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Potholes Action Group keeps up the pressure

The Potholes Action Group has held a second meeting in its campaign to get improvements to road conditions in the parish of Hougham Without.

At the meeting at the Village Hall on Sunday 11th February, attended by 44 people, Action Group Leader Steve Oxenham updated campaigners on progress so far:

- Natalie Elphicke MP came to Hougham to inspect the roads on Thursday 25th January. She offered to present a Parliamentary Petition and asked for more information to be sent to her.
- Hougham Without Parish Council has written to the Leader of Kent County Council (KCC) Roger Gough. While the Council has undertaken some pothole repairs these are of poor quality and better repairs are needed.
- So far a petition has been signed by more than 200 local people and more signatures are expected and invited.
- Clogged drainage, resulting flooding of Broadsole Lake and Satmar Lane Lake, is being attended to.

Steve Oxenham said 'We need to know the level of repair we can expect and how permanent this will be. We don't want KCC to regard the work as completed.'

Action Group members will meet Cllr David Beaney (Con) Dover Down and River on Wednesday 21st February. The Village



Top left: Natalie Elphicke MP came to Hougham to inspect the roads on Thursday 25th January. She offered to present a Parliamentary Petition and asked for more information to be sent to her.

Top right: A petition with more than 200 signatures is handed to the MP. Right: The Action Group holds its second meeting on Wednesday 7th February, for campaigners to discuss progress so far.



will be kept updated on the outcome of this meeting.

Meanwhile, villagers continue to report damage to vehicles on the KCC website and were urged by the campaign to chase up responses. Walkers, cyclists, horseriders and more are at risk and there is concern over access by emergency services.

One campaigner told the meeting that delivery companies are beginning to charge an excess to come into West Hougham. It was suggested at the meeting that the local people should repair the potholes themselves, but there were liability issues with this. ■

“Around the Parish”

News from Hougham Without Parish Council

So, February has come and no snow yet. I know, I might be tempting fate, but Snow far, no snow! Excuse the pun, but I am sure many of you will remember the last heavy prolonged snowfall in the winter of 2010 with banks of snow lining the hedgerows and more recently in 2021 with the weeklong snowfall (see pictures below). Perhaps global warming really is changing the weather patterns and systems and these types of pictures are something for mere nostalgia and reminiscence moving forward?

Needless to state, in many ways the absence of cold and snow has been a blessing with the Satmar Lane route (more comically known as the Satmar Lake since 4th Nov 2023!) only being allegedly fixed over 3 days from the 14th of Feb 2024 by KCC highways. However, the picture (see below) taken on Sunday 18th Feb, 2 days after the alleged fix only just go to show that promises and good intentions are often not enough for beleaguered Hougham Without villagers! To further compound this, the three days that several workmen from KCC spent on the job, and the thousands of pounds it cost, will be a huge disappointment for road users and council taxpayers alike!



It may have not escaped many in the villages to see the recent renewed impetus from KCC to fill potholes and take remedial action to repair, maintain and address problems with the roads in and out of the villages. This in large part because of the efforts of the recently formed Hougham Action Group on roads, with support from the Parish council. Of course, many of you like Parish Council members will welcome this remedial action with many perhaps suggesting it is long overdue for a village that has largely be forgotten in terms of major highway renewal programmes over recent years.

Some of you may have attended the recent newly formed Hougham Roads Action Group meeting at the Village Hall on Sunday 11th Feb for an update on their work and discussion on the state of the roads in and out of Hougham Without. Members of the group were able to update on their plans to compile a register of road problems and encourage parishioners to keep reporting problems via KCC's website.



Left: Severe flooding on Satmar Lane. One of many issues which led to the setting up of the Potholes Action Group which has been campaigning for improvements in the road conditions in West Hougham and surrounding areas.

Further works are planned by KCC highways at Broadsole Lane towards the end of Feb 2024 to alleviate constant flooding problems like Satmar Lane. One can only hope that the amount of time and money being spent by KCC on this project (several tens of thousands of pounds) will be more long lasting and productive than what has happened at Satmar Lane most recently? The Parish Council will continue to advocate for safe and well-maintained roads in and out of villages. If you have problems to report, damage to yourself or vehicles please use the usual channels of communication (see below) to report these incidents.

For now, take care, keep safe and try not to either fall down a pothole, get submerged in a flood and get struck by a fallen tree!

Best Wishes, Hougham Parish Council

How to report potholes or make a complaint or claim for pothole damage

The Parish Council has been trying to resolve these issues via discussions with David Beaney, the KCC Councillor for Dover West (including Hougham Without Parish) and making representations to the KCC pothole/flood/fallen trees webpage.

However, it might be worth reminding all residents that it is easy to report fallen trees on roads to KCC by phone:

0300 0418181 Mon-Fri in work hours

0300 0419191 out of hours

These phone numbers are also relevant for flooding. For reporting potholes use the KCC web portal at [Potholes - Kent County Council](#) KCC has overall responsibility for maintaining safe highways in and out the village

KCC Cllr David Beaney can be contacted on email:

David.Beaney@kent.gov.uk Tel – 07818 024487

Natalie Elphicke can be contacted on email:

Office.natalie.elphicke.mp@parliament.co.uk

FISH AND CHIP SUPPER

The Streetz2Streetz Fish and Chip van will be outside the Village Hall from 5.30-6.45pm on Friday 22nd March, so do go along and grab a fish supper.

The van comes whenever there's a Pop Up Pub. Normally this would be the last Friday of the month, but due to Good Friday being on Friday 29th March, it has been moved to the week before.

You can take your fish and chips into the Village Hall to join in with the Pop Up Pub, where everyone brings their own drinks.





The now infamous...

GHOST WALK

SATURDAY 16 MARCH 2023 7.30-9PM

Sinister tales and unexplained mysteries from Hougham, one of Kent's most haunted villages. Ghoulish true stories of tragedy, misfortune and unexplained events guaranteed to send a shiver down your spine.....

Are you scared.....do you feel brave enough

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The walk is over a mile long in duration. It partly covers muddy fields, wooded areas and climbing 2 stiles (waist height) in the dark. Participants need to be physically fit enough to complete this walk unaided. No children under the age of 12 due the nature and content of the walk. Children 12 and over are permitted with a responsible adult. Participants will need to bring their own torch and wear a high visibility vest (provided). They will also need outdoor footwear and suitable outdoor winter clothing. This event is strictly an advance ticket only event (only 25 places available) Please contact Steve Green to book steve-9494@hotmail.com.

Tickets £8 person.

The walk will start and end at Hougham Village Hall where refreshments are available. The tour is not suitable for anyone of a nervous disposition or suffering from any other associated health condition. Participants must follow the direction and instruction of the walk guide and staff at all times to ensure their health and safety. Participants may encounter unexplained noises, confusing images and unexpected events during the walk. All participants will be asked to sign a liability waiver before departure, and take part entirely at their own risk.



Nature Trail

by Tony Rawlins

Midway through February, and Spring is beginning to assert itself in the growth of plants all around us. The snowdrops have been with us for a week or two now and are starting to fade and give way to crocuses which are very welcome in their bright and jolly colours. Primroses, too, are not far behind and will soon be gracing the woods and gardens.



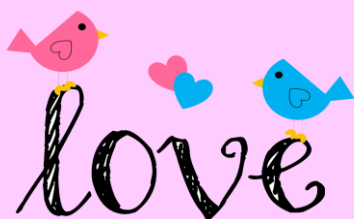
The 14th February and it's St. Valentine's day, which is world famous as being the patron saint of lovers but not just for humans - also it is widely seen as the day that birds choose their mates and the mating process begins with nestbuilding after a suitable site has been selected. Birds nests come in a wide variety of styles and types, generally speaking the larger birds nests tend to be rough and ready whilst the smaller birds spend a lot of time and effort in building wonderful nests comprising natural products found close by. Wrens are famous for their beautifully constructed homes, usually tucked away in a place safe from predators in so far as they are able.

Last year, we had a nest in front of our house belonging to a pair of long tailed tits and built right in the middle of a somewhat spiky bush that one would think was safe enough. But sadly it was not to be. A couple of crows had no doubt kept an eye on the tits and this resulted in a raid on their nest which was unceremoniously removed from the bush on to the grass and totally ransacked to the horror of the hapless tits who, of course, were not able to do anything other than protest at this devastation. Thus it is, of course, that small birds tend to have large broods of chicks each year, whereas the larger more predatory birds only lay one or two eggs in or on a somewhat scrappy affair of a nest. As was so rightly, but cruelly, said "might is right". The smaller birds then have to resort to various means to protect themselves and to ensure their continuing survival in a harsh world.



Many people enjoy having a bird feeder for small birds in their garden and often a nesting box or two which blue tits, in particular, choose for their accommodation. We have one outside our kitchen window and had a camera inside so we could get pictures on our television set and watch the parents feeding their brood and practising their flying skills, initially within the safety of the box until one fine morning the youngsters take off from home. The majority all depart on the same day but, from time to time, a weaker fledgling will not make it on the first launch day. But, encouraged by it's parents, the fledgling has normally succeeded by the next morning. With a bird feeder close to home the new arrivals do not seem to be in a hurry to move too far way from their birth place.

The weather at this time of the year continues to be very changeable. So often, especially here in Kent, at the end of March comes a high pressure zone which settles over us, bringing dry sunny but cool days, usually with an Easterly wind, which can often last for a few weeks. Such a weather event is not a dependable occurrence and cannot be relied on.



Valentine's Day is widely seen as the day that birds choose their mates and the mating process begins.

From the vicarage

I remember the hours I spent as a teenager, waiting for the bus to school – and how I would smile whenever I heard older people in the queue start a conversation. If it wasn't the weather, it was their aches and pains that they always seemed to talk about.

Years have passed, and I must admit that that particular chicken has come home to roost. There was a time when I could run up a staircase, often two steps at a time, carrying schoolbooks from one lesson to the next – but now my knees usually complain when I try anything like that. At the bus station the other day I happened to see someone I knew. We started by asking each other how we were. Guess how the conversation went...!



St John of the Cross

'I'll try less giving up and more letting go'

As I write it is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. It is a time when people talk about giving something up – for Christians, a way of preparing to keep Holy Week and Easter. I've been reading about a monk, St John of the Cross, who lived in Spain during the 16th Century and who, to put it simply, compared getting to know God to going on a journey or, more precisely, to climbing a mountain. It's a journey that, like life itself, has challenging uphill stretches.

One of his 'big ideas' is that God wants to help us along on the journey – but we must realise that we can only accept what's on offer if we're prepared to risk letting go of what we already have. We can't accept anything new if our hands are already full. So perhaps I'll try less giving up, and more letting go this Lent. And I'll joyfully embrace life with wonky knees ...

Brian

LENT DATES

Wednesday 14 Feb 2024 – Thursday 28 Mar 2024

CHURCH SERVICES, March 2024			
Date	Alkham	Capel	Hougham
Sunday 3rd Lent 3	Evening Prayer 5.00 pm	Sung Eucharist 9.30 am	Eucharist (said) 11.00 am
Saturday 9th <i>Fun, fellowship and food – all children accompanied by a responsible adult please – thank you!)</i>		 3.00 – 5.00 pm	
Sunday 10th Mothering Sunday	Sung Eucharist 9.30 am	Worshipping Together 11.00 am	Worshipping Together 11.00 am
Sunday 17th Lent 5	Worshipping Together 9.30 am	Eucharist (said) 9.30 am	Sung Eucharist 11.00 am
Sunday 24th Palm Sunday	Eucharist (said) 9.30 am	Evensong 6.00 pm	Sung Eucharist 11.00 am
Thursday 28th MAUNDY THURSDAY		Maundy Thursday Eucharist 7.00 pm	
Friday 29th GOOD FRIDAY		Good Friday service 10.00 am	
Saturday 30th <i>Building the Easter Garden at Messy Church, followed by tea.</i>		 3.00 – 5.00 pm	
Sunday 31st  EASTER DAY	Easter Day Eucharist 9.30 am	Easter Day Eucharist 7.00 am <i>...followed by breakfast</i>	Easter Day Eucharist 11.00 am
There is usually a Eucharist at St Radigund's, Capel at 11.00 on Thursday mornings.			
Visit us online at: www.church-alkham-capel-hougham.org.uk and on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/BeneficeofACH			

100 CLUB PRIZE DRAW WINNER

The winning ticket in the February 100 Club Prize Draw was number 19 owned by Wendy Finnis.



What's On at Hougham Village Hall MAR/APR 24



To book any of the events message Dianne on 07710 195331 or Chris on 07533 689018 or book online at <https://www.westhoughamvillagehall.co.uk/>

Friday 22 nd March (to avoid Good Friday) 5pm	Pop Up Pub. Bring own drink and nibbles Streetz to Streetz van selling fish and chips from 5.30pm
Saturday 2 nd March	Quiz Night. £5 per head. Maximum number of people per table 6. Bring own drink and nibbles.
Saturday 16 th March	Ghost Walk. For details see page 4
Sunday 30 th March	Easter Egg Hunt 9.30am Easter Bonnet Competition 10.00am. Both events are taking place on the Village Green
Saturday 6 th April	Coffee Morning at the Village Hall organised by the Church. Please contact Rachel Hogben at rph-rmh@hotmail.com for details.

QUIZ NIGHT

AT HOUGHAM VILLAGE HALL

Saturday 2nd March 2024 7.30pm

£5 per head

Maximum of 6 people per table

To book in advance, please message Alison 07976 623805,
Dianne 07710 195331 or Chris on 07533 689018

If you'd like to join a beginners' yoga class
on Wednesday evenings 6.30-7.45pm
at the Village Hall, please contact:
Carole Haines

carolehaines94@yahoo.co.uk.

