



March / April 2025

Edition 204



USEFUL NUMBERS

Braintree District Council	01376 552525
Colchester Hospital	01206 744491
Doctors Car Service	07845 596092
Freshwell Health Centre	01371 810328
Hedingham Medical Centre:	01787 461465
Kaaren Berry, Parish Clerk	07341 264219
Little Chestnuts Preschool	079018 80914
Pumphouse Brewery	07801 042545
Church Warden Brian Moody	01787 237974
St Margaret's School	01787 237354
The Green Man Public House	01787 237418
Toppesfield Community Shop	07895 510767
Toppesfield Village Hall Bookings	
Frances Winter	07809 237789
Vets - Ardmore, Gt Yeldham	01787 238255
Medical Equipment	01787 238146

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Toppesfield Parish Council

Your Councillors are - Kitty Bourlet (Chair), Paula Edwards-Holmes (Vice Chair), Amanda Smith, Chris Neale, Frances Winter, Jeremy Graves 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 20th April 2025

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 the March/April edition of the newsletter!

To kick off this edition, I wanted to highlight the save the date for the VE celebration on 11 May. Planning is in progress but will be set to be a fun family event for all—please do put it in your diaries and come along. Other exciting events coming up are:

- Litter pick on 5 April (same day as the market)
- Comedy night at the pub on the 28 March

I wanted to also remind people about an important message that is later down in the newsletter about sharing concerns and feedback to the Parish Council. We do try as best we can to support and even solve your concerns. A good example of this is back from January when we were informed about the school bus getting stuck on the Toppesfield road. This left some children stranded—which is absolutely unacceptable. We did have Peter Schwier who is our County councillor in attendance. We were able to raise the issue and the urgency of this issue directly with him—and that particular pot hole was in fact filled within 48 hours and fixed in February. This is an extreme example, but a representation of the importance of coming to talk to the Parish Council!

Thanks

Kitty Bourlet

Parish Council Information

A summary of Parish Council goings-on at the January and February meetings:

In January Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- A public consultation on the proposals to improve waste collections is open until the 2nd March 2025. More information can be found on the Braintree Council website or go to www.braintree.gov.uk/wasteconsultation to complete the survey.
- It was also reported that a meeting will be held on 10th January 2025 at Braintree District Council to discuss the devolution /reorganisation of local government and whether they will become part of the Greater Essex Group with Southend and Thurrock.
- Construction on the medical centre in Sible Hedingham was due to commence this winter (2024/2025) and be complete in spring 2026.
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre has approx. 580 residents now, but this will increase when a few issues have been resolved.

Cllr van Dulken asked if there were any questions, and the parish council expressed their concerns about a school bus getting stuck in a large pothole on the Toppesfield Road and the pupils being asked to leave the bus and walk home. It was agreed that the parish council would write to Hedingham Buses and Hedingham School to ask what their emergency procedures are should this happen again. It was also discussed what could be done to safeguard the children in this situation.

Cllr Schwier reported that:

- Essex County Council are looking at setting their budget for 2025/2026. Nearly half of their budget is spent on adult and child social care. The budget meeting will take place on 20 February 2025 and there is potential that there will be an increase of 4 – 4.5% increase.
- Primary school places need to be applied for by the 15th January 2025.
- The Royal Countryside Fund is open for applications. More information will be sent out via EALC.

Other business in January included:

The Neighbourhood Plan and parish council strategy documents continue to be progressed. A coffee morning on the 8th February 2025 is planned, the council's budget was approved for 2025-2026. Signing post repairs and ownership of the access road to the playing field was also discussed.

In February Cllr Richard van Dulken reported:

- Toppesfield Road where the bus was stuck last month has been repaired and Highways were proactive in addressing the issue once Cllr Schwier contacted them.
- The garden waste subscriptions are due for renewal at a cost of £55 for the year. More information about this can be found on Braintree District Councils website.
- The government has put Essex into the Fastlane for devolution. Essex, Thurrock and Southend will become Greater Essex. The area will then possibly be put into 3, 4 or 5 unitary authorities. Braintree District Council will disappear and be merged in with a larger area. More details will be released on this over the coming months.
- Wethersfield Asylum Centre – there has not been a change in numbers which remain at 580 residents, but this will increase to 800.
- Braintree District Council budgets are being prepared and an extra £470,000 is required to cover the increase in National Insurance that they will have to pay. A small amount of compensation will be received from the government to help with the costs.
- Essex County Council will increase the verge cutting to 2 cuts per year following a 1 cut trial this year.
- Braintree District Council have undertaken a review of all the litter and dog waste bins in the district which number 2100 and most are emptied once a week.

Other business in the February meeting included:

A talk from members of the Finchingfield and Wethersfield Joint Neighbourhood Plan committee to inform the parish council of their progress, the annual litter pick will be hopefully held on 5th April 2025 and 80th anniversary VE Day event will be held on 11th May 2025. Cllr Graves will take the lead on the VE Day event and will be seeking volunteers to help with the planning or on the day itself.

Full minutes of each meeting can be found on the parish website: [Minutes - Toppesfield Parish Council \(e-voice.org.uk\)](https://www.braintree.gov.uk/minutes-toppesfield-parish-council-e-voice.org.uk)

If you have any concerns you would like to raise with the Council, ideas for projects or anything you would like to parish council to consider please do get in touch or attend the open session at a Parish Council meeting. There is a public session held at the start of every parish council meeting from 7.30pm — 7.45pm.

Parish Council meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of each month but please check the website to confirm.



Hello from Little Chestnuts Pre-school, I thought we would let you know what we provide and our plans, as it has been brought to my attention that some in our village don't know.

Little Chestnuts was established 50 years ago as a parent toddler group, over the years we developed into a playgroup and now we are a Pre-school, with over 30 children registered some from the village but most from the surrounding villages and some as far as Witham!!

Our setting is registered with Ofsted, and we accept government funding for 2-year-olds and 3-4 year olds, 15 hours and extended hours. We are a registered CIO charity, and our trustees are a group of parents that have volunteered to help run and support the setting. Planning fundraising events and ensuring we are running correctly and providing the best care for all the children and their families that attend the setting.

We are open 8.30am-3pm Monday -Friday term time and we have just extended our service by now providing after school care 3.15pm-5.15pm Monday – Thursday for both the children at Little Chestnuts and St Margarets primary school. For the last few years, we have also opened 2 days for 3 weeks in the summer holidays to provide childcare for those working and also for the children have a routine and consistency. It makes our return in September a little easier for both the children and staff!!

We offer a wide range of activities including weekly dance classes, yoga, cooking and we take regular walks around the village and to our allotment and visits from and to the local primary school to watch plays, listen to the choir and enjoy some cake.

We were extremely grateful to be given an area for our outside learning at the allotment, the children have had great fun exploring and learning new skills.

We are also looking to provide a weekly sports class this term, these activities are a valuable resource that enables the children to try something new, listen to and follow instructions from different adults and learn new skills.

Our newest development is a new building to provide a quiet place for our children with additional needs to complete activities and for our Talk Boost programme, parent meetings, meetings with other professionals such as speech and language, health visitors etc... and of course a place for the 5 staff members to complete training, planning and key working observations and assessments for the children. And we have two apprentices joining us this term, which we are so pleased to support and teach a new generation of practitioners into early years childcare.

For more information please visit our website www.littlechestnutspre-school.co.uk or call us on 07901880914 or email manager@littlechestnutspre-school.co.uk

Thank you to all who have supported Little Chestnuts over the years, we really appreciate everything you do.

Andrea Chinery and the Little Chestnuts Team x





Save the date - 11th May 2025

The Parish Council are organising a **fun family event** to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day

More details will be announced nearer the time so please look out for posters and Facebook posts to see what has been planned.



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



Saturday 5th April 2025—10.30am—12.30pm

Saturday 3rd May 2025—10.30am—12.30pm



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

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





Community Litter Pick

Toppesfield Parish Council are organising the
Annual Community litter pick on

Saturday, 5th April 2025

Please come along and help clean up our village.

The more volunteers we have the more of our
Parish we can cover.

We will meet at Toppesfield village hall at **10am** where
routes and teams will be allocated.

Children under 16 need to be supervised at all times by
a responsible adult.

Hi-viz vests, gloves and litter pickers
are being loaned to us by
Braintree District Council.





St. Margaret of Antioch Toppesfield

Church services for March and April 2025 are detailed below.

All services start at 11.00am unless indicated.

CW = Common Worship service BCP = Book of Common Prayer service

March 2nd Holy Communion CW Rev Chris

March 9th Holy Communion CW Rev Graham

March 16th Messy Mass Rev Chris and Tia

March 23rd Holy Communion BCP Rev Graham

March 30 Mothering Sunday service Rev Tia

April 6th Holy Communion CW Rev Chris

April 13th Palm Sunday Holy Communion CW Rev Graham

April 18th Good Friday meditation Rev Tia 3pm

April 20th Easter Day Holy Communion CW Rev Chris

April 27th Holy Communion BCP Rev Graham

We sadly report that Rev Keith Holloway died early in February. Keith was Rector of the Upper Colne benefice, which included the parishes of Toppesfield, Great Yeldham, Stambourne, Little Yeldham and Tilbury juxta Clare, from 2002 until he retired in 2010. We offer our sympathy and prayers to his wife Dorothy and their family.



Toppesfield Footpaths Walking Group

The walking group on a Thursday goes from strength to strength with up to 16 walkers turning up occasionally.

We have friends from Stambourne and Hedingham , Yeldham and Halstead all enjoying Banter and the footpaths around the village.

There are no issues with the Footpaths that we have walked at present and the new Finger-posts running down by the allotments and across to the sewerage works are in place and the walkways are clear.

New members welcomed, (get fit in the mind and body for summer).

Come along on a Thursday morning at 10 am- Meet outside the Green Man .Bring the dog , and walk for approx. 1 to 1 1/2 hrs .

Tea and coffee is available at the shop afterwards.

See you all soon

Paul Thompson - Marching On Together



Toppesfield Allotment news

In March, as spring approaches, it's an ideal time to prepare your allotment in the village for the growing season ahead. Here's a comprehensive guide to help you get started:

1. Soil Preparation and Maintenance:

Weeding: Remove any weeds that have emerged to prevent them from competing with your crops.

Soil Improvement: Incorporate well-rotted compost or manure to enhance soil fertility and structure.

2. Sowing and Planting:

Vegetables:

Outdoors: Sow seeds of broad beans, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, onions, lettuces, radishes, peas, spinach, summer cabbage, salad leaves, leeks, Swiss chard, kohlrabi, turnip, and summer cauliflower directly into prepared beds.

Indoors: or in a poly tunnel - Start seeds of sweet peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, celery, salads, and globe artichokes in a heated propagator or on a sunny windowsill.

Fruit:

Bare-root Trees: Plant bare-root fruit trees before buds burst.

Soft Fruits: Plant potted soft fruit bushes such as currants, gooseberries, and raspberries.

Strawberries: Plant cold-stored strawberry runners and sow seeds of alpine strawberries.

3. Pruning and Training:

Fruit Trees: Carry out formative pruning of newly planted fruit trees if the weather is dry.

Berries: Untie canes of blackberries and hybrid berries that have been bundled together for the winter, and train them into arches before the buds burst.

4. Protection and Maintenance:

Pest Control: Protect early outdoor seed sowings from slugs with biological controls.

Frost Protection: Cover early sowings with cloches or fleece to shield them from late frosts.

Mulching: Apply a mulch around fruit trees, nuts, and bushes as long as the ground isn't frozen to retain moisture and suppress weeds.

Toppesfield Allotment news

5. Planning Ahead:

Seedbeds: Prepare seedbeds ready for sowing as the soil warms up by ensuring they are weed-free and raked to a fine tilth.

Support Structures: Put supports in place for peas and start preparing runner bean supports and trenches for sowing in May or planting out in June.

6. Harvesting:

Crops: Harvest purple sprouting broccoli, kale, winter cabbage, Jerusalem artichokes, and spring onions.

7. Community Engagement:

Workshops and Events: Consider organizing workshops or events to share knowledge and foster community spirit among allotment members.

We will have a group project Tidy Up day towards the end of March weather permitting, the water cabinet also needs remedial work as it is falling down.

We can have a sausage sizzle on the day and make it fun for the kids!

By following these guidelines, your allotment in Toppesfield will be well-prepared for a productive and enjoyable growing season.

Welcome to Suzy and Wendy who have taken over the allotment that Ian and Anoush had last year, they are looking for a small shed if anyone knows of a surplus one available?

Clare will be issuing the agreements this month (Cash Only) is preferred .

You may like to take a look at the woodland area , that has been made into an outdoor learning area for the preschool. Thanks to Kaaren Berry who is the driving force behind this project.

Best Regards to all

Paul Thompson - Chair 07824 665915





Braintree District Council Garden Waste Subscription It's Time to Renew

The full year's subscription fee for your first bin will remain at £55 for 2025/26 and for a second or subsequent bin, the subscription fee will be £30.

New or replacement bins cost £35.50 per bin.

Each bin requires a separate subscription.

If you already have a green bin, you can continue to use this when you subscribe.

If you have previously upgraded to a 240L bin, you may continue to use this for the same price until such time as the bin needs to be replaced, at which point a 180L will be offered (there is no longer an option to have a 240L bin).

For more information please contact Braintree District Council directly or via their website:

[Subscription costs, refunds and how to pay – Garden waste – Braintree District Council](#)

**renew
OR SUBSCRIBE
TODAY!**

**Garden Waste Collection Service
renewals are **NOW OPEN****

 www.braintree.gov.uk



TOPPESFIELD

ROLLING EVENTS FUND

Stand up

COMEDY

ADULTS ONLY

NIGHT

7.00pm - 11.00pm



TOPPESFIELD VILLAGE HALL

FRIDAY 28th MARCH

FREE ENTRANCE

WITH PRE-BOOKED TICKETS ONLY

(tables and seating provided)

bring your own drinks and nibbles

*This is a free event sponsored by
The Toppesfield Rolling Events Fund
However, donations to fund future events
will be gratefully received.*

*Tickets are limited to 70 and will therefore be
allocated on a purely first-come-first-served basis.*

Please book your tickets now by email

wendyames121@hotmail.com



BRAINTREE COMEDY CLUB

St. Margaret's C of E Primary School



We have had an exciting half term with Key Stage 2 starting swimming lessons, a visit from a fire engine, the cross-country team attending a second event held at Hedingham school and the return of our community coffee afternoons.

We are delighted to now have our new outdoor classroom in place. We have been able to facilitate this through a range of grants, including from FOSMs and from The Halstead and Earls Colne Educational Charity and our thanks go to them for making this possible. This will be used for teaching sessions, as a quiet space at break and lunchtimes and as a supportive space when children are finding things tricky.

The choir represented the school magnificently at the Young Voices concert in the O2 on February 4th. They had a fantastic time and were an absolute pleasure to take.

A group of children represented the school beautifully at the Candlemas service at St. Margaret's Church with some children carrying candles and some reading. Well done to everyone involved.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to attend one of our coffee afternoons. We have two more coming up next half term. The first is on 28th February and will include a beetle drive! We hope to see lots of you there. Please also encourage other members of the community to come along.

There are some dates to add to your diary:

Community coffee afternoons will be next half term at 2:00 pm on the following Fridays: Friday 28th February and Friday 28th March. These coffee afternoons are open to all. There are wonderful refreshments available, prepared by FOSMs, and children on hand to play some games and have a chat with. We are planning to have a beetle drive in February. Do please come along and bring a friend with you so that we can keep this community event running.



We look forward to keeping you up to date with our news in the next edition of the Parish magazine and look forward to seeing you at lots of our events this year!

Facebook: [St. Margaret's CofE Primary School, Toppesfield](https://www.facebook.com/StMargaretsTopp)

Twitter: @StMargaretsTopp

Instagram: stmargaretstopp



VOLUNTEERS

NEEDED.

DOCTORS CAR SERVICE

Take local residents to their doctor's surgery for appointments and bring them home

Contact Paula to Volunteer

Paula Edwards-Holmes

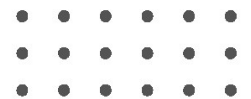
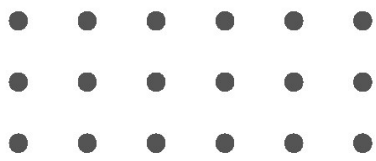
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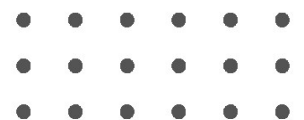
Silvertime Talks presents

Tax, Care & The New Guy



Topics include:

- Wills
- Trust
- Asset Protection
- Lasting Powers of Attorney
- Managing Care Fees
- Sideways Disinheritance



Register Interest - Contact Kaaren

clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com



Our beautiful girl Cookie is looking for a loving and patient home to take her on some new adventures... could that be with you?

Everyone that has the pleasure of meeting Cookie falls in love with her and her sweet nature. She loves meeting new people and making new friends whether that's people or with dogs! Saying that, Cookie would love to find a home with a doggy companion that can show her the ropes and give her a little bit of confidence in the home. Cookie loves playing off lead and socialising with dogs out on walks!

She at times can be a little bit strong on the lead, this is mainly when she sees another dog and just wants to go over and say hello! So ideally we are looking for someone that will be confident walking her on the lead and working on some loose lead training!

Cookie is suitable to live in a home with children aged 16 years and up that have lived with or have experienced around bigger breeds! She's a gentle girl but a little bouncy at times! Sadly Cookie cannot live with cats in the home!

We are unsure of Cookies past so it's best to be prepared that she may have not lived in a home before and will need a little bit of patience and guidance in the early few weeks settling into a new environment, this will also include the fun toilet training - but she's so smart she will pick that up in no time!

So, do you like the sound of Cookie and want to find out a little bit more? Why not fill out an interest form via the Danaher Animal Home website: <https://danaheranimalhome.org.uk/dogs/21255/cookie>



Spring Trivia Questions

1. What month does Spring begin in the Northern Hemisphere?
2. What Christian feast day can take place any Sunday between the 22nd of March and 25th of April?
3. Every year, millions of tourists visit Japan during the springtime to admire which flower?
4. What kind of animal delivers Easter eggs to children?
5. How long is the nighttime on the day of the Spring Equinox?
6. What kind of dancing might you see at a town fair on May Day in the UK?
7. The 1st of April is also known as what?
8. From March until May, the Keukenhof gardens in the Netherlands thrill visitors with their splendid fields of what kind of flower?
9. Which BBC TV programme follows springtime wildlife in the UK?
10. What month does Spring end in the Northern Hemisphere?
11. Who is the Goddess of Spring in Roman Mythology?
Flora Aestas Juno Pulchra
12. Spring is when many animals wake up after hibernation. Which of the following animals does not hibernate during winter?
Tortoises Chipmunks Bats Pandas
13. On Holi, Indians celebrate the end of winter by throwing what?
Flowers Turmeric Painted leaves Powdered Paint
14. Mayflies spend most of their lives underwater, emerging in late spring to mate. How long does an adult mayfly live once it flies out of the water?
One to Two days Four days to a week About a week About two weeks
15. Which of the following spring flowers is not grown from a bulb?
Lilies Sweet Peas Crocus Tulips
16. Thai New Year, known as Songkran, takes place during which Spring month?
March April May It changes each year
17. Where would you have to stand to see the sun pass directly above you during the Spring Equinox?
The North Pole The South Pole The Northern Tropic The Equator
18. In which Spanish city does the *Las Fallas* festival take place every year on the 1st of March?
Barcelona Bilbao Valencia Saville

BAR OPENING HOURS

Monday - Closed
Tuesday - Thursday 3 - Close
Friday- Sunday 12- Close



KITCHEN OPENING HOURS

Wednesday & Thursday 5-8
Friday & Saturday 12-9
Sunday 12-4

Kevin vs. Janet: The Battle of the Dishes!

Each Friday, watch as Kevin and Janet go head-to-head in the kitchen, each whipping up a special dish to win your hearts and taste buds. Who will reign supreme? You be the judge!

~

Sundays

Sunday Roast featuring sirloin of beef and large selection of fresh vegetables

~

Monthly Pub Quiz Night!

Join us for a night of trivia and fun, all in support of Air Ambulance. Test your knowledge and help a great cause at the same time!

1st Saturday of the month from 7.30pm

Answers to Spring Trivia Quiz

1. What month does Spring begin in the Northern Hemisphere? **March**
2. What Christian feast day can take place any Sunday between the 22nd of March and 25th of April? **Easter Sunday**
3. Every year, millions of tourists visit Japan during the springtime to admire which flower? **Cherry blossoms/Sakura**
4. What kind of animal delivers Easter eggs to children? **A Rabbit (the Eastern Bunny)**
5. How long is the nighttime on the day of the Spring Equinox? **Twelve Hours**
6. What kind of dancing might you see at a town fair on May Day in the UK? **Maypole Dancing**
7. The 1st of April is also known as what? **April Fool's Day**
8. From March until May, the Keukenhof gardens in the Netherlands thrill visitors with their splendid fields of what kind of flower? **Tulips**
9. Which BBC TV programme follows springtime wildlife in the UK? **Springwatch**
10. What month does Spring end in the Northern Hemisphere? **June**
11. Who is the Goddess of Spring in Roman Mythology? **Flora**
12. Spring is when many animals wake up after hibernation. Which of the following animal does not hibernate during winter? **Pandas**
13. On Holi, Indians celebrate the end of winter by throwing what? **Powdered Paint**
14. Mayflies spend most of their lives underwater, emerging in late spring to mate.
How long does an adult mayfly live once it flies out of the water? **One to Two days**
15. Which of the following spring flowers is not grown from a bulb? **Sweet Peas**
16. Thai New Year, known as Songkran, takes place during which Spring month? **April**
17. Where would you have to stand to see the sun pass directly above you during the Spring Equinox? **The Equator**
18. In which Spanish city does the *Las Fallas* festival take place every year on the 1st of March? **Valencia**



TOPPESFIELD

Community Shop

***OFF LICENCE & GROCERIES**

BREAD - MILK - FRUIT & VEG - FROZEN FOODS

ICE CREAMS - BEERS - WINES - SPIRITS

STATIONERY - CARDS - STAMPS

COAL - PET FOOD - PLANTS

NEWSPAPERS - MAGAZINES - CIGARETTES



Garden Cafe

*no alcohol is to be consumed on the premises

OPENING TIMES

Monday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Tuesday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Wednesday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Thursday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Friday	.....	8.30am - 4.00pm
Saturday	.....	10.00am - 12.30pm



WEDNESDAY 10am - 1pm