

January 2021

Edition 179



USEFUL NUMBERS

Braintree District Council	01376 552525
Castle Hedingham Surgery	01787 461465
Colchester Hospital	01206 744491
Doctor's Car Service	07845 596092
Freshwell Health Centre	01371 810328
Great Yeldham Surgery	01787 237212
Halstead Hospital	01787 273110
Kaaren Berry, Parish Clerk	077889 55038
Little Chestnuts Pre School	079018 80914
Little Hedgehogs Toddlers	01440 785778
PumpHouse Brewery	07801 042545
Rev. Liz Paxton	01787 277270
Sible Hedingham Surgery	01787 460612
St Margaret's School	01787 237354
The Green Man	01787 237418
Toppesfield Community Shop	01787 236003
Toppesfield Village Hall Booking Secretary - Daphne Jude	01440 788270
Vets – Great Yeldham	01787 238255

Toppesfield Community Shop
Church Lane, Toppesfield
01787 236003

Fresh Fruit & Vegetables, Milk,
Newspapers, Confectionery, Pet Food,
Dairy Products, Meat & Poultry, Kindling
and Coal, Cards, Stationery and more!

Monday - Friday
8.30 am – 3.30 pm.

Saturday 10.00 am – 12.30 pm.

Toppesfield Post Office
Church Lane, Toppesfield
Wednesday 10.00 am - 1pm

Services include: Special Delivery, Mobile
Top Up, Insurance Services, Household
Payments, Travel Money, Moneygrams,
Savings Accounts plus more!

Toppesfield Parish Council

Councillors - Alan Collard, Amanda Smith, Andrea Chinery, Boyd Page and
Chris Neale.

Parish Clerk - Kaaren Berry

Parish Council Meetings are normally held on the first Thursday of every month in the
Village Hall. During lockdown the parish council are meeting virtually. You are welcome
to attend the Open Session that starts at 7.30pm. Please email the clerk for login details.

A Parish Councillor will also be available to listen to your views and answer your queries
at the Village Markets when they restart.

Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Newsletter

Published by Toppesfield Parish Council

Editor: clerk.toppesfieldparishcouncil@gmail.com

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

Twitter & Instagram - Toppesfield & Gainsford End Community :
Website: <https://e-voice.org.uk/toppesfield-parish-council/>



From the Parish Council



Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2021.

The Parish Council would like to wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year. We hope that during 2021 we will all be able to see and do at least some of the many things we missed out on in 2020.

Unfortunately, we have started the new year with a reimposed lockdown and as a result we have reconstituted the TGE Response Group which was first put in place last March.

Full details are shown overleaf.

We aim to provide the same level of support once again and our marvellous and invaluable community shop will undoubtedly, be at the forefront of helping to get through the next couple of months. If you are able to help at the shop during lockdown please do get in touch with Ann Read, whose contact details are in this Newsletter.

We also have access to two professionals who can help with any wellbeing issues; if you are feeling lonely or need someone with whom you can talk over a problem confidentially, please don't hesitate to call **07341 264221**.

For more general queries or for prescription deliveries, please call **07341 264220**.

As has been the case over the past year, the Newsletter does not contain the usual reports of village activities. It does however keep you up to date with what is going on at St Margaret's church, at the Green Man, the Shop and the Brewery. In addition we have our regular articles from 'Rambling' Ann Read and from Paul Thompson, Toppesfield's answer to Monty Don.

We will probably all like to get out and around the parish to take our permitted exercise over the coming months. Despite the heavy ground, as Ann says in her footpaths article, there are many footpaths around Toppesfield & Gainsford End which provide expansive views and always have something new to discover.

We are sure that the landowners will make good the rights of way over the fields as soon as possible, which will make life easier for all of us!

Finally, following some departures last year, the Parish Council remains short of its full complement of councillors.

You can read in this Newsletter about some of the things that the Parish Council is involved with, ranging currently from the proposed revamping of and improvements to the car park in Park Lane to the activities of the Environment and Ecology working group. The latter is an informal part of the Parish Council but is open to anyone in the parish who would like to get involved.

So, if you feel that you would like to get involved please get in touch with our Clerk, Kaaren Berry, who will be able to give you more information.

Our next Newsletter will be in early March and all copy should be sent to Kaaren by 19th February 2021.

We would especially love to see some new contributors and photos of our parish to publish in our next issue.

TGE RESPONSE GROUP

Following Monday's announcement by the government that we are all moving into a new lockdown, the Parish Council is reviving the TGE Response Group that was first set up in March last year.

Please note the following telephone numbers / email addresses:

- For emergencies and prescriptions 07341 264220
- To talk in confidence, if you are worried or lonely 07341 264221
- To place on order for deliveries from the shop 07081 422665 or skomerann@tiscali.co.uk

Please note that the shop hours have changed, until further notice. The shop is open Monday – Friday from 8:30 to 1:00pm and Saturday from 10:00 – 12:30.

This lockdown is happening at the worst time of year: January and February are the most dismal months for many people.

Let's all try and help each other get through this period. At least this time we can see an exit route through the inoculation programme, but in the meantime call your friends and neighbours for a chat, take time to listen to people and make the most use you can of things like zoom or facetime.



St Margaret's Church

Sadly, having decorated the church beautifully for Christmas and rehearsed for our 'carol' service, the change to Tier 4 and the instruction that everyone should stay at home led us to decide to cancel the Christmas services. But many thanks to everyone who joined in our preparations - it's a great shame they couldn't be shared as we had planned.

For the time being, until the progress of the virus has become clearer, we have decided not to hold our regular Sunday services in church. Rev Liz will be conducting them each week via Zoom and they will be shown on YouTube.

Meanwhile the church will continue to be open on Wednesday mornings for private prayer. Here is a New Year's message from Rev Liz:

New Year's message

"Hope
Smiles from the threshold of the year to come,
Whispering 'it will be happier'..."
— **Alfred Lord Tennyson**

Well, I am not sure what was going on in Alfred Lord Tennyson's life when he wrote that line, perhaps he had had a bad year, but it does seem very appropriate for the New Year 2021.

In a way, moving from December 31st to January 1st is just an accident of the calendar, and yet we imbue the meaning of a New Year with all sorts of 'fresh starts' and 'turning over new leaves'. It is the opportunity to quit the things that we know aren't good for us, and embrace good habits that we know will be therapeutic. And yet, most years we are doomed to failure because just knowing something is good for us is not enough to embrace new habits.

We have been forced to adopt all sorts of new habits in 2020 from which we long to free ourselves. When we are able to do so, some things will spring back into the available choices of what we are permitted to do...embracing loved ones, socialising with family and friends and having lovely holidays, - even enjoying crowded places! There will come a time this year when we will be able to do all these things, post vaccine and a negligible 'R' rate.

However, in 2021 we shouldn't overlook the things that we have discovered this year that make our hearts sing. A quieter time, a walk in the country, the rediscovery of the garden and wildlife. Can we keep hold of the slower pace - or will we jump straight back to frenetic activity?

IN our churches we have been so sad not to be able to sing as we used to, and we are all enthusiastic to get back to that. Crowds at Weddings, noisy harvest celebrations, the local school in church learning about Jesus. But we hear in the Bible that the source of Hope to which Alfred Lord Tennyson refers isn't random, but comes from patient endurance.

Romans 15 "4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So may I encourage you to start 2021 with endurance and encouragement, with God's help that your hope for a blessed and joy-filled 2021 may be realised.

Blessings Rev. Liz

Park Lane - Parish Car Park

In the last Newsletter, we asked you for your views and thoughts about the future of the car park in Park Lane. As explained then, a number of nearby residents had complained about the condition of the space and its abuse by a small number of vehicle owners.

We subsequently received a number of really helpful comments and plan to use these to move ahead with some improvements this year.

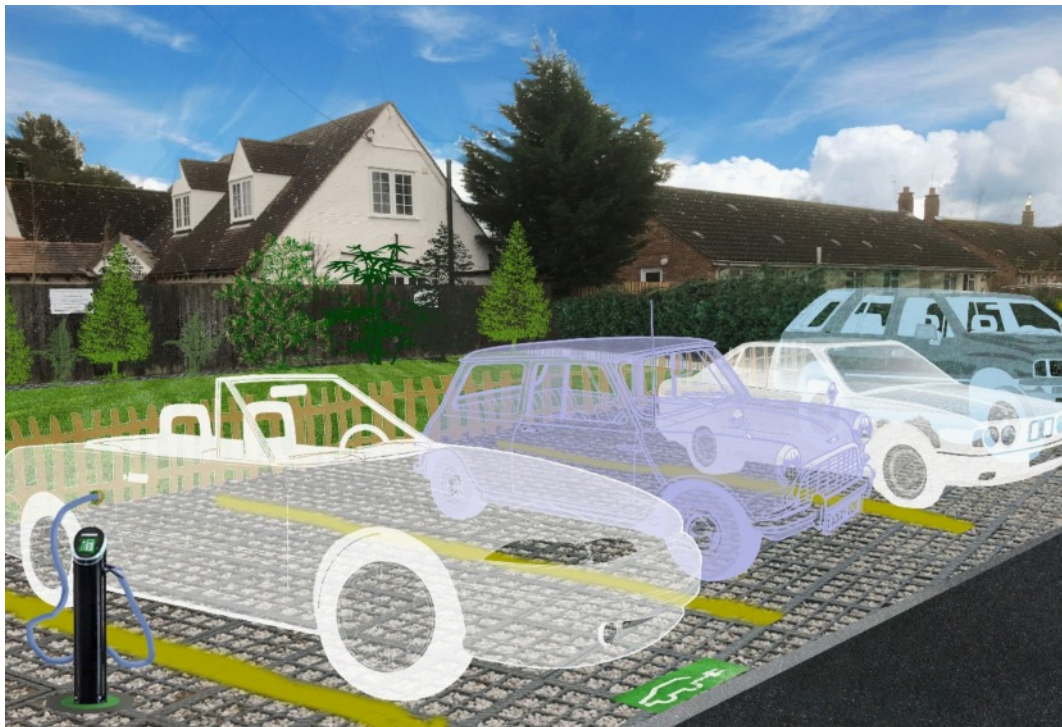
From the feedback received, it is clear that there is a continuing wish and need for some car parking spaces.

In outline, our plan is to divide the space into two parts. The front half will be surfaced and marked into 4 or 5 parking places. This space will also include an electric car charger.

The rear half, which would be fenced off, will be left for the time being as a green space.

Although only half the area would be used for parking, in practice the same number of cars will be able to park as is the case currently; today the only way for more cars to use the space is to double park, which is clearly not effective.

Below is an impression of what the car park would look like after the work has been completed.





The Green Man
Church Lane, Toppesfield, Halstead, Essex, CO9 4DR
(01787) 237418

First let me wish you all a Happy New Year, let's hope 2021 is both better and happier for us all.

We are looking forward to welcoming you back into the Green Man pub when this is all over. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who have offered and shown us their continued support throughout this difficult time.

We are hoping that we can get back to normal as soon as it is safely possible to do so and re-instating our full menu as well as bringing back the much-loved Thursday Lunch club.

We have invested, with the help of a Government grant, in 6 new pop-up gazebos with heaters for the use of customers within the garden area. These will enable us to welcome you back when restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so. We have also bought a new Marquee 12 x 6 meters that will be available to hire, please enquire at the Green Man pub.

Stay safe and we will look forward to seeing you all soon in the Green man pub where a friendly welcome is always guaranteed.

Best wishes and Happy New Year,

David, Paul, Clair, Katie, Neil, Brian, and Millie.

Not forgetting Millie dog and Rupert



News from the Footpaths



Happy New Year Everyone. It is hard to realise that going into 2021 we are still in the Covid nightmare but this is where the footpaths are going to continue to be our salvation. Now that life is more restricted again I am trying to get out on a walk every day. I must say there have been some very foggy days when I was a bit afraid I might get lost and oh the mud! I have lived in this parish for over fifty years and do not remember the fields being so saturated and the clay so sticky. This is where cross field paths are a nightmare and while the land owner should reinstate them after cultivation that is impossible at the moment . Hopefully once the land has dried out and crops established these footpaths will be reinstated.

There are always things to look out for and even the mud shows up interesting things. There are bird footprints in the puddles and of course all the deer slots, just amazing. There are still lots of berries for the birds to feast on and such a delight to see the fall of crab apples under the tree. A delicious feast to keep birds and other creatures going through the Winter.

Ditching and hedge maintenance is carried out at this time of year and there is a wonderful example of a hedge being laid just at the edge of the village. Hedge laying is a very ancient craft and involves the partial cutting and bending of the stems of a line of shrubs or small trees near ground level and then the top branches are interwoven. This makes for a really strong stock proof fence as well as being attractive to look at and good for wildlife. Apparently this practice was around at the time of Julius Caesar.

On a less pleasant note, when out walking, I have been doing a bit of litter picking. There are such a lot of cans, bottles as well as now masks etc, but even more annoying are the bags of dog poo where dog owners have picked up the poo but then thrown the bag into the hedge. Please do not do this. There are several dog poo litter bins around the village. Rant over! Do keep walking and enjoying our beautiful parish and stay safe,

Ann Read



New year present for dogs and especially their owners



The new 'poo bins' have arrived! The one on the left is in Park Lane and the one on the right is in Gainsford End Playing field. Please make sure they are both used. Because of lockdown, many more of us are walking around the parish and, as Ann says in her Footpaths article, it's not pleasant to find bags discarded by the side of footpaths.

Toppesfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan

It will not come as a surprise that progress on the Neighbourhood Plan has slowed considerably since our last note. We have held Zoom meetings to try to advance things where we can. However, the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan is very much a "face to face" exercise and without being able to speak directly to you, our community, things have slowed somewhat.

We would dearly love to receive your thoughts, and pictures, so that we get a full range of thoughts and ideas as to what you consider to be good, and bad, architectural features found in the parish. So far we have had few responses, so why not have a think and whilst out walking, jot down some thoughts or take some pictures to show us what you really appreciate +about our built environment – all whilst staying Covid-safe of course!

Please forward your thoughts to us via email at ToppesfieldNP@gmail.com, or via our FaceBook page, which can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/tgenp>.

There is also our Instagram page showing the views some people have already submitted. Here is a link to explain how to create an account:

<https://help.instagram.com/155940534568753>

Once you have an account if you search for "toppesfieldviews", you should then be able to click "follow" and then be able to see the page.

If you have any queries, thoughts or opinions, do please feel to contact us at:
ToppesfieldNP@gmail.com

In the meantime, please continue to stay safe, and look out for neighbours who may be feeling isolated or have needs that you feel you can help with – obviously with social distancing in mind!

We wish you all a very Happy New Year, with fingers crossed for a return to some semblance of normality very soon.



Happy New Year Everyone

Here we are starting a new year and still in the covid nightmare. However the shop continues to be the mainstay of the village and as we have new restrictions and concerns about the infection rates we will do our best to keep the shop manned and stocked.

For many years now the shop has held a monthly market and these have been greatly missed so we were determined somehow to put on the Christmas market to cheer everybody up and to be a light in the gloom. At first it was to be in the marquee in the Green Man Garden but the marquee was damaged in the gale. Then a marquee was hired but there were so many stalls we would have to have several gazebos. Added to this was the constantly changing situation regarding tiers and lock down so we were not sure we would be able to hold it at all. However right at the last minute we changed tack to have the marquee on the hard standing at the Village Hall and use the village hall as well and despite having a heavy fall of snow the day before we had a wonderful market. There were over twenty stalls, all local producers and of course all covid secure with one way system and track and trace and monitoring numbers of people in the marquee and village hall. It was great and such a lift for the village. I cannot thank everyone so much for making it happen.

The shop continued to keep open and stocked up right through Christmas and even on Christmas Eve Father Christmas's elves were on duty!

Please remember that we can still set up deliveries. You can order all your meat etc from Priors Hall (by Monday evening please) and also bread from Tensheds. For the bread please contact Wendy Ames.

As we move into further restraints some volunteers are now not available for duties so we have decided that, as **from Monday 4th Jan, the shop will open at 8.30 am as usual close but close at 1.00pm Monday to Friday.** Saturday hours remain at 10.00 am – 12.30 pm. The post office is open as usual Wednesday 10.00 am – 1.00 pm.

If anyone would like to join the band of volunteers do please speak to the volunteer on duty in the shop.

Please keep supporting your community shop and stay safe.

Ann Read



Our best Christmas present was.....

For Christmas Aunty Belinda bought us both a "Super Litter Picker" set. So, over Christmas we have been busy picking up litter from around the village. This has made going on walks much more fun.

We have learnt about what can be recycled and what is rubbish. Cans are the most exciting thing to find because we get to crush them before they get recycled.

Micro-plastics are the trickiest thing to pick up with our "grabbers".

Mummy is pleased because it gets us outside and entertains us during lockdown, she says she would recommend other parents get their children some rubbish grabbers.

Love Bill and Alora



NB The parish council hopes (lockdown permitting) to organise a litter pick during April, so all you grown-ups get you grabbers ready and take take inspiration from the children!



What a way to end the year at the brewery!

After a year of so many lows, it was great to end 2020 on a high.

Even with pubs closed and Tier 4 restrictions fully in place, the brewery had its best performance in a very long time. Our Christmas sales were more than 1000 bottles, including gift packs and cases. We also supplied takeaway draught beers in large quantities; doing our bit to make the festive season 'a merry little Christmas at home'.

In order to weather the economic storm, we have continued to make use of the furlough scheme. Kaaren is fully furloughed and Aaron is brewing one day a week, helping replenish our stocks of bottles after the Christmas rush.

If you've visited the brewery recently, you'll almost certainly have seen one of our committee members, Tina Mason, dispensing beer and smiles to our happy customers, whatever the weather. Behind the scenes, the whole committee has been working hard to keep everything going and to plan for a better future in 2021.

Fortunately our special status as a community owned, not-for-profit brewery means we have many friends and supporters to whom we can look for help. Peter Moore is providing us with a card payment system, through his company, lolly, and the Plunkett Foundation are funding the purchase of new bottling and labelling equipment. In addition, Braintree D.C. have granted us emergency support and are paying the full cost of a transactional website and digital marketing campaign. Together these initiatives will help us grow an online business, reach a far wider market and ensure sustained success for Pumphouse in the challenging months to come.

We are very grateful to them all.

However different this may sound, it's a necessary response to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. We will never lose sight of our original objectives: to provide high quality, good value real ales, to support our local pubs and to offer employment and volunteering opportunities within the community. The brewery is for you, our neighbours and friends.

Please look out for current offers on our Facebook page or call in on Fridays 10am-4pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm.

High quality craft ales for just £2 a pint and £2 a bottle.

**With our very best wishes for a happy and healthy 2021!
We look forward to seeing you soon.**



A Welcome to 2021
By
John Barleycorn

The 21st century comes of age!
And as we turn another page,
Leave 2020 and move ahead,
We hope for a better year in its stead

With Pumphouse Ales let's raise a toast:
To health care workers at their post;
Using their skills in every way,
Until the vaccines save the day.

Let's leave behind the tears and tiers
And look ahead to the best of years.
To refresh our souls, no need to go far:
A Pumphouse Ale in the Green Man bar.

For those not familiar with him, John Barleycorn is the self-appointed brewery poet for Pumphouse Brewery (we couldn't find a cat, which would have been more usual). His occasional musings appear on our Facebook page.



Environment & Ecology



Did you realise how much we need trees?

Trees are the ultimate carbon capture and storage machines. Like great carbon sinks, woods and forests absorb atmospheric carbon and lock it up for centuries. The UK has a target to become carbon net zero by 2050. It has been calculated that planting 1.5 million additional hectares of woodland would be required to help reach this target. Ideally, every community in the country will need to play its part and we are now making our own start in Toppesfield.

From the beginning of January and over the next 2 months, the Environment & Ecology Group is organising the planting of 40 trees – oaks, field maple, hawthorn and hornbeam, all of which are species native to this area and which are suitable for our boulder clay soil and undulating countryside. Five container grown oaks have already been planted, last weekend.

These native broadleaf trees provide ideal habitats for many species of wildlife. They help reduce flooding, capture carbon and release oxygen and generally enhance our countryside.

Funding for this phase of tree planting came from a variety of sources. The Tree and Landscape Department at Braintree District Council has provided expert advice and a substantial portion of the funding; grants were received from Toppesfield Community Shop and our District Councillor, Richard van Dulken's Discretionary Grant Fund; private donations totalled over £200 and the Parish Council has allocated £200 towards the cost. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to all these organisations and individuals.

We also recognise the invaluable support from Tom and Robert Mortlock and Alice and Simon Cornwell for allowing the trees to be planted on their land, along public rights of way. Others have helped too and thanks go to Jane & Peter Moore for the supply of tree guards, to Paul Thompson for watering pipe and to the volunteers who planted the oaks last weekend.

We now need to plan for the planting of the remaining trees; these will be bare-rooted so will be easier and quicker to plant and we want to plant them by the end of February.

Because of distancing requirements, this will be ideal for family 'bubbles' so please let me know if you would like to plant some trees and help to improve our local environment for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

We will provide the trees, stakes, ties etc and provide a planting guide to all volunteers.

It is so good to start 2021 with positive action!

Lynn Collard
01787 237841
lynncollard@yahoo.co.uk

Andy & Rosie Daines
planting their oak tree



Toppesfield & Gainsford End Allotment Society

Toppesfield Allotments Association

Welcome to what we all hope will be a very different year in view of the vaccine giving people more confidence in being able to tackle the great outdoors. That's if you feel inclined to take it? As I know there are people that believe there is a conspiracy theory about the pandemic.

We have had several cases of covid19 in the village mostly those with children and teens at the schools.

Those that contracted it will tell you that it was not a pleasant experience.

That aside, we had a very safe allotment experience last year we expect another one in 2021.

Thanks go out to Margaret Dyson at the start of this season for the box of seeds that will be distributed to anyone that would like some, just contact me with what you are after and I will gladly pop them round if they are in the box.

Clare T as secretary will soon be out calling for with the annual subscriptions for those that are to continue with the plots. For those not wanting to continue could you please confirm by February to allow time for others to take a place.

Tommo's Tips

Now is the time to clean and sharpen your tools and perhaps clear some of the site in preparation of the new planting season.

Early Spring onions can be planted in a sheltered place or under a cloche. Little is essential on the allotment in January, other than maintenance, housekeeping and preparing for better weather.

Protect your plants from cold, check stakes and ties on fair days you can plant fruit trees and blackcurrants, gooseberries and currants.

With icy weather, the compost heap will barely be ticking over, so you might as well start a bean trench. It will provide moisture as well as nourishment for the beans later on. Dig a trench about 30cm deep and wide. A lining of newspaper will help to hold in moisture through summer. When the trench is almost full, heap the soil over it. It will sink down as the compost rots and flatten out. Top dress asparagus with good well-rotted manure and introduce a layer of sharp sand onto the beds to aid drainage and suppress weeds.

Keep safe and well

Paul Thompson Chair



2020..... in a single photo

