

GREAT MAPLESTEAD PARISH ASSEMBLY

Meeting held at the Village Hall on Wednesday 13th April 2016

ATTENDEES: Cllr. D Turner – Chair; Mrs A Crisp, Parish Clerk; Cty. Cllr. D Finch; Dist. Cllr. J O’Reilly-Cicconi; 9 village organisation representatives and 25 members of the public.

1. **APOLOGIES** –Cllr. J Newton & Mrs J Bowers.
2. **MINUTES** – Meeting minutes from the Annual Parish Assembly 15th April 2015 were signed as a true record by Cllr. D Turner, Chair.
3. **PARISH COUNCIL REPORT** – Cllr. D Turner read out the Parish Council’s annual report.
4. **UPDATE FROM ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL** – Cllr. David Finch provided an annual update and invited questions from the audience.

Reports were provided by the following organisations and lodged with the Parish Clerk:

5. **ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW**– Report by Mr I Johnson
6. **SOCIAL COMMITTEE** – Report from Miss J Ingram.
7. **VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE** – Report from Mr M Watson.
8. **ST GILES CofE PRIMARY SCHOOL** –Report from Mrs J Nichols, Headteacher.
9. **YOUTH CLUB** – Report from Mrs M Jeggo, read by Mrs A Crisp.
10. **ST GILES PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL** – Report from Rev G Ellis
11. **KNITTING CIRCLE** –Report from Mrs M Carder, read by Mrs S Knight.
12. **CARPET BOWLS CLUB** – Report from Mrs J Chaplin
13. **GREAT MAPLESTEAD W.I.** – Report from Mrs J Newton, President.
14. **GREAT MAPLESTEAD WEA** – Report from Mrs J Bowers, read by Mrs J Newton.
15. **UPDATE FROM BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL** – Cllr. J O’Reilly-Cicconi provided an update from Braintree District Council.
16. **RCCE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR COMPETITION (formerly BEST KEPT VILLAGE)** – Report from Mrs A Crisp.
17. **CLOSING REMARKS** – Cllr. D Turner thanked all representatives and organisations for their attendance and continued contribution to the village.

Signed.....TRUE COPY..... Dated 19 April 2017

GREAT MAPLESTEAD PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMANS REPORT

Parish Council Meetings are open to everybody and everybody is given an opportunity to speak, if required. To be honest they are not all that exciting! Minutes of a 2006 meeting reveal discussions on dog poo-bins, parking and the size of the bottle banks. The same topics are still being discussed in 2016 - some things do not change! BUT it is worth the free entrance fee to attend at least one a year.

In our first year as a newly elected Council we committed to a couple of key objectives:

1. To improve communication between the council and parishioners
2. To respond to all planning applications and respond to all requests and surveys from Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and other agencies. Great Maplestead Parish Council would have an opinion, a considered view on whatever was going on.

We have achieved both objectives:

1. Our Magna Carta newsletter and improved website have gained much recognition across the county and the newsletter will become part of the national archive in the future. If you have not yet signed up for an e-mail copy please provide the Parish Clerk with details of your e-mail address. Hard copies are available to read in the church. My thanks to Cllr. Steve Harris for driving this initiative.
2. As Parish Council minutes testify, the council is regularly responding to planning applications and local and national consultations & surveys.

Cllr. Steve Harris, with assistance from Cllr. Martin Elms have been involved in clearing and maintaining our parish footpaths.

As Highways Officer, Cllr. Martin Elms has been involved in pothole repair and numerous drainage issues, including a 70-metre stretch of drain in Lucking St. With the help of volunteers from the Village Task Force the old drainage ditch has been cleared and this has prompted ECC into finally accepting responsibility for the roadside drainage and are now working on completion on this project. Martin has also completed a full drain survey of the village.

The parking situation around the school has proved problematic and the council is working closely with the school to seek solutions. At our last meeting, we agreed to the installation of new school signage, complete with flashing lights. The lights will operate during drop-off and collection times, Monday-Friday in term time. The aim is to raise awareness and slow down traffic. Martin is working closing with Dist. Cllr. David Finch and it is hoped the lights will be installed during May. Thank you, David, for your support.

Finally, I would like to outline some of the activity we have planned for the coming year. This is an opportunity for you to comment and give feedback via Ann, our Parish Clerk (who by the way does a fantastic job and deserves recognition for the effort she puts into this Parish Council):

- To upgrade the playground equipment and introduce an adult trim trail. Full details are here for you to peruse this evening.
- Increase the size of the car park on the village playing field.
- Review the position of the bottle banks within the village and potentially increase the size/number of bins.
- Acquire a defibrillator for the village.

Braintree Planning have invited comments from the parish on the proposed new name of the street leading into the new house "High View" (formerly known as Treeways). The proposal is the street is named "Treeways". At the last Parish Council meeting it was proposed that the street is named after local people who have made a significant contribution to the village – "Cracknell Close" was suggested in recognition of Len & Sheila Cracknell. We would welcome your views.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our meetings in the forthcoming year.

Dave Turner
Chairman

GREAT MAPLESTEAD FLOWER SHOW

With ever changing weather conditions hitting us every year, the gardens of the Maplesteads produce Flowers and Veg to make the village hall tables groan and win praise from our judges.

It is these difficult conditions where people who think they have no chance, can win a 1st, 2nd or 3rd. For some unknown reason the Home Brew category is going from strength to strength with some very good tasting Blackberry Whiskey & Sloe Vodka, and it was great to see so many entries in the infusion evening, where some very unusual concoctions turned up.

My thanks to the team and all those who attended the show but most of all to those who entered produce and arrangements. We have a wealth of talent in the villages please keep it up and I hope to see you in September.

Thank you

Ian Johnson

Great Maplestead Social Committee Report 2016

The social committee was established, when the pub closed in Great Maplestead, to provide events for residents to get together and enjoy themselves. As a result of these social events any surplus money raised goes towards the cost of running the Village Hall.

Since the last Parish Assembly the social committee has been very busy. We have added new members and hosted new events. We have continued with some of the old favourites such as the village walks and curry and cards.

In October we held the very entertaining Murder Mystery evening where the audience had to solve the mystery of who hadn't murdered the evil Granny. With gruesome cocktails to start and a themed three course meal, served by zombies the evening was greatly enjoyed by all.

In December we had our living advent calendar with people decorating and lighting up a window for each day of advent. This turned into a social event with people offering mulled wine and seasonal nibbles when they lit their windows. Something I already have plans to repeat next year.

Once again the Curry and Cards evening was a huge success in January.

In February we had our first ever Infusion Challenge. Forty-two different Infusions were brought along to be tasted and voted upon. Everyone was involved in tasting a wide range of infusions and vote for their favourites. Some were delicious, such as the wining Sloe Gin from Steve and Ann Harris others were more of an acquired taste such as the Garlic Sherry from Fred/Myra Jeggo. In between tasting drinks there were some table quizzes and the challenge to identify a number of crisp flavours.

March saw our first ever Magic Evening. Fifteen magicians performed tricks, which enthralled and baffled us. We had a delicious two-course meal and plenty of enjoyment throughout the night. For me the evening culminated in a life-long ambition of being sawn in half. I don't think I have laughed quite so much in a long time.

Coming up with have our fourth beer festival on the 30th April and 1st May with a wide range of beers, ciders and wine; live music and a visit from the Belchamp Morris Men. In June we will be celebrating the Queen's 90th Birthday with wheelbarrow racing on the playing field and afternoon tea followed by dancing and a lamb roast in the village hall. We have enjoyed the new events and the old favourites but what makes everything so enjoyable is the participation of everyone. That's what puts the Great into Maplestead.

Julie Ingram

TRUSTEES OF GREAT MAPLESTEAD VILLAGE HALL

Thank you to the Social Committee and others for all their fundraising efforts for the Village Hall in the past year.

Please remember to use the Village Hall for all your events, regular income is required to help with the upkeep.

Martin Watson
Village Hall Committee
(in the absence of the Chairman)

ST GILES C of E SCHOOL

Report to come

GREAT MAPLESTEAD YOUTH CLUB 2016

Maplestead Masterchef was the event that opened our 8th year of Youth Club, it proved to be as popular as ever with Mary and Martin Elms kindly judging for us, thank you. The youths made jammy heart shaped biscuits, which proved to be quite tricky to make, the evening taught us that using a rolling pin is not as easy as it looks! We took the entries to the Flower Show where two of our youths took second and third places in their category.

Other events that we held this year were Blingo, a joke night, a triple challenge and our July Jolly which has also become an annual event for our leavers and a taster evening for hopefully new members.

Unfortunately, since Christmas our numbers have dropped considerably, we have always noticed a reduction at this time of year but not as much as we have this time! Our next event is a Rounders evening; usually this is pretty well attended, but we really need to keep our attendance up in order to keep Youth Club financially viable. If anyone knows of any local youths who don't attend but may like to, we would appreciate your sending them our way, they are always welcome to bring a friend. In the meantime, we will rack our brains for more activities that will hopefully appeal to them, or perhaps if anyone here has any ideas or skills that we may like to use, we would love to hear from you.

Myra Jeggo

The Church of St Giles

"Rural Churches to Close" many of you may have seen reports in the media in the past year with similar headlines to this. Can this be true of St Giles', Great Maplestead, some of you might have asked? Well we can report to this Annual Meeting the answer is a definite No.

St Giles' is a church where congregation and community are one and the same thing. Of all the groups who will report this evening nearly everyone will have members of the congregation of the church as an active member. To us this points to the strength of both the church and the community. When reviewing the activities of St Giles over the past year nearly all the activities have been through working with other groups and will probably be reported elsewhere:

- The Flower Festival run alongside Open Gardens
- Harvest Lunch with the Village Social Committee
- Providing Broadband services to the village, working with County Broadband
- The Advent Windows
- The church has two governors at St Giles School

In addition to these, other village events have had church presences such as the raffle at the Christmas Bazaar.

The other side is the attendance of the village at church services. From the regular Sunday congregation through to the major festivals of Christmas, Harvest, Plough Sunday etc. we are always pleased to see so many of our neighbours coming to share these events with us. In addition we also have to thank all those who continue to support the Wednesday coffee mornings.

For many the church is also that special building at the heart of the village. We are pleased that the church can be open most days. The churchyard, with the public footpath is also well used and respected. This year we completed the redecoration of the interior of the church, including having the painting over the altar cleaned, and a tree that overhung the garden of remembrance had to be removed as it has become dangerous. A holly tree had to be removed due to disturbance of graves. The removal of both of these trees has opened up views that have not been seen for many years.

So to return to the original question – let us stress there are no plans to close rural churches in our area. There will be challenges ahead but with a strong church and community we will meet them.

On a personal note, we wish to say what a pleasure it is to have moved into the Rectory in the village after four years of being the Ministers, thanks for the many expressions of welcome. We hope that during the coming years we will welcome many of you into the Rectory.

Gay & Nick Ellis
Vicar & Lay Minister

MAPLESTEADS W.I.

The national WI was formed 100 years ago in 1915, not to make jam and sing Jerusalem, but to revitalize rural communities and encourage women to become more involved in producing food during the 1st World War. Since then, the organisations aims have broadened and the WI is now the largest voluntary women's organisation in the UK. There are over 215,000 members in over 6,600 institutes.

The Maplesteads' WI celebrated the centenary, joining a large group in Earls Colne for a live streaming of the AGM held at the Albert Hall. It was attended by the Queen, Princess Anne and the Countess of Wessex who giggled uncontrollably when the royal icing on the celebration cake repelled the Queen's best efforts with a sharp knife. Despite the illustrious company – though not in their presence – and the importance of the occasion, the feisty audience made no bones about ousting the resolution under discussion. The institutes they represented had not been notified of an amendment and therefore had not voted on it – shades of Tony Blair, who some years ago broke the 'non-political' rule and was booed off the platform and, indeed, out of the Hall.

Nothing quite as exciting happened in Maplestead but we did enjoy a 'posh' celebration tea at Hedingham Castle with other members from our group and one of our members went to Buckingham Palace WI Garden Party.

We always try to support village events and this year provided tea, coffee and cake at the Flower Festival, helped with the Quiz and had an excellent stall of homemade goodies at the Christmas Bazaar. We can supply refreshments for happy and sad occasions alike, support events at the Quay Theatre in Sudbury and have monthly lunches at local hostelrys.

All these activities are in addition to our main monthly meetings, held on the 1st Thursday at 7.30pm. The speakers this year have been as wide ranging as usual and some meetings were open to non-members – even men! Who can forget Tracy Mackness and her Giggly pig sausages or the Englishwoman's life in Turkey – complete with her Turkish toy-boy! Sometimes we call upon our own members – they are a talented and well-travelled lot and these meetings are invariably excellent.

If you haven't tried us, come and join us – but ignore us at your peril!

Jill Newton
President

MAPLESTEADS WEA ANNUAL REPORT – APRIL 2016

The Workers Educational Association – or WEA – was founded in 1903 to provide education and lifelong learning for adults from all backgrounds, in particular those who have previously missed out on education. It now appeals to everyone with an interest in learning who wants to broaden his or her horizons.

In the Maplesteads we run two x 10 week courses each year, one in the Autumn and one in the Spring. We try to choose tutors offering subjects we have not covered before – an increasingly difficult remit after 34 years – but we have a loyal and sociable following who enjoy outings and wine, as well as the Monday evening lectures.

Last Autumn's course was a real winner. Alex Bass came to talk about the Wildlife Habitats of East Anglia, More than 30 members enjoyed his enthusiastic delivery, his excellent slides and bird impersonations and his individualistic presentation. He really was our very own Percy Edwards. We are visiting Fingringhoe Wick with Alex in May and nearly everyone from the course has signed up – so many in fact that there will be 4 sessions.

This Spring, Edward de Maunsell, talking about the Mediterranean Classical World, had a hard act to follow but his approach was equally individual, battle cries substituting for bird song. For those who have travelled around the Mediterranean, it was an informative trip down memory lane and for those who have not, it described the pleasures to be found.

We are lucky to have such a loyal and friendly group, prepared to come out on Monday evenings in Winter; the envy of many larger communities who struggle to keep going.

Particular thanks to **Bill and Jean Bowers** for all their hard work.

RCCE 'BEST KEPT VILLAGE' COMPETITION

In 2015 the Parish Council once again fancied its chance of winning the RCCE Best Kept Village award and the possibility of a cash prize for the village. We were successful in achieving a Merit Award but sadly no money.

This year the competition has been re-named **Village of the Year** and the format has changed. Entry is now much simpler, with a 1-task entry form: "*Describe what makes your village special, in no more than 500 words*". Entries must be in by 3rd May. Anybody can submit the entry form; as I have completed it for 4 of the 5 most recent years does anybody else fancy giving it a go?

The entry form for the Best Kept Churchyard competition will be passed on to St Giles church for their consideration.

Best of luck for 2016!

Ann Crisp

GREAT MAPLESTEAD KNITTING CIRCLE

The knitters continue to meet on the last Wednesday of the month at Magpies or Four Seasons. The hats and mittens go to the charity Samaritan's Purse, who put them into their Christmas Shoe Boxes. The small blankets go to the Premature Baby Unit at Broomfield Hospital and other sizes to the Farleigh Hospice.

We were getting short of wool but after the appeal in the Parish Magazine, which also got into the Halstead Gazette, we now have enough wool to keep us happy for some time. Thank you everybody who searched their cupboards and donated wool. We also have two more members and now average 8 attendees each month, but would be happy to welcome more – we have enough teacups and plenty of spare knitting needles.

This year we have produced over 200 hats with accompanying mittens, 13 cot blankets and one full-sized blanket. If you know of anyone who would like a social afternoon do put them in touch with me, Margaret Carder. We will try to provide transport if needed.

Margaret Carder

CARPET BOWLS CLUB

Carpet Bowls is doing well at the moment. We have of late attracted a few new members and we still have a very faithful membership who regularly attend on a Monday afternoon. We even have two or three members who come purely for a chat and the tea and biscuits! Subs. have remained at £2.00 for the two-hour session.

We are not interested in making a profit, so long as we can cover the cost of hiring the hall and the heat and have some money towards our Christmas lunch. We would, however, love to welcome new members, although any prospective members should realise that although we all enjoy our carpet bowls, the main purpose is still the social side. There is always a great deal of chatting going on!

We have a rota so that each week a different member provides the tea and biscuits for everyone and there are usually many willing hands to help with the washing up.

Thirteen of us went to the Bird in Hand in Halstead for our Christmas lunch, which was enjoyed by all. This was part financed by Carpet Bowls again this year.

Carpet Bowls usually takes a break for the summer sometime in May, dates tend to be flexible around the start of member's holidays and we resume in late September/early October. During last summer some of our members started going for a cream tea at a garden centre on a Monday afternoon, and I would especially like to thank Carol Brownlie for the idea and providing the transport each week.

We are a really friendly bunch, with a very varied age range, so if anyone fancies a couple of hours of fun and friendship on a Monday afternoon, we would love to welcome new members. Oh, and it is good exercise too!!

--ooOoo--