

**St Margaret's Parish Council are coming to the end of their tenure.
What have we been up to?**



It's not all dog poo and parking!

We own and support, on your behalf, the cricket club, the bowls club, the football club, the tennis club, the playing fields - King George V (Cricket), the Alexander field (football), Madge's green (by the boat), 2 village ponds, the children's play area, the civic cemetery, various other small bits of land and of course our infamous Village green. There is always ongoing maintenance going on but you may recently have spotted the new play equipment for our younger residents, you may have driven over the new road surface to the King George V's field or even basked in the new hot water at the cricket and football club.

Most villages have a small green in the center bounded by a white picket fence. We own the biggest village green in the county or even country. At 90 acres the South Foreland valley is huge (between Lighthouse road, St Margarets Road, Goodwin Road, Beach road, the Front to the South Foreland lighthouse) With privilege comes responsibility and I do not know what we would do without our volunteers led by Dave Hart and Chris Little who clear the scrub and maintain the land. The White cliffs countryside alliance stewards and protect this land for which we give them £5,000 of your money yearly as well as the odd special payments. Our councilor Anna Newton is passionate and proactive about protecting this special area of scientific beauty.

Our groundworks contractor Mr Ian Miller can often be seen in the village cutting grass, litter picking, maintaining benches, looking after the civic cemetery and doing what needs to be done to keep our village special. He is coming up to retirement soon and the Parish council will have to organize a replacement – He will be a hard act to follow.

We chose to invest in CCTV at the village carpark and the King George V field.

The Public Convenience in the village car park is paid for 100% by the Parish at about £7,000/year. A positive in the recent budget was to remove rates off public toilets. This should save us £1,000/year. The reduction has not come through yet but on this basis we decided to drop the parish council precept. Our 1% drop will not make opening the council tax envelope any easier this year I'm afraid!

I am still absurdly proud at getting the 5 extra bins installed in the village. Do you know where they are? – answers I box at the end of this article.

Our present challenge is to install a new bus shelter and replace the old one at Nelson Park / Station Road. The idea came from a local resident who managed to obtain a grant towards it. She and we were concerned that passengers, particularly school children and elderly people, queuing up at the bus stop on North side of Station road direction Deal, were getting very wet and cold in the bad weather. Reports of children running across this very fast stretch of road only as the bus pulls up are even more concerning. So far it has taken us 3 years and hard work to get as far as the planning application. **Ref: 19/00138** – please do go online and support it.

One learns that nothing happens quickly at council level and there is lots to do. We take our responsibilities seriously. Planning, for example, we can only respond on specific criteria and guidelines. I am not always sure that Dover council planning appreciate our heartache, but we consider it vital to have informed representation.

It is important that we don't get bogged down in the minutiae and find the time and the vision to make a difference and that's where having a full complement of active councilors helps.

There are good days: - At our meeting yesterday, we had the joyful task of providing grants towards local groups and organizations – the Nursery & After school Club, the toddler club, Pegasus, the Spirit of St Margert's (the Boat) & the History Society.

We also heard from the National Trust who we have been working closely with, trying to sort out the traffic issues along Reach road/Upper road in peak tourist times. They are proposing a new car park opposite Sherley's farm. As always, the devil is in the detail however, it is looking good.

We are happy to support the Gridlock Group who are having a fresh look at traffic in our village and what can be done to alleviate some of the problems!

It makes it all worthwhile when the council can help the village pull together. The village shop, Smugglers and other residents came up trumps with the Christmas tree decorations and the special event to turn them on. Councilor Chris Smith has taken up the challenge of seeing if we can close the High street for next year's event. It won't be easy but if anybody can do it he can. Chris also looks after our website Do have a look or let him know if you have any news to add. <http://www.stmargaretspc.co.uk/>

I hope the Remembrance parade to the lighthouse will live on in collective village memory. The National Trust, the British Legion, the Parish Council and many volunteers put together this local even. The weather behaved; the stars were out and the South Foreland lighthouse shone once again across the channel; embracing our valley whilst St Margaret's remembered!

100 real flame torches, 500 residents, a mile of unlit unmade up road, on a moonless night, in November, – what could possibly have gone wrong?

There are bad days: It can be very frustrating and onerous. A recent example was the suggestion by a resident to place a planter by a bench on Sea Street. Our clerk followed process and contacted the highways department. A very lengthy document was issued, with instruction to pay £120 admin fee, a £125 capitalization fee and a £150 inspection fee – Oh and we must ensure that the installer has 5-million-pound liability insurance. This is probably a "chose your battle" moment.

Can You Help – As a Councilor?

We are short of councilors.

Our wonderful Councilor Brenda Paul, ex chair who has guided us for many years is finally retiring to have more time for her hobbies and other interests. She will be missed but I am sure, and I am relying on the fact that she will help from the sidelines for ever. Our Vice Chair Councilor Robert Wilkie has been offered a fantastic career opportunity which he has to accept so he too is leaving us but has promised to continue helping us with the realms of paperwork for "The Bus Shelters". I will be calling the replacement bench on Sea Street – Rob's now forever!

Councilor Tony Fielding and Councilor Jennie Harris are our experienced people. Tony is our planning guru, our sports club liaison and the Gridlock representative, Jennie oversees the civic cemetery, liaises with Kent Association of Local Councils KALC and she was the driving force behind the new children's trim trail in the playground.

Our biggest asset and strength is our very skilled, experienced and capable parish clerk. Jane Cook - She keeps us on the straight and narrow and knows how things work.

There are 3 or 4 vacancies around our table. We have left leaflets out in the Doctor's surgery and at the library which explain what the responsibilities are. They do include attending 11 meetings a year on the second Monday of the Month, reading, evaluating and responding to emails and ensuring that the precept is spent wisely. Please think about applying and:

- Look on our parish website www.stmargaretspc.co.uk.
- Pop down to the office at the village hall - office on a Monday morning 9.30-11 or Thursday afternoon 13:00-15:00,
- Ring the parish council number 01304 892535 – don't be afraid to leave a message – someone will get back to you.

Can You Help – in another capacity?

There are other roles. As the gridlock and the SFV team prove you can make a real difference without being constrained by the council.

We could do with a footpath warden, pond warden, play equipment monitors, tree warden, help in the South Foreland valley etc. No job description – anybody with a vision and wish to help make our village better! The pond in Chapel lane is being looked after and we can all see how happy the ducks are here– the pond on Reach road however...

Dates for the diary

Clive Harding has kindly volunteered to do some **defibrillator training** on Monday 18th March 6pm in the Channel rooms. The Parish Council obtained a de-fib which is sited at the village hall. The units are meant to be self-explanatory and an American voice guides you should you ever need to use it. I for one will be a lot happier if Clive can demonstrate in an un stressful situation first. Just come along – although emailing Jane or leaving a message on 01304 892535 parish.clerk@stmargaretspc.co.uk will make it easier for us to accommodate numbers. If there is more demand, we will arrange additional sessions.

Finally, come along to our **footpath walk**, beat the bounds of our village as the St Margaret's residents have done for centuries and be rewarded by Brenda's homemade scones and a cup of coffee/tea. Routes suitable for all the family & dogs - Sunday 28th April – Pick up your maps from 1pm from the Channel rooms.

Councilor Rebecca Simcox (Chair)

Annual Footpath Walk

Sunday 28th April

13:00 Channel Rooms

CPR Training

**How to use the Village
defibrillator**

Monday 18th March

18:00 Channel Rooms

Answers to Bin locations:
1) Bottom of Salisbury road – beyond the goats, 2) Hotel road – entrance to the Lees, 3) "Dog poo alley no more" – the footpath between Salisbury and Droveaway, 4) in the dip in Station road 5) bottom of Collingwood road