

In this edition:

Easter events - p8

**Panto review and
pictures - P10-11**

Local events - p12-13

Cricket Fixtures - p14

**Parish Council
Meeting details - P22**

Puzzles - p24-26

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From the Church



March: A Season for Honest Beginnings

In March the Church enters a season called

Lent. You may have seen photographs of Christians with a small cross of ash marked on their foreheads. It can look unusual, even slightly uncomfortable. Why would anyone choose that?

On Ash Wednesday the minister places ash on a person's forehead and says, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." It is not dramatic. It is truthful.

We spend much of life avoiding our limits. We avoid talking about death. We distract ourselves from our weaknesses. We tell ourselves we are fine, even when we are not. The ash is a quiet interruption. It reminds us that life is fragile, time is short, and what truly matters should not be postponed.

But Lent is not about guilt. It is not about making people feel small. It is about clarity.

Lent is not about becoming religious. It is about becoming honest.

Honest about our habits. Honest about our relationships. Honest about the ways we drift. Honest about the fact that sometimes we lose sight of who we are and what we are living for.

During Lent many Christians choose to give something up. Chocolate. Alcohol. Social media. An evening habit. The point is not self-punishment. It is perspective.

When you step back from something you rely on, you begin to notice things. You notice how quickly you reach for

distraction. You notice how little silence you allow. You notice how tired you really are. You notice how much you long for peace.

Creating a small limit can open a larger space.

In a world that runs at relentless speed, Lent invites us to slow down on purpose. To pause. To reflect. To ask deeper questions: What is shaping me? What is driving me? What needs attention? What needs healing?

March is also a month that hints at spring. The light shifts. The ground softens. Things that looked lifeless begin to stir. Lent carries that same quiet hope. Yes, it asks us to face reality. But it also whispers that new life is possible.

You can begin again.

You can begin again spiritually, even if faith has felt distant.

You can begin again relationally, even if conversations have been strained.

You can begin again personally, even if you feel you have drifted from the person you hoped to be.

Lent does not demand perfection. It invites honesty. And honesty is where change begins.

So, as March unfolds, take a moment to stop. Turn down the noise. Sit with the questions you have been avoiding. You may find that in the quiet, something steady and hopeful is waiting.

Sometimes the most important new beginnings start with the courage to be honest.

Rev Tim Siefert

ST JOHN'S CHURCH - Directory

Tel: 01732 833 596 Website: www.stjohnshildenborough.co.uk

Please ring the church office or email any time, if you would like to discuss any pastoral or administrative matter.

Office Hours - Monday to Friday 10am till 4pm

Role	Name	Contact Details
Vicar	Rev Tim Saiset	07973 136 968 tim@stjohnshildenborough.co.uk
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What's on in March at St John's?

Church Services	
Sunday 9.15am – 10.30am Communion 3 rd Sunday of the month	A contemporary service with a programme for children and youth. Breakfast is served from 8.45am and everyone is welcome.
Sunday 11am – 12.15pm	A more traditional service with hymns, regular Holy Communion.
Tuesday 11.15am – 12 noon	Morning prayer – a peaceful time for connection with God.
Community	
Wednesday 4 March 7.30pm in the Church	Prayer & Praise
Monday - weekly 10-11.45am Church Centre £3/family	Bright Sparks Toddler Group A fun filled haven for little ones providing a safe space for play and a chance for carers and parents to connect.
Tuesday - weekly 11.30am -1pm, weekly Church Centre	Community Larder For people who need a helping hand with some essentials. Donations gratefully accepted of non-perishable food in jars and cans.
Wednesday 11 March 11am in the Church Centre (Second Wednesday of the month)	Forget-me-not Café Whilst some of those who come to the café live with dementia, others may have memory loss or care for a person with dementia. Join us for coffee and cake.
Wednesday - weekly 12-2pm, Church Centre	Warm Hub Free homemade soup & bread roll, dessert, tea & coffee. All welcome.
Thursday & Friday 9am – 2pm Church Centre	Angel Café A welcoming space for all ages, perfect for a delicious treat and a chat. Closes during school holidays.
Saturday 7 March 9.30am-11am, Church Centre	Who let the dads out? Play time for Dads and kids up to 6, soft play and breakfast included.
Children & Young People	
Sunday 9.15-10.30am Term time only	Generation Creation For primary school aged children and young people years 6 and above. Start in the church and move to the Church Centre.
Sunday 8 & 22 March 5-7pm in the Church Centre 2 nd and 4 th Sunday of the month	HIVE Youth Group For school years 6-13.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: We are seeking two individuals to help organise the reader and prayer rotas for our 9:15am and 11:00am services. Using existing lists, you'll help members find dates to serve. To help, please contact Tim or Emma at office@stjohnshildenborough.co.uk or 01732 833 596.

Sunday 8th March 2026

**Come and hear the latest
from the persecuted church**



Hear from Barnabas Aid on their work to help the persecuted church
at our 9:15 and 11am services on 8th March 2026



HIVE
HILDENBOROUGH VILLAGE

**The Hive
Youth Group
March 2026**

For school year
6-13

£1 a session



March 8th - Come and hear from
'No Leftovers' Paul about reducing Food
Waste and make something tasty to eat.

March 22nd - Escape Room Style
Easter Egg Hunt

5- 7pm . Church Centre
St John's Church.

All youth leaders
hold a valid DBS

For more information please
contact
Lisa Glasscote
lisa@stjohnshildenborough.co.uk

Wide range of
kids play
equipment



WHO LET THE DADS OUT?

2026 Dates.

**Jan 3rd, Feb 14th, Mar 7th, April 4th,
May 2nd, June 6th, July 4th, Aug 1st,
Sep 5th, Oct 3rd, Nov 7th, Dec 5th.**

**£3 per family; includes hot breakfast
roll and refreshments**

Meet other
local Dads and
have fun

For
children
aged 0-6

9:30-11am

Church Centre, Foxbush TN11 9HT

ST JOHN'S CHURCH, HILDENBOROUGH

READ THE BIBLE IN HOLY WEEK

29 MARCH - 5 APRIL 2026

SIGN UP SHEETS WILL GO UP ON ABOUT
1 MARCH 2026



WE WILL READ THE WHOLE BIBLE ALOUD DURING HOLY WEEK IN CHURCH IN 15 MINUTE RELAYS FROM 6AM TO 12 MIDNIGHT (EXCEPT DURING SERVICES) UNTIL WE HAVE READ EVERYTHING FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION. SIGN UP SHEETS IN CHURCH FROM 1 MARCH



Easter

SERVICES AT ST JOHNS HILDENBOROUGH

Sunday 29 March 2026

Palm Sunday

9.15am and 11am services as usual

Thursday 2 April 2026

7pm Maundy Thursday service

Friday 3 April 2026

2pm Good Friday service

An hour at the Cross

Sunday 5 April 2026

10am Easter Service

11.15am Holy Communion



GOOD FRIDAY

HOPE IN THE GARDEN

Friday, 3rd April 2026. 10:00-11:30am

Come and join us this Good Friday for a relaxed, family-friendly drop-in morning!

Easter Trail - Complete the trail and win a chocolate prize.

Make an Easter Garden - Hands-on craft for all ages.

Refreshments - Enjoy a drink and a Hot Cross Bun.

Free Event - No booking required, just drop by and stay for as long (or as little) as you like.

FIRST STOP: THE CAFÉ
VISIT THE CAFÉ IN ST JOHN'S CHURCH
CENTRE TO COLLECT YOUR EASTER TRAIL
STAMP SHEET AND START YOUR TRAIL.



SUNDAY 15 MARCH 2026

COME AND CELEBRATE YOUR MOTHER WITH
US AT ST JOHNS

HAPPY
MOTHER'S DAY
I LOVE U MUM

9.15AM CONTEMPORARY SERVICE

11AM TRADITIONAL SERVICE

FOR ANYONE WHO FINDS MOTHERS DAY DIFFICULT, FOR WHATEVER REASON, PLEASE KNOW THAT WE ARE PARTICULARLY THINKING AND PRAYING FOR YOU ON 15 MARCH.



FOR ANYONE WHO HAS RECENTLY LOST THEIR MOTHER, WE ARE THINKING AND PRAYING FOR YOU TOO.



Forget-me-not Cafés



Companionship over a cuppa



At our February Café, the Family Room in the Church Centre

was full to overflowing when we welcomed the Otford Merry Monday's 17 ukulele players, to entertain us. So, what is a ukulele? It is a four stringed instrument that looks like a miniature classical guitar. The players took us through a very varied repertoire from Bye Bye Love and Rockin' Robin, a Beatles number – A Hard Day's Night, Sound of Music – Edelweiss, Abba – Waterloo and finished with Dusty Springfield's I only want to be with you. We also celebrated one of the Café patron's birthday and sang a Ukelele-lead Happy Birthday. It was a good fun morning, and it even stopped raining!

This month our Café will be on Wednesday 11th March from 11.00 am to 12.30 pm in the Family Room of the St. John's Church Centre and we will be welcoming the speaker Phillip Waite who is a retired RAF Military Policeman. He has many stories to tell of his time in the services.

Whilst some of those who attend the Café live with a dementia diagnosis, others have mild memory loss, others care for a person with dementia. There is plenty of free parking and disabled facilities on site.

The Café is also open to anyone who would like to get out of the house for a couple of hours and meet other people for some conversation. If you are feeling lonely and would like someone to chat to please come along.



If you would like more information on the Forget-me-Not Café or would like to be put on the mailing list for the monthly programme of all the Cafés please contact Elaine on forgetmenot.sadfc@gmail.com or 07946 534 476.

Julie Rhodes

Hildenborough Amateur Dramatics Society 'HADS' – Cinderella

The first performance ever by Hildenborough Amateur Dramatic Society (HADS) was by any standard a triumph. Such groups are a very necessary part of the theatre life of England through which so many careers have begun. But that is not the aim of such societies. It is to give anyone who wants to try to perform a chance to do so and this is best achieved by setting standards that are as high as possible and it was such a pleasure to see that HADS were aiming high in that respect. To present a pantomime on such a tiny stage was brave but it paid off handsomely. There was only the possibility of having two main scenes and each of these cleverly suggested, by the use of perspective, a greater depth of stage than there was in reality, so well done to the designer and scenic artists. The lighting and sound were unobtrusive as they ought to be, so to the technical team came up trumps as well.

Any group like HADS ought to include people of all ages and it was cheering to see the pupils of Dance-Worx doing so well. They were very well trained by the talented choreographers, Katie Noad and Freya Parfitt, and, as far as I could see, were clearly enjoying themselves.

However it is the main characters who make a show come to life and in this it was good to see that there was a very healthy camaraderie in the cast. Brionnie Haselden as Cinderella was an engaging and reliable heart of the show who could also sing very well, as could all others who had songs to sing. (I loved the way that a hand appeared whenever a song was due as it was a neat way to deal with the lack of space and equipment.) Kate Lake as the evil stepmother certainly earned the boos she received while her 'boots are made for walking' routine was clever. Her daughters, the ugly sisters, played by Mark Davidson and Rob Mansfield were suitably outrageous and were a great couple, one of whom had never appeared on a stage before, although that didn't show at all. Their costumes were perfectly outrageous and, impressively, entirely self-sourced by the cast. The look of the show was as high-quality as everything else in this production. Buttons (Greg Shea) was very energetic while Fred Bradstock (Number One) and Charlie Edelsten (Puss and Wolfie) looked quite at ease with their smaller parts.

Carole Ore as Fairy Florette looked every bit a fairy godmother and spoke her rhyming lines very well, not always easy when all around you are speaking prose, while Ruth Palmer looked the part and took to it very well. Finally, Dandini and Prince Charming (John and Lisa Ewens) were, unsurprisingly, a good team bringing, as they did, some wider experience and a sense of humour to their roles.

But one of the impressive aspects of this show was that there was not one weak link in the company. This implies a cooperative spirit among the group which means that anyone without any experience will be encouraged and helped which is a key characteristic of amateur drama. So warm words of congratulation are due to Rich Lake who has set up HADS as a society who do what they do as well as they can. And as regards Cinderella it was important that the audience and the company enjoyed the whole experience which they evidently did. Surely we are all looking forward to the next show in the summer.

What an excellent start for HADS!

John Marsh



What's on in and around our village?

Arts and culture are flourishing in the local community often with little by way of external funding - please read through the following events and try and get to one if you can!

School Governor Opportunity – Hildenborough CE Primary School

Hildenborough CE Primary School is looking for members of the local community who may be interested in becoming a school governor.

School governors play a vital role in supporting the leadership of the school, helping to shape its future, and ensuring the best possible education for our children. You do not need to have previous experience in education – just an interest in the school, a willingness to learn, and time to contribute. We meet six times per year and ask that Governors take an area to monitor which requires three additional visits to the school.

If you would like to find out more about this rewarding voluntary role, please contact Hildenborough CE Primary School directly.

ruth.ardrey@hildenborough.kent.sch.uk or call 01732 833 394

Ruth Ardrey - Headteacher

Hildenborough Road Races – Suspended due to lack of volunteers

Following the race last year, I resigned as Race Director and a number of the committee also felt it was time for them to step back as well.

Despite hunting since last summer, we have been unsuccessful in finding new volunteers who wish to commit to organising the races and therefore, sadly, the races will not be going ahead this year.

Amy Pay – former Race Director

PRINCESS CHRISTIAN'S FARM: 2026 EVENTS

Spring: Lambing Open Days (4-5 April) & Spring Tours (7-17 April)

Summer: Tractor Open Day (20 June) & Summer Tours (3-28 August)

Autumn/Winter: Wreath Making (27-28 Nov), and Christmas Open Day (12 Dec).

Info: 01732 838 408

www.princesschristiansfarm.org.uk

Riding Lane, Hildenborough, TN11 9LN



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PARENT NETWORK SESSIONS

THE FAMILY ROOM, ST JOHNS CHURCH,
TONBRIDGE RD, HILDENBOROUGH

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9 MAR, 13 APR
11 MAY, 8 JUN
12-1.30PM

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LUNCH

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INFO@WKAPSS.ORG.UK

MENDELSSOHN'S

ELIJAH: Join the Sevenoaks Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra for a performance of this acclaimed masterpiece.

When: Sunday 29th March, 3pm.

Where: Pamoja Concert Hall, Sevenoaks School.

Tickets: £5-£17 (+ fee). Book at www.thespacesevenoaks.co.uk/sps or call 01732 467 765.

SEVENOAKS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Experience a powerful program featuring Delius's impressionistic **Paris**, Elgar's **Sea Pictures** (with mezzo-soprano Rebecca Hart), and Holst's iconic masterpiece, **The Planets**.

When: Sunday 8th March, 3pm

Where: STAG Theatre, Sevenoaks

Tickets: Adults £22, under-26s from £5. Book at www.stagsevenoaks.co.uk or call 01732 450 175.

REPAIR CAFÉ TONBRIDGE 2026

Where: St Stephen's Church, Waterloo Road, TN9 2SW **When:** 10:00am – 12:30pm (Last repair accepted 12:00pm)

Upcoming Dates: Sat 14 March | Sat 11 April | Sat 9 May

Repairs: Electrical, Electronics, Mechanical, Wood, Clothing, Textiles, and Sharpening. **Cost:** FREE (Voluntary contributions welcome). Enjoy refreshments at the café!

Contact: tonbridgerepaircafe.uk | 07470 141 035

Hildenborough in the news

Garrington (a property finding service) recently listed Hildenborough in 18th place out of 1,447 on their best places to live in the UK. We scored particularly well on wellbeing and house price, quality and value.

(Editor - I think the local magazine has something to do with it too!)

HILDENBOROUGH



FARMERS' MARKET



morning. Farmers' Market - we love you and thank you, each and every one of you."

A regular volunteer at the Market is Susan H who thinks "It is a lovely place to go to see lots of people who I have known for years and catch up

Have you visited the Farmers' Market? If the answer is "no" then here are two reviews. It is always nice to hear from our customers and volunteers about the Farmers' Market and on speaking to one of our very regular customers Jenny L she said this:

"From the moment we arrive to a warm welcome right through to the time we leave with our bags full of wonderful goodies we are truly blessed. We enjoy friendly chit-chat, catch up on news and are often on the receiving end of friendly banter!"

There's a terrific selection of stalls and every one of them is manned by kind and friendly folk who will give help and guidance if needed.

There are also visits from the police, a financial adviser who is also the Keys Magazine Editor and local Councillors from the Parish Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council advising on local matters. There's a great team of volunteers manning the coffee, tea and biscuits area and keeping the tables cleared [I bet they don't realise just how much they are appreciated]. There are always activities for children during the holidays. I can think of no better way to spend a couple of hours on a Tuesday

with them.

The stalls have a variety of goods to buy. The bread is very tasty as are the cakes. It is very relaxing to sit and drink coffee. My grandchildren love coming to buy bits, look at the Lego stall and have a drink. They also enjoy the activities during the school holidays"



The Easter holidays are coming up and as always, we will be organising some free Children's Activities so what better way to fill a Tuesday morning and entertain your kiddies during the holidays with an activity, tea/coffee/squash and cake!

The Farmers' Market is held every Tuesday in the Village Hall in Riding Lane from 8.30 am to 11.00 am. If you have any queries or questions, please contact the Manager Nick on managerhildenboroughfm@gmail.com.

Hildenborough Cricket Club fixture list. Eynsford and Hurst Green are new opponents.

Full List:

3/5 Hadlow Away
10/5 Petts Wood Away
17/5 Lamorbey Park Home
24/5 Mereworth Away

31/5 Kent Ramblas Away
7/6 Brasted Invicta Away
14/6 Kilndown Away
21/6 Capel Development Away
28/6 Horsmonden Home
5/7 Hurst Green Home
12/7 Wrotham Home
19/7 Leigh Away
26/7 Mereworth Home

2/8 Farningham Away
9/8 Wrotham Away
16/8 Petts Wood Home
23/8 Kent Ramblas Home
30/8 Wateringbury Home
6/9 Wateringbury Away
13/9 Eynsford Away
20/9 Brasted Invicta Home
27/9 Hunton Wanderers Home

Hildenborough Gardeners' Society

First, some words of caution. On Wednesday 4th Feb, we found that someone had broken into our garden store in the Recreation Ground, crowbarring off the bolts and locks. As there was nothing of great value inside, nothing was taken, and no damage was done internally. Please take care to keep your valuables and tools securely locked up, as there are some undesirable people about in the village.

Our Spring Show is set for March 28th, and we hope to see many of you there with your spring flowers, as we gradually leave winter

behind. As ever, plants are completely weather-dependent, so our fingers are crossed. Our second talk of the year comes on March 13th at 7 p.m. – on Sissinghurst Castle gardens.

Membership for the year will be £7, and can be paid at the store or at any of our talks and shows. Hard copies of handbooks will be available to members for collection, and will be available online too.



David Haugh



Owl display in the village hall - a review

Since we have lived in Kent, we were for many years members of an Ornithological Group and in that time have had the pleasure of seeing all five species of "British" Owl.

We were entranced by these marvellous creatures, but our experiences could not compare with the close up encounters that we and 85 other Villagers had on the above evening.

Daniel Clark of UK Owl and Raptor Centre brought five Owls from their base at Groombridge Place with colleagues Liam and Grace to demonstrate these wild creatures to an audience fairly sprinkled with children of all ages. We were seated in one of four rows arranged in twos either side of the length of the Hall. One Owl at a time, the birds flew

close over and between us and at rest we could view a bird at close quarters.

This was 75 minutes of fascinating action which was expertly described by Liam who conducted a commentary throughout which was both informative and amusing.

The Owls involved were from Britain, Barn and Long Eared, Boobook (Australia), Southern White Faced and Milky Eagle Owl both from Africa. The last, named Kofi, had a wing span of 1.8m whereas the rest were of modest proportions except Zazu the White Faced Owl which was tiny.

Daniel has been coming since 2019 and only missed in "Covid" year. They intend to come, again, next Winter, if possible so keep a watch out. Something not to be missed!

Pat Davies

The Night Sky - March

Of the major planets, Jupiter remains master of the evening sky, ensconced within the borders of Gemini, the twins.

During the first few days of March, it is at its greatest altitude lying due south and just over 60° above the horizon around 8:30pm. If you recall that the angular distance from the horizon to the zenith (the overhead point) is 90° then Jupiter will be two thirds of the way "up". If you have binoculars then take a look to see if you can find any of the four Galilean moons (Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto). These are the four brightest out of Jupiter's total of 97 natural satellites. They are referred to as Galilean because it was Galileo who first saw them in 1609 and 1610. If you do look for Jupiter's moons you will need to be able to hold your binoculars steady either by using a tripod or by leaning them against a wall or fence.

Jupiter's moons are important in astronomical history because they played a part in proving that light travels at a finite speed.

At a time when the determination of longitude on board ship was a problem, a method of finding local time, and therefore ultimately longitude, was being sought. One suggestion, initially from Galileo, was that it should be possible to use one of Jupiter's satellites (Io) as a kind of clock by publishing tables that predicted when Io was being eclipsed by the body of Jupiter. However, it was found that it was difficult to predict such events accurately because, in some cases, they occurred earlier than expected and sometimes later. It became obvious that the times were always late when Jupiter and Earth were further apart in their orbits but were earlier when the two planets were closer to each other.

Ole Rømer, a Dutch astronomer, reasoned that when the two bodies were further apart, the light had a greater distance to travel and so it took longer for the light from Jupiter to reach Earth and so the eclipse was late. It follows that when the planets are closer, the distance is less and the eclipse is early. Rømer didn't actually work out the speed of light himself but he provided the data for the Dutch mathematician, Christiaan Huygens, to do so.

In case you're wondering, the moon Io was chosen because, out of the four Galilean moons, it is the closest to Jupiter and would therefore yield more eclipses over a given period. Galileo's idea of using Io and Jupiter as a clock was largely unsuccessful because it was far too delicate an observation to make from the heaving deck of a ship. It was, however, possible, with care, to carry out the observation on dry land.

Saturn is now lost in the evening twilight but Venus is appearing low down, due west towards the end of March. Look around 6:30 to 7pm from the 15^{th} onwards to see the evening star emerging. It will become more prominent in the coming months and in June will have a coming together with the giant planet Jupiter.

The Earth reaches the spring, or vernal, equinox on 20^{th} March at 14.46. The centre of the Sun will then lie exactly over the equator and day and night are of *approximately* the same length.

Don't forget that British Summer Time (BST) begins at 1am on Sunday 29^{th} March when clocks should go forward by one hour. It remains in place until 2am on the 25^{th} October.

Brian Mills FRAS

Evening WI: For our February meeting we welcomed Jo Hall who gave us her talk "Mud, Mirror and Thread."

Jo told us about the start of her career, her training in London and becoming a designer, her first job in London designing uniforms for big companies. By chance she went to Sevenoaks market and met a man selling hand block-printed materials, this meeting changed the whole course of her life-three months later she was working for his company in Jaipur. This was the start of her love of India and where she would go on to build the foundations of her company "Bazaar" which she has now been running for nearly 30 years. She travels to India once or twice a year and spends time designing and organising patterns, clothing, and jewellery to eventually sell over here.

Jo talked about the different trades and the development of the relationships she has built with all the workers and their families. She bought along some beautiful examples of different materials and explained who would have made them and for what occasions. She explained some of the processes involved in making the textiles, such as block printing, the different natural dyes that are used and the time some fabrics can take from design to production.

Jo shared photographs of some of the people and places she visits and along with all the different materials and her talk, it gave us a fascinating insight into the development of her company and the amazing relationship she has with the different regions of India and all it's amazing people.

After Jo's talk we had some refreshments and time for a chat.

We then covered all the WI business and shared information of any upcoming events.

Our next meeting is **Tuesday 10th March 2026** when we will be having a talk from Dean Caston- "Queen Elizabeth II-A Lifetime of Service".

Hildenborough WI meets once a month and gives members the opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills, and have fun. We always welcome new members, so please feel free to drop in and say hello.

Please note our meeting time, we meet in the family room at the Church Centre at 7.15pm for a 7.30pm start.

Lorna Stapley-President

the WI
INSPIRING WOMEN

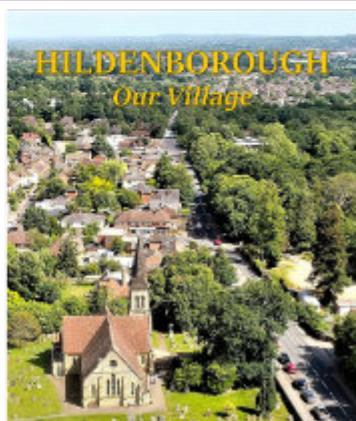
HILDENBOROUGH – OUR VILLAGE

Discover the history, character, and key people of Hildenborough in this new book from the Hildenborough History Society. From its first documentation to the present day, it is beautifully illustrated with photos, maps, and artwork.

Price: £20

Available From: The Church Office

Contact: 01732 833 596 or
office@stjohnshildenborough.co.uk



T.M.B.C. News

Finance.

Or the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement as it is otherwise known. Yes it is finance time again. The provisional settlement was published on the 17th December 2025 and it incorporated changes to the Local Government Finances under what has been titled Fair Funding 2.0 and the Business Rates Reset.

The information received by TMBC on the 17th confirms that a large number of the previous grants issued are now 'rolled up' into the settlement under Revenue Support Grant.

The settlement covers financial years from April 2026 to March 2029, this is considered a welcome addition as it allows greater financial planning for TMBC in forthcoming years.

As part of the settlement the Government prepares a Core Spending Assessment to detail the resources available to the Council as a whole. It should be noted that Tonbridge and Malling see the second highest reduction in its Core Spending Assessment for authorities in England. (First place went to Market Harborough District Council) But it should be noted that this assessment included a notional amount for Council Tax Revenue to be raised by the authority.

This is based upon the Council Tax and Taxbase for 2025/26 but then allows for the assumption that the band D amount will increase in line with the referendum principals and taxbase increases.

To demonstrate consistency, the Government has provided a 'notional settlement' for 2025/26 financial years to allow comparison to the new settlement calculations.

The calculated figure for Government Support in 2025/26 is £9.163m.

Council Tax is expected to fund the Core Spending Assessment rises from 59.0% in 2025/26 to 64.4% in 2028/29. To put this 9.8% reduction in Government funding into monetary terms the

reduced amounts accumulate to £1.594m over the settlement period.

Empty Properties.

Unfortunately there are a number of residential properties across Tonbridge and Malling that are and remain empty, some for many tens of years.

These empty properties are generally liable for Council Tax. However, housing associations with charitable objectives may qualify for a "Class B" exemption for up to six months, provided the property will be reoccupied within that period in line with those charitable objectives.

Other properties that remain empty for more than 12 months (except in certain exceptional circumstances) are subject to an additional premium on top of the standard Council Tax charge:

Over 1 year but less than 5 years standard Council Tax plus a 100% premium, over 5 years standard Council Tax plus a 200% premium, over 10 years standard Council Tax plus a 300% premium.

Properties that have been empty for less than six months are typically those undergoing a change in ownership or tenancy. It is common for a property to remain vacant for a short period while sales are completed, or tenancy arrangements are finalised.

As at 16 December 2025 there were 995 empty properties across the borough.

This includes all properties from those empty for one day through to long term empty properties.

Even Clarion Housing Group reported at the end of September 2025, that they had 117 void properties within Tonbridge & Malling. Clarion have stated that considerable new resources have been put into their void works teams, for their properties in the Tonbridge & Malling area.

Water Supply.

Last month I mentioned that the water supply companies are not consultees with

regard to planning applications. Meaning TMBC does not have to ask them if they are able to supply water to any new properties. Well would you believe it, the Government have produced a white paper (50 pages long) setting out their plan for water. We will have to wait and see, you can search for DEFRA white paper water.

Thermal Imaging Camera.

TMBC residents are making use of the TIC, which can help to show, cold spots and heat loss in homes. Due to demand a second camera has been purchased. Please contact TMBC (Climate Change Officer) if you wish to borrow the TIC.

And Finally, Behind You.

During the late 1970s I was involved with The Masque Players, residents might remember them putting on two plays a year in Hildenborough village hall. Well, there are some new kids on the block,

Hildenborough Amateur Dramatics Society. As I write they have just finished their first production of Cinderella in the church hall, which was very well supported with 3 out of the 4 shows sold out. I know all the cast and crew worked very hard to make it a complete success. Please contact them if you feel like joining in, in any way.

Contact me.

Please do not hesitate for one minute, about contacting me on Borough Council matters. If you would prefer a home visit in private, just let me know.

Council Meetings.

Please remember Council meetings are still streamed on You Tube, however public attendance is permitted in the Council Chamber.

Cllr Mark Rhodes

Borough Councillors

Kath Barton
c/o TMBC, Gibson Building, Gibson Drive,
Kings Hill, ME19 4LZ
Kath.Barton@tmbc.gov.uk

Mark Rhodes 01732 914 166
39 Cranford Road, Tonbridge
mark.rhodes@tmbc.gov.uk

TMBC - 01732 844 522

Kent County Councillor

Harry Rayner 03000 421 606
harry.rayner@kent.gov.uk

Contact the Parish Council via
clerk@hildenboroughparishcouncil.gov.uk
or by telephone (07818 329 029)

**Hildenborough PC, Riding Lane,
Hildenborough, TN11 9HY**



Hildenborough History Society - from the Archives

There are many treasures to be found in the Archives of HHS. One such is the minutes of the committee meetings of the Hildenborough Choral Society from 1954 to 1977, generously donated by Roger Hayward. (Roger's mother Peggy and her close friend Mary Fleming were pillars of the society, Treasurer and Music librarian respectively.) These beautifully-kept hand-written Minutes are a mine of information, well worth exploring, complete with lists of members, posters, photos and accounts.

awarded first place in 1957 and 1958. A gem from the Minutes is a photo of Mr Sutton triumphantly holding the trophy aloft!

The programme for 2 December 1956 shows the society performing the Vivaldi *Gloria*, Vaughan Williams *Folk Songs of the Seasons* and a sequence of Carols, in the Village Hall. The venue is significant - at this date St John's Church had a choir of boys and men - women were not allowed to join. Perhaps it was this lack of opportunity for the ladies to sing that led to the revival of the choral society.



In 1961 Mr Sutton resigned and was replaced by Mr George W Smith. Although there was much regret at Mr Sutton's departure the appointment of Mr Smith was a great success. Under his *'inspiring and genial leadership'* (AGM 1966)

the choir went from strength to strength performing well-known works from the classical choral repertoire such as Stainer's *Crucifixion*, and in 1967, Handel's oratorio *Samson*, complete with professional soloists and a semi-professional orchestra.

There had been a choral society in the village on and off since 1905 but the Society only really took off in 1954 under Mr Rupert Sutton as conductor. The Minutes tell us that the aim was to present two public concerts a year and take part in the local music festivals. A constitution was established; rehearsals would take place in the Drill Hall; subscriptions were agreed. Happily, the society was blessed with an enthusiastic and determined conductor. With an initial group of 27 singers (8 sopranos, 7 altos, 4 tenors and 8 basses), the choir quickly achieved success at the Tunbridge Wells Music Festival being

Sadly this success was not to last. When in 1968 Mr Smith resigned the news was received *'with great dismay'*. Eventually he was succeeded by Mr Gordon McAllister who no doubt did his best but had a hard act to follow. In spite of some interesting and challenging programmes (Rossini - *Petit Messe Solennelle*) and attempts to join forces with other local

choirs, the number of singers fell, and in November 1975 he declared that the Committee *'should seriously consider disbanding the society'...*

The final entry is for the committee meeting on the 17th March 1977, setting out plans for the 1977/78 season. Quite what happened thereafter is not known. At the time there would have been increasingly strong competition from bigger societies such as Sevenoaks Choral and Tonbridge Philharmonic. Roger Hayward remembers that Mary Fleming and his mother Peggy Hayward both went on to sing with the Penshurst Choral Society (which flourishes to this day.)

At the time of writing choral singing has never been more popular. Perhaps 2026 will be the year for the Hildenborough Choral Society to be revived once more?

Charles Vignoles

P.S. The picture is of The Choral Society in 1957 with their winning cup and certificate. Unfortunately we don't have a list of their names if any KEYS readers can identify anyone for us. We have a roll for 1959 if that could jog memories.

From our MP: Tom Tugendhat

In 2021, I was sanctioned by the Chinese Communist Party for speaking in Parliament about the persecution of Uyghurs in north-western China. For more than a decade, many have faced severe repression, and I have continued to press the UK government to stand firmly against human rights abuses.

Since then, we have also seen serious allegations of spying in Westminster, debated the proposed new Chinese embassy site in London, and raised more serious questions about our national security and values. We are facing a hostile state that is trying to undermine us here in the UK.

That is why, when the Prime Minister travelled to China earlier this year, I hoped that the case of the British Citizen, Jimmy Lai, who remains imprisoned in Hong Kong, the hostile actions of the Chinese state online, and the treatment of the Uyghur people, would be central to those discussions.

Instead, I learned at the end of the visit that I and several other MPs had been removed from China's sanctions list.

While that may sound like a positive step, it isn't. It's a distraction from far more important issue: the freedom and rights of those still suffering persecution.

These may seem like distant international matters, but they reflect the kind of country we are and the principles we stand for, the goods and services we trade and the relationships that we rely on in times of global conflict. It is important that we remain clear about the challenges posed by authoritarian governments, and that we do not compromise our values for short-term convenience.

If you would like to read more about my work on these issues, you can find further updates online, or you are always welcome to contact my office.

E-mail – tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk

Phone – 01732 441 563

Post – 130 Vale Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1SP

Website – www.tomtugendhat.org

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram - @tomtugendhat

Tom Tugendhat

Centre Piece

From Hildenborough Parish Council - <https://www.hildenboroughparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Contact: Louise Jenner (Clerk) - 07818 329 029 clerk@hildenboroughparishcouncil.gov.uk

Postal Address: Pavilion and Recreation Ground, Riding Lane, TN11 9HY

The Parish Council's green post box is located at the rear of the Pavilion Building

Hildenborough Parish Council Invites Residents to Annual Parish Meeting

Hildenborough Parish Council is inviting local residents to join them for this year's Annual Parish Meeting, an opportunity for the community to come together and hear updates on the Council's work over the past year.

Councillors will be on hand to share progress on key projects and answer questions from residents. A number of local clubs, groups, and associations will also be present to showcase the vital work they do within the village.



The event offers a great chance to discover new activities, meet community representatives, and sign up to local



groups making a difference in Hildenborough

Date: Thursday 12th March

Doors Opens: 7pm Hildenborough Village Hall

Local Clubs & Organisation Talks Start: 7.30pm

Parish Council Update Start: 8.40pm

Hildenborough Residents Invited to Share Ideas for Unused Land Near Doctors' Surgery

Hildenborough Parish Council is inviting residents to put forward their ideas for a small unused area of land located on the right-hand side as you enter the doctors' surgery.

Councillors are keen to hear how the community would like to see this space utilised, and are encouraging suggestions that could benefit residents or enhance the surrounding



environment.

All ideas are welcome, and the Parish Council hopes this will spark a creative conversation about how best to make use of this small but valuable piece of community land.

Hildenborough Calls for New Flood Warden Volunteers

Hildenborough, do you know your flood risk?



SCAN HERE TO CHECK YOUR RISK



Environment Agency

Visit gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding for advice on how to:



Check your flood risk



Sign up for free flood warnings



Make a personal flood plan

Residents of Hildenborough we are seeking a few extra volunteers to support our community. The role is vital in helping local households prepare for

Know the signs!



FLOOD ALERT

PREPARE

- Prepare a bag that includes medicines and insurance documents
- Visit gov.uk/flood



FLOOD WARNING

ACT

- Turn off gas, water and electricity
- Move things upstairs or to safety
- Move family, pets and cars to safety



SEVERE FLOOD WARNING

SURVIVE

- Call 999 if in immediate danger
- Follow advice from emergency services
- Keep yourself and your family safe

Floodline

0345 988 1188



Incident Hotline

0800 80 70 60

flooding, stay informed during severe weather, and coordinate support when water levels rise.

Volunteers share updates, monitor conditions, and assist vulnerable residents. On-line Training is available. No previous experience is required—just a willingness to help.

Anyone interested in becoming a Flood Warden is invited to get in touch and learn more about how they can play a part in strengthening Hildenborough's flood resilience.

www.hildenboroughparishcouncil.gov.uk

Contact Hildenborough Parish Council Parish Clerk at 07818 329 029 or email clerk@hildenboroughparishcouncil.gov.uk.

The Parish Council's green post box is located at the rear of the Pavilion Building on Riding Lane.

Louise Jenner

Wordsearch - Love and serve one another

On Maundy Thursday we recall the final command that Jesus gave to his disciples before his death. After the Last Supper, He rose and washed his disciples' feet. This was astonishing for a 'teacher' to do, but He had a firm purpose in mind: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." His disciples were to love through service, not domination, of one another.

In Latin, the opening phrase of this sentence is 'mandatum novum do vobis'. The word 'mundy' is thus a corruption of the Latin 'mandatum' (or command). The 'washing of the feet' ceremony was an important part of the medieval church's liturgy, symbolising the humility of the clergy, in obedience to the example of Christ.

Maundy
Thursday
Final
Command
Jesus

Disciples
Death
Last
Supper
Washed

Feet
Astonishing
Purpose
Teacher
As

Loved
you
Must
One
Another

Service
Domination
Latin
Ceremony
Medieval
Humility
Obedience

N	A	T	C	Y	E	F	N	D	R	M	Y	E	N
T	I	I	E	R	D	L	I	M	I	Y	F	P	T
P	O	T	S	E	O	I	A	N	O	T	H	E	R
N	S	B	A	V	F	U	C	U	A	I	E	N	S
T	L	T	E	L	N	C	E	O	C	L	O	O	J
R	H	D	T	D	A	T	R	B	M	I	I	E	D
E	T	U	Y	Y	I	V	W	E	T	M	S	A	R
P	S	S	R	Y	N	E	E	A	N	U	A	P	T
P	U	E	A	S	T	O	N	I	S	H	I	N	G
U	M	R	O	L	D	I	M	C	D	H	R	U	D
S	H	V	P	H	M	A	O	E	E	E	E	D	S
D	T	I	D	O	D	G	Y	V	R	H	M	D	O
S	T	C	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	S	A	S
Y	T	E	A	C	H	E	R	A	U	O	C	I	R

Crossword Clues

Across

1 Arouse (Song of Songs 2:7) (6)

4 Extinguish (Isaiah 1:31) (6)

8 "They — —," you will say, "but I'm not hurt!" (Proverbs 23:35) (3,2)

9 Unhappiness (Nehemiah 2:2) (7)

10 Jewish (7)

11 Dirge (anag.) (5)

12 'A truthful witness gives honest —, but a false witness tells lies' (Proverbs 12:17) (9)

17 Paul quoted from the second one in his address in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:33) (5)

19 'Do not use your freedom to — the sinful nature' (Galatians 5:13) (7)

21 'As you can see, he has done nothing to — death' (Luke 23:15) (7)

22 Name applied by Isaiah to Jerusalem (Isaiah 29:1) (5)

23 'All the people — — one man, saying, "None of us will go home"' (Judges 20:8) (4,2)

24 Lazarus, who was carried by angels to Abraham's side when he died, was one (Luke 16:20) (6)

Down

1 Appalled (Job 26:11) (6)

2 'In an — to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea' (Acts 27:30) (7)

3 Expel (Acts 18:16) (5)

5 'But I have a baptism to —, and how distressed I am until it is completed!' (Luke 12:50) (7)

6 'Of the increase of his government and peace there will be — —' (Isaiah 9:7) (2,3)

7 Hurry (Psalm 119:60) (6)

9 'For I desire mercy, not —, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings' (Hosea 6:6) (9)

13 One of its towns was Sychar, where Jesus met a woman at Jacob's well (John 4:5) (7)

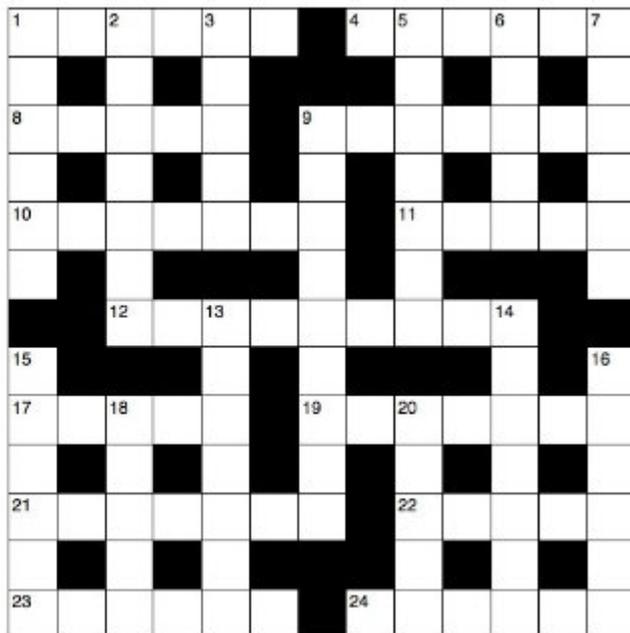
14 Shouting (Acts 7:57) (7)

15 Arachnid (Isaiah 59:5) (6)

16 One of Paul's first converts in Philippi was Lydia, a — in purple cloth (Acts 16:14) (6)

18 Donkeys (5)

20 Raked (anag.) (5)



Sudoku - easy and medium puzzles

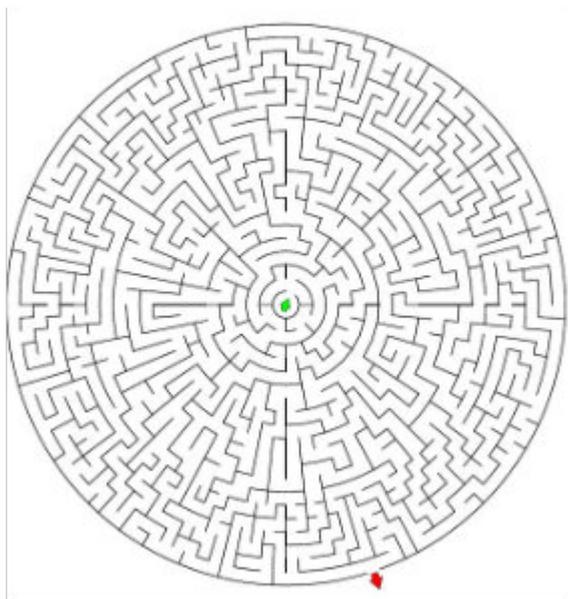
7		9					8	3
5	4		9	3	1			
			2					4
4	5			1		8	2	6
	6						3	
8	9	2		6			4	1
9					3			
			5	8	6		1	9
6	3					2		8

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2				3	4	1		
	1		8					5
		6		9				
5							6	
	2	4		7		8	3	
	6							2
				8		6		
6					4		2	
	4	1	9					8

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Maze - can you find your way from the green arrow to the red?





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IFA: Rob Mansfield DipPFS

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The advertisement for Bouncy Castle Hire features a vibrant orange and red background. At the top center is a colorful illustration of a bouncy castle. To the left of the castle are three red circular icons: 'Local Business', 'Public Liability Insurance', and 'All Pipe Safety certified equipment'. To the right is the 'RODMILL CASTLES' logo, which includes a small illustration of a castle. The main text reads 'BOUNCY CASTLE HIRE' in large, bold, white letters. Below this, it says 'Affordable Bouncy Castle Hire' and provides the phone number '07768367534'. A QR code is located in the bottom left corner, with the text 'Let's Start!' below it. The website 'RODMILLCASTLES.COM' is printed at the bottom of the ad.

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Church Contacts

Home (Connect) Groups
Prayer Chain
Bright Sparks, (Mondays, term-time)
Generation Creation (Sundays)

Church Office **01732 833 596**
Cynthia Fawcus **01732 833 397**
Lisa Glasscote **01732 833 596**
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Community Groups

Evening Women's Institute
Beavers (Ages 6-8) Thurs 5.15-6.30 pm
Cubs (Ages 8-10.5) Monday 6.30-8 pm
Scouts (Ages 10.5-14) Friday 7.30-9 pm
Guides

Miss Lorna Stapley - **07960 174 789**
hildenboroughbeavers8thtonbridgescouts@hotmail.com
hildenboroughwolfcubs@gmail.com
8thtonbridgescouts@gmail.com

Brownies

Sharon Roberts - **07960 782 178**

hildenbrownies@outlook.com

Hildenborough Amateur Dramatics

Rich Lake - **07579 210 122**

Hildenborough Conservation Group

Mrs Lynne Flower **01732 355 080**

Hildenborough Farmers' Market

managerhildenboroughfm@gmail.com

Hildenborough Gardeners' Society

David Haugh **01732 832 869**

Hildenborough History Society

Tracy hildenboroughhistorysociety@yahoo.co.uk

Village Preservation Society

David Vanns **01732 835 289**

Hildenborough Litter Pickers

Emily Simons **07715 113 899**

Hildenborough Parish Council

Louise Jenner **07818 329 029**

Hildenborough CofE Primary School

www.hildenborough.kent.sch.uk - **01732 833 394**

Stocks Green Primary School

www.stocksgreenprimary.co.uk - **01732 832 758**

Stocks Green Pre-School

www.stocksgreenpreschool.co.uk - **01732 834 115**

Oaks Nursery

www.oaksnursery.org.uk - **01732 834 401**

Village Hall Bookings

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West Kent Concert Band

wkcb@muzodo.com

Floodline

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Southern Water (spillage reporting)

0800 952 1001

Hildenborough Speedwatch

jonathan.ashton.bidwriting@gmail.com

KENT POLICE (Non-emergency calls) 101

Hildenborough Sports

Badminton

Kathryn Stewart **07809 299 553**

Indoor (Short Mat) Bowls Club

David Chambers **01732 833 612**

Hildenborough Cricket Club

Barry Webb **01732 838 422**

Hildenborough Friendly Badminton Club

Ivan Kirkpatrick **07730 888 429**

Stoolball Club

Lauren Welch **07999 604 213**

Tennis Club (membership)

www.hildenboroughtennis.co.uk

Hildenborough Road Races

hildenroadrace@gmail.com

Tonbridge Swimming Club

chairman@tonbridgeswimmingclub.co.uk

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MAKING TAX DIGITAL (MTD) FOR INCOME TAX

Making Tax Digital for income tax (MTD IT) will become mandatory for many sole traders and landlords from 6 April 2026 if your qualifying income from self-employment and property exceeds £50,000 in the 2024/25 tax year. It will change how you keep records and report income, and it will affect the way you plan your cashflow and manage deadlines.

Instead of keeping paper records and filing one self-assessment tax return each year, you will:

- keep digital records of income and expenses

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HMRC defines “qualifying income” for MTD as your total gross income in a tax year from self-employment and property, before expenses or tax.

These are significant changes. Early planning will give you the best opportunity to adapt smoothly and avoid any last-minute challenges.

If you would like any advice,
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