therapy, and small group classes and workshops. Caroline's wellbeing sessions are client-centred, guiding individuals towards their desired outcomes using one or a combination of clinical massage and myofascial release, pain reprocessing therapy, breathwork, movement and self-massage, and mindfulness. Alongside client work, ongoing professional development has included further training in Tension, Trauma & Stress Releasing Exercises (TRE), supporting a deeper understanding of stress and nervous system regulation. In 2026, services will expand to include clinical hypnotherapy, alongside continued development of both individual and group offerings to support chronic pain, stress, and overall wellbeing. Opportunities to connect with local groups and raise awareness of this approach to health and wellbeing are always welcomed.

<https://www.movewithease.org.uk>

YOGA – HAPPY NAT

Yoga in Yalding Thursday evenings is going brilliantly. We are a really lovely group mainly of locals in the village and a few from East Peckham & Benover. Classes are busy most of time and everyone is supportive of each other; it has become a lovely ever growing community.

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 who come with older children. Lego Club is an after school club for one hour 3.30-4.30 on a Friday afternoon term time and we are always pleased to see children making Lego and learning to interact with each other. We had a display at the beautiful flower festival during the Summer and children made little gardens. We entered our 3rd Lego Christmas tree which always gets lovely comments. We had some Lego rose sets for Valentines and they are proudly in the window in a Lego vase. 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 make, take a look at www.facebook.co.uk/YaldingLegoClub or look in the library window

SCOUT GROUP

Firstly, I would like to thank Angela, Ben and Joe for their hard work and dedication to the group, without which we wouldn't be able to do what we do. A year on and Yalding Scout Group is still in trouble in fact we are hanging on by the thread. We are struggling with only 4 leaders. This means that we have absolutely no slack if a leader is not available and we have to cancel sessions. We managed to reopen Beavers for a short time but it didn't work out. We would love to run all Scouting groups: Squirrels for 4 to 6 year olds, Beavers for 6 to 8 year olds, Cubs 8 to 10 year olds, scouts 10 to 14 year olds and Explores 14 to 18 year olds. However, we are

currently only able to keep a very depleted cub and scout group running. Yalding Scout Group was 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. It is such a valuable organisation for our youngsters but without volunteer leaders we don't believe we can survive much longer. Despite our troubles one of our scouts Oliver Cust still managed to be selected for the World Scout Jamboree which is to be held in Poland in 2028. This is testament to what a great scout Oliver is, we are very proud of him. However, our small group has had a scout representative selected at the last 4 Jamborees, this is an amazing achievement and shows what an invaluable service Yalding Scout Group provides. ARE WE REALLY PREPARED TO LOSE IT? Even if you only have the slightest interest please volunteer to help keep this group going. If you are interested please contact me on 07508 920223. Kind regards DeeAnn Hall, Group Lead Volunteer

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 or a game. We love having an interactive time with your little one, but we do understand that little ones sometimes sleep in the afternoon or they are at pre-school. We love to see children who are free for a fun time in the library on Tuesday afternoons. Storytime is term time only from 2.15-2.45, so older brothers or sisters can be picked up from school after. We do our best to have a storyteller each week, so look out for Joanna from time to time, by popular request! Follow story time 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)

HRBC has been going strong for 16 years now. No new members recently but we continue to meet (monthly) and enjoy (mostly) being challenged occasionally to read something we would not ordinarily choose for ourselves. The library continues to do a sterling job of supporting us so thank you to the team there. Many members also choose audible or digital copies. Our favourite book this year was Frank and Red by Matt Coyne, a heartwarming story involving an old (ish) man and a young boy. Audible version featured a lovely Irishman reading it -thoroughly recommended

LITERARY GROUP

Our reading over the past year has covered a wide range, from ancient history (Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars) to contemporary novels (Bee Sting, Lessons in Chemistry), to dramatic travel writing (The Places Between, Rory Stewart's extraordinary account of walking across Afghanistan in winter) and 18th century natural history (Gilbert White's Natural History of Selborne. Our discussions as a group have always been lively and interesting. As always, we owe huge thanks to Yalding Library for getting in so many of the books we read.

YALDING BOOK GROUP

Yalding Reading Group (Daphne's book club). We are a group of 10, ranging in age from 50's to high 80's. We meet once a month, taking it in turns to host, to review the book we have read that month. Each member proposes a book and throughout the year we endeavour to include a classic, a memoir, a thriller, historical fiction, contemporary fiction, short stories, a biography. The person who proposes the book presents some information about the author, prior to our group discussion over a glass of wine. We also have a summer and winter outing. This summer we went to the Ram Inn in Firle for lunch followed by an afternoon at the gallery Charleston in Lewis for a Vanessa Bella exhibition. This winter we went to a screening of Hamnet. We are all extremely grateful for the very valuable resource of Yalding library and the friendly and efficient

staff who run it. Without our wonderful library the book club would be unable to operate. The library supports numerous book groups in the village, enabling us to broaden our literary knowledge and facilitating our social connections with fellow residents.

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 but a new member has been welcomed into the Group this year. The selection and range of books continue to be varied, which are chosen at an early January meeting each year and submitted to the Library, who 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 year 2025/2026 started with a new chairman and committee. The main aim for the forthcoming year was to have all plots brought to a high horticultural standard which I am pleased to say has been achieved. We also hoped to reinstate the overgrown empty plots and find new people to take on these empty plots, this we have achieved and to date all plots are now taken and we have a waiting list of 4 people. Our latest project is to turn an overgrown area that is not fit as a vegetable plot into a rest and relaxation area and a wild flower area, this project is still on going and we hope to complete it in the next 3 months. The committee and I are hoping to have more social on site gatherings with BBQ's, firework night, summer and Christmas association dinners with friends and families. All association members are looking forward to the new growing season.

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 10th 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 went to Hastings and our ultimate goal each year is to swim in the sea! In 2026 one of our trips will be to Rochester so no swimming in the sea there! We have also entered A Letter In Mind which is a fundraising art project for The Brain Trust which we support every year. 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!). £3 per person all welcome. We have www.facebook.com/yaldingartgroup and a WhatsApp - both of which showcases all the work we do during the year.

BINGO

Bingo nights are held every Wednesday at Yalding village club, eyes down 7.30 pm. We are a friendly bunch and always welcome new players. If you require further details please contact Sue Gerrish on 01622 814163 or 07852 995895 or email suegerrish@gmail.com

BEE KEEPERS - Laddingford & District

As part of the British Beekeepers Association and a charitable organisation, we are maintaining our self-sufficiency and remain successful with a good membership. The main challenge over the last two years has been the emergence of the Yellow Legged Asian Hornet! There have been many sightings within Kent on the South Coast and now much closer to home in Maidstone and surrounding areas with nests being found and destroyed by the National Bee Unit! It will be a challenging time for beekeepers and gardeners alike as they destroy not just bees but ALL

pollinators. Our main aim over the coming months will be to educate the public on the threat of this invasive hornet.

FILM CLUB

It seemed that nearly every other village in Kent had a thriving film club and Yalding was missing out! After going to Teston, Rusthall & Lenham film clubs we asked many questions and we then formed a committee, got a bank account and constitution. That was in September 2025. Then the real work began! Running a film club is unfortunately expensive, so we borrowed some money to cover the various bills which need to be paid e.g. £100+ every time a film is shown to cover copyright. We also needed to find funds for public liability, hall hire, refreshments/food stock, advertising etc. We are lucky that Yalding School are lending us their sound equipment at the moment and Pete had a projector otherwise our project would have ended there as they are the very expensive items needed. We bought a lightweight screen which folds up into a small box which works very well and looks good on the stage. However, that is the sum of our own equipment! We have applied for a couple of grants as we are a community group and we feel we will give a real benefit to the village and surrounding areas by offering a film night every month and we have been partially successful with gaining two grants so far. Our ultimate aim is to get our own equipment to be able to show films and have the Yalding School equipment as backup should we need it (and if they are still willing to lend it!). Yalding Parish Council funded our February-May film brochure, which appeared in the Yalding & Laddingford Parish Magazine for February. Robert Ford (MP) has approved an additional £500 which will fund 10 films in the form of two colour brochures after May 2026. We were also lucky to be awarded £100 from the Yuletide Committee for banners. We are really grateful for monies from all sources. We are currently waiting to see if the Arts Lottery Fund will fund a projector. The decision from them will be made in April. We have a GoFundMe page and we've been blown away by the donations sent in and we are currently looking to see if we can get a grant to cover our monthly £110 fee for copyright as that is the one cost which is holding us back. However, I must say what fun it has been. We started in October with Galaxy Quest and we had a great turn out. The next film was The Good, The Bad & The Ugly and many cowboy outfits were worn, which really made the evening. Our Christmas film was the classic It's A Wonderful Life and we had Christmas jumpers galore plus a beautiful set of painted wings (by Anastasia) for our audience to pose with as 'when a bell rings, an angels gets his wings!' We finished our first run in January and our second run of films finishes on Friday 1st May with Mama Mia! Lots of ABBA costumes please! We like our audience to choose the films, so a proposed film list is in the April issue of the Y&L Parish Magazine and the vote will be counted and films decided upon for the next brochure. We had to cancel the March film so The Graduate will be shown on Friday, 5th June as the first film in the third season. As funds are really tight we have made the decision that we will have a bar at every film showing. This decision was not taken lightly, but to be able to continue, the profits are really needed from operating a bar. We hope everyone will continue to support Yalding Film Club and we have built up in the short time of operating a core of avid film goers. Why not join them? Please look at the posters as each film has an age rating or is a PG. We update events via www.facebook.com/yaldingfilmclub or www.yaldingfilmclub.weebly.com

GARDEN SOCIETY

As well as our spring and autumn shows, we have organised an outing by coach to Hyde Hall Garden, and two outings when we travelled independently and met at Restoration House Rochester and Goddards Green near Cranbrook. All were much enjoyed by our members. Our three winter talks were well attended, with an earlier start time to allow for refreshments on arrival. We had a super summer picnic in a member's garden and a lively Christmas party with an enthralling short talk and a quiz with "bring and share" nibbles. We have updated our website. This is still a work in progress, but in time we hope it will include a display of members' photos and reports of our events. We have a similar exciting programme planned for this year, and are always delighted to welcome new members, whether experienced gardeners or enthusiastic owners of a few (?wilting) pot plants.

KNIT AND NATTER

The Knit & Natter Group at Yalding Library is now in full stride and projects are coming thick and fast! This is our third 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 made lots of poppies for the WI Remembrance display on the church & the lych-gate. They also filled the thick netting display which went up for the first time surrounding the Laddingford sign and they also covered the bollard outside the library, so we're hoping other bollards will have a lovely poppy display also in November 2026. It was lovely to see and was truly inspirational. 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 you'll be more than welcome.

RELATIVE MINORS (RM) ORCHESTRA

We have enjoyed playing this last year under a slightly more informal arrangement with Karen Di Marco conducting but other members of the band/orchestra occasionally take the lead. We enjoyed a very energetic workshop with Julie Moore who conducts several bands and orchestras across Kent and we learnt a good deal from her. Every year we enjoy playing at the Laddingford Carol Service and in December the vicar took up the baton in Karen's absence. This was a very successful and popular evening. We also played at the summer Flower Festival and several of our players performed solos, duets and music for small groups. We have welcomed several new players, including sisters, daughters, father and son. So, our name continues to be relevant. We are always pleased to include unrelated players too! We have changed our meeting times to the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month to enable more of our members to attend as they lead such busy musical lives with other bands. Our rehearsals are 5-7 pm at St. Mary's Laddingford. We play music from many genres: films and musicals, pop, classical, jazz, etc. and we welcome new players who can sight read reasonably well but do not need to be experienced players. Please contact Heather Haddesley on 07790125791. We are always looking for new players and anyone who plays a musical instrument is very welcome.

REPAIR CAFÉ

The Repair Café was launched by the Major of Maidstone last March and has now been going once a month for just over a year. It 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. During the time we have been operating many items have been repaired by our varied experts. We have a wood table, electronics, mechanics, sewing, ceramics & jewellery repair. We also have an IT table where we will talk through any problems with mobiles, laptops or tablets, software problems only please. 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. You don't have to have a broken item to come along, our refreshments and cakes and particularly cheese scones by Cheryl are very popular. We love to see anyone who just wants to come along and see how we work or just to have a natter and a cuppa. Everyone is welcome. We have refreshments and cakes for a small donation in the small hall and Laura raises funds for Friends of Yalding Surgery with her jigsaw swop table. We will swop jigsaws but would ask for a small donation each time. 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 can all make a difference, so look at that broken item again with fresh eyes and bring it along.

VILLAGE VOICES

The numbers of voices joining Village Voices this past year has increased again and stands at 24 regular singers. We sing a variety of songs for our own pleasure and wellbeing and we are a very social group and welcoming to new members. We hold an annual summer BBQ which is

very popular and this year 16 of us attended a whole weekend of unaccompanied singing with Chris Rowbury who is a nationally renowned workshop leader. We thoroughly enjoyed learning new songs, skills and meeting other local choir members. We sang at the Laddingford Carol Service in December and our rendition of "Sheep! Sheep!" was a hilarious success. We have also been invited to sing at St. Luke's lunch club in Maidstone and Evergreens at East Farleigh WI Hall. The highlight of the year was singing at the Flower Festival in June. For this we designed and wore our new logo polo shirts. We challenge ourselves to learn all our songs off by heart for these performances and it certainly helps us to communicate the variety of styles that we sing. All ages, stages and levels of experience are welcome to join the group and you do not need to be able to read music. If you would like to find out more about us, we meet in the church from 7.30 – 9.00 pm, usually on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month and the cost works out at £2.50 per session to cover costs. Contact Karen Di Marco 07771760389 and/or karendimack@gmail.com. After deductions for venue hire, printing and purchasing new music, any residual income is donated to SchoolGambia.

WI

We have had another busy year at Yalding & Laddingford WI. It is very encouraging that another generation of ladies have joined us. We had local businesses demonstrating candle making, chocolate and sloe gin and a very educational talk from British Red Cross on basic first aid and deliberators. We also had an interesting talk about wills and an enjoyable evening with a fashion show, modelled by some of our not so shy ladies, we opened this event out to the public and we were very grateful for the support. Line Dancing is always a favourite and looking forward to another Hoedown in September. The ever-popular wreath making was again well supported. Many ladies continued to knit and crochet poppies to display on Church Tower for Remembrance Day. We held a successful Jumble Sale in the spring and Craft Faye in the Autumn and had a wonderful time on our Christmas night out at The Chequers. We are always looking for ideas for workshops or interesting talks to entertain the ladies for around 90 mins and would welcome anyone to speak to the programme Secretary Sue Gerrish on 01622 814163 or suegerrish@gmail.com

YALDING AND LADDINGFORD ENTERTAINERS (YALE)

With no local drama since before Covid, and with most of the original drama group no longer available, it's a delight to be able to report on two successful productions in the past year. The VE celebrations in June saw a performance of "Mum's Army" as part of the village street party. With challenging 'acoustics' among the many revellers the performance was audible to only a few and so was repeated some weeks later at the Chequers with two shows, one in the garden and one inside. These sparked overwhelming enthusiasm for another village pantomime, the first in fact since 2010. Rehearsals for "Dick Whittington" began in September with three performances to a packed Village Hall in late February. With over 40 people involved, with ages ranging from 7 to 81, the show was a testament to the joys and rewards of teamwork and commitment, bringing delight to audiences of over 400 including a great many exuberant children. Their support and vocal participation ("It's behind you," "Oh no it isn't") contributed immeasurably to making this a genuine community event. A crucial factor in all this was the arrival in Laddingford a few years ago of drama teacher Kelly Woods. She brought not only her theatrical skills and experience but an inspiring sense of vitality and optimism to both events. The pantomime was an unqualified triumph and surpassed all previous local performances in ambition and technical sophistication. The overall success of the show resulted from invaluable teamwork onstage and backstage. It is worth noting that very few of the team had ever been involved in a stage production before, not counting school. Here's hoping some of those in the audience and the wider community will be encouraged to show similar boldness when future opportunities arise.

MARKETS

YULETIDE MARKET

2025 saw us back to normal in the High Street with an expanded food and drinks offer this time, including running our own market bar right in the centre. All the food was organised at either end of the High Street and we were supported by the stalwart attractions of the fairground and

bottle stall flanking the outer edges of the market area. This arrangement worked very well and gave the market a nice layout. Add to this approximately 40 stalls offering various goods and our visitors enjoyed their experience. The Church was well integrated this year and played a key part in the overall event, and we are hoping to keep this for 2026. 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 for overflow parking. 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 complying with our traffic related requests, coming out and supporting in their droves; our superb Yuletide extended volunteer team, The Parish Council, most local businesses and of course our visitors from near and far. 2026 will see us review everything including the mix of entertainment, food offers, stalls mix and we plan to bring the 'market inn' back too. Stall holder feedback mentioned the poor cell signal which affected their ability to use electronic payment methods, so a priority area is enabling Wi-Fi somehow throughout the market. If we crack the Wi-Fi we should also be able to get some outdoor musical background going too. We'll be talking to a couple of local organisations about improving their level of participation, all in the name of inclusivity and with an eye on visitor safety and minimising risks. We also need to review the road closure logistics as costs keep rising so you may spot some discreet tweaks this year on how things run. Watch this space. 2026 sees Dee Ann stepping down as Chairman of the working party with Jason Bryant resuming the role. 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? Please don't hesitate to contact us

HALLS AND FACILITIES

YALDING VILLAGE HALL

The Village Hall has been reasonably busy with bookings up to the end of February and into March (especially with the panto and rehearsals) and a little quieter since. Regular bookings have increased slightly with Shine Dance class reserving more regular times. In terms of issues, the main one was the leaks during the Christmas period during the very cold weather. As a result, we have decided that the pipes above the hall need to be moved away from the eaves and insulated properly. We have received one quote, but the second quote didn't materialise despite chasing. The work needs to be carried out in the summer break when it's quiet, so I will organise another quotation in the next month, so we have a comparison. Play Place have reported that the rear garden needs some work to tidy it up as they found some pieces of glass in the area around the play area surface. A quote was provided to turf the surrounding area and seed the bare patches, as well as fitting some extra boarding under the fence to block the fox burrows. This quote was approximately £250 and I recommend we carry out this work. Lastly, woodworm was found under the stage and this needs treatment. I am awaiting an estimate/quote following a recent survey that was carried out. Other than that, everything seems to be running smoothly, and no other issues to report. We would just like to say to you all that the village hall is a self-supporting charity and we need to pay our bills from our income keeping a small reserve for maintenance. We are sorry but we are unable to give discounted rates to other charities. Also, please do not advertise your event with a bar before checking that a TENS license will be available. We do not have an alcohol license and we are only permitted 15 TENS licenses each year which we could very easily exceed with the current use of the hall.

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE (YYCC)

A reminder 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. Various groups continue to use the building so that there are few vacant slots each week. There continue to be some one off bookings also, mostly at weekends. We are grateful to Martin Johnson who continues to manage hall bookings, and our electronic calendar is in full use now, so it can be shared with those who need to see the bookings or availability. We have been able to replace the Main Hall heaters since last year and are very thankful for the funds donated for this. We have also taken the opportunity to fully update the electric wiring in the building which has been a very large expense but worthwhile to

keep the building and users safe and certified for the future. Well done to the Friends of YYCC, who held another Christmas Tree Festival in December and have continued the very successful Repair Cafe this year which is a community as well as a practical and fundraising event each month. We still hope eventually to put a cabin in the garden for use as an office and a counselling room. There are future plans to redevelop the basement and some more work is needed on the roof.

FRIENDS OF YALDING YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE

Linda and June were 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 usually held the second week of December after the weekend of the Yuletide Market. Unfortunately, there will be no Christmas Tree Festival in 2026 due to June taking a late holiday and being unable to organise it, but we may have one in 2027 especially as we've been promised a Santa's Grotto which would be great if we can organise it. 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 public voting declaring a winning tree. We are always entranced by the imagination of our entries and it is such a warm cosy event. We've had many great 'winners' over the past couple of years which have included the Village Tea Rooms, Circle Dancers, Yalding Cricket Club and last year the worthy winners were Yalding Scouts with a very impressive disco ball on top! Volunteers offer refreshments, cake and mince pies to visitors and all donations go to the upkeep and ongoing renovation of the Baptist Church/Yalding Youth & Community Centre. However, in March 2025, we expanded our group of 'Friends!' We now also run Yalding Repair Café which has been a runaway success and they have a report also.

HELPING HANDS

Yalding Helping Hands is a voluntary organisation which comprises volunteers from the village to assist members of the parish who need help with transport for doctor's or hospital appointments. It provides a service to many elderly residents, as well as some younger residents, who may not have family locally to provide transport to take them for these appointments. As highlighted in previous years, Helping Hands desperately needs volunteer drivers. Many of our volunteers have either moved away, are no longer in good health or are just getting older. It has now become really 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 as there is nobody available. If this is the case, in future years it may well be the end of Yalding Helping Hands. Transport is provided for local residents to Maidstone Hospital, Tunbridge Wells Hospital or Yalding Doctors' Surgery. Volunteers are reimbursed petrol and car parking expenses. If you feel you could help please get in touch with Jenny or me – our contact numbers are listed in the parish magazine. PLEASE HELP.

YALDING PICNIC AREA AND CAR PARK

Being part of The Lees, the area is owned by Yalding Parish Council (YPC) and any profit is ploughed back into our Community Funds. The toilets are currently owned by Maidstone Borough Council but will revert back to the Parish Council following LGR. We have had to stop the use of BBQs as too many people were lighting charcoal burners and tipping the remains onto the grass. This is not only a fire hazard when the weather is hot but it is also damaging to the habitat for wildlife. It is still of some concern both to YPC and the Environment Agency regarding the use of the weir pool by children for paddling but we feel that we have done all we can with fencing and signs and that it is the parents responsibility to safeguard their children.

NU-VENTURE BUS'S

Yalding's daytime buses to/from Maidstone continue to be provided by Aylesford-based local bus company Nu-Venture. Financial support from Kent County Council for these services is likely to continue until Summer 2027. The assistance of Yalding Parish Council on a number of issues is especially welcome, particularly the prompt notification of flooding and roadworks on local roads used by buses requiring services to be diverted or curtailed. There have been no planned change in the past year, and none are expected in coming weeks, but unplanned

changes due to works in the highway continue at an ever-growing rate. Kent Highways continue to plan to undertake more works in the evenings and at weekends, but certain utility companies remain far less co-operative and this impacts on the service offered when buses have to be diverted at short notice. Congestion at the Town Bridge continues to delay buses especially at peak times, the help of those parishioners who give way in their cars to allow buses priority to cross the bridge is always much appreciated by our drivers!

YALDING LIBRARY

There has been a drop in visitor numbers to Yalding Library over the last 12 months and this has also reflected in a reduction in book issues. We have now purchased a removable ramp that will enable the school to resume visits to the library and hopefully this will improve our visitor and issue numbers. 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. The Summer Reading Challenge last year did show an increase in numbers of children participating with 71 children taking part compared with 49 in the previous year. We were lucky to receive an education grant from the Yalding Foundation and this has enabled us to buy more children's books, as well as prizes for the Summer Reading Challenge for Yalding children for the next few years. We appreciate the support of the local community for the library and hope to see more visitors over the coming year.

PADDOCK WOOD & DISTRICT LIONS CLUB

We are part of Lions Clubs International, a global network of volunteers working to support communities around the world. The Paddock Wood & District Lions Club is a volunteer led charity that has been supporting local communities since 1982. While our name reflects our origins, our work has always extended far beyond Paddock Wood. Today, we actively serve a wide rural area including Brenchley, Collier Street, East Peckham, Five Oak Green, Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Lamberhurst, Marden, Matfield, Staplehurst and Yalding, with members living across these communities.

A Year of Supporting Our Communities: Over the past year, our focus has remained simple. We bring people together, raise funds, and provide practical support across our district. Our events continue to act as a cornerstone for community life. From the Carnival Weekend and Rockin' in the Rec, to the East Peckham 10K and our Santa's Sleigh runs through villages such as Marden, Staplehurst and East Peckham, these moments are about far more than fundraising. They create connection, shared experiences, and a sense of community across our villages. Alongside this, much of our work happens more quietly. We have supported foodbanks in Marden and Staplehurst, contributed to the East Peckham Community Fridge, provided grants to Staplehurst Emergency Help Team, and helped families across the district with essentials such as school uniforms and household items. We have also supported local youth initiatives, including Laddingford Primary School Challenger Troop. This breadth of support reflects something we are keen to emphasise. Our work is not centred on one town, but spread across many communities throughout the district, responding wherever the need arises.

Who We Are: We are a group of local people who give what time we can. Some of us are long standing members, others are newer, but we all share a common aim to help others and contribute positively to the communities we live in. We meet monthly to discuss local needs and plan activities, and we balance our volunteering with social events that help keep the club welcoming and sustainable.

Looking Forward: Working Together: One of our ongoing challenges is awareness. Despite working across a wide area, there is still a common perception that we are primarily a Paddock Wood organisation. This can make it harder to reach people and communities who may benefit from support, or who may wish to get involved. We see local councils as key partners in helping to change this perception and improve awareness across all our communities. By working together and sharing information, we can ensure that residents across all our villages are aware of the support available and the opportunities to be part of it. We are also always looking to grow our membership so that it better reflects the communities we serve.

We are proud of what has been achieved over the past year, but equally aware that there is more we can do, particularly by strengthening connections across the whole district. We welcome continued dialogue with local councils, community groups and residents, and we are always open to hearing where support may be needed. For more information, please visit: <https://paddockwoodlions>.

PATIENTS' PARTICIPATION GROUP (PPG)

The PPG continues to play an active role in supporting our local surgery and ensuring patients' voices are heard. Over the past year, the group, currently made up of six members, has met on a quarterly basis to maintain regular dialogue with the practice team. At each meeting, we receive updates on new developments within the surgery, including changes to services, staffing and improvements to patient care. We also gain insight into the challenges faced by the practice, particularly in the context of increasing demand and wider pressures within the NHS. An important part of our role is to raise and discuss specific issues or concerns that have been highlighted by patients. By working collaboratively with the surgery, we aim to contribute to practical solutions and help improve the overall patient experience. The PPG is keen to support the surgery in any way we can and to act as a constructive link between patients and practice staff. We would very much welcome hearing from patients who have questions, feedback or suggestions and encourage anyone interested to get in touch. Together, we can help ensure our surgery continues to meet the needs of the whole community.

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 (or more if you can spare it!) per household to cover publishing costs and we put an envelope in the February issue. We have a QR code in the magazine with details of the bank account is on page 2, so if you would prefer to pay digitally, the account is 11424503 sort code 09-01-53 (Donation Yalding Parish Magazine). Details on how to contact us are also on page 2. 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 from Yalding & Laddingford residents & Yalding Parish Council give us. The magazine team consists of Editor & Advertising - June Chapman, 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 your magazine is not delivered by the 1st of the month, please come into the Post Office, Village Tea Rooms, library or church for your copy and when it is delivered we'd appreciate one in return. If you are a distribution volunteer and feel you can no longer meet the 1st of the month deadline for distribution, please let either Anna or Paul know and we'll think of another way of getting those magazines to your neighbours. Please don't feel bad, we would rather have magazines distributed on time than them lying on a table in your house! If you would like to be a volunteer delivering the magazine, please contact mag@yaldingchurches.co.uk

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. We are now using Gagglemail for our bulk emails as Microsoft started to treat the emails as unsolicited mail and not delivering, sometimes urgent messages.

PARTNERSHIPS

MEDWAY VALLEY COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP

Kent Community Rail Partnership is one of over 75 CRPs across the UK. We are hosted by Walk Wheel Cycle Trust, the charity making it possible for everyone to walk, wheel and cycle; connecting longer journeys by public transport. We are accredited annually by the Department for Transport. 2025 saw celebrations of the 200th anniversary of passenger rail travel take place across the country under the banner of Railway 200. Highlights for the Medway Valley Line for 2025/26 are listed below. We have given a voice to local communities, by responding to the London to Central Kent and Hastings Strategic Study, and the Maidstone West and Barracks Strategic Station Consultations, which saw over 70 community responses shared with Network Rail. Pop-up events took place at Tonbridge, Paddock Wood and Maidstone West stations, and Medway Archives Centre, focused on celebrating Railway 200. A new information panel was installed at Paddock Wood, connecting people to the history of the former "Hop Pickers Line" to Hawkhurst and the pioneering railway engineer Colonel Holman F Stephens. The Maidstone River Festival saw us 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, and Wateringbury, who keep their local stations attractive and welcoming to visitors and regular users. A change of adopters at Maidstone West sees us working with Maidstone Climate Action Network to promote sustainable travel choices and community connection to nature. We have helped our partners to rehome over 90 cycles abandoned at stations, saving them from landfill, providing opportunities to learn new skills during their refurbishment and raising funds for community projects from their sale. Social media posts have promoted our Rail Trail walks from Medway Valley Line stations and those of partner organisations. These walks bring tourists into the Medway Valley by train, promoting sustainable tourism and tourist spend in the local economy. Kent CRP volunteer Dominic Noades received recognition for his "Outstanding Volunteer Contribution" at the Community Rail Awards 2025. The award recognises his dedication and advocacy for Kent CRP. Kent CRP is grateful to Yalding Parish Council for its funding and support for our work.

MEDWAY VALLEY COUNTRYSIDE PARTNERSHIP (MVCP)

MVCP is a nature conservation organisation that works across the two boroughs of Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling. MVCP are in a period of transition and capacity of work has been scaled back but this report highlights the work carried out in the Yalding area. MVCP orchestrates the control of Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* along the middle and upper Medway catchment. This includes tributaries such as the River Beult, which alone had over 3,300 plants treated in 2025. Please become familiar with this highly toxic plant, treatment normally takes place in April-May period. MVCP also organised vegetation control events for Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* at the Medway Victory Angling Society site (Nettlestead Community Woodland) to assist the 1500 sapling trees that were planted there over recent years. Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* management took place at Hampstead Marina, this plant can prove to be problematic as it can grow up to 20cm per day and clog waterbodies. There are two ponds on the Yalding Fen site that are part of a nationwide scheme to benefit Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*. Whilst these are the only two ponds in the village that is part of that scheme, the surrounding area has proved good breeding grounds for the species. Pond samples last year were recorded as GCN present, samples have recently been taken this year, and it is hoped for the same result. The officer leading the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* is currently on leave, but it is hoped that some monitoring will take place as we are in partnership with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).

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. We all also did online training via www.communityspeedwatch.org. If you are interested in joining Speedwatch, please look up Community Speedwatch online and ask to join Yalding and it will prompt you to register and do the online safety course. We liaise with each other via a WhatsApp Group to get a team together for a session in various allocated points in the village. We can do a session with just 3 volunteers but prefer to have four and we monitor traffic for one hour each session. It has become apparent that the worst places for speeding vehicles is when they come

into the village via Lees Road and also via Benover. We have reported our findings to Kent Police and we are hoping that speed monitors might be positioned in these areas to remind drivers to slow down. We would also recommend white arrows being painted on the road to warn motorists they are entering a village. We are hoping that lighter equipment can be bought as the weight of the current monitor & stand is inhibiting us as it necessitates a volunteer having to drive it to the location. We have passed on recommended speed gun prices to Yalding Parish Council in the hope they may be able to purchase new equipment to enable volunteers who don't drive to do a Speedwatch session.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS THAT SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

INVOLVE KENT

Involve Kent is a local charity working to support healthy, connected communities across Kent. Over the past year, we supported 31,260 people across the county and continued to help local residents access practical, emotional and wellbeing support, including through social prescribing at Yalding Surgery. This support can help residents with a wide range of issues that affect day-to-day wellbeing, including loneliness, long-term health conditions, housing, finances and finding local activities or services. Our aim is to help people get the right support at the right time and feel more connected to their community. Over the coming year, we hope to continue supporting local residents in and around Yalding and to strengthen links with local groups and services wherever we can. We are always pleased to hear about community needs, opportunities and ways we can help residents stay well and connected.

LOCAL COMMERCIAL SERVICES

CHEQUERS INN

The Chequers continues to be the focal point of Laddingford and with the closure of two pubs in Yalding in the previous year is also popular with Yalding residents. The customers are not only from within the Parish but landlords Charles & Tracey have built a reputation over the past 32 years which also encourages customers 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. The Chequers is committed to supporting the local community and providing a happy and welcoming environment for everyone. Charles & Tracey have recently announced that they are planning to retire towards the end of 2026 and new landlords are being sought that will continue to be sympathetic guardians of The Chequers, Laddingford.

CLOCKHOUSE FARM

At Clock House Farm, our mission remains clear: to deliver on our commitment to growing a better tomorrow by continually producing the highest quality fruit, ensuring a consistent and reliable supply to our customers while farming responsibly.

Key Developments in 2025:

Continued Investment in Sustainable Growing (Linton Growing). Following the successful implementation of the tray field project at Linton Growing in 2024, this year has focused its on continued optimisation and performance. The system is now fully embedded within our propagation process and continues to deliver significant environmental and operational benefits. This investment continues to play a vital role in securing long-term sustainability and food production resilience.

Farm Expansion and Development. Over the past year, we have continued to integrate and develop our recently acquired site near Faversham (Langdon Manor Farm).

Water Management and Environmental Responsibility. Water remains a critical focus across all our sites.

People and Community. People remain at the heart of our business. In 2025, we have continued to grow our permanent workforce across a number of areas within the business, with many of these roles filled through local recruitment, invested further in training, development, and long-term career opportunities for employees, continued to strengthen our welfare and support systems across all areas of the workforce. We are proud to provide meaningful employment

opportunities while creating a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment for everyone who works with us.

Community Engagement. We remain committed to working closely with the local community in Yalding and surrounding areas. This includes:

- Ongoing communication with residents and stakeholders
 - Supporting local initiatives and schools
 - Responding promptly to any concerns, including traffic, mud on roads, or site-related issues
- We value the continued support of the community and remain open, approachable, and responsive.

We are proud of what we continue to achieve and remain committed to growing a better tomorrow for our customers, our people, and the communities in which we operate.

HAMPSTEAD MARINA

No report received

LITTLE VENICE

No report received

ORCHARD VIEW GARAGE

We had a substantial cost increase this year with rent and rates and employment costs all going up. Our energy costs have reduced due to contract ending and being able to locate a better electricity rate going forwards. We have two new office receptionists, covering most weeks now. Jane from Collier Street and Bekkie from Yalding. Our technicians are the same with Paul, Alex, George and myself Mark. The company has now operated 24 years in Hampstead Lane and we are keeping busy. We are seeing a steady increase in electric or hybrid vehicles, but the majority are still petrol and diesel. The body paint shop with Sam is very busy. To sum up, the demand for the garage is still good and we are still secure in the site.

ORCHARD VIEW STORES

Orchard View Stores would like to thank the community of Yalding village for the ongoing support and business this year. We are delighted to announce, that we have taken an opportunity and have applied for the Post Office to be within our shop. We hope that this opportunity comes our way smoothly, so that we can ensure Orchard View Stores can help thrive and keep the ongoing Post Office customers no hassle at all. We aim to continue to help maximise the village as much as we can, on delivering the best service and quality on helping to sustain the village community.

YALDING POST OFFICE

As I reported last year we will be retiring on June 10th, 2026. We will close for good at 1.00pm that day. It is highly unlikely that Post Office Ltd will approve any other people to take over the branch as it stands. The business case is too poor. The most likely scenario is the Post Office will move into another local business. There may be a time lapse between us closing and the new branch being ready for business. We hope to set up a temporary Outreach Service, but this is proving difficult. The Emporium will close at the end of April. It is likely that the room will be used as an office space. I said this last year, and the year before that...sorry to sound like a stuck record...Royal Mail, despite its many problems around delivery times, loss of mail, industrial relations and new foreign ownership will be raising postage prices again. Thank you for supporting our little Post Office. We have been running it for very nearly 15 years. It has been an honour and a privilege to have been your local Postmaster...I've enjoyed every moment of it. Thank you Yalding!!! Tim.

TEAPOT ISLAND

We understand that this will be open again shortly. Keith and Sue have granted a lease to a third party and the solicitors are taking ages to complete it.

THE BOATHOUSE

Just wanted to let you know that our branch opened in early May. We are serving a classic menu with English food and Sri Lankan dishes for everyone to try. During the summer, we'll also have live music outside and we'd love to welcome everyone from the community. We'll be accepting cash as well, so everyone is more than welcome to come along and enjoy. Also, if anyone is looking for a job, especially in the kitchen, they can give a call anytime. 01622 814359.

THE FORGE

I have had a successful year with a constant flow of customers creating bespoke handrails, gates etc. My animal sculptures were exhibited at Pashley Manor Gardens, Leeds Castle and the Yalding Church Art Exhibition in Aid of School Gambia. As a result of that exhibition, I have been invited to be a part of an exciting exhibition being held at Maidstone Library in 2027. I have pieces returning to Pashley Manor Gardens and Leeds Castle this year. This month I have been included in Elle Decoration Magazine as part of their Stylish Interiors section. As a business in Yalding I would like to be kept updated with any conversations about a toll on the bridge as stated in the February issue of the Parish Magazine. I am concerned this would affect footfall for my business and am keen to have an input.

THE GEORGE (YALDING SUPERMARKET)

No report received.

THE HOP PICKERS REST

We are running steady 7 days a week 363 days a year 8 am till 3pm serving breakfasts and lunches to have at our little site past orchard view garage or delivered via just eats again if anyone feels the pain and struggles of life and needs a chat and warm drink come and have one on me.

THE WALNUT TREE

Stonegate group have not responded to a request for a report. This time last year we were all very excited about the sale of the Walnut Tree, unfortunately Stonegate pulled out of this sale and continue to advertise the lease.

THE WOOLPACK

Sales have been strong again this year. Pub sales and accommodation sales. The Gardens Wedding venue in the summer is providing a lot of business with weddings every day in the summer. Overall, a very good year for us.

TWO BREWERS CLOCKS AND ANTIQUES

The clock repair side of the business is doing well. We aim to repair your clock within a month to six weeks. Sometimes we need to order parts in from our suppliers which can increase the time it takes to do the work, so please bear with us. All work carried out has a 1-year guarantee. You may not be aware that we also fit good quality, Swiss-made watch batteries at cheap prices. The antiques side of the business is steady. New stock comes in all the time. The shop is open Monday to Friday now from 10-5. Occasionally if you find the shop closed outside these hours, call us on 07767 77101. We may be on a collection or delivery. Opening at weekends was not supported locally and was therefore, regretfully, no longer financially possible. Parking outside the shop is free. This is your village antique and clock shop, so please take advantage of it.

TWYFORD BRIDGE MARINA

We are glad to have the new bridge over the marina all settling in with the plants and grasses nicely hoping the great weather continues for fun Boaty times through the season anyone who is feeling down and needs a lift of mood contact me and I will see if I can help with a trot up the river to relax the mind.

YALDING CLUB

No report received.

YALDING GARDENS

During 2025, we hosted 97 weddings and welcomed approximately 9,000 visitors to Tipis Restaurant between November to March. A key highlight was a particularly successful and well attended GardenFest event in the summer, where we opened our doors not only to prospective wedding couples but also to the wider local community. The Gardens and its wedding operator, Glow Events, continue to support local employment, with approximately 12 staff members from Yalding and over 140 employees based within a 20-mile radius. We are pleased to continue hosting the Laddingford District & Beekeepers Association on the grounds, with their honey used in the kitchen and gifted to couples during viewings. Our annual GardenFest open day remains an important event for the local community, offering an opportunity to explore the venue and grounds. The date for GardenFest 2026 will be announced in due course. Updates can be found via our Instagram and Facebook.

YALDING TAXIS

Over the past year, Yalding Taxis has continued to provide reliable local transport for residents, including school runs, station transfers, medical appointments and other essential everyday journeys. We remain committed to offering a dependable service to the local community and supporting residents who may have limited transport options. Over the coming year, we aim to build further on our service reliability and availability, while continuing to look for ways to support local transport needs in Yalding and the surrounding area. We would welcome any continued support from the Parish in helping raise awareness of local transport services, particularly for residents who may benefit most from them.

YALDING TEA ROOMS

This is our first full year at The Village Tea Rooms; we've been proud to keep the kettle on for Yalding. More than just tea and cake, we've worked hard to make the tearoom a true community space where neighbours catch up, visitors feel welcome, and local businesses support each other. We have our wonderful collaboration with Bakeaboo Bakes from Laddingford, bringing you the ever-popular 4-layer 'Flavour of the Week' cakes. It's been a joy sharing these creations with the village and supporting another local business. The Tea Room has provided raffle prizes for local fundraisers and partnered on events like our recent raffle with, The Nail Fairy. Small moments that bring people together matter, and we love being part of them. We've kept our focus on homemade food, great coffee, and a friendly smile. Whether it's a full afternoon tea or just a quick cuppa, we want everyone who walks through the door to feel at home. The support from Yalding residents has been incredible. Your custom and loyalty mean the world. We're excited to plan more community events and seasonal specials. Also watch this space for new menu items. Helen and the tearooms team.

ZARDA COTTAGE

No report received.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

YALDING ENTERPRISE PARK (YEP)

Things remain a bit slow in the occupier market with what is happening in the global economy at the moment, but we have reasonable amount of occupier interest in quite a few units which is positive. We have also since now achieved planning permission for the Indoor Padel operator for the front two units of phase B, we have now got the frame on order and this will be underway in the next couple of months with the aim for a November opening! Aqua chimp opened after easter and as the water warms up and they are now expanding the leisure operations with the inclusion of a new aqua slide. Phase D, which is our phase of smaller business units to the south of Phase B was approved last year and we are now looking to start the first phase of this in late spring, we are quite positive about this as the demand for smaller business and start up units seems strong at the moment, we hope to have the first phase of this complete by next spring. With respect to quest school, they are currently working through their detail design and fitout and we are working with them to get their specification and works finalised. They are currently looking to take occupation by next spring with a fair tail wind. The Gatehouse, landscaping and fencing are in the process of being finished after which we are looking at pulling down the hoarding (although this will be reinstalled around the substation) which will then open up the front of the estate nicely.

FERNHAM HOMES (KEWARD ROAD DEVELOPMENT)

Fernham Homes have now completed the archaeology works have and Ecology works are ongoing. Kingsheath Construction commenced groundwork operations in April and are principal contractor for a period of 6 months. Operations over the next few months will involve installation of roads and sewers, piling work and plot foundations.

GOVERNMENT AND AGENCIES

KATIE LAM MP

I'm so sorry I'm unable to be with you tonight. I want to start by thanking Yalding Parish Council for the work they do in our community. It isn't always an easy job, and I'm so grateful to those

who volunteer their time and energy to improve their local area. I've been the Member of Parliament here in the Weald of Kent for almost two years now. It is 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 busy responding to constituents about the things that matter to them, whether that be the cost of heating oil, the SEND White Paper, or the state of the roads. Right now, I'm focused on holding South East Water to account following their appalling response to the recent water outages across the Weald. I want to thank everyone who responded to my survey. I received several thousand replies and it's so helpful to have your feedback; it's really important that SEW know the impact their inadequate service has on businesses and individuals across the constituency. I am collating the responses and will update everyone on the results as soon as possible. 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, charities and more; it's so helpful to hear at first-hand about their achievements and the challenges that people and businesses across our area are facing. If I've not been to see your organisation yet, please let me know and I'll make sure I call in!

I hope to continue to meet lots of you when I am out and about. I wish Yalding Parish Council the very best as you carry out your vital work. 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. He is unfortunately away on leave at the moment and was unable to prepare a report.

KCC HIGHWAYS

It has been another very busy year for the Maidstone Highway Operations team. As you would expect, a significant amount of work has gone into maintaining and repairing our roads and footways across the borough, alongside responding to day today enquiries and highway emergencies. There have been several changes within the team over the past year, as a result, the team has been short staffed since October. Despite this, the remaining stewards have coped extremely well under sustained pressure. The winter pressures and pothole response challenge intensified from February onwards, when we experienced what can only be described as a "perfect storm" of prolonged rainfall, frost, repeated salt spreading, and freezing conditions. Inevitably, this led to an increase in potholes and a backlog of enquiries as the team struggled to keep pace with demand. To help manage this volume, a decision was taken at a senior level to deploy dedicated patching crews to carry out temporary pothole repairs, directed by the highway stewards. This arrangement ran for approximately three weeks and allowed stewards time to begin catching up. We are now firmly in the recovery phase, with stewards following up temporary repairs and arranging permanent fixes. This process is ongoing and may take up to six months to complete.

There are also some significant operational changes ahead: From 1 May, our highway maintenance contractor will change from Amey, who have held the contract for the past 15 years, to Ringway. While this transition is expected to be disruptive initially, due to new systems and working practices, we are hopeful that the new contract will bring long-term improvements. Henderson & Taylor have been appointed as our new Pothole Blitz contractor. They will operate independently from Ringway and will cover both Maidstone and Tonbridge.

Recent and ongoing works in Yalding include:

- Yalding Hill – full resurfacing
- Yalding High Street – large patch repairs
- Twyford Bridge – the issue with the trench has now been resolved. The responsible party was identified as Telent, who carry out traffic signal works.

The team continues to respond to highway and footway emergencies while managing day-to-day enquiries. We are currently awaiting confirmation of the budget for the year ahead. A number of roads have already been identified as candidates for future pothole blitz works; these will now be doublechecked, prioritised, and programmed once funding is confirmed. Thank you for your continued patience and support as we work to keep Maidstone's highways safe and serviceable.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Borough Election in May 2024 saw Claudine Russell re-elected as a Borough Councillor for the Ward, and 2 new Councillors elected from the Green Party, Michael Summersgill and Grace Couch; there was no election in 2025 or 2026, as the posts are for four years. The Council is still led by a Green & Independent Alliance and Liberal Democrat coalition, in minority control; a by-election in 2025 added three new Reform UK Councillors for one Ward, at the expense of three Independents. Cllr. Russell leads the Conservative group on Maidstone Council (as well as now being a KCC. Councillor for the Cranbrook Division) and is 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's role as a Cabinet member changed in September 2025 from the portfolio covering Climate Transition & Nature Recovery to one covering Corporate Resources (which covers Budget and general Management), after an Independent councillor resigned her post. Mike has spent much of the half-year understanding the complexities of local government finance and preparing the budget for the coming financial year and what might change with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR); the latter is still a 'work in progress'! One legacy of his previous Cabinet role, which included updating the Council's Climate & Biodiversity strategy, was rewarded by MBC achieving 'Gold Award' status in the Kent Wildlife Trust awards in March, alongside just one other Town/District Council. Cllr. Couch continues to utilise her previous experience as a council officer (in Swale and London Boroughs) to be applied 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 working to recruit youth representation on LGR consultation and at the citizen deliberation on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). She also brought a 'member agenda item request' to the Health committee, securing £10,000 for a project to tackle period poverty. 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 continuing fly-tipping activity 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. There have been several speculative Housing applications, or threats of applications, recently that we continue to monitor. It has also been great to support Borough-wide initiatives such as the fourth Eco-Hub last Autumn, grants to KWT for river restoration, homes for social rent, the first electric bin lorry in Kent, as well as drone expansion, prosecutions and vehicles being seized as part of waste crime initiatives.

COMMUNITY PAYPACK

Community Payback was asked to help out Yalding Parish Council and after several visits with Councillor Gough and The Clerk a new agreement and Risk assessments were finalised and work began on 12th April 2026 with a new team from the Gravesend area. The numbers were initially small but have grown over the last couple of weeks and now a full van up to eight people are in attendance. The group now arrive in Yalding and are met by Ken who highlights the tasks for the day to the group and the supervisor. Although it is early days Ken has reported that he is pleased with the work and progress made so far.

Some of the work completed:

- Cutting back meters of bramble and foliage to enable fencing to be repaired or replaced.
- Strimming footpaths to keep them accessible. the plan is to carry on with this for the foreseeable.
- Cutting back meters of bramble and foliage to allow access to the gates previously inaccessible
- Removing dormant ant hills and levelling to prevent trip hazards for cattle and pedestrians.
- Disposal of cleared foliage.
- All work carried out is done considering the existing wildlife and environment

Future work:

- Fencing on the Fen is to facilitate cattle and sheep grazing in the fields

- Continue Strimming and cutting back on the paths at the Fen
- Jetties rebuilt and repaired around at the Fen
- On hand to address emergencies, within our remit, as they arise.
- New paths cleared/created to improve access for all that use the area.

The group and the supervisor have reported they enjoy working at the Fen and feel the work is helping the community. We hope the community will see the difference at the Fen and eventually other areas of the Parish.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Leigh Flood Storage Area Update-The Environment Agency's work to expand the Leigh flood storage area (FSA) and construct a new scheme to reduce risk to Hildenborough is going well and we expect to complete the works in the summer. All 3 new gates have been installed at the Leigh control structure and the final one is currently being connected to the new operating system and being tested. The new embankment, penstock and pumps at Hildenborough have all been constructed and testing is underway. Once construction is completed, the expanded Leigh FSA will operate much as it does now, and the target outflows during heavy rainfall will remain approximately 75cubic metres per second. However, the extra capacity will mean that it will be able to store more water in larger flood events, like that experienced in 2013. Communities downstream of Tonbridge benefit to some degree from the operation of the Leigh FSA as it reduces peak flows in the River Medway. This may reduce flood risk in Yalding for some events, such as where the flow of the Rivers Beult and Teise are below levels which would give rise to flooding. You can find out more about the works at: Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme - GOV.UK

Property Flood Resilience- Now is the time for homeowners with Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures to clean and undertake routine maintenance of their measures. Any replacement parts or guidance can be obtained from Watertight. Contact details can be found at <https://www.watertightinternational.com/>

GOLDING HOMES

Yalding is supported by the Neighbourhood South Team, which has welcomed some new faces this year. The team includes Owen Moemkem, Shelley Martin, Charlotte London and Hannah Perfect. If you have any questions or concerns, please email help@goldinghomes.org.uk. During the past year, we welcomed 6 residents who joined us for the annual estate inspection, identifying 1 case of fly tipping, 4 abandoned car issues and 2 play area repairs. This year's inspection is on Thursday 20 August at 10:00. If you'd like to take part and work together to improve the area, please get in touch with the team at help@goldinghomes.org.uk. We manage 126 homes in Yalding and received 3 ASB reports and had 17 other cases for supporting tenancy management during the last year.

MOAT HOMES (The Glebe)

We have no pressing issues to report currently. There were some concerns shared from both private and Moat residents about parking on the Glebe. This is managed by a parking management company; tickets are issued for those parking on the street however this has led bays being used inconsiderately and visitors' bays that are being used as second parking spaces meaning visitors have nowhere to park. Grounds maintenance did also hit a blip. This is being monitored around the blocks and moat homes properties. Concerns were shared with the managing agent.

KENT FIRE AND RESCUE

We are currently undergoing a resourcing review to shape the future of Kent Fire and Rescue Service and will launch a 12-week public consultation period on 25 June 2026. There is understandably significant interest around this, and once our proposals have been finalised and the consultation has begun, we will contact parish councils in areas directly impacted by a potential on-call fire station closure. In the meantime, you are welcome to contact us with any queries by emailing info@kent.fire-uk.org.

KENT POLICE

Local neighbourhood policing teams continue to address a number of ongoing concerns within Yalding and the surrounding area.

- Catapults - Officers are aware of reports involving the possession and use of catapults. Whilst not illegal to own, they can be used to cause damage or injury and will be seized where being used in an anti-social or dangerous manner. Patrols have been increased and any intelligence from the community is welcomed.
- Anti-Social Behaviour – Yalding Lock, there have been continued reports of anti-social behaviour around the Yalding Lock area, particularly involving groups congregating and causing disturbance. Officers are conducting regular patrols, particularly during peak times, and are working with partner agencies to reduce issues in this location.
- Nuisance Bikes / Motorbikes - Reports of nuisance use of bikes and motorbikes, including off-road riding and inconsiderate riding on public roads and footpaths, remain a priority. Targeted operations are ongoing, with officers identifying offenders and taking enforcement action where appropriate, including vehicle seizures under Section 59 powers.

Residents are encouraged to report incidents via the Kent Police website or by calling 101. In an emergency, always dial 999. The neighbourhood team would like to thank the community for their continued support and information, which is vital in helping to tackle these issues.

KENT RESILIENCE

The Emergency Planning and Resilience Team continues to work in partnership with Swale Borough Council, with the arrangement now well embedded and delivering improved preparedness across both districts. Over the past year, the team has strengthened its approach through regular exercising of plans and incorporating lessons learned from incidents.

Incidents Over the Past Year - The past year has seen a number of operational incidents, particularly relating to utility disruption and public health:

- Utility Disruption - A significant water outage earlier this year required a sustained multi agency response. Council officers worked alongside partners to support residents, coordinate assistance, and ensure the water company improved both communication and support arrangements. A further short duration water outage in Staplehurst was managed effectively and resolved quickly with minimal impact.
- Public Health Incident - The team supported the response to a meningitis outbreak, attending multi agency Tactical and Strategic Coordinating Groups as part of the wider response arrangements.
- Ongoing Major Incident Response - Maidstone Borough Council is currently managing an ongoing Major Incident in relation to Miller Heights, following the service of a Prohibition Notice on the building. This has required a significant, sustained multi agency response, with council teams working around the clock to support affected residents and coordinate ongoing activity. This incident continues to place considerable demand on resources and demonstrates the scale and complexity of response the Council is prepared to deliver when required.

Encouragingly, Maidstone has not experienced any severe storm impacts so far this year.

Ongoing Projects: Building Resilience - The team continues to deliver a range of projects to strengthen preparedness and reduce the impact of future incidents:

- Major Emergency Plan - Updated to reflect learning from incidents and exercises, ensuring it remains current and effective.
- Power Outage Planning - A new Power Outage Plan has been developed and has completed its review stages. It will be tested through an exercise before being formally adopted.
- Risk Management - Ongoing work with council services to identify corporate and operational risks, helping departments put measures in place to maintain service delivery during disruption.
- Infrastructure Resilience - A backup generator is now in place at the council depot, ensuring continuity of key services, including waste operations and the ability to operate a secondary emergency centre during power outages. This is supported by expanded solar panels and battery storage, providing additional resilience.

Community Resilience - Supporting communities to become more resilient remains a key priority. Work has continued to help parishes develop local emergency plans and strengthen community led response arrangements. The Staplehurst Emergency Help Team has demonstrated the value of this approach, playing an important role during recent incidents.

Interest from neighbouring parishes is growing, with collaboration helping to share good practice and encourage similar initiatives across the borough. The Council also continues to work closely with partners including County Council, the Environment Agency, and the Kent Resilience Forum, ensuring a coordinated approach to risks such as flooding across the Medway area. This partnership working helps ensure that communities are informed, supported, and better prepared for future events.

CONTACT DETAILS

PARISH COUNCIL

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KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCILLORS:

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Claudine Russell

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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 2026/27

EXPENDITURE				
Post Office Rent	8,000		Parish Events	2,500
Post Office Insurance	600	****	Flooding	1,000
Public Toilets	10,000		Town Bridge Investigations	2,000
Bank Charges	500		CCTV	1,000
Yalding Village Hall	1,000		Neighbourhood Plan	1,500
Parish Magazine	500		Tree Inspection Work	- 500
MV Railway	500		Lees Car Park	17,000
Grant Pot	1,500		Defibrillators	1,500
Hire of Halls	675		Contingency	29,135
Annual Meetings	1,000			<u>174,540</u>
Insurance	2,500			
Legal & Accountancy	1,000			
Office Equipment	250			
Printing/Stationery/Postage	600			
Repairs & Maintenance	500		INCOME	
Clerks' Salaries & Expenses	42,400		Parish Precept	90,000
Signs & Noticeboards	1,000		Parish Services Scheme	18,215
Subscriptions	1,600		Income Lees Car Park	25,000
Telephone	2,250		Post Office Rent	1,000
Training	1,000		Bank Interest	1,350
Website			Truly Electricity Rebate	1,300
Yalding Church Clock	250		Wayleaves	49
Churchyards	500			<u>136,914</u>
Play Equipment	1,500			
Van Costs	1,500			
Miscellaneous	3,500			
Verges	1,960			
Village Green & Windmill Path	675			
Fowle Hall Green	320		B/fwd 01/04/2026	40,856
Jubilee Field	934		Income	136,914
Kintons	5,261		Expenditure	(174,540)
Lees	1,350		C/fwd 31/03/2027	<u>3,230</u>
The Tatt	180			
Lees Fencing	-			
Fen	2,750			
Cost	1,500			
Electricity	3,500			
Repairs & Maintenance	2,000			
Replacement	3,500			
Litter Collection	650			
Litter Bins	-			
Christmas Lights	2,000			
Kiosk Electricity	1,700			
Floodlighting	500			
War Memorial	250			
Miscellaneous	2,000			
Finger Posts	2,750			

**THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL BE HELD ON
TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026 AT 7.30 PM IN YALDING VILLAGE HALL
YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUIRED**

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 any 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. Motion to Approve The Councils subscriptions
13. To confirm the Insurance policy renewal – 3-year contract until 2028
14. Motion to pay The Clerk and Assistant Clerk's salary monthly under The Scheme of Delegation
15. Confirmation of programme of meetings for the 2026/27
16. Confirmation of members of Working Parties
 - 16.1. Yuletide Market
 - Parish Councillors
 - Resident Volunteers
 - 16.2. Parish Wide Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
 - Parish Councillors
 - Resident Volunteers
17. 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

Angela Gent

Clerk to Yalding Parish Council – 14 May 2026

**Note: Minutes of previous meeting were signed at a Parish Council Meeting held on 03 June 2025.
There are no Matters Arising**

**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING WILL BE HELD ON
TUESDAY 19 MAY 2026 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 20 May 2025
3. Matters Arising from the previous meeting
4. Chairman's report for 2025/26
5. To note the Annual Reports and thank the contributors
6. Finance Review 2025/26
7. Presentation of Budget 2026/27
8. Town Bridge Presentation re Town Bridge Toll Initiative
9. Presentation by Yalding & Laddingford Entertainers (YALE)
10. Any Other Parish Business

**Followed by the Annual Meeting of The Parish Council
THE AGENDA CAN BE FOUND INSIDE BACK COVER**