

CENTRE PIECE FOR SEPTEMBER 2023 KEYS MAGAZINE

It has been a busy few weeks since I wrote my first ever Centre Piece article last month and I am seeing lots of things from a new perspective in my role as Parish Clerk. Take flooding, for example. On 20 June I had a sober introduction to the challenges faced by residents whose properties are threatened with or experience a flood during and after a heavy downpour. Shortly after I arrived at the Farmers' Market I received a phone call from a resident of Foxbush whose neighbours were doing their best to stop floodwater entering their homes. It was my first visit to the sandbag store in West Wood to open up the container and assist with transporting sandbags to Foxbush to protect the homes from any further heavy rain. In the event, the rain subsided and Kent County Council came the next day to clear the blocked drain that had been the cause of the flooding. There were similar emergencies taking place in other parts of Hildenborough. The "Flood Event" forced me to focus on familiarising myself with the Emergency Flood Plan so that I will be well prepared to take the appropriate action in future. Later this month I am meeting with representatives of TMBC and the Environment Agency so we can discuss the issues around flooding in Hildenborough and they can answer my questions. I will soon be arranging training for new flood wardens so please let me know if you would like to know more about becoming a flood warden volunteer.

Highways matters

The installation of bollards outside The Flying Dutchman and dropped kerbs in the Brookmead area are still to be undertaken by KCC but the good news is that it has been confirmed that guards are soon to be fixed to the belisha beacons on the pedestrian crossing close to One Stop, to prevent the flashing lights disturbing residents.

We now have possession of a shiny new plaque for the milestone at the Morley's Roundabout end of London Road and I am arranging for it to be installed. Hildenborough's two milestones will be professionally cleaned at the same time.

West Wood

I am very pleased to report that the water leak at the boundary of West Wood and the B245 was fixed on 11 July so work to renovate the pump cycle track will be commencing the week beginning 16 July. This means that the track will be back in operation in time for when the schools break up for the summer.

Unfortunately there was an incident of three teenagers, two girls and a boy, bullying and following two younger girls who were playing in West Wood recently which was very frightening for them. The incident was reported to the police by the girls' parents. We want to make the community aware of this incident so that hopefully word will get back to parents who may suspect their teenagers may be the perpetrators and speak to them about it before further incidents take place. Please can we all look out for signs of unruly behaviour amongst the village's youngsters so it can be nipped in the bud.

On a more positive note, I recently joined the Tree Inspector on his annual inspection of the trees in West Wood. I found it fascinating and learned a lot about the science of trees and their vulnerability to disease and climate change. Fortunately most of the trees in our ancient woodland are thriving but if you spot a tree with an orange cross on its trunk it will be because it needs attention, which will not necessarily mean felling. It could just be that the inspector has spotted a branch or two that have become unstable and need removal. It is tree "TLC" and I'm proud to be helping to look after the trees in West Wood, the Village Green and the Recreation Ground. If you see a tree that you

think may need attention because it is leaning over dangerously or has loose branches please let me know.

Recreation Ground

Our maintenance contractor has made a start on repairing the playground surface and the loose patch at the bottom of the slide has now been fixed. Unfortunately two of the swings have been taken out of action, awaiting repair, but it is hoped they will be back in operation very soon. You may have spotted members of the Community Payback Workforce painting the playground's perimeter fence with preservative every Friday but it soon became apparent that the task will not be completed by the start of the school holidays. Their numbers are quite limited and it is a slow job due to the fiddly nature of the work so it will probably be going on all summer. It should not pose any problems to users of the playground as the workforce steer clear of the areas close to where children are playing and they will be supervised at all times.

Village Green

Unfortunately there has been a delay in restocking the planters as we needed to wait until a watering rota had been set up. I am pleased to report that we now have a band of willing volunteers ready to water the trees and the planters so I am arranging for the plants to be purchased and put into the planters as soon as possible. I am creating a timetable so we can start to plan seasonal updates to the planters well in advance.

Could you be a Parish Councillor?

The Parish Council still needs new members so please let me know if you are interested. For this and for any other issues you wish to report to the council please e-mail me at clerk@hildenboroughpc.org.uk or call me on 07818 329029. I will be popping along to the Farmers' Market when I can on Tuesdays and a member of the council will be attending at some point in August. The Parish Council does not meet in August so I will be saving all the news for my next Centre Piece article in the September edition.

Julia Church

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