



Available free by email or online for the Parish of Hougham Without and beyond

Editorial: Alison Barker alisonbarker@gmail.com
 Advertising: Christine Care carechristine5@gmail.com

TV CHANNELS COVER 'FORGOTTEN HOUGHAM' POTHOLES

The state of local roads, which has led to West Hougham being dubbed 'Pothole Central', was the subject of two regional TV reports during March as a result of campaigning by the Potholes Action Group 'Forgotten Hougham'.

ITV's Meridian News reporter Sarah Saunders interviewed the Action Group's leader Steve Oxenham, who accompanied her to see the crumbling Crooks Court Lane. He told her that the Action Group knows of £65,000 worth of damage to cars owned by people living in West Hougham from flooding and potholes and that a £14,000 vehicle had to be written off.

The 'Forgotten Hougham' Action Group were shown gathered at the Village Hall. Those interviewed included Jenny Smith, who said 'Because the roads are crumbling you have to drive like a drunk to avoid the potholes'. Aidan Lowry said the council should be ashamed of itself for letting the roads deteriorate so badly over recent years and Simon Withey said 'You don't know if you're going to go over a 6 inch pothole or a 1 inch pothole'.

In an interview for the news programme, Dover MP Natalie Elphicke said 'They tried to patch it up and arguably they've made it worse. This is a completely unacceptable situation. Government has given millions of pounds to Kent County Council to deal with Kent roads. They need to get back out to West Hougham and look after Kent villages so that people can travel safely'.

KCC told the programme it appreciates public frustration and spends around £50m per year



BBC South East at Six (top pic) and ITV's Meridian News reported from Hougham, interviewing local residents. Below: Action Group members sing the Forgotten Hougham Potholes Song.

of Government funds and that KCC is also repairing potholes and roads in the county from own budget. The Council claims 100 pothole repairs have been done in West Hougham this year.

ITV was not the only TV company to cover the misery caused by potholes and poor road repairs. BBC reporter Dan Johnson interviewed Simon Wilson from the RAC, who highlighted how new holes open up next to pothole repairs. He said the RAC argues that councils need to spend more and also adopt more preventative measures.

Cont/...page 2

Cont from/...page 1

According to government data, there has been a 45% reduction in road repairs in the last 5 years, he said. The BBC said the company which represents the manufacturers of tarmac has warned that the roads are 'at breaking point'.

Dan Johnson referred to KCC's additional £8.3 million for a 'Pothole Blitz' to repair potholes in the next decade, but said that it isn't likely to be enough. There is a £15bn backlog in road repairs across the country. Campaigners in Wiltshire were shown fishing in their local potholes and holding pothole golf in the High Street.

This report on national TV was followed by a more detailed report on BBC South East at Six filmed in West Hougham. Reporter Nick Johnson interviewed Steve Oxenham who said that the eastern route out of West Hougham was crippled with potholes, while the Western route out of the village had flooding. 'We feel cut off', he said.

The reporter met 10 residents in the Village Hall, including Peter Robinson who described how his car nearly turned on its side due to a pothole. Nick Johnson visited the spot where the incident occurred and gave some figures relating to the extent of the problem.

On average, local authorities have a £7.2m shortfall in what they need to repair the roads. The backlog of road repairs across the country is £2.4bn. If the roads in the South East are left unrepaired 44% will need to be replaced within 15 years.

Trustytec mechanic Ed Woolston told the BBC many drivers are bringing in vehicles with suspension issues such as broken coil springs. Other local garages were experiencing similar demand for their services, said the reporter.

Local musician Hannah Estelle Caldwell sang the Potholes song for the cameras, which amused South East presenter Natalie Graham, who described the singers as in fine form. Meanwhile, campaigning continues on Facebook where a post showing the song being performed received at least 350 likes at



Dover MP Natalie Elphicke came to see the state of the Hougham roads, accompanied by Action Group Leader Steve Oxenham.

time of this newsletter being published.

Musician and West Hougham resident Paul Sherman, who helped the Action Group to write the song, had previously performed it at a recent Pop Up Pub in Hougham Village Hall. ■

Dover MP Natalie Elphicke told ITV's Meridian News 'They (KCC) tried to patch it up and arguably they've made it worse. This is a completely unacceptable situation. Government has given millions of pounds to Kent County Council to deal with Kent roads. They need to get back out to West Hougham and look after Kent villages so that people can travel safely'.

Rural England Prosperity Fund

Dover District Council has a fund of £300,000 for 2024/5 under the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant scheme which has now re-opened for applications. REPF funding supports rural businesses and communities in the district.

At time of going to press, the Parish Council were giving consideration to submitting a grant application for funding under this scheme for the Village Green refurbishment works.

THE POTHOLES SONG (Sung to the tune of John Denver's song 'Country Roads')

Almost cut off, it's West Hougham
It's much worse than River, Capel, Alkham
Roads are bad there, worse than on the moon,
Pothole Village Central, no one gets there soon.

Country Roads, can't get home
To the place we belong,
(It's) West Hougham, Pothole Central,
Can't get Home, Country Roads.

All our neighbours gather round us,
Satmar Lane, no stranger to floodwater,
Cars get damaged, engines tend to die,
Thoughts of big repair bills, teardrops in our eyes.

Country Roads, can't get home
To the place we belong,
(It's) West Hougham, Pothole Central,
Can't get Home, Country Roads.

I hear the clunk of the (motor) in (that old) pothole
The damage reminds me that I cannot get away,
Driving down the road I get a feeling
(That) I should have set off yesterday, yesterday.

Country Roads, can't get home
To the place we belong,
(It's) West Hougham, Pothole Central,
Can't get Home, Country Roads.

Unsafe roads, Can't get home,
To the place we belong,
Forgotten Hougham, Hellfire corner,
Can't get home Hougham Roads

Can't get home, (down) Hougham Roads
Can't get home, (down) Hougham Roads.

(Credit to Forgotten Hougham Action Group, Paul Sherman and Hannah Estelle Caldwell)

If you missed the chance to join in the Song at the last Pop Up Pub, look up Hougham Dover Kent on Facebook and give it a like to support the Action Group.

As performed for
BBC South East at Six
and trending on
Facebook

Paul Sherman:
'The sale of canoes has gone up in
West Hougham'.
'We're in a pothole. Look out!
There's a bit of road coming up!'

“Around the Parish”

News from Hougham Without Parish Council

VILLAGE GREEN UPDATE

The Parish Council has obtained quotations to trim and reduce the height of the bunding area on the Eastern side of the village green. This is the rough area at the back of Forge Field.

A decision was made to commence this work which had to be completed by the end of February to avoid compromising nesting season. In the event, the weather was so wet and atrocious that to bring in a heavy industrial flailing machine would have caused extensive damage to the lawn. It requires at least 5 consecutive days of dry weather to avoid ground damage. In the event there was no 5 day dry period in the whole of January and February.

The work will now be carried out in September or October. The intention is to reduce the overall height of the growth in this area to something like 6 feet.



Spring Coffee Morning

10.00am - 12.00 noon

Saturday

6th April 2024

At The Village Hall, West Hougham

Cake Sale & Raffle

With proceeds from this event going to the combined Parish

QUESTIONNAIRE - Many of you participated in a Village Hall questionnaire which asked your feedback and suggestions to help the Hall to plan events and activities which would be of local appeal. The results were discussed at the March Hougham Village Hall Trust CIO Management Committee Meeting and the Committee will aim to go ahead with some of the suggestions in current months. Please go to the Hougham Village Hall website <https://www.westhoughamvillagehall.co.uk/> for further details.

**FISH AND CHIP SUPPER**

The Streetz2Streetz Fish and Chip van will be outside the Village Hall from 5.30-6.45pm on Friday 26th April. The van comes whenever there's a Pop Up Pub. 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 and nibbles.



The Next

QUIZ NIGHT

AT HOUGHAM VILLAGE HALL

will be

Saturday 8th June 2024

7.30pm

£5 per head

Tables of 6 people

Bring your own drinks and nibbles
Please book online on the website at

<https://www.westhoughamvillagehall.co.uk/>

or message Alison 07976 623805, Dianne 07710 195331 or Chris
on 07533 689018

Nature Trail

by Tony Rawlins



'April is the cruellest month', T.S. Eliot

It would be actually better appreciated were April prove to be a warm pleasant balmy month by way of a change. We seem to have had so much cold and wet weather this last winter.

But already the first blossoms have appeared on our Magnolia, so perhaps we are in luck. The vagaries of the weather are a constant challenge to British forecasters. Even now, with some advanced technology to help them, errors are frequently cropping up. In some countries the weather patterns are steadier and more reliable, but due to the sea around us - with the constant changes of tides and the warmer water of the Gulf Stream flowing across the Atlantic from the Caribbean and the occasional Continental weather crossing the sea - Britain enjoys very varied weather patterns which certainly challenge the meteorologists.

The Spring flowers are all appearing pretty well on cue and the occasional Bumble Bee will venture out on a sunny day. The birds on our birdfeeder are extremely voracious in this period and their colourings are brighter and stronger - all part of the nesting and mating season coming up. On a pleasantly warm Spring day, it gives great joy to see the early butterflies the Orange tipped and the Yellow Brimstones then, as the days become progressively warmer and the daylight hours ever longer, all the other butterflies come out of their winter hibernations.

Life for wild animals is a precarious affair. We have a cock pheasant visiting to pick up droppings of food from the bird feeders but so far we have had no sight of a hen pheasant which is rather saddening and we hope that one will appear which will not only make the cock pheasant happy but us too on his behalf. However we fear the worst that a fox or some such may have taken any lady bird for it's lunch. But then the predators are a vital part of the rich pattern of nature in which every creature plays a part usually for the feral good of the system.

One does wonder sometimes quite how the common wasp fits in especially on the occasion invariably in the late summer when a wasp often drunk on a surfeit of fruit whacks one with his painful sting. To try to intervene can have the adverse affect; I recall, a few years ago, now reading a report that on Cyprus an attempt was made to reduce the wasp population with burning of nests and other measures. but unfortunately the very next year there was a veritable plague of wasps as the little chaps had presumably gone into overdrive when they found their numbers badly depleted. The Cypriots did not try that one again, to the best of my knowledge!

Would you be interested in a silent disco?

Canterbury Cathedral held one, and Brian tells us how it went...



From the vicarage

Canterbury Cathedral is a World Heritage Site and Mother Church of the Anglican Communion. When the Dean and Chapter stage events such as organ recitals or art exhibitions alongside the daily services nobody usually minds.

The rule is that events in churches and cathedrals should be 'seemly' – so you can stage a concert or a talk on local history, but not an evening of adult humour. But what about a 'silent disco'?

Mobile phone footage of the recent event in Canterbury Cathedral posted online shows people dancing along to '90s music played through headphones and enjoying themselves. Some argued that a silent disco might be a good way to introduce the Cathedral to those who might otherwise not visit. But others made it quite plain that turning cathedrals into nightclubs, as they see it, doesn't tick the 'seemly' box. Nevertheless, Canterbury Cathedral's 'silent disco' contributed about £10,000 towards the £30,000 per day it needs to keep its doors open. Few realise that cathedrals are funded neither by the Church of England nor by the taxpayer, but by donations and income from visitors.

Neither are parish churches publicly funded. Like other parishes we rely on our parishioners to help to raise the 'Parish Share' – the amount needed by the Diocese to keep our local churches functioning – which for us this year is £29,000. Apparently, a similar situation elsewhere led a churchwarden to go into her local pub and explain the situation to the locals. They each agreed to donate the price of a chocolate bar to the Parish Giving Scheme each month.*

That, or a disco? I'm still trying to decide...

Brian

**To help to support your parish church, please contact the Parish Giving Scheme on 0333 002 1271 during office hours or visit <https://www.parishgiving.org.uk/donors/>. Sincere thanks for your help.*

From the HH Editor:

Would you be interested in a silent disco? If so, where would you prefer it to be held? Please let me know.

Contact Alison alisonrbarker@gmail.com

CHURCH SERVICES, April 2024			
Date	Alkham	Capel	Hougham
Sunday 7th 2 nd Sunday of Easter	United Parish Eucharist at St Mary's (Capel Old Church) 10.00 am		
Saturday 13th <i>Fun, fellowship and food – all children accompanied by a responsible adult please – thank you!)</i>		 3.00 – 5.00 pm	
Sunday 14th 3 rd Sunday of Easter	Sung Eucharist 9.30 am	Worshipping Together 11.00 am	Worshipping Together 11.00 am
Sunday 21st 4 th Sunday of Easter	Worshipping Together 11.00 am <i>(note new time)</i>	Eucharist (said) 9.30 am	Sung Eucharist 11.00 am
Sunday 28th 5 th Sunday of Easter	Sung Eucharist at St Laurence, Hougham @10.00 Followed by Annual Parochial Church Meeting		
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			



*The Hougham Herald would like to wish
all our readers a very Happy Easter.*

100 CLUB PRIZE DRAW WINNER

The £25 winning ticket in the March 100 Club Prize Draw was number 59 owned by Jane King.

GHOST WALK – A thrilling time was had by everyone who took part in the Ghost Walk on Saturday 16th March. 20 people took part in the walk which was organised by Steve Green. The event not only gave everyone a chance to experience 'scary Hougham', but also raised £37.20 for the running costs of the Hall and an additional £20 donation for the Hall. A further £10 was raised from the sale of tea and cakes. Steve would like to pass on his thanks to the actors who helped make it such a successful night.





What's On at Hougham Village Hall APR-JUL 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/>

Saturday 6 th April	Church Coffee Morning 10am-noon
Thursday 2 nd May	Village Hall is polling station for election of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent
Saturday 8 th June	Quiz Night 7.30pm. For details see page 7.
Saturday 13 th July	One for your diaries! A Party in the Park is presently being organised, with music and food. Look out for further details online and in the HH.
Date to be confirmed	Hannah Estelle Caldwell, local musician and performer of the 'Potholes Song', will perform at a Village Hall Music Night in the summer. Details nearer the time.

Regular classes

Every Tuesday morning 10am-11am **Pilates class**.

Contact michelle@pillarpilates.co.uk or book at Pillar Pilates using the Facebook link.

Every Wednesday evening 6pm-7pm **Dog training**. Contact Emma Lush 07583 947605

Every Sunday afternoon 2.15pm-4.15pm **Dog training**. Contact Emma Lush 07583 947605

Every Saturday 9am-10am: **Zumba class**

Contact houghamvillagehall.dover@gmail.com or use the Village Hall website contact form.