

Parish News

SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF FRANT, ERIDGE & BELLS YEW GREEN



Frost, Bells Yew Green

IN THIS ISSUE...

3

Letter from the Rectory by the Reverend Brendan Martin

4

Church Services, features & News from the Pews

7

Frant Bowls Club review of the year

10

Frant School's proposed plans for a Pre-School building

12

The 130-year-old story of Frant's Rat and Sparrow Club

14

What's on in the Parish: events, useful contacts & dates

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From the Rectory



What are your hopes and dreams for 2024? As I wrote this little article and saved it to the computer, for the first time I created the “2024” file – it’s always a bit of a moment when you write it for the first time – where has the last year gone?

I have to confess that when it comes to hopes for the future, I am a bit of a dreamer... I am always in danger of dreaming of more than the reality brings, but then the alternative is to set low expectations, and that is just not very exciting. I am definitely more of an optimist...

Personally this year I have great hopes for the garden. Last year the garden got a bit lost in amongst having our fourth baby Raphael in May. This year I have big plans! The greenhouse will be full, the veg will be thriving, and I finally want to try and use the apples on the tree to make cider! Not to mention the hens, I really want to get hens...

In our village this year, I am very much hoping we can build a Preschool as part of our Frant CE School. At the moment our families are having to drive some distance to preschools around about and there are not enough places. We really hope that it

will attract young families, that it will be good for the school to have a steady stream of children coming into reception class. Ultimately that it would be good for our children as they seamlessly transition from preschool into school to enable them to thrive in their education from a young age.

In our Churches in 2024, we are having a Year of Revival. Sometimes I think we over complicate the Christian life. Faith can become more about meetings and tasks rather than the simplicity of enjoying prayer and worship together as a church. In January we are having a little Sunday Service Series looking at “Is God there?” “Does God Care?” “Can God help?” Spoiler alert... the answer is yes to all three... but let me encourage you if you haven’t had a chance to think those things through recently to come along. They are some of the most important questions we can ask and I hope it will be deeply encouraging for those who can join us. Starts Sunday January 14th, Eridge 9:15, Frant 10:30.

So whatever the year has in store for us in our villages, I pray for God’s blessing on us as we build community together.

—Rev Brendan

News from the Pews

It was great to see people turn out for our Walking Nativity and Christingle service, in spite of the rain. Well done to all the children who took part, you were awesome!

At Encounter we had our annual ice-skating trip in Tunbridge Wells and gathered with other youth groups in the area for the UNITE Christmas Party run by Youth for Christ in Tunbridge Wells.

We finished Sunday Club off for the year by looking at how Jesus Christ is King, and what that means for us.

In Lego Bible Club, we finished our series of looking at those from the Bible who reflect Jesus by making some amazing Lego creations!

Looking forward to the new year... If you have children in school years 4-6, look out for our Archery after school club.

Our Encounter youth group, every Friday in term time will be back in January, so anyone from school years 6-13 sign up for games, good food, quizzes, Bible discussions, outings, and more. Contact info below.

Sunday Club, during the morning service, is for any child to come and hear God's word, play games, make craft, sing songs and more.

Little Fishes, every Tuesday morning, is back in January for good coffee and chat for the adults, and toys, crafts, snacks, Bible story and singing for the children.



Contact me or look at our website for more information. Ed Pascoe, Youth and Families Minister, Frant Church. frantyouth@gmail.com; frantchurch.org

A wonderful evening was enjoyed by 30 ladies at The Stables in Frant on 2 December. The room was decorated with beautiful foliage and fairy lights and attendees were welcomed with a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie! Needless to say there was plenty of friendly chatter whilst the ladies decorated their gift boxes the contents of which made for a real pamper hamper to give as a Christmas present.



A huge thank you to Julie Pascoe for organising this successful event. Thanks also to the guest speaker, Suzanne, who gave a thought provoking talk for us to reflect on in the lead up to Christmas.

» Frant Christmas Fair

Another successful Christmas Fair was held outside The George on 2 December. It was a freezing cold afternoon but that did not deter the stallholders and customers! Thank you to Dom and his team for once again organising this event and to Michael Freestone for these excellent pictures!



St Alban's, Frant & Holy Trinity, Eridge

Rector

The Reverend Brendan Martin — 01892 752003; rectoryfrant@gmail.com



Churchwarden

Juliet Nightingale—01580 200403
Kyle Laidler—07775 855866

Services for

January / February 2024



Churchwardens

Jonathan Lynn—07788 597051
Stephen Barnes—861302

10.30am Frant as One (All Age)	7th January	Communion Service	9:15am
10:30am Morning Worship	14th January	Morning Prayer	9:15am
	<i>Is God There?</i>		
10:30am Morning Worship	21st January	Communion Service	9:15am
	<i>Does God Care?</i>		
10:30am Morning Worship	28th January	Communion Service	9:15am
	<i>Can God help?</i>		
10.30am Frant as One (All Age)	4th February	Communion Service	9:15am
10:30am Communion Service	11th February	Morning Prayer	9:15am
10:00am Ash Wednesday Communion	14th February		
10.30am Morning Worship	18th February	Communion Service	9:15am
10.30am Morning Worship	25th February	Communion Service	9:15am

WORSHIP AT BELLSYEW GREEN

Sunday Services: 10.30am & 3.00pm / Bible Study & Prayer: Thursdays, 7.00pm / Enquiries: Peter Arrowsmith, 01892 610309



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Frant bowls club
» A review of 2023

Frant Bowls Club had a very good year. For a small local club with just over 30 members we played 37 matches. Against stiff competition and with some clubs fielding County players in their team, we won 17 matches and lost only 10. The remaining 10 fixtures were cancelled because of flooded greens or it was too hot and on some occasions clubs were unable to raise a team.

Our matches take place in both Sussex and Kent. The best Home result we achieved was against Buxted but the worst was our Away fixture against Crowborough Wolfe. In most of our matches there was some very skilful play. The game is quite cerebral and strategic, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition, the vagaries of the green and naturally the weather.

As well as club matches we have our own competitions which test individual skills. During 2023 we played a Two Wood match, which can be quite challenging, a Drawn Pairs match, the President's Cup which is the Captain's team versus the President's team and The Open which is a singles knockout match and is the most prestigious cup to win. These matches are played throughout the season with the Finals played in August.

Following the Finals Day we had an Awards Dinner at the Crowborough Golf Club in November. As usual this annual event was well attended and it concluded with the award of the cups and trophies. The photo shows the winners of the various competitions some of whom you may recognise.

The winner of the Two Wood

competition was Brian Cook, the Drawn Pairs competition was won by Peter McDonald and Jeff Holloway, the President's Cup was won by Colin Skinner and The Open was won by Audrey Hall. There were two other competitions namely the Tuesday Cup and the Captain's Cup. These were won by Michael Freestone and Chris Hall respectively.

In 2024 we will be considering some improvements to our green such as new ditch linings which prevent damage to bowls if they leave to the green at either the sides or the ends. Although improvements to our green are important, the maintenance of the green, the surrounds and the club house is equally vital. This is a continuous process throughout the year and depends on the support and effort of the membership.

The game of bowls is a fascinating sport. The bowls come in varying weights and sizes. Each player considers whether to deliver the bowl forehand or backhand, the finishing position of the bowl - be it long or short and how much weight to put into delivering the bowl. And avoid the bowl leaving the green. The delivery of the bowl can even depend on several factors which can affect the green. Is it damp, are there hollows, is the grass long or short? The length of the grass can be perhaps be 5mm to 8mm in height. These are factors which can affect to bowl and whether or not it will reach its target.

The 2024 bowls season at Frant Bowls Club starts in April. Interested? Come along to the green by the Memorial Hall at 4.30pm or thereabouts on a Tuesday afternoon and you'll find a warm welcome, maybe a drink from the

bar and a friendly introduction to the captivating game of bowls.

—Michael Freestone

Frant Music

We are thrilled to announce that world class classical music will be returning very soon again to Frant church. Internationally acclaimed classical pianist Yevgeny Sudbin has agreed to return to Frant Church on Friday 19 January 2024. Hailed as 'one of the greatest pianists of the 21st Century' by The Telegraph, Yevgeny will provide an enthralling programme ranging from Haydn through to Scriabin. Yevgeny has visited Frant before some years ago and many of us still remember being totally spellbound by his mastery.

Tickets are £20 and can be purchased at Brittens Music Shop in Tunbridge Wells, Frant Stores, or online at frantchurch.org



Frant Parish Council

The Parish Council commissioned a survey of the Albert Well on the A267 as you leave Frant heading North. It is in a poor state and estimated repairs run to over £14,000 so we thought we would first try and find out its history and archaeological status.

The following will be of interest.

The proposal for the well was made in June 1862 by the Rector of Frant following the death of Prince Albert. By 1864 funds were obtained and the original site was to be on Frant Green. However, a local resident Mr P Ashburnham objected to this site threatening legal proceedings!! Lord Abergavenny stepped in and offered the current site. I quote the Public notice.

'A most convenient spot has been granted, contiguous to the turnpike road and a well has been sunk which furnishes an abundant supply of soft spring water. The well has been by a temporary apparatus rendered accessible to the public. The expenses of the whole undertaking, including the sinking of the well, engine pump, raising the adjacent ground to level with the turnpike road and enclosing it with a stone wall amount to the estimated value of £130.'

In the 1890's the residents of Frant wrote to the Parish Council asking to re-open an abandoned well on Frant Green because of 'the inconvenience caused by our distance from the well and the deficient supply from that well in times of drought'. Thus the Victoria well was soon built.

In 1901 Lord Abergavenny passed responsibility for the maintenance and care of the Albert Well to the Parish Council where it has remained ever since! It is a Grade 2 listed building of 'moderate' archaeological value but we will carry on our responsibilities handed to us in 1901! The full report will be on our web site.

On a similar but more recent historical note the Parish Council has refurbished the two BT (GPO!) telephone boxes in Frant and Bells Yew Green using the original GPO red paint (Great job Niall!). Our intention is that they should remain available for use by the residents of the Parish. Some suggestions already put forward are a secondhand book exchange and/or a plant exchange. Any other ideas, via Rosie our Clerk please, would be most welcome.

—Cllr Stuart Crookshank



Friends of Bells Yew Green

The BYG Village Hall Committee continues to make improvements, for example, new exterior doors have been fitted, to add to the list of upgrade work. Next up is renovation of the loos and entrance hall, with the work currently in the planning stage. We are looking for a carpenter and plasterer and probably a plumber, too. Could you recommend anyone, please? (See my number below). If anyone would be interested in sponsoring part of the work, we would be more than delighted. We were so grateful for community support for the kitchen.

Our hall remains popular for regular bookings of children's parties, BYG Big Band, dance classes, Kung Fu and Breathwork, to name a few. Additionally, we've had community parties/charity fundraisers (no charge), hosted by local group, The Fireflies, as well as weekly community gatherings and so on. However, there's always room for further classes, gatherings and activities in our community hub - why not check out our timetable at www.bellsyewgreen.org to choose a slot that suits you and then contact our Bookings Manager, Anna, (details on our website) to make a booking?

In addition, we're currently endeavouring to install internet (finally!). We discovered that the village hall has never been listed on Royal Mail



records, for some unknown reason. Well, it's only been there seventy odd years!

Meantime, in the village, Frant Parish Council has been sprucing up our telephone box - have you noticed?! Once kitted out it will be used as a book exchange and maybe a plant exchange from late spring - very exciting! If you have any suggestions do let them know.

—Sue Wallis

Parish past

Frank Sivyer (1900-1979) left a wonderful memoir giving a cottager's eye view of Frant life more than a 100 years ago. Handwritten in 4 exercise books in one paragraph with unique spelling, I have quoted from it before but it's well worth revisiting - punctuated but keeping his unique voice.

"The greatest cause of slum-like living was the size of families (7 children in their two-bed cottage on Riverhall Hill) ... the main hot meal was a stew with 3 pennyworth of bones, perhaps a sheep's head for 6d cooked over the open fireplace with our vegetables, large chain with hooks hanging from the chimney ... my father's illness became a real worry we would have to quit the house (it went with his job as gardener for 12 shillings a week) It looked like the workhouse for us, but no ... the sanitation was outside shed with tin buckets, ours a Gem being twin and a pipe carried waste to a sump

at the bottom of the garden, we emptied it once a year, my word, what vegetables that produced!

The traffic past was pretty continuous ... dog carts, wagons, rich turnouts of carriages, penny farthings, bicycles. These were not easy to master, too much weight on the pedal and over you went with a clonk on your head. All cottagers had a pole with the letter of name of the carrier on it, if one wanted his services you stuck it in the hedge and he would call, nothing was too small, one pound of butter or a long list, he would purchase and drop it in on his return journey for a few pence. The Royal mail was a horse drawn veichel (vehicle) the driver with a seat on top all weather ... he came past us at night, nine o' clock indoors in Winter one would remark There goes the mailman. His horse we knew the longest called Darkie, would take letters from us to the post, making his return journey in the early hours of the morning."

—Pat Wright

Frant Parish Frindship Group

A Very Happy and Peaceful New Year to one and all.

The last few months of 2023 were a busy time for the Group. Our October speaker was Clive Nuttman and the topic 'The Real Brexit' our geological break from the continent. Clive is a biologist currently working as a freelance environmental educator and he gave us a fascinating picture of how the unique chalk grasslands of the South East were formed over millennia and the vast array of flora and fauna it supports. All of which is under threat from over development and climate change.

In November our Chairman, Brian Gill, welcomed members to our fifth Annual General Meeting and reported on a very successful and entertaining year. Although on a sombre note we took a moment to remember the members who have sadly passed away this year namely Betty Parry, John Gibbons, Nick Jones and Audrey Jessup. We also remembered those members who have had to go into full time care.

Business being completed as this was a morning meeting, we finished with a Fish and Chip lunch and quiz.

To round off the year we were looking forward to our Christmas Tea on 10th December and hoping for better weather than last year when we were snowed in.

We start 2024 with our exercise

classes these are normally on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month at 2.30 pm in The Stables. However the first class of the year will be on the third Thursday of January the 18th.

The first meeting of the year will be January 25th 2.30pm in The Stables when the speaker will be Patrick Phillips a retired driving instructor and his subject 'Driving Dilemmas in Later Years!' In February (22nd) we have Janie Ramsey and her subject 'Without Reserve' anecdotes from the world of auctions.

If you are new to the village and are 55 or over do join us as a guest at one of our meetings and see whether you would like to become a member. We have very good cake, tea and chat after the speaker!

We look forward to seeing old and new members for the start of another year.

Enquiries Valerie Palmer 01892 750559 valeriepalmer@uwclub.net

Frant and the conversion of Sussex

» Mary Alexander

The conversion of pagan Anglo-Saxon England to Christianity began after St. Augustine's arrival in Kent in 597. It could only take place with the permission of the local king. There were at least twelve kingdoms, small and large. They were gradually absorbed by more powerful kings until the early 900s when Wessex ruled over them all. Sussex was a kingdom which was overshadowed by Kent and Wessex in the 600s. When Augustine arrived the king of Kent was very powerful, and also dominated Essex and Surrey. Although these areas were converted early on, Sussex was not. However, in the 660s King Æthelwulf of Sussex allied with King Wulfhere of Mercia whose influence extended from the Midlands to the Thames and across into Surrey. Æthelwulf was baptised with Wulfhere as his god-father. This was not just a spiritual relationship – it subtly underlined Mercia's dominance over Sussex. Then in the 680s Wilfrid, a bishop in Northumbria, was exiled and took refuge in Mercia then Sussex. He preached energetically and the people of Sussex were converted and baptised.

When a king allowed missionaries to work a bishop was appointed, which is why bishoprics are based on the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Kent had two dioceses which is unusual. It was because there

was a sub-kingdom based on Rochester, as well as the main one in Canterbury. When Surrey was dominated by Kent it was in the diocese of London, based in Essex, because Kent also controlled Essex. Later it was transferred to Winchester diocese when the kingdom of Wessex dominated Surrey. The first diocese of Sussex was Selsey which seems an odd choice. However, Mercia and other kingdoms were strongly influenced by Irish Christianity which liked remote places, such as Iona and Lindisfarne. There had been a few Irish monks in Bosham before Wilfrid came to Sussex, but they do not seem to have had much influence.

The early Christian missionaries lived in communities of monks, priests and lay-people called minsters. The missionaries travelled out from their centre preaching, teaching and taking services. One of those minsters may have been in Rotherfield where there seems to have been an early church. Frant was part of the parish of Rotherfield until it became independent. Eridge was part of these two settlements and so the people of our area were probably served by priests based in Rotherfield. There is a story that a man called Earl Beorhtwald gave land at Rotherfield, Hastings and Pevensey to Saint-Denis in Paris in 795. (He is sometimes called Duke Bertoald, from the Latin in the charter but the Anglo-Saxons did not have dukes.) He is said to have been cured of illness on a pilgrimage to the French monastery. In thanks he built a church at Rotherfield and gave it to Saint-Denis. Sadly, the story is unlikely. Scholars think the charter is dubious, and the story sounds like a much later one. Monks often forged charters to prove ownership of land when the original document was lost. I don't know if Saint-Denis ever owned land in Sussex. There are two copies of the charter in the French national archives, so they may have done. The story may have come about to explain the unusual dedication of the church to St. Denis, or perhaps there really was a link with the French abbey.

So the coming of Christianity to Frant and Eridge was quite complicated. It involved the politics of the different kingdoms, with influences from Rome, via Augustine, and Ireland through Mercia, and possibly France.

—Mary Alexander, December 1st 2023

Foster Carers

East Sussex County Council are keen to talk to prospective foster carers. The latest in a number of films promoting foster carers has been launched on the County Council's website, entitled "Any of Us", and it makes for a thought-provoking watch.

Fostering can provide a positive new way of life for your family. It offers children and young people a safe and supportive environment to develop and thrive. If you have considered becoming a foster carer, the County Council would love to hear from you. They offer an extensive range of training and support. Change a life and contact them for more details on 01323 464129 or visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk/children-families/children-in-care.

News from Nus Ghani, MP

Happy new year! Winter is a beautiful time in Wealden, and I hope that you have enjoyed the festive season. As we step into 2024, please allow me to reflect on some of the successes and work that has been done to support Wealden throughout the past year.

I am incredibly proud to have helped secure over £2m Government funding for building safety improvements at two fantastic Wealden schools, Beacon Academy in Crowborough and Uplands Academy in Wadhurst. This is an amazing result for Wealden and comes in addition to the £1.3m that Beacon Academy secured in 2021, and further support that Hailsham Community College and St Mary's School in Maynard's Green were awarded last year.

Following the completion of multi-million-pound step free upgrades at Eridge station last year, I was delighted to officially open Crowborough train station which has undergone similar improvements as part of a £4.7m investment from the Department for Transport's Access for All scheme, including the installation of two lifts and a brand-new footbridge. We've also had a great success in Horam, where Phase 1 of the Get Active Pathway was completed in the autumn, increasing opportunities for physical activities such as cycling, scooting, walking and enabling those with mobility issues to have better access to exercise locally. This is a fantastic result for Horam and I'm pleased to have supported its delivery.

Since the beginning of the war,

Wealden has led the way in providing support to Ukrainian families arriving to East Sussex. I continue working with volunteer groups in Mayfield and Hellingly and I'm immensely grateful for the kindness and hospitality of Wealden residents involved in local support. But I also appreciate that some Ukrainian families may now wish to move on into their own accommodation and I'm pleased that Wealden was supported by over £418,000 from the Government's £150 million fund to help Ukrainian guests find employment and long-term suitable independent accommodation.

As part of The Coronation celebrations of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla in May, we paid tribute to all volunteers across the nation, and I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank just a few of the many Wealden groups and charities whom I had the pleasure to support this year and whose work is invaluable to so many local residents. MAYFACS, who continue to lead the support for Ukrainian families in Wealden; Rotherfield St Martin charity who support people living with dementia; Nutley windmill volunteers who carry out a huge amount of restoration work; Kinship Carers in Hailsham who run a fantastic support group; and the Uckfield Volunteer



Centre, who are a great resource for advertising available roles and coordinating volunteer-led efforts locally.

It has been a busy year with lots of wonderful news and successes locally, but there is more to be done and I will continue to work hard in 2024 to campaign for more resources for Wealden and to ensure that your concerns are heard in Westminster. If you need my assistance, please get in touch via email nusrat.ghani.mp@parliament.uk.

Frant School

I have just come back from hearing our choir sing at the Frant Christmas Market, which was very atmospheric and happy. Well done to the children.

You may be aware that we are hoping to open a Pre School, on site, towards the end of 2024. We held an Open Evening for people in the village to come and look at the plans (pictured below). We are hoping to go to planning in the new year and start building as soon as that comes through. If you would like to know more, please do come and speak to me and I can share the plans in more detail.

Please enjoy some of the highlights that have taken place and are due to take place before the end of term.

Another successful annual PTF



bonfire and fireworks night. Thank you to all of those involved in organising it and to everyone who attended.

We have held Open Days for the parents of children hoping to join us in September 2024. Thank you to our House Captains who showed them around.

We continue to participate in many sporting events around the County under the guidance of Mrs Douch. It is lovely to see children representing their school for

the first time.

As part of our Remembrance learning, the children made poppies that adorn our front wall alongside the soldiers. Thanks go to Deborah Tompsett for working with all the children.

Glyndebourne – on Wednesday 13 December our year 5 and 6 children joined other schools in singing at Glyndebourne alongside the Opera Choir and some of the orchestra.

Towards the end of term, we



participated in various festive activities including the Church Carol Concert, a Secret Santa afternoon, disco and raffle and finally the Lower School Nativity play in the Church which was, as always, a wonderful occasion.

I hope you have enjoyed reading our news. Please do contact the school at any time if you have any questions or would just like to say hello. I am in school every day and will always find time for a chat.

With very best wishes.

—Mrs Joanna Challis, Acting Executive Headteacher

Eridge Garden Club

The Eridge Garden Club continues to thrive with regular talks and visit to gardens.

In March 2023 Jo Arnell gave a talk on "Autumn is the new Summer – how to keep the colour going and extend the season". The talk was very interesting and informative and was attended by approximately 40 people.

In May we ran 3 bluebell walks at Troutbeck and these were greatly enjoyed by those who attended. Also in May a group of members and guests visited Hole Park Gardens at Rolvenden Kent. It was a lovely summer's day and the gardens were stunning, although the roses were not yet out.

In August Karen and Andrew Wolfle kindly opened their delightful garden in Groombridge for a plant swap and tea. The garden looked stunning particularly the dahlias and was very inspiring. On a beautiful summer's day with delicious cake and tea what more could we need?

In November Nikola Fox, an award winning landscape and garden designer gave a fascinating talk on the art of garden design and how art and science inspires her work. The talk was attended by approximately 50.

The committee has exciting plans for next year – including a talk on cuttings, a visit to Clinton Lodge near Fletching in May, Eridge Fair stall, a talk on poisons and parasites and a visit to the Prairie Gardens in Henfield.

Lesley and Jonathan Lynn are also opening their garden in April 2024 to raise funds for Family Support Work (FSW).

Membership costs £5@ year and attendance at an event costs £3. Further details on our programme of events can be obtained from the Chair, Jane Stevens at stitchesjane@gmail.com.



The Arts Society Ashdown Forest

Thursday 11th January at 2pm at Crowborough Community Centre, TN6 1FE Lecture: "Danish Modernism: The Skagen School of Painting" Lecturer: Caroline Levisse

Located at the northernmost point of the Jutland peninsula, Skagen is an attractive spot in the summer, known for its unusual light. In the late 19th century this fishermen's village was home to an artists' colony. Reacting against styles enforced by the Academies and influenced by French modernism, they painted en plein air and represented scenes from ordinary life- fishermen at work, social gatherings and domestic scenes. They are especially renowned for their depictions of the particular light of long summer evenings, where their works often become more romantic and lyrical.

Caroline Levisse is an art historian based in London. Born in France, she studied art history before moving to Copenhagen for research. She now lives in London and teaches art history, publishes articles and lectures for the Arts Society, specialising in 19th and early 20th century Western art.

Everyone welcome – members of the Society free, visitors £7 per lecture. Refreshments available at the end of the lecture.

For further information, contact our

Membership Secretary on 01892 861015 www.tasaf.org.uk

Rat and Sparrow Clubs
» **There was one in Frant...**

Picture, if you will, children bowling hoops along Frant High Street, everlasting sunshine, people drawing water from the wells, milk delivered by horse and cart, farmers making hay, visits to the baker and cobbler and the local pub full of happy country folk supping their ale. Sounds bucolic, a life-style to dream about in today's frenetic society

However life on a farm in the early 1900s was very different. It was hard. There were no fertilisers and no selective weed killers. But there were huge numbers of rats, mice and birds stealing the wheat in the barns and the fields. Rats used to eat around one-third of a farmer's total harvest, so it made sense for a farmer to join a club the purpose of which was to destroy the vermin and protect his crop.

In the January 12, 1894 edition of The Courier, a meeting of the Farmers Club was held in The George Hotel, Frant. After some discussion the 'Rat and Sparrow Club' in Frant was formed. Clubs like this were formed by farmers countrywide and the purpose was to fight against the invasions of rats, mice, birds and other creatures considered vermin in the field consuming vast

quantities of grain. Men would have paid a shilling (5p) a year to be a member of the Rat and Sparrow Club.

Rat and Sparrow Clubs provided an opportunity to earn extra cash for farmers who were working long hours in the fields. Men would earn around one penny for each rat they caught, and as most village men were employed on farms they knew how and where to catch them easily. This was a time prior to the use of rat poison when rats were an absolute menace. Even nowadays it is reckoned that there is a rat within ten feet of each of us.

Men caught rats in cages which were baited with a piece of meat or fish. However rats seemed to go for the scent of a kipper that was tied in the cage. Two or three rats would go in and the cage was thrown into a horse-pond to drown the rats. The dead rats were retrieved and their tails were cut off. They were then taken to the tally-man who may have been waiting in The George when the men returned from working in the fields. The rat's tails were usually piled up on a table in front of the tally-man to be counted. The payment was one old penny for each rat tail.

When it comes to sparrows that's a slightly different but macabre story. At the turn of the 19th century and until WW2 there were very few if any animal or bird protection societies. Therefore as sparrows consumed vast quantities of the harvest they were considered fair game and caught.

If farmers couldn't get their quota of sparrows farmers' boys used to go out at night with torches put their hands into haystacks and hedges, pull the sparrows out and pluck their heads off, pop them into a tin and throw the other bits away.

The undertaking by club members was to get 15 - 20 rat tails and 30 - 40 sparrows heads which roughly equated with half a club membership fee.

Research shows that in 1917 the West Farleigh and District Sparrow and Rat Club (also referred to colloquially as The Loyal Tickle Back or Jack Sparrow and Mole Club) was in existence. The club met at The White House, meeting on the first Wednesday of the month, from beginning of October to the end of March.

Landowners and farmers from East and West Farleigh, Hunton, Teston and Barming were members paying an annual sum according to the acreage



they owned. Five shillings for those with more than 100 acres and half-a-crown for fewer acres.

Papers associated with this club state "Whilst no one wishes to exterminate the sparrow, it is generally agreed that any good it might do destroying harmful insects is greatly outweighed by the damage done to crops, that reduction in its numbers is as necessary as in the case of rats, or of any other destructive pest."

Many clubs were reformed or invigorated by the onset of the First World War because there was a greater need for home grown food. Without the use of present day fertilisers and pesticides, yields were considerably lower than today and there was a need to

harvest as much as possible.

In the Annual report of the club in March 1917 the 'good' work of the club was reported. The farmers and workers amassed 1192 Sparrows, 657 Rats, 33 Bull finches, 134 Moles, 879 Blackbirds, 1301 Queen Wasps, 1854 Butterflies, 13 Stoats and 9 Jays. 8 sparrow heads would have provided the catcher with enough for a pint of beer!

However the RSPB, in a leaflet also from 1917, expressed unease at the killing of birds, and sought to highlight the benefits of birds to the farmer as a natural form of insect pest control. With current views on the environment and nature conservation the determined killing of these wild creatures described as vermin would be anathema to society today.

Records of when the club ceased do not exist but it was probably in the 1920's when more modern farming methods were introduced. However there are records of land girls, during the second world war, catching rats!

Information was obtained from Kent Archeology Society magazine, Autumn 2011. and Bygone Kent Magazine Vol 3 no 2 and Vol 6 no 9. Photos from Rat and Sparrow Club Eynsford, Kent with the tally-man and tail count.

—Michael Freestone



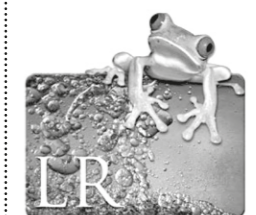
Parish Pets #10: Brody

Hi everyone, my name is Brody and I live in the High Street. My birthday is in March when I will be one. I love living here and especially saying hello to everyone that walks past my house. I am very clever as I have got to know the difference from all the villagers and those that visit Frant. I love going for walks around the fields and especially the one around The Stables. Sometimes I run off after the deer or squirrels but when I hear the whistle run right back. Although my mum and dad are a bit cross with me. My best friend is Rosie and we love to chase and wrestle with each other. I always get excited when I see her. I also have a friend called Banjo who lives next door but one. When I can I sneak out of our my house and run to Banjo's where I can creep in and pinch his food. Naughty but very nice!

Please say hello to me when you see me in my front garden. I love a little tickle. My favourite treats are green beans and carrots which I just love. I even have my own Instagram account so you can follow me on Life_ofBrody. I always look on the bright side of things.

» **Like your pet featured in Parish News..? If so, send a description and photo to: carmel.kinley@gmail.com**

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**Parish Diary:
January/February 2024**

- » **Thursday 11 January**
Arts Society Ashdown Forest, Danish Modernism talk. See page 12
- » **Thursday 18 January**
Frant Parish Friendship Group, Exercise Class. The Stables, Frant. See page 9
- » **Friday 19 January**
Frant Music Concert – Yevgeny Sudbin Frant Church, 7.30pm. See page 7
- » **Thursday 25 January**
Frant Parish Friendship Group, Meeting/Talk. The Stables, Frant. See page 9

Regular Meetings

- Little Fishes: Baby & Toddler Group**
Every Tuesday 9.30–11.30am in The Stables, Frant. A warm welcome to all.
- Encounter (School Years 6–13)**
Contact Ed Pascoe for more information: frantyouth@gmail.com
- Coffee Morning at The Stables, Frant**
Every Wednesday, 10:30am–12noon. Come for a hot drink, a cake and a chat.
- Festival Church Kids** During 5pm outside service.

Parish News can be downloaded from: www.frantchurch.org or www.eridgechurch.org
Advertising enquiries: 750285 or susan.piccioni@btinternet.com
Contributions for our next issue should be sent to the Editor: carmel.kinley@gmail.com or 01892 750217
Next deadline: 1st February 2024

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Andy Brooks: 07876 011782
Bells Yew Green Village Hall
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Bob Standley: 783579
- Parish Council meetings**
Full PC meetings are usually held at 7.30pm every 3rd Wednesday of the month. Please check the Council's website at www.frant-pc.gov.uk
- MP for Wealden**
Nus Ghani MP:
nusrat.ghani.mp@parliament.uk
- Police Contact Details:**
To report a crime or incident dial 101
For other police enquiries contact the Wealden unit on 01273 404938 or www.sussex.police.uk/wealden/

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


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