# Community News

MARTEN WEXCOMBE | WILTON | WEST GRAFTON | EAST GRAFTON

# **JUNE 2024**

# **Making our Community Great**

The Parish Council AGM took place on Monday 13 May. It is an opportunity for local clubs and organisations to provide an update on the year's activities.

The Parish Council and these (mainly voluntary) groups and organisations are vital to a strong community.

In this edition, we have included the reports from each of the groups please take a few moments to have a look through - you might be surprised at what has been going on!



fundraising page and spread the link – alternatively you can forward from Parish WhatsApp groups or the Grafton Parish Community News or Sunflowers facebook pages (published to both on 27 May)



Please use this QRcode to donate towards the upkeep and running of St Nicholas' church. Every penny will be wisely spent. Thank you for your support as always.



# Many Hands Make Light Work

Your Parish Council spends effort at various times of the year organising events to encourage community inclusion and to bring the community together.

These events include national celebrations such as the Coronation, anniversaries and Guy Fawkes Night in addition to the annual Rounders Tournament.

On every occasion there is work required on the day and planning beforehand.

There are a number of people who always "turn up to help", for which we are extremely grateful, but more are needed. If you are able to help in any way, no matter how small, then please email **clerk@graftonparish.com** with your name and contact details so that the workload can be spread a little more evenly and so that we can continue to organise and run these events.

There is no doubt that these events help to cement friendships and community spirit and are generally good fun too.

Please contact us to volunteer and do your bit to help the Parish Council keep the community spirit alive in our vibrant Parish.

Thank you - Grafton Parish Council

## **Visit Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre**

A fun and free event for Year 6 and upwards! Come along and learn how to survive in the great outdoors by learning how to cook on an open fire and how to build a shelter, as well as joining in with some arts and crafts. Monday 24th June 5pm to 7pm To book your child's/children's place(s), email Heather Pinney hpinney@communityfirst.org.uk

#### **East Grafton Coronation Hall**

To book Coronation Hall or to find details on how to hire trestle tables visit: www.graftonparish.com or contact as follows: Email: hall@graftonparish.com (anytime) Call: 01672 216115 or 07479 281809 (9am to 6pm Monday to Friday)



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# **Our Vicar Writes - Cash Generating Units**

Some time ago I decided I was going to write on this topic. Before Easter my much-loved old Welsh Collie, Tilly, was given an injection to free her from joint pain in France. Horrified, I discovered that the jab cost twice as much in Britain, putting it beyond my pocket. The price is driven up by the syndication of Vets' Practices.

Fund managers find something that can give good returns and then create a monopoly, or as near as the law allows. Individual practices and presumably the customers are referred to as cash generating units, cgu's.

What is your reaction? Outrage at the exploitation or admiration of the clever fund managers who boost our pensions. It is never quite as simple as we would like it to be!

Recently we have had a plethora of examples of society failing to absorb the fundamental moral principle of doing onto others as you would like to be done onto you. In Christian terms, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

I am part of an institution that fails most dramatically when it seeks to recruit cgu's to fill the pews. It is at its best when it holds a lantern, to guide people to love of neighbour. Like the white tip of my collie's tail, the 'Shepherd's Lantern,' that guides the shepherd home as it bobs above the vegetation.

As I finish writing, I am drawn to the vision of the people wandering into the churches of our team. Cool places of peace and healing no matter what your religious persuasion.

Thank God that we do not embrace the concept of cgu's!



# Summer sort out ... Bag2School collection Wednesday 26 June, 9am



Time to dig out that summer wardrobe and have a sort out!

Sunflowers at Grafton has a Bag2School collection on Wednesday 26 June so take the opportunity to clear your cupboards and help us raise funds.

Bear in mind that items are for re-use rather than recycling. Bag up good quality used adult and child clothes, bags, paired shoes and socks, belts, hats, scarves, ties and jewellery. Bag2School also take soft toys and household linens and curtains (but not duvets, pillows, cushions, blankets, corporate clothing or school uniforms thank you).

Use existing plastic bags that you have at home to bundle your contribution. Spread the word to family and friends – encourage them to have a clear out too. The more we collect the more money we raise! We have very limited storage space at Sunflowers so please don't drop your bags before Tuesday 25 June.



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# Timmy B Yoga

Weekly Yoga Classes Coronation Hall, East Grafton

Tues 7pm, Wed 9.30am & Thurs 8.00pm

& Summer Pop–up Yoga at Wilton Windmill when weather is set warm & dry!



Message me to join the list

tim.brew@hotmail.co.uk 07747 780 898 Full Calendar at www.timmybyoga.co.uk



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# **GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL AGM REPORTS 2024**

# GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023 - 2024

Another year has gone by and the global picture has changed enormously. We have a new King who is sadly very ill, there were catastrophic earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, and senseless slaughter of young people in Israel and equally brutal response. The Ukraine war seems to be in a state of stalemate as it enters its third year whilst pathetic politicians try to score points to gain or remain in power. And it's been the wettest 18 months since records began over 150 years ago in the UK. Grafton Parish might seem like a speck of dust in a desert compared to all of that but here are the highlights of our year.

The Coronation Hall continues to go from strength to strength. It is getting ready to have solar panels put on the roof to improve its eco-credibility and hopefully reduce its electricity bills. It recently had the roadways in and out of it re-surfaced to reduce potholes and mud. It remains a very successful venue and popular with its regular clients as well as a great venue for occasional users.

The playing field has had the skate ramp removed and the beginnings of a pétanque pitch have been marked out. Delays due to the weather have hampered it but soon there will be a pitch laid for anyone wanting to partake. This has mainly been grant funded thanks to the efforts of the Sunflowers Nursery team. The cricket wicket is overgrown but the youth cricket has fizzled out and the youngsters have disbanded.

The Defibrillators are being run on a very tight watching brief. Each Parish has a manager who reports in once a week on the state of them. The Grafton one was sent back for a repair (to the USA) and took nearly 6 months to be replaced. This was all very unsatisfactory and the plan is now to keep a spare one, so if one should be removed, another will be put in its place.

The neighbourhood plan is well underway. The plan for sustainable development within the Parish and the call for sites has finished and they are now in the evaluation phase of it. There has been an enormous amount of time and effort put into this by members of the Parish Council and all and any professional consultancy work has been paid for out of a grant funds.

Speedwatch has had new volunteers and the team have been out checking on the speed of passing motorists. This is part of a package of traffic calming measure the PC have introduced to try and reduce speeding through the villages, in particular in East Grafton as you approach the green from Burbage.

The Community Calander has been a great success keeping everyone abreast of what is happening with in the Parish and neighbouring villages.

We had several events: We celebrated the Coronation of our new King with a Bangers and Mash event on The Green and Hall with a game of hotly contested rounders. We had the fireworks at Wilton and then, hosted by Bill at the Swan, where we had street food banquet under gazebos in the pouring rain. Spirits were not dampened however, and everyone enjoyed themselves enormously. Carols on The Green were hosted by the PCC in the Church this year, a day or two before Father Christmas did his rounds through the villages.

The landscape has changed once again with more ash trees being felled in Grafton, Wilton and Wexcombe. I am delighted to report on more trees being planted in the avenue between Grafton and Wilton and one day these will look fantastic. The wetland at Wilton has started to take shape and attract quite a lot of different wildlife; it has proved a valuable asset against flooding in the village. The landscape has looked a lot more like a seascape this year with the amount of rain and flooding we have had in the Parish. On two occasions that I know about; in West Grafton and Wilton, the villagers were magnificent. Several people's homes were starting to become infiltrated by the endless rain and the community came together spectacularly to dig trenches, direct traffic and loaded, distributed and stacked sandbags in alleyways and doorways to keep the water out. It was remarkable to see so many people jump to action as the cry for help went out.

It would be remiss of me not to discuss potholes. Everyone, it seems including me, have shredded tyres on the wretched things. As you might be aware there is an online reporting system, and as you might also be aware it is very flawed. I am pleased to report that after many photos were collated in an album with their exact locations and frankly with a bit of bullying at the PCAP level with the County Council, some (not all) have mercifully been filled in. It is no secret that the Government has no money and this is handed down to us with increased Council taxes and less spending. You might be appalled by some of the temporary fixes but in the current economic crisis (no matter how short sighted these bodge jobs may appear) it is all that County can stretch financially.

The PC has managed to stay on budget despite having to purchase 3 new defibrillators and the precept will remain the same for next year. No extra Council tax funds will be spent by the Parish Council.

Despite the rain, the struggles and roads, we do live in a very beautiful part of planet earth. Once again through incredible acts of kindness, volunteering and the general good cheer of the people that live here we are incredibly lucky to call it home.

I would once again like to thank the Parish Council for all their hard work and endeavours for another year.

Regards, David Lemon (Chairman Grafton Parish Council) - chairman@graftonparish.com

# A SELECTION OF EDITED ANNUAL REPORTS FROM COMMUNITY GROUPS PRESENTED AT THE GRAFTON PARISH AGM ON 13 MAY 2024

## **St Nicholas Church**

I would like to stress the many positive things that have happened over recent years in East Grafton. There is a context which goes to just before my time and the closure of East Grafton School. As with many churches, the presence of a school within the worshipping community tends to be a greater draw to the church itself. Ten years ago, we had a good number of people with young children who were happy to come to church on a Sunday. They still support the church but are seldom seen, despite many attempts to provide 'more relevant' styles of worship.

We could not compete with other Sunday 'commitments'. Despite that, there is a very strong sense of the church being linked to the identity of the community.

East Grafton remains a popular church for Pastoral Services and 2024 will see three Weddings and a number of baptisms. There is always a steady trickle of funerals, with many people who have historically lived in the Parish choosing to make it their final resting place.

St Nicholas' functions best as what is currently referred to as a "Festival Church"; Easter, Christmas and Remembrance generally produce attendances into three figures.

Unfortunately, this way of viewing a church presents severe financial concerns. Like a pet, a church (and vicars) is not just for Christmas. You cannot feasibly support staffing for occasional services without supporting regular services. £25,000 approximately annually cannot be covered by services a year. The third traditionally goes to the Legion.

What happens is possible because of a relatively small number of volunteers who care for the fabric of the church and graveyard. This small group are also the heart of the regular worshipping community. It is they who are the chief outreach to those in need. It is they who have tried to keep the church a warm and welcoming place. It is they who upgraded the lighting of what was a depressingly dull building to show off its full beauty. A constant comment of visitors is how different and welcoming the church is as a building. Notably for such a small group, we have managed to maintain the use of the organ courtesy and Romaine has returned to play for us. When no one is available, we still sing!

It is that small group who provide the substantial outreach to the local community, most notably through 'Winter Warmers'. Patiently and wonderfully a relatively large number sit down for a good meal and shared company once a month.

As with many parishes countrywide, this has been achieved despite the lack of 'formal officers' in particular a church warden. We are continually grateful to Ann who cares for the finances with great skill and dexterity. The PCC functions well, but in its own way, playing to people's strengths.

There is much more I could say, but the fact that St Nicholas' continues to survive is a testimony to a small group of people. They have maintained the possibility of future worshipping communities in the Grafton area. We need to back that up by continuing to pray for both the Church, for that group and for our wider community.

**Reverend Michael McHugh** 

## **Grafton & District Horticultural Society**

We had yet another successful year. Our 4 speakers were very interesting with lectures that ranged from an introduction to the Fynbosch of the Western Cape of South Africa, to growing cut flowers, a love of roses and a very up to date talk about rain gardens and the Action for the River Kennet. Bedwyn did a trial last summer on rain gardens which was very successful.

The 5 gardens we visited from May to September were Broadleas House gardens, Kettle Farm Cottage in West Ashton, Beggars Knoll Chinese Garden in Westbury and Wudston House in Wedhampton. The September visit was cancelled due to storm and rain. The owners of the gardens are always extremely welcoming. They provide information and answer questions as well as treating us to a delicious tea and cake sitting in beautiful surroundings.

Our Christmas party with a splendid buffet and a fun quiz was a fitting end to a most enjoyable year.

## **Coronation Hall**

It seems like a long time ago, but this time last year the Hall had just hosted the amazing Coronation Party, followed by rounders on the Green. Huge thanks to Annie Witcher, Ann Dudney and all their helpers for organising a truly memorable event.

It is always good news if I am struggling to think of things to put into our annual report. The hall continues to be well used with our regular hirers keeping the weekday calendar pretty much full, and plenty of parties, workshops and other events at the weekends.

The track outside the Hall was looking rather sad, and during the past year we have had this repaired. It was subsequently dug up to install fibre by Gigaclear, but we are expecting them to return to make good their repair, as well as rectifying the damage that they did to the parking area.

Whilst we had to use some reserves to carry out repairs to the track, the Hall's finances remain strong.

We continue to explore the options for solar power and expect to be able to progress this in the coming year.

As always, we are thankful to Maria our caretaker for keeping the hall in such good order, and we have recently welcomed Finola our new cleaner to the Hall. Thanks also to Fran Barclay for continuing to plant and care for the hall's tubs and baskets.

**Bill Clemence** 

# **Grafton Goslings**

This welcoming and friendly group continues to meet every Thursday during term-time at the Coronation Hall and bounces along brilliantly.

Baby & toddler groups like Goslings play a vital role in communities – offering little ones and their grown-ups a place to play and chat. The group is well supported by both Parish families and those from neighbouring villages and is in good health.

# **Wilton Windmill Society**

Thank you to everyone who helped with the pre-season clear-up session in early March. A huge amount was achieved, very efficiently, with a great team. Shortly afterwards, the wind picked up and we had a superb milling session, with nearly 150 bags of flour produced ready for sale.

The Windmill opened again at Easter for visitors and flour sales. Sales to the local farm shops have been going well, so well in fact that we need to mill again as soon as it is possible; however without any back-up electric motors to power the stones, we await suitable wind speeds for further milling.

We now also have Wiltshire Honey for sale in the Shepherds Hut. Initially this came from Corsham, but recently we have had more from Paul Ainsworth's hives in Burbage – good to get it locally.

Four years ago we were looking at ideas for a celebration project to mark the 200th anniversary of the building of Wilton Windmill. Sue Baxter came up with the idea of placing one of our old millstones at the entrance, as they do on the roads leading into the Peak National Park in Derbyshire. With planning permission, Covid and after a while series of delays, the stone is at last in place. Sam MacArthur of Ramsbury Stonemasons has done a wonderful job. We thank Chris Kerr who dealt with the planning application, Peter Wilson who dealt with the gates and fencing and David Lemon, who allows us to relocate the entrance to his field.



We will be holding our Murder Mystery and Hog Roast on 15 and 16 June, tickets are £30 each and are available from **info@hauntedmysteryweekend.co.uk** or by calling **07769 977779**.

# **Sunflowers at Grafton**

It has been an eventful year for Sunflowers.

Two minibus thefts in 7 months – September 23 and April 24 - sent us spinning off course as we dealt with the immediate aftermath and the subsequent ripple effects.

Following the September theft of our 15-seat minibus our fundraising enabled security improvements in our grounds - installation of CCTV; robust new gates and fencing; reducing the front hedge height; and security on the vehicles themselves. Despite these security measures our 12-seat minibus was stolen on Easter Monday and found burnt out early the following morning.

This knocked us sideways ... but not down! We have been buoyed by many kind messages and offers of help which have combined to create a great big hug around us. Our fundraising pot is started with insurance monies of £18,500. This is close to one third of what we estimate is needed to get 2 vehicles back on the road and further improve security so we have significant fundraising to do. Activity is underway to explore funding, grants, and sponsors and to plan events.

That we have managed through this with no disruption to service is nothing short of a miracle – testament both to the management team and to the immense kindness and generosity of friends across the community and wider afield.

Our nursery rooms are in excellent health and we are very busy. We had a long overdue visit from Ofsted in May 2023 and the team managed what can be a very nerve wracking experience absolutely magnificently. We maintained our GOOD rating which we have consistently had since opening and were absolutely delighted with the result.

We are seeing significant changes in the landscape for wraparound care (breakfast, after school and holiday clubs) which are exerting an influence on the development of our TreeHouse clubs. The most significant example to date is the opening of Breakfast at Bedwyn – a breakfast club run by Sunflowers at Grafton which is based at Bedwyn Primary School.

Our commitment to a positive impact in the Parish remains undimmed. This includes regular activities such as supporting Grafton Goslings and organising our annual Macmillan Coffee Morning and parish litter pick through to offering volunteering opportunities to support local young people working towards their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Staying ahead and managing the potential impact of external influences is a constant challenge and we always have an eye to this. But keeping everything in balance and maintaining the bubble around our wonderful Sunflowers world and shielding our team and families from the stresses and strains of the wider childcare sector is fundamental.

Like any organisation we are all about people and it is the work of our wonderful team – those looking after the children and the trustees who support us – that continues to enhance the super reputation we have.

# **Pewsey Community Area Partnership**

PCAP has survived for over 20 years, quietly getting on with supporting many groups and organisations in the area. A selection of our work follows, but full details are within our full report to be found on the Grafton Parish Website:

\* Received and managed a health and well-being grant fund from the Pewsey Area Board, projects from which included tools for local Footpath Groups and funds for Shalbourne Link.

\* Grafton Trees for the Parish group joined PCAP in order to apply for a grant from Wessex Water to replace lost ash trees in Wexcombe, which was successful.

\* Running the monthly Pewsey Vale Memory Café and, for the June Café, taking our regulars on a canal trip with the Bruce Boats Trust.

\* Raising the years long issue of there being no freight plan for HGV's, an issue on roads A345, A342 and Mr Kruger's campaign for the A338.

\* Lobbying to save station ticket offices following GWR announced plans to close them.

\* Demand Responsive Bus Launch – project taken from an idea that PCAP outlined and Wiltshire Council developed into a project for DfT funding. By November 2023, there had been 10,000 journeys with 2,000 app downloads. With fares capped at £2, PCAP are immensely proud of this project.

\* The Area Board and North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust granted funds for a bike repair stand which is now up and running in Pewsey.

\* The Youth Café opened – attendees have remained steady at 25-30 each week. PCAP has been helping with safeguarding and managing the Café .

\* Pewsey Community Area Potholes report was produced and a meeting with Cllr Richard Clewer took place, this was productive and many repairs have been carried out since.

\* Successful cost-of-living project supporting local families in need has enabled PCAP to be set up as an online Evoucher Foodbank.

The Pewsey Vale Tourism Partnership (part of PCAP) produces monthly business and visitor newsletters, deals with visitor enquiries, runs the Visit Pewsey Vale website (**www.visitpewseyvale.co.uk**) and social media, delivers leaflets and applies for grants and manages local projects.

## **Grafton Defibrillators Annual Report**

At the end of November 2023 I discovered that some of the defibrillator cabinets which were over 10 years old and installed around the Parish were deteriorating badly due to corrosion caused by ingress of rainwater and internal condensation.

During a subsequent email conversation with Debbie Dowsett of Webnos/ Community Heartbeat to get some pricing for replacement cabinets and parts, I was told that the original cabinet manufacturer had been taken over and the model type we had installed was now considered obsolete by the new manufacturer and that spare/replacement parts like the lights and heaters were no longer available.

This kickstarted the search for an alternative supplier, of which there were a great number.

There was certainly a lack of communication between the defib guardians at the time and checks on the defibs were being carried out at random intervals and unknown to each other.

A meeting was set for anyone involved with the defibs to get together at Manor Farm, Wilton and put names to faces as well as setting a weekly check to be carried out on Mondays. This is now supported by a WhatsApp group - Grafton Defibs which has improved communication significantly.

In February I discovered that the Department of Health & Social Care had a Community Defibrillator scheme running in which they were providing funding for 1900 community defibrillators throughout England. After a vote taken at the March PC meeting we were able to obtain three new Defibrillators and External Heated Cabinets with keypad lock for just £750 each with a 50% discount for each.

The new units have been installed at Coronation Hall, East Grafton, Marten and Wexcombe and are all now registered on www.defibfinder.uk

In April two First Aid Training sessions were organised by Annie Whitcher, with particular emphasis on Defibrillator use and CPR were well attended and very well presented.

Looking forward I believe we should replace the remaining units at Wilton and West Grafton before the next winter. The DHSC scheme has now expired and they are awaiting advice from Ministers as to whether there will be an extension granted. They are therefore unable to supply any further units at this time.

Details on the Webnos/Community Heartbeat website dashboards need to be updated and communicated to the team.

#### **Defib Guardians:**

Wilton – Mike Fleckney, Rupert Bentley Wexcombe – George Hosier, Ed Nelson Marten – Richard Pash, Mike Hyslop, Wendy Skardon, Dave Skardon West Grafton – Annie Whitcher, Nat Neal East Grafton – Chris Beale, David Wilson

Kevin Burke

#### East Grafton



At Coronation Hall on the end of the building by the kitchen door (what3words location = purses.spark.fermented)

Marten



Driveway at eastern end of Bentley Billiards Factory – next to Mill Farm what3words location = immediate.dusters.widget



#### Wexcombe



To the left of the farm gate heading to farmyard for Lower Farm, past the old bus stop what3words location = cleanest.weep.sandals

#### West Grafton



By side door of Hidden Cottage, at the first RH bend from the A338 what3words location = nights.florists.hilltop

#### Wilton



In the telephone box opposite The Swan Inn /hat3words location = leader.acrobatic.vandalism

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# **Dates for your diary**

#### **Mobile Library**

Information on the monthly Mobile Library Service can be found at apps.wiltshire.gov.uk/librariesinformation/Library/Mobiles The next mobile library is on Wednesday 26 June at the Coronation Hall in East Grafton from 11.40 to 12 noon.

## June

10	18:00	Parish Council Planning Mtg	Manor Farm, Wilton
15	19:00	Murder Mystery & Hog Roast	Wilton Windmill
16	19:00	Murder Mystery & Hog Roast	Wilton Windmill
24	17:00	The Great Outdoors	Oxenwood Education Ctr
26	09:00	Bags2School	Sunflowers
26	11:40	Mobile Library	Coronation Hall
29	10:00	Steaming Weekend	Crofton Beam Engines
30	10:00	Steaming Weekend	Crofton Beam Engines

July					
07	11:00	Holy Communion	St Nicholas' Church		
08	19:30	Parish Council Meeting	Coronation Hall		
21	12:00	Windmill Family Fun Day	Wilton Windmill		

# **Local Clubs**

Windmill Society	secretary@wiltonwindmill.co.uk	
Horticultural Society	01672 810364 Marijke Craig	
Crofton Beam Engines	crofton@katrust.org.uk	
Baby & Toddler Group	graftongoslings@yahoo.co.uk	
Dance classes	07746 479345 Charlotte Price	
Yoga	07747 780898 Tim Brew	
Zumba	07710 115324 Joanna Bury	

<b>Coronation Hall Regula</b>	Dates	
Monday (weekly in term-time)	Charlotte Price	16:45
Tuesday (weekly in term-time)	Zumba	09:30
Tuesday (weekly in term-time)	Charlotte Price	16:15
Tuesday	Timmy B Yoga	19:00
Wednesday	Timmy B Yoga	09:30
Wednesday (weekly in term-time)	Charlotte Price	15:30
Thursday (weekly in term-time)	Grafton Goslings	10:00
Thursday (weekly in term-time)	Charlotte Price	16:45
Thursday	Timmy B Yoga	20:00
Monday (1st & 3rd week in month)	Alzheimer's Cafe	13:15
Tuesday (1st week in month)	Winter Warmers Lunch	12:30



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## Village WhatsApp Groups

New to WhatsApp? We can help - just get in touch

Text or WhatsApp to join: East Grafton: Tamara 07711 824864 West Grafton: Annie 07802 923344 Wexcombe: George 07786 332950

Marten: Richard 07795 636767 Wilton: Tara 07833 320951

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Deadline for content for the next issue is Friday 28 June Email news@graftonparish.co.uk to contact the Community News team. Check www.graftonparish.com/community-news/ for advertising rates and format.