



January / February 2024

Edition 197

TOPPESFIELD
& GAINSFORD END *Parish Newsletter*



TOPPESFIELD

USEFUL NUMBERS

Braintree District Council	01376 552525
Colchester Hospital	01206 744491
Doctors Car Service	07845 596092
Freshwell Health Centre	01371 810328
Hedingham Medical Centre:	
Castle Hedingham	01787 461465
Sible Hedingham	01787 460612
Kaaren Berry, Parish Clerk	07341 264219
Little Chestnuts Preschool	079018 80914
Pumphouse Brewery	07786 861009
Rev. Caroline Brown	01787 469161
St Margaret's School	01787 237354
The Green Man Public House	01787 237418
Toppesfield Community Shop	07895 510767
Toppesfield Village Hall Bookings	
Wendy Ames	07933743724
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Toppesfield Parish Council

Your Councillors are - Alan Collard, Amanda Smith, Kitty Bourlet, Frances Winter, Jeremy Graves, Paula Edwards-Holmes and Jane Daines.

Parish Clerk — Kaaren Berry

Parish Council Meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of every month in the village hall. You are welcome to attend the Open Session which starts at 7.30pm.

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Newsletter — Published by Toppesfield Parish Council

Editor: clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com

Please submit your articles for the next newsletter by 28th December 2023.

Please see our online resources to find out what is happening

Facebook Pages :-

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Toppesfield Village Hall

Toppesfield Village Stores

The Green Man, Toppesfield

Pumphouse Community Brewery

Toppesfield and Gainsford End Neighbourhood and Development Plan

Twitter & Instagram— Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community

Website—<https://e-voice.org.uk/toppesfield-parish-council/>



From the Parish Council



Welcome to another Toppesfield & Gainsford End Newsletter, our first for this 2024 leap year.

Last year ended on a high note, with a rejuvenated Christmas event in early December, when Santa really did come to town, arriving and departing on his reindeer-drawn and elf-attended sleigh. In between times he appeared on the church tower roof; we are simply delighted that he gave so much attention to Toppesfield – and during his busiest time of the year!

Tree lighting; mince pies; mulled ale; Santa; carols in the Green Man: what more could any of us want?



The Roman name for the first month of the year was Ianuarius, named after Janus, the god of beginnings and transitions.

So, as the new year begins, not only do we look back at the past year but, more importantly, at what we can look forward to in 2024.

Already, as you can see in the Newsletter, many in the parish are already laying their plans, whether these relate to garden or allotment, events at the church and an open event at the brewery on 13th.

On 20th January the Village Hall will be the venue for a Coffee & Cake event with an additional focus on our village history. Ann Read will be bringing her comprehensive collection of parish photos of people, places and events from over the years, as well as the complete set of village Newsletters from when her father, Sid Read, compiled the first one in the 1980s.

We aim also to have a couple of videos about the village. The event is free to attend; full details appear later in the Newsletter. Do you have some photos or perhaps some recollections that you would like to share? Or perhaps you are interested in discovering more about your village? Or perhaps you would simply like to have a cup of tea and piece of cake and a chat with your friends. Whichever it is, we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on Saturday 20th January.

One thing we hope to complete this year is Toppesfield's Neighbourhood Plan. Work on this did commence late in 2019 but was severely delayed by covid lockdowns. We are now, however, on the home straight and we expect to have a draft plan ready for consultation with the parish during the first quarter this year. We will be holding an open day where you will be able to drop in and hear about the plan. We will advertise this when we have a date.

Meanwhile, the Parish Council would like to wish all parishioners a very Happy and Successful 2024.

Parish Council Information

A summary of Parish Council goings-on at the November and December Meetings: Full details can be found in the minutes for the meetings on the parish website.

Highlights from the November meeting were:

- Plans for the Christmas event were well underway
- Outline planning permission for the village pump was withdrawn and an informal consultation request will be made.

In December Councillor van Dulken reported:

- I was pleased on your part to note, from the November Minutes, that BDC can find nothing in their records which prevent the PC from disposing of part of the car park.
- You will perhaps be aware that BDC Planning Dept. has approved the retention of the Great Yeldham Men's Shed (plus additional containers) in the Recreation Ground in the neighbouring village, with the proviso that the metal containers be clad in wooden slats, and landscaping carried out.
- You should be hearing soon of the introduction of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) scheme in the District, which will be of particular interest to areas such as Yeldham Ward, off the gas grid. Braintree has been awarded £2,466,000 for distribution to households where income is less than £31,000 p.a. and where the house is off the gas grid and EPC Band D or lower. Grants will be made available towards improvements in energy performance and heating systems.
- It is the hope that the Councillors' Community Grant fund will continue to operate during 2024-25 however there may be changes to the form of operation.
- Wethersfield, you are probably aware that the judgement on the Judicial Review went against the Councils in Braintree and at Scampton in Lincolnshire, unfortunately deciding that the Home Office acted lawfully when making the decision to use the site as a migrant centre. BDC has asked for permission to appeal. Still on Wethersfield, I am now taking part in regular Zoom meetings with fellow Councillors and other interested parties, and the relevant Home Office staff, regarding the day to day running of the migrant centre. I'm not terribly sure how useful this is as at the last meeting I was assured that most migrants were content with the location and conditions on the base, and 2 days later they held a demonstration at the gates to show how unhappy they are!
- You may have seen reports of the financial problems of many Councils across the country, with a number actually declaring bankruptcy (as they are not allowed to operate at a loss). I am pleased to be able to assure you that while BDC is certainly facing challenges, it is far from having that level of problems, with relatively negligible long-term borrowings of under £6 million, and a medium-term deficit which is manageable and hopefully will not affect the statutory services to residents and businesses. The introduction of the subscription service for Garden Waste was unfortunately necessary in order to help bridge the budget gap, and last I heard an unexpectedly high number of eligible households – 36% - had signed up for the subscription service, going a long way towards making this non-statutory service self-sustaining.

Parish Council Information continued

Highlights from the December meeting were:

- Feedback on the Christmas event was positive and it was well attended.
- Quotes for a replacement slide were gained but it was agreed defer this until a whole playing field plan is produced.
- The new trees were planted along The Causeway
- A Coffee Morning will be held on the 20th January 2024 at Toppesfield village hall from 10am —12pm and people will be invited to bring old photos and stories from the parish to share with other residents.

The next Parish Council Meetings are scheduled to be held on 11th January, 1st February and 7th March 2024 starting at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.



St Margaret's Church Services for January – March 2024

Jan 14th Holy Communion 11.00am

Jan 21st Morning Prayer 11.00am

Jan 28th Benefice Holy Communion at Castle Heddingham 10.00am led by Bishop Roger

Feb 4th Morning Prayer 11.00am

Feb 11th Holy Communion 11.00am

Feb 18th Morning Prayer 11.00am

Feb 25th Holy Communion 11.00am

March 3rd Morning Prayer 11.00am

March 10th Mothering Sunday Holy Communion 11.00am

March 17th Morning Prayer 11.00am

March 24th Palm Sunday Holy Communion 11.00am

March 31st Easter Day Holy Communion 11.00am



Maintenance of Graves within St Margaret's Churchyard

The subject of the maintenance of the graves within the churchyard is a very difficult subject to approach, especially for those whose loved ones have been buried there.

However, while it is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council of St Margaret's to maintain the churchyard, the rules and regulations that relate to the graves themselves are decided and enforced by the Diocese of Chelmsford.

There is **NO** intention that anyone from the Church will be 'policing' graves or removing items, but there are rules regarding what is and what is not permissible to be placed on the graves.

One of the rules being 'only fresh flowers or stems cut from shrubs and bushes (including Holly) will be permitted'.

Plastic or artificial flowers of any kind will not be permitted.

The intention is that graves and graveyards are places where there should only be plants and flowers that would grow naturally.

Exceptions are:

Poppies at Remembrance Sunday

Wreaths at Christmas

Wreaths at the anniversary of the death of the deceased -limited to a 2-week period.

In addition, no other ornaments should be added to an individual gravesite, other than an authorised memorial stone.

Once a family have a design for a memorial from a stone mason, the work cannot go ahead until approved and signed off by a member of clergy. Again, there are very clear rules about what is and what is not allowed regarding the stone and lettering.

While being mindful of those who grieve and tend the graves, we would like to work towards ensuring the graves adhere to the rules.

Therefore, over time could you replace any artificial items with flowers and plants that are natural.

If you want to refer to the rules yourself, there is a Diocese of Chelmsford Churchyard Handbook kept in the Church.

Rev Caroline Brown



St Margaret's Church

At this time of new beginnings we wish Rev Caroline the very best for her new life in West Sussex. She is moving to the parish of Donnington near Chichester to be nearer to her daughter and family. We'll miss her here in Toppesfield. We're very thankful for all she has done, bringing new ideas into our church family, and we hope that these new ideas, like Messy Church craft events and coffee mornings, will be carried on by the wonderful group of helpers who have been working with her.

In Rev Caroline's place we're very pleased that Rev Graham Ridgewell has agreed to lead our Holy Communion services twice instead of once each month, and our other services will be led by members of our congregation and guest speakers. Our benefice of seven churches is also hoping to appoint a part-time replacement for Rev Liz who retired last year, but it will take some months before the vacancy can be filled.

2023 will be remembered for the sad loss of some dear friends whose passing was marked by moving services in church and elsewhere, when the village showed what a powerful sense of community we are blessed with. The same is true on a happier note for our Harvest and Christmas services when the church was filled with some joyful and mostly tuneful singing.

A highlight of the autumn of course was the Supper Auction. As always it was a great evening made possible by the organising skills of Val and Kat and her team and the amazing generosity of everyone who donated and/or bought items in the auction. Over £4000 was raised, giving a huge and timely boost to the church's finances. As with other organisations, costs such as heating and insurance have been rising sharply in the last few years and the Supper Auction income is a great help in covering them. We also have to pay for our share of the priests' costs managed by the Diocese. And beyond all that the parish is solely responsible for the upkeep of our 14th century church building. We're trying to build up a fund to tackle the work identified in the most recent building inspection, not least the need soon to replace the roof of the south aisle.

So again our heartfelt thanks to all of you who help to keep the church alive in Toppesfield, attending services, making generous donations, helping with events, ringing the bells, winding the clock, keeping the churchyard tidy, cleaning the toilet, arranging flowers, or just being respectful of what St Margaret's stands for in our village.

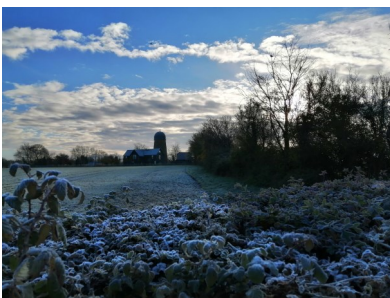
News from the Footpaths



Hi Everyone

Happy New Year! The years seem to speed by at an accelerating rate, a sign of more mature years I think. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas. Toppesfield certainly did its best providing so many great events. I still have to shed a tear when Father Christmas appears at the top of the church tower.

What of the footpaths. It has been so wet that the footpaths are a bit of a challenge. Our heavy clay does not allow the rainfall to drain away but puddles up making walking very tricky in places especially where the footpaths go across cultivated land. You end up with a ton of mud on each boot! Still I always find things to spot and enjoy on my walks and in the mud, footprints to be spotted. Of course the main ones are the slots of the deer both the fallow and the much smaller muntjac. The deer obviously use the same routes making tracks in the grass.



The few days we had with very heavy frosts made for easier walking and fantastic scenes of frost on the hedgerows and coating the cobwebs. The mild Autumn has meant that the leaves hung on the trees later and the colours were amazing. Now the only deciduous tree that is still hanging on to its' leaves is the oak. Always the last to lose its' leaves and the last to unfurl its new leaves in the Spring.

The Oak is a fantastic tree supporting a teeming community of hundreds of different species of wildlife in its life cycle from acorn to sapling to forest monarch. In its varying faces through the seasons it will provide a home or shelter for a myriad of birds, mammals, moths, beetles, bugs, spiders, lichens, mosses and fungi as well as all the many invertebrates that will live in amongst its roots. This is true community living! The late winter colour of its leaves adds to the tapestry with rose hips and red dogwood bark.



News from the Footpaths continued

I know not strictly a footpath species but I did spot some primroses in flower in my garden and also buds of the Lenten rose hellebore pushing through. As I stooped to admire these I was close to the wonderful scented box shrub which is evergreen and I forget about. But in the late Winter the tiny creamy flowers appear and have the most heavenly perfume.



Yes it is all beginning again.

Hooray we have passed the shortest day and the birds are singing Enjoy your walking.

Ann Read



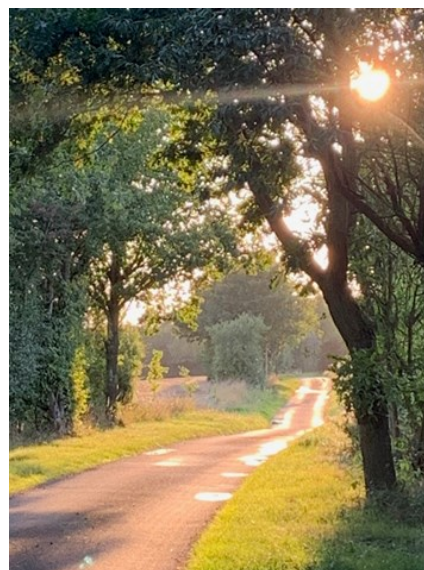
HARROW HILL – THE DIFERENCE A FEW MONTHS MAKES



31 December 2023



30 August 2023



PUMPHOUSE

BREWERY

A Happy New Year to our customers, shareholders, volunteers, friends and neighbours!

Thank you for making December such a good month for Pumphouse.

As well as strong sales to pubs and clubs, the extra space in the barn allowed us to produce and store an extra 1,200 bottles ready for the festive season.

By Christmas there were just 15 bottles left. Our apologies if your favourites had sold out!

We're back brewing & bottling, and we'll build up stocks as quickly as we can.

By the time this newsletter reaches you, we expect to have held our first Shareholders and Guests Open Day in the barn on Saturday 13 January, between 11 and 2.

The intention was firstly to say thank you to our investors and helpers, and secondly to explain just how much more there is to do.

Paul Cook retired at the end of December, having made a massive difference to our sales efforts.

We offer him our sincere thanks for all he has done over the past three years.

Now there are only four of us on the committee, so if someone is unavailable, we can't actually form a quorum. **It would be hugely beneficial if two or three shareholders join us and help steer Pumphouse into a successful 2024.**

Likewise, more volunteers would make a big difference (you don't have to be a shareholder to volunteer). **Our immediate priority is to sell more ales to more local pubs.**

Ideally we aim to build a team of volunteers who each have responsibility for one pub; by making and maintaining contact, selling and delivering the beer and generally providing a high level of customer service. **Looking after a single pub should never become onerous and shouldn't take too much time. It's volunteering and it ought to be fun!**

We also plan to attend extra events and markets in 2024 (and run our own in the barn) to help boost Pumphouse's income and reputation. More volunteers will make such a difference. Again, the aim is to make the experience enjoyable for all.

If you think you can help, and would like to know more, please speak to any of us, or email: **pumphousecommunitybrewery@gmail.co.uk**

From 15 January the brewery will be open three days a week: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from 10 - 4. We'll soon have plenty of lovely bottles for sale at £3 each.

Thanks and Cheers from Aaron, Kaaren, Tina, Mick,

Julia & Richard



Toppesfield Village Hall

**The Village Hall Committee would like to wish you all
a very Happy and Healthy 2024.**

As another year starts in Toppesfield and Gainsford End we once again would like to remind everybody of the availability of hiring the Village Hall. There are many occasions when hiring the Hall makes a lot of sense and the cost is very reasonable with all that is included in the hire fee. More information is available from any member of the Committee but if in doubt contact Jean Bagnall, 01787 238178.

We held various meetings last year and there are proposals for this new year, but if you have a topic or a proposed fund raiser or a private function, please speak to us about having the Hall. The Hall has been maintained to a good standard and as soon as the weather permits, work will continue in the rear garden.

Lastly, if there are any Villagers who might be interested in becoming more involved in the general running of the Hall, we would welcome their input.

Thankyou for your continued support, Jean on behalf of the Committee x



**The Next Village Markets will be held at
Toppesfield Village Hall on:**

Saturday 3rd February—10.30 am —12.30 pm

Saturday 2nd March— 10.30 am —12.30 pm

Saturday 6th April—10.30 am—12.30 pm

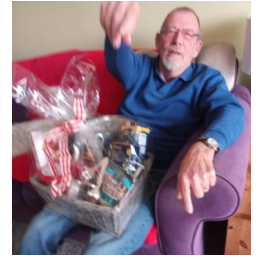
Please pop along to see what is on offer from fresh meat, jams, pastries, and cakes to handmade crafts, cards, jewellery and more.

Or pop in for a tasty bacon roll and a cuppa with friends.

TOPPESFIELD ALLOTMENTS with NASLAG

Happy new year to all,
Lets get January out of the way and then the allotment year can move ahead with vigour.

Much thanks go to Linda and Bill for organizing the Christmas Draw for a splendid Hamper which was won by Mick Francis, much to his delight.



Thanks also to Victoria for adding to the pony manure pile which is rotting down nicely and will be top dressing my asparagus and feeding the beans at the end of January.

Jobs for February:

Avoid planting out too early due to the risk of frosts
Sow seeds indoors/under glass
Potato chitting
Fruit tree planting and pruning

What to grow in February

These be sown directly outdoors dependent on location and it's climate:

Shallots	Garlic	Early carrots	Early lettuce
Early Peas	Broad beans	Jerusalem Artichokes	

You can sow indoors in a warm and light position:

Beans	Tomatoes	Chillies	Parsnips
Sprouts	Peppers	Aubergines	Cucumbers
Celery	Broccoli	Cauliflower	Leeks
Onions			

February weather can still be troublesome; especially in cooler locations so there is still very few vegetables you can sow directly. However, you can start to sow seeds this month indoors.

We know you are keen to get going and there are plenty of jobs to get done on the allotment plot this February.

You can still prune fruit tree and plant new ones, especially raspberry and canes.

You can sow broad beans directly and garlic and shallots.

To start your seeds, you can sow some early varieties of lettuce, carrots, and peas indoors. You can also sow tomatoes and chillies in a heated propagator. Depending on the variety and your location, you could try starting parsnips, but it could still be too early/cold. Parsnips are renowned for having a poor/long germination period so it might be worth trying a few.

TOPPESFIELD ALLOTMENTS with NASLAG continued

Indoor seeds will require light, warmth, and watering. If you are using lidded seed trays, open the vents as required if they are sitting on a particularly sunny spot. You can also provide your seeds with extra false light, for example a lamp, tin foil and so on to help prevent leggy seedlings that are weak. Quite often, growers start their seeds too soon and it results in them having to start again.

You may have waited until this month to chit your potatoes. They are best done during February rather than earlier if you are in a cooler climate.

That's all folk until the next enthralling edition.

Paul Thompson
(Tommo) Chair



P.S Clare will be out for Fees n March can we please have speedy payments as we want to bank them in one visit .



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St. Margaret's C of E Primary School

Last term was incredibly busy in school, as the Autumn term always is! We were spoilt with a visit to Hedingham Castle for Seed Class, an inspiring afternoon in Braintree exploring creative careers for Blossom class, an Egyptian funeral procession for Sapling class, harvest festival and Christmas services in church supported by Rev Caroline, a film night, performances of our nativity, 'Straw and Order', by seed class, Christmas dinner, Christmas craft afternoon, a fabulous Christmas Fayre, a spooky trail and our first Elfridges event! Everyone was ready for a rest by the end of term!

We must offer huge thanks and congratulations to FOSMs on their fantastic fundraising efforts this term. They have raised over £1000 so far. We hope to use this money to fund some trips next term alongside a visit from Spirit of the Wild into school.

As we start the spring term our classes are eager to get started on their big question learning. Seed class will be thinking about 'Who can help me?'; Sapling class will be pondering 'What lights up the world?' and Blossom class will be considering 'How far can you go?'.

We would also like to congratulate Mrs Newland on being awarded her Master of Science in Educational Leadership and Management and also completing a level 7 senior leader apprenticeship which recognises her as a chartered manager and a fellow of the chartered management institute.

Finally we hope you had a peaceful Christmas and wish you a happy new year.



St. Margaret's C of E Primary School continued



Do remember to follow us on social media and like and share our posts far and wide!

Facebook: [St. Margaret's CofE Primary School, Toppesfield](#)

X (formerly twitter): @StMargaretsTopp

Instagram: stmargaretstopp



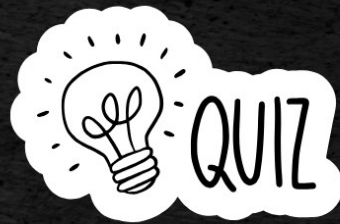


HAPPY NEW YEAR!

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the Tree Lighting and throughout the festive period! Thank you so much for your ongoing support.

Janet & Kevin x

SATURDAY



FIRST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH

We have changed the day of our popular quiz night!

Starting Saturday 3rd February

8pm Start

£2 per head – Max 6 per team

COMPLIMENTARY SNACKS PROVIDED

For take away and table bookings please call 01787 237418



TOPPESFIELD



Community Shop



*Support your community
to enable them to support you!*

**We stock a wide range of
frozen and convenience foods
as well as many household products
alongside our fresh and 'to order' services
all at very competitive prices**



Weekly orders

Bacon
Ham
Sausages
Chicken
Lamb
Beef

PRIORS HALL FARM



Fresh Quality Meat

Prices dependent on cut and weight

Fine wines



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Vineyard

OZES
cdp

also available in
our freezer cabinet

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PIES
PASTRIES

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Soup, Rolls***

OPENING TIMES

Mondays	8.30am - 4.00pm
Tuesdays	8.30am - 4.00pm
Wednesdays	8.30am - 4.00pm
Thursdays	8.30am - 4.00pm
Fridays	8.30am - 4.00pm
Saturdays	10.00am - 12.30pm

**POST
OFFICE**

OPEN
Wednesdays
10.00am - 1.00pm



Happy New Year from Danaher Animal Home, Braintree, Essex.

2023 has been an extraordinary year for Danaher, marking our busiest year on record. The overwhelming influx of animals brought challenges, but together, we faced them head-on. We are thrilled to share that we have successfully rehomed an impressive total of 839 animals!

This achievement wouldn't have been possible without the compassion and commitment of our amazing community. Whether people have adopted, volunteered, donated, or simply spread the word, they have played a crucial role in making a difference.

A special thank you to the incredible celebrities supporting Danaher – Ronnie Buckingham, Mrs Hinch, Pete Wicks, and Katie Penny-Jeffries. Their dedication to our cause has been a beacon of hope for the animals in need.

As we step into the New Year, we will continue this journey. More animals are waiting for their forever homes, and with all our continued support, we can make 2024 even more remarkable for them.

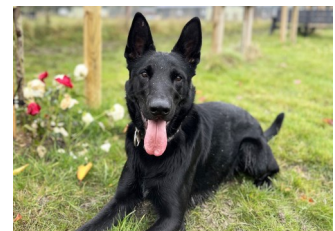
Here's to a year filled with compassion, joy, and countless wagging tails!



Danaher Animal Home – Jet 18497

Jet came into us here at Danaher Animal Home after being abandoned, so we have no history on his life prior to coming to us. He is an adult male German Shepherd. We believe Jet has been scent trained and he knows lots of commands and has wowed everybody with his intelligence. He has become very bonded with his handlers, and for all these reasons we are looking for an adult home with no other dogs, and previous experience of working dogs. Jet is neutered vaccinated and microchipped.

If you feel you would have the experience and space for Jet, we invite you to submit an interest form to us at www.danaheranimalhome.org.uk and follow the links.



For more information or to see other animals available for homing, please go to our website address shown above.



LITTLE CHESTNUTS PRE-SCHOOL



TOPPESFIELD

**SPACES
AVAILABLE**

WEEKDAYS

8.30AM - 3PM

**CALL 07901 880 914
TO BOOK A VISIT**



Toppesfield Parish Council and the



Village Hall Committee would like to invite you to a

Coffee Morning



With historic photos of the
village



At Toppesfield Village Hall
20th January 2024
10 am – 12 pm



Please come along for a cuppa, cake or biscuits and share stories and photos of historic Toppesfield and Gainsford End. **We will have a selection of photos for you to see on the day.**

Do you have any you could bring along?

We want to help keep our history alive and informative **both** to newer residents of the parish **as well as those who have lived here for many years.**

No **photos or stories?** Don't worry - **just** come along and meet **old and new friends and learn more about your village!**

