

Village Hall Committee Report for APM 2015

I took over after Paul Chapman stood down from the role of Chairman at the AGM in November. Paul had been chairman for 7 years and, prior to that was treasurer for 5 years and we are very grateful to him for all the work he did for the Village Hall in that time.

Paul was Chairman up to our AGM so I have plagiarised his Chairman's report for the following financial summary.

The accounts to 30 Sept 2015 disclosed an excess of income over expenditure of £3,822. This goes towards rebuilding our reserves which have decreased over the past two years due to the work carried out on the Village Hall.

Our lettings income of £5,778 was slightly higher than the figure for the previous year. With the new Manuden Village Community Centre it does not appear that we have suffered too much by losing bookings.

The 2014 Fete income was 10% higher than 2013 at £4,400. We are most grateful for all the work that is put in by the Fete Committee and the whole village in making the day such a success. Without the funds arising from the Fete we would not have such a fantastic facility.

The lettings income tends to only cover the day to day running costs of the Village Hall – heating oil, insurance, cleaning, gardening, general maintenance etc. and we are in the fortunate position of having the additional Fete income to cover the larger maintenance projects and enhancements such as building work, decorating and contingency for things such as a new boiler or oil tank.

Since the Village hall AGM there has been very little change in the finances. The regular bookings have thankfully remained (weekly we have 3 Yoga classes, Toddler Group, Social club and monthly WI meetings)

New furniture for the bar area was the hot topic towards the end of the year and a sub-committee was set up to decide on the type of furniture that would be most suitable with 2 representatives from both the Village Hall Committee and Social Club Committee. Sue Griffiths, on behalf of the Social Club, managed to get a grant to cover the cost of the furniture which was a fantastic result. The furniture has been ordered and hopefully we will see it soon.

Longer term there have been thoughts about a larger kitchen area which would be great for the regular large catering events put on by the Social Club, Church and other organisations – possibly taking over the space occupied by the Ladies toilet and building a new toilet block at the back of the hall. This would also make the hall more attractive to larger events such as weddings.

Steve Hurst also stepped down from the committee this year. Steve had been treasurer for seven years and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all his work and for his help in handing over to John Oglesby our new treasurer.

Thanks also the Village Hall Committee particularly to Sue Griffiths the secretary, a role which appears to include (amongst other things) obtaining grants, arranging meetings, mending things, meeting contractors, managing the loft etc. etc. To Catherine Felstead - the lettings secretary and to John Oglesby for volunteering to become our new treasurer.

Thanks to Bob Mason who is the caretaker and Natalie Trapmore who has been cleaning the hall for a number of years. Natalie has handed over the mop for a few months while she is busy with her fundraising at Grove Cottage.

Mike Demsey.

Annual Parish Meeting Friday 8th 2015

Reports from Village Organisations.

Choir and Drama

The choir sang very successfully at the Christmas Carol service, and also helped lead the singing at the Social Club's St George's Day festivities. We have acquired a "new" piano for the village hall, which has caused much interest! Drama Group is quiet at the moment.

Croquet

In 2014, 16 doubles teams entered the 'Berden Bowl', our village competition.

The finals of the Plate and the Bowl were held on September 27th at Dewes Green Farm.

The Plate match took place in the morning when Chris Thickett and Mike Taylor played Liz and Richard Little; Chris and Mike winning the match.

After the usual Finals Day lunch, a jolly crowd of spectators settled down to watch Peter and Barbara Jester play Sue and David Williams. It proved a good game for those on-lookers, with the Jesters 'pegging out' first to win the Bowl.

This year is the first without Jenny Lowe, a stalwart of the Croquet Club, who died last year. Her family have kindly donated to the club, Jenny's competition standard hoops which had originally been presented to her by the club.

Fete

Rob Talks, chairman.

Knit and Natter.

This new village group meets monthly. As well as knitting and nattering, we have tried our hand at candle making, providing stock for the Busstopshop, and origami. We intend to have a different topic each month, either sharing a new skill, or seeing work other members have undertaken.

Manuden and Berden History Society

We have had another very successful year and we continue to meet in Manuden and St Nicholas Church, Berden on the 3rd Thursday of every month between September and May. The main focus of my work in the village has been researching the stories of those men found on the Berden War Memorial. We held an exhibition at Manuden community centre last November and this was well attended. I gave a talk on the men from Berden and will publish extracts from this in the Parish magazine. I continue to receive items for the archive and a number of requests from families in the USA and Australia who are interested in their ancestors birthplace. I have also contributed some articles and web links to the Berden web site. There may be the opportunity to display some of the items in the archive

if a display cabinet can be found and placed in the Village hall. Maurice Ancell's book continues to sell and all proceeds will be going to the Friends of Berden Church. John Burton is using some of my research and pictures of Berden in 1914/2014 to create a time capsule which will go beneath the War memorial after it has been restored. I continue to write an annual record of important events in the Village for the Essex PRO and Recorders of Uttlesford History. Mark Trapmore

Mother and Toddler group

Mothers' Union

The few remaining members of the MU now meet with the Saffron Walden group.

Social Club

Rob Tuson

Village Hall

Mike Dempsey

Women in Berden ~ Parish Meeting Report 2015

During the months since our last Annual Meeting we have enjoyed a varied programme of speakers at our own meetings and also events organised by our local WI Groups.

Our speakers have told us about diverse subjects such as herbs for kitchen & first aid, an easy attitude to gardening and the story of the River Stort. We heard about women's self-protection and the work undertaken by the local group of street pastors and, on a lighter note, some British comedy greats and creative costume design for theatre & TV.

Once again we held a successful car ramble in July and the weather was kind for our August meeting when we had a relaxing and enjoyable evening in Anne Wilkinson's lovely garden.

In October we welcomed husbands, partners and friends to an open meeting with our speaker Lucy Allen who came along to tell us about her life as a professional stunt performer.

At our December meeting Jenny Beech showed us how to make some fabric "jester" bags suitable for holding a small present and, for those who were fast enough to finish the bags in good time, there was a chance to make a Christmas card. These activities were, accompanied by the now traditional, delicious glass of Ulla's Swedish Glögg and mince pies. In January we got our year off to a good start with another social evening as we held our New Year's Party.

Members went along to the Stansted Mountfitchet Group Meeting, held in Manuden, in September. Matthew Collins was an excellent speaker relating his experiences as a travel

writer and television reporter and our institute was responsible for a very successful bring and buy in the form of attractively wrapped, mystery presents. Members were invited along to meetings held by other institutes in our Spring Group including a most enjoyable afternoon at Ugley's Christmas party. We also took part in events organised by the Audley Group ~ a walk around Langley Upper Green in June, a beetle drive in Wendons Ambo in September, the quiz at Swards End in October and the December carol service in Saffron Walden.

So, an enjoyable year so far ~ we're a friendly and informal group and we would be so pleased to welcome some new members to our future meetings.

ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING FOOTPATH REPORT 2014 – 2015

Last year, 2014, Berden was poorly served by Essex Highways who are now responsible for the majority of our edge of field rights of way and, sadly, this is likely to be the same scenario throughout 2015 as they promise just one cut between now and September! Thanks to the Priory Farm our good network of permissive paths remained enjoyable throughout 2014. Berden Parish Council will continue to investigate ways of getting an improved service from Essex but it would be greatly appreciated if regular users would continue to complain, and the earlier in the season the better, to Essex Highways on an individual basis. Highways can be contacted by phoning the local / Harlow office on 01279 642600 or emailing - highways.westernarea@essex.gov.uk

Blaking's Lane, Berden footpath 12, leads from The Crump to Peyton Hall and Little London. It is, arguably, one of our finest paths, and is believed to be part of an ancient track way. Maintenance of this path is the responsibility of Essex Highways but despite agreeing, in 2012, to put it back on their maintenance list they have ignored all pleas to cut back the ground growth and encroaching shrubbery and make it serviceable for all walkers. However, in recent weeks we have sought the help of the excellent Uttlesford Rangers, who were here within days of the request, to return this path to a useable quality for all walkers to enjoy throughout this spring, summer and beyond; please make the most of their superb work.

Many of you have been asking why, according to recently posted notices, the Essex / Hertfordshire boundary footpath 27 is to be closed. This is as a result of a mapping error, by Essex Highways in the late 70's early 80's, which resulted in the path appearing on both the Hertfordshire and Essex sides of the boundary hedge. Those who regularly walk, and enjoy, this path do so for most of its length the on the well maintained Hertfordshire side and know that the Essex side would be all but impossible thanks to long established thick hedging and a number of deep un-bridged ditches. It is the never used imaginary Essex footpath that is now being formally closed and not the frequently used Hertfordshire route. The stretch of this path that leads from the edge of Stocking Pelham on the Essex side of the hedge through to a point close to Essex footpath 29 is not affected. This map inaccuracy has been recognised in Berden for many years and despite requesting that a common sense approach be sought to resolve the problem; Essex Highways decided to refer it to the council's legal department at a cost that has believed to have been several thousand pounds. After appeals the adjudicating Planning Inspectorate, in Bristol, found against Essex and in favour of the effected Berden land owners. The Essex definitive map, and subsequently, the next editions of all the relevant O.S. maps are all now in the pipe line for revision.

Walkers might be interested to note that this county dividing hedge was probably the boundary between the ancient Saxon kingdoms of Mercia, at its largest, and the East Saxons. You might like to take your passport with you, next time you decide to head that way for a walk, in order to avoid an international incident.

Lastly, I'm pleased to say that there has been far less horse damage to footpaths over the past year and that, thankfully, more and more dog walkers are now clearing up after their dogs, and some after the dogs of others. Thank you and, don't forget, dog waste bags are provided by the parish council and are available on the village green.

John Burton – 6/5/2015

Broadband

Annual Review of Berden Broadband Delivery dated 8th May 2015

Since early 2013, the Parish Council continues to seek and promote the early delivery of sustainable superfast broadband to the parish. This remains a key objective of the Parish Council.

Over the past year, this has focused on the main Superfast Essex provider.

1. Superfast Essex & Openreach BT

The Parish Council have continued the discussions started in June 2013 with both Essex County Council (Superfast Essex) and their selected provider BT Openreach.

Despite Berden being part of the highest respondent area of the 2013 Essex demand survey (albeit as a percentage of a small population), **Essex did not include Berden in the Phase 1 programme for superfast broadband to 2016.** Phase 1 included Harlow, Braintree and other larger villages. Indeed, Uttlesford remains the worst area for superfast broadband coverage in the County.

Despite initially being billed as **rural broadband** provision, this is now County wide provision and Essex apply '**value for money**' criteria for investment in new superfast. Essentially, value for money is assessed on the number of properties served; hence small villages such as Berden rank way down the order. In addition, Berden is on the Hertfordshire border (with a telephone exchange on the other side of the border) and again lacks the appeal of leading to other Essex villages.

Despite Berden already having superfast fibre in the village, Openreach will not take on any third party duct or fibre.

Superfast Essex have consulted on the Phase 2 rollout programme and again Berden made online votes and again was one of the highest respondent areas in the County (again albeit as a percentage of small population base).

Superfast Essex are due to announce the Phase 2a delivery areas at the end of May 2015. This will be for delivery by 2020. Phase 2b will follow on, end date to be confirmed.

2. Buzcom & Wifi Broadband

Berden is blighted by **topography, trees and interference from the pylons** and wifi is largely considered as unsuitable.

Uttlesford have part funded wifi delivery from Buzcom to other areas in the district.

3. Satellite

Whilst a costly option, this will be considered when the Superfast Essex Phase 2a delivery is announced.

Berden does have speeds ranging from 0.5 Mbps to 5 Mbps. Make sure you maximise your speed by connecting the router to the main socket (not an extension) and reduce electronic clutter.

Email from Superfast Essex

From: [Connie Kerbst](#) >

[Hide](#)

To: [Duncan Murdoch](#) >

Phase 2 plans for Berden

5 May 2015 16:31

Duncan,

Berden is one of the top areas we highlighted to BT for inclusion in Phase 2 due to high customer demand. We are working through the proposed plan, but there are a few questions still to be resolved. It is looking promising, but until those initial discussions are concluded I cannot commit to anything more than that I'm afraid.

Kind regards

Connie Kerbst

Senior Programme Manager - Superfast Essex

Information Services

Essex County Council

Tel: [03330 136 197](tel:03330136197)



www.superfastessex.org | make.theconnection@essex.gov.uk

Email from BT Openreach

From: annette.thorpe@bt.com [<mailto:annette.thorpe@bt.com>]

Sent: 25 March 2015 15:33

To: duncanmurdoch@moult-walker.co.uk

Subject: RE: Superfast Essex Programme Update - December 2014

Duncan,

I can confirm the community served by this postcode formed part of BT's response to the tender.

However you will appreciate that complete postcodes cannot be guaranteed and the uplift from the serving cabinet will vary according to ISP and distance too.

The final coverage and deployment timelines is subject to ongoing discussions with Essex CC, post contract.

Until such time as the final design work has been completed, (which may still take some months), I cannot confirm anything, other than our tender response did include this postcode.

Kind regards

Annette

Berden Parish Council 2014-15 Financial Highlights.

- * Overall a very good year for Parish Council funds, with Current & Deposit accounts increasing by more than £3000, to a little over £12,500.**

- * Essentially the precept for the village, £7,000, covers the grass cutting and maintenance of the playground and Simon's Field, as well as paying for the administration of the Council through the Parish Clerk's office.**

- * As far as income is concerned, this year saw us receive a generous £1,500 from the team at the Berden & Manuden Parish news, as our share of a total of £6,000 distributed between the church and the council in each village.**

- * We don't have many transactions flowing through our books. We had 10 receipts in total and some 46 cheques were drawn, roughly half of which were to cover grass and hedge cutting.**

- * The Council is always on the look-out for grant support for the projects undertaken in the village. Whilst we do not budget for these, we were successful in receiving over £1,100 for future projects, including funds for our War Memorial. Also the new playground equipment will be grant aided in the new financial year to the tune of more than £6,000, £3000 of which was received from Essex county Council yesterday.**

- * We now enter the period between today and June 5th for local review and questioning of the Accounts, following which they will be submitted to Littlejohn's for External Audit.**