

Lydford on Fosse Parish Council

(parish website: lydfordonfosseparish.gov.uk)



Annual Parish Meeting

Meeting of the above named Parish Council held on
Wednesday 9th April 2025 at 1830 hrs in the Parish Hall, West Lydford.

Present: Cllrs. Frampton (Chair), Purcell, Sloggett, Stankiewicz and Steel
Also the Clerk and 14 members of the public

Minutes

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming out this evening for the Annual Parish Meeting and stated that this was not a Parish Council meeting but a meeting for the parishioners and they are invited to speak at any time. It was pointed out that the meeting would be recorded just for help in compiling the minutes and that if anyone wasn't happy with this that they should make it known before speaking.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies given by Cllr Fielding who has been diverted by an unexpected event and Cllr Seehra has a long standing commitment.

2. Approval of minutes of 2024 Annual Parish Meeting

These were approved and signed in the meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

Full report in Appendix (1)

4. Financial Report

Report given in Appendix (2)

5. Somerset County Council Report

Cllr Sully was not present and no report had been received.

6. Planning Report

Cllr Frampton's report as Planning Representative is in Appendix (3)

7. The Local Plan and LCN

Cllr Purcell's report on the Local Plan and the Local Community Network is in Appendix (4)

8. Highways, Pavements & Signage

Cllr Steel began by saying how very difficult it was taking on the position as Highways Representative. There appears to be no forthcoming response or help from SC via their online portals or email communication. The overall response is that nothing is that dangerous that it requires any action to be taken. SC are only keen for their contractors 'Keir' to be approached for quoting any work likely to be undertaken, however, their costs are very prohibitive. No response has been received as to whether SC are going to leave the drains in a fit state before the Parish Council has to take on the responsibility. Any changes to road signage has also proved unsuccessful.

Cllr Steel, along with the Road Safety team, are looking at getting Village Gateways installed when the grants are next available.

All these frustrations have been raised with Cllr Sully who has been sympathetic however further dialogue will probably be mad to SC regarding this unsatisfactory position.

Signed.....

Members of the public raised the point of SC's neglect at clearing up road signs and debris after road closures, and the waste of money it incurs.

Also, that there were two road safety funds, the Police and the Somerset Council.

It was advised that pot holes can be reported via an online link which is on the SC website, and also on the Parish Council website.

9. Footpaths

Unfortunately at short notice Cllr Fielding cannot be with us this evening.

The Chair said that we are fortunate with having a Footpath Representative that maintains our paths and is active as Cllr Fielding is. She works closely with the Ramblers Association installing Kissing gates on many pathways around the village.

Cllr Fielding is trying to complete the signage for the NWA memorial walk which hopefully will be finished shortly.

Cllr Fielding has also been putting up signs to stop cars trying to go up Mardi's Lane as google maps was showing this as a short cut to Keinton. Also, signs for dog walkers to clear up after their dogs.

It was hoped that work to the Millenium bridge was to take place however we have been advised that SC will not be funding this now. Another foot bridge south of Rubbery Farm has also been closed and condemned.

A member of the public raised the wastefulness of SC resources as every few weeks someone was having to come and renew the signs stating to be careful when crossing the Millennium bridge.

The Chair thanked them for bringing this to his attention.

10. Community Engagement

The Clerk read out Cllr Seehra's report in his absence. See Appendix (5)

11. Community Speedwatch

Mr Emsley presented his report on behalf of the Speedwatch Team, which can be found in Appendix (6)

12. Neighbourhood Watch

Mrs Mitchell, the representative for the NHW team read out her report. Please see Appendix (7)

13. Lydford Sports Club

Chairman of the Lydford Sports Club, Mr Lee's report is in Appendix (8)

14. Parish Hall Report

Mrs Jameson, chair of Lydford Parish Hall management Committee, read out her report. Please see Appendix (9)

15. Flood Risk Management Working Group

Mr Spencer set up a Flood Working Group after experiencing two major floods in the area last year

to try to mitigate any future risks. His report can be found in Appendix (10)

Several discussions took place amongst residents regarding their concerns, the causes and outcomes of these floodings.

16. Lydford Forest Gardens

Mr and Mrs Pauley sent their apologies. Their report was read out by the Chairman, please see Appendix (11)

17. St Peter's Church

Mr Berry, member of the PCC and Church Warden, read out the report for St. Peter's Church. Appendix (12)

Signed.....

18. Lydford & District Gardening Club

An entertaining Gardening Club report was read out by Mrs Mitchell, please see Appendix (13)

19. Walters & Pope Charity

Report as per Appendix (14), also read out by Mrs Mitchell

20. Scrapbags

This small handicraft group's report was read out by the clerk, see Appendix (15)

21. 3rd Tuesday Group

This report was also read out by the clerk, see Appendix (16)

After all formal reports were given, with no further discussion from the public, the Chair closed the meeting.

Meeting closed at 20.35

Minutes prepared by Ann Parkhouse, Parish Clerk

Signed.....

Appendices

(1) Chair's Report – Annual Parish Meeting, 9 Apr 25

- I'd like to begin by **thanking all the representatives** of the various community clubs and groups that have taken the trouble to be here or who have submitted written reports.
- As I said earlier, this is **not a Parish Council meeting**, it is your meeting which the PC facilitates. You are very welcome, and I encourage you to engage throughout. As a PC, it is an invaluable opportunity for us to understand what you care about, and why. So please do feel free to join in.
- This year has seen a **refreshing of the Parish Council's membership**. We said goodbye to Cllrs Bartlett, Persson and Stockings, and our Clerk, Julie Nicol, and we thank them for their hard work and efforts on behalf of the PC and the wider Parish. In their place we have welcomed Cllrs Sloggett, Stankiewicz and Steel, and Ann Parkhouse as our new Clerk – albeit she has plenty of previous experience in the role, and in keeping us all in order !
- Like many Town and Parish Councils in Somerset, this has been an increasingly busy period. The **financial emergency** faced by Somerset Council means that we are having to understand how the reduction and possible loss of many of the 'non-statutory' services that Somerset Council provides will affect us as a community, and what we can do about that. We must also strive to influence the Local Authority's remaining decisions, such as urging it to keep Dimmer Lane Recycling Centre open.
- This now means that we have had to shift to a **new financial model** of holding greater reserves so that we do have the capacity to mitigate issues that arise at short notice, as we can no longer rely on Somerset Council to do so.
- This is perhaps most apparent in **Flood Risk Management**. In the last 15 months, we have had 3 major flood events in the Parish, and been left disappointed by the support received from not only Somerset Council, but also from the Environment Agency and the Emergency Services. We have therefore agreed that we will acquire Flood Response equipment, and will work with our Flood Risk Management Group to prioritise the writing of our Emergency Response Plan, as you will hear later.
- **Other areas** where we have sought to address issues or improve circumstances in the Parish include:
 - Short-term improvements to the **Playground** on the Sports Field, in conjunction with the Sports Club. However, we have to recognise that this facility is approaching the end of its practical life, and we will need to start to focus on options for its replacement – or reluctantly consider its removal.
 - We have now completed the installation of **defibrillators** throughout the Parish, and established a checking, cleaning and reporting regime to ensure that SW Ambulance Services' Emergency Operators always know that they are ready for use. We have also agreed to acquire and install 2 **bleed kits**. One will be installed by the river as part of the

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extension of the Church Car Park this summer; and we are still negotiating a suitable site for the other in the vicinity of the Cary Road/A37 crossroads.

- o We facilitated the **pollarding of 2 London Plane trees** in West Lydford that were blocking the light, damaging the adjacent driveways and presenting a skid hazard during periods of leaf fall.
- o The **War Memorial has been cleaned** in preparation for the commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day next month.
- o The PC is also looking at additional measures to address speeding traffic passing through the Parish, as Cllr Steel will outline.
- o Cllr Fielding has continued to do a sterling job in maintaining our **footpaths** and upgrading their access points with kissing gates to make them accessible to a wider range of users.
- We have also transitioned the Parish Council website and email accounts to the “.Gov.UK” domain. This is an official public system that brings additional security benefits.
- We are, of course, blessed to live in a beautiful rural community, and the PC is striving to keep it that way. We welcome responsible visitors, and recognise the well-being benefits of all the natural beauty that our Parish has to offer. But some of our visitors are sadly not responsible, and we have seen a marked rise in the amount of dog muck left by inconsiderate dog walkers – despite having bins for this waste on or near most of our most popular walks. This is not just unsightly and unpleasant, but presents a genuine hygiene risk to farmstock and children. Undoubtedly it will continue to focus our attention as summer approaches, and the number of visitors increases.
- Finally, we expect the law regarding **how Parish Council meetings are held** and attended to change soon – the Government has indicated its intention to do so. At present, Town & Parish Council meetings must be held in person. In future, by exception, Councillors will be able to attend ‘remotely’. This means that we may also be able to offer the opportunity for members of the public to join our meetings online. If and how we make this happen will depend on how much interest there is from Parishioners. If we get it right, we hope to increase participation in Council meetings – and that can only help us to be a better and more representative PC. In the meantime, do please feel free to join any of our meetings in person.
- I will now hand over to the Clerk, as the PC’s **Responsible Financial Officer**, to present the Financial Report.

(2) Finance Report for Annual Parish Meeting 2025

Good Evening

Little did I imagine that I would be sitting here as the parish clerk after a lapse of 20 odd years!

How time flies, and I must say that the job certainly isn’t any easier the second time around.

Well, another financial year for the parish council has come to an end.

We began the year with a balance of £30213.83. This amount included the precept for the coming year of £14k. And we have ended the year with £21723.93.

We have kept in a good position against our budget forecast for the year which was £19848.33

The main outgoings for the year are on – Sports Club Ground and Play Area Maintenance, staff salary and donations made for the benefit of our village.

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With so much uncertainty within SC and the expected cuts to the services usually provided by them, it was decided to keep this year's precept at the same level as last year of £14K

We also now have a 3yr budget plan, with some funds being built up to maintain and replace assets over time, and other contingency funds to allow us to meet unexpected events, such as any need to take legal action or to cover short notice by-elections.

We already know that the cost of emptying litter and dog bins on parish land will now fall to the parish council this year.

With the poor state of our drains and ditches it could prove very costly to get them to a viable condition if SC were to leave them in their current state.

We constantly strive to maintain our balances in the healthy position they currently are.

(3) Planning Report – Annual Parish Meeting, 9 Apr 25

- **Our Approach to Planning Applications** – Parish & Town Councils are not decision-making bodies when it comes to Planning Applications; we are consultees who are offered the opportunity to represent the views and interests of the Parish on applications that fall within its boundary. In addition, through training and experience, we are able to focus on considerations that are considered material by SC's Planning Officers and its Planning Committee. Before considering any application at a PC meeting, the Planning Member – currently me – will attempt to contact and discuss it with the applicant and those most immediately affected by it. The one piece of advice that I would offer to anyone that is considering submitting a planning application is to discuss your plans with your neighbours first.
- **Planning Applications** - In the last year, Lydford on Fosse Parish Council was consulted on 12 Planning Applications and one appeal against a Somerset Council Planning Department decision.
 - Two applications were submitted under the principle of 'Permitted Development', meaning that no recommendation was sought from the PC as the applicant believed that they had a right to make the changes proposed without planning permission. However, one of the 2 was subsequently rejected by Somerset Council on the grounds that permitted development requirements had not been met.
 - Of the remaining 10 applications, the PC agreed to recommend approval of 8, and recommended that 2 be refused.
 - The PC decided that it did not have the detailed legal understanding to offer a meaningful comment on the planning appeal.
- **NPPF** - The planning landscape has evolved considerably over the last year. The new government has reversed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework that were introduced in 2023 and introduced other changes to make it easier to secure approval for new developments, in line with its manifesto. Many of these changes are aimed at making the development of brownfield sites in the green belt easier, but others could reduce the voice of local communities in influencing decisions on large proposals that will impact their area.
- **Local Plan** - At present, the development area for our Parish and its new housing targets are all defined in the Mendip Local Plan. But this will be replaced from 2028 by a new 'Somerset Local Plan' which will then be in place until 2048. The Parish Council is engaging proactively in the

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consultation process through which this new plan will be developed. We expect this to become increasingly busy over the next 18-24 months, but it is essential that we are as involved as we can be in order to protect the interests - and possibly the character - of our community in the long term.

- **Somerset Local Validation Checklist** - Finally, Somerset Council has recently released a reference document which summarises all the information requirements for planning applications. It is called "The Somerset Local Validation Checklist", and it aim to help applicants meet both national and local council requirements.

(4) The Local Pland and LCN

Mendip Local Plan Parts 1 (Strategy and Policies) and 2 (Sites and Policies) continue to remain in place and form the basis for planning decisions until the Somerset unitary Council, established in April 2023, have formulated their new Plan now anticipated in 2029.

The plan that I mentioned last year to relocate housing from the north of Mendip to the 10 site allocations which focused on the towns rather than villages e.g. Glastonbury 96, Street 110. Midsomer Norton 225 and several others totalling 544 dwellings is now in the final stages and being reviewed by a Government Inspector.

Somerset East (formerly MDC) is still showing a shortfall in its 5 year housing plan now running at about 3.5 years.

Our Local Community Network (LCN) has met regularly over the past 12 months and still top of the agenda has been Flooding, Highways and Footpaths for which Working Parties are still very active. The future of the Dimmer Recycling facility which I mentioned last year has still not been clarified by Somerset Council.

Lydford are in the east Somerset LCN for which the map in front of you (hopefully) indicates our position west of Lovington, Alford and Castle Cary. Possibly one of the advantages of being in this particular LCN is our closeness to Castle Cary where I believe many of us attend the Doctor's, Dentist or other facilities.

The next meeting of the LCN is planned for 7pm on 30th April at Henstridge Village Hall.

(5) Community Engagement Report

Firstly, many apologies for not being present this evening.

As promised in last year's report The Lydford on Fosse News Facebook page has been successfully set up. Village news is regularly posted and hopefully people are finding it useful. There are only 61 members at present but hopefully this will grow given time.

I also mentioned producing a questionnaire to gauge our community's expectations of their Parish Council. Sadly, this project hasn't progressed at all, for which I apologise!

I will try my best to get something going soon.

A lot of local information is shared through the Lydford Village Info WhatsApp group and the Lydford Bulletin via email.

I'm willing to set up a WhatsApp group to convey Parish Council matters but I'm not convinced that this is the right platform or how popular it would be!

Latest reports such as traffic notices, SC reports, PC minutes, news and info etc continue to be published on our website now on its new gov.uk domain: **lydfordonfosseparish.gov.uk**

Signed.....

(6) Community Speedwatch

The SpeedWatch team currently consists of five ladies and two gentlemen. Despite articles in the Parish magazine, we have not been able to persuade any further volunteers to join.

We undertook 90 monitoring sessions last year and we operate at the following five sites:

B3153 The Rookery (east of the traffic lights)

B3153 The gas installation (west of the traffic lights)

B3153 Toy Farm

A37 Near the Motorhome site

A37 Bridgefoot

On the B3153 Cary Road we have counted on average between 250 to 260 vehicles per hour. This figure has remained more or less the same for the past three years. The fastest vehicles recorded were 50mph in the 30mph limit, and 66mph in the 40mph limit.

On the B3153 to Keinton Mandeville we recorded on average between 330 to 340 vehicles per hour. The fastest vehicle was recorded at 62mph.

On the A37 the fastest recorded vehicle was also 62mph, with an average of 604 vehicles per hour.

It is worth noting that 2.4% of vehicles counted over the five sites were speeding.

A total of 740 speeding vehicles were reported direct to Avon and Somerset Police. These details are then put together with the registered keeper's details and one of two letters are sent to the keeper. The first letter is to draw the driver's attention to the speed recorded, however, if the speed is excessive a sterner warning letter is sent. Registered keepers of an excessive speeding vehicle who live local are likely to receive a visit from a Police Officer or a Community Support Officer. Currently there are thirty teams operating throughout Mendip with Shepton Mallet, Street, Frome and Pennard coming onstream soon when the team have been trained. The Lydford team are regularly in second or third place in Avon & Somerset for the highest number of sessions completed in a month. There are six other districts within Avon & Somerset which operate SpeedWatch teams.

Members may be interested to learn that the Mendip SpeedWatch procedures are setting the standard for the rest of the County. The recent Annual General Meeting of the Mendip SpeedWatch teams there were over fifty representatives from the different teams together with various high-ranking Officers from A&S Police.

As was mentioned earlier in this report we have seven volunteers, but we would welcome more people.

Come and see us in action and it may whet your appetite. Contact the Lydford Coordinator at lydfordcsw@btinternet.com

(7) NHW Notes Parish Assembly April 2025

The Lydford's continue to be a safe place to live and work! We enjoy a low crime rate when compared with other areas. The community thrives through its friendliness helped along by the variety of clubs and organisations.

Tim Richards our PCSO based in Street is helpful, reassuring and approachable. He drops by when he can and helped with resources when the A37 was flooded in January this year. A new beat manager has recently been appointed – Charlotte Bradley, she is familiar with the area.

I am aware of a couple of break-ins over the year and most recently a bag stolen from an unlocked car in Church Lane – unfortunately I have no further details about this. A car driver ended up in the deep ditch in the early hours of the morning by Grove Cottage – the residents contacted the police and the driver was breathalysed and found to be 3 times over the limit.

The police make the point that people often feel they don't want to report minor matters in fear of wasting police time - what the police don't know about, they can't deal with! So I would ask members of the community to report all incidents which may be linked to anti-social behaviour and criminality. Residents would never be criticised for making a call with good intent if when checked it turns out to be innocent.

NHW is understandably not in the forefront of everyone's mind but it is an important part of our village life and provides support, reassurance, and information when required.

Thanks to both my NHW colleagues and the Parish Council for their support.

Lynne Mitchell lydfordnhw@gmail.com

Signed.....

(8) Lydford on Fosse Parish Hall report for the 2025

The volunteer Committee arranged a number of Moviola Films and welcomed regular Clubs, societies and family events to use the Hall throughout the past 12 months.

As ever, the Hall's availability can be seen on our website and we do hope we can accommodate.

Improvements to the Hall for 2025 are beginning with the electrics and the kitchen, particularly the ovens and hob. The Committee is keen to make practical alterations yet make sure bookings cover costs. In addition, we donated to the Car Park renovation project, bought the Hall's defibrillator and paid for it's fitting costs as part of that wider project too, which in total mean overall the Hall has made a loss this FY. However, the Committee believes in both projects and we were happy to contribute.

The Hall is here, run as a Charity, for the community and we genuinely hope we can help whenever asked, so please do ask. In addition, we are happy to support user groups through our media feeds so please see these for details of events, let us know of others you'd like us to share or promote and please do follow us on Facebook [@lydfordparishhall.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/lydfordparishhall.org.uk) .

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Carolyn for her weekly cleaning and thank the bookings for leaving the hall ready for the next users. But, please can I urge all groups to clean after themselves, especially the kitchen, such as the oven, as the next group doesn't need to be cleaning first, after the previous user.

And finally, my very sincere thanks to the great Committee for everything they have done, yet again this year, to maintain this fabulous community asset.

In the spirit of transparency, after 7 years and longer than I originally intended, I shall be stepping down as Chair at the 2nd July AGM and although feelers are out this still needs to be filled. Other posts will be rotating too so a please, anyone can volunteer and the vote will happen that night. It's a lovely team and I look forward to supporting events in the future too.

Sue Jameson - Chair, Lydford Parish Hall Management Committee. Registered Charity 1099268

(9) Flood Risk management Working Group

Since the 2 flood events at Bridgefoot in January and February 24, and the subsequent meetings and discussions with the various authorities involved in Somerset, the following actions have been taken to mitigate the risk of flooding:

- In August 24, Somerset Council completed a CCTV survey of the underground sections of the culverts which run alongside and underneath the A37 at Bridgefoot, from the Fair Place junction. Although no report received, the company carrying out the survey stated that the culverts are clear.
- In November 24 a team of parish residents cleared debris, fly tipped rubbish and other items from the ditch behind the lay-by on the A37 which has helped the flow in high rainfall events.
- The Axe Brue IDB have completed their annual survey and clearance of the East Lydford Rhyne (Oct 24). Bridgefoot Rhyne was not completed.
- Bridgefoot Rhyne remains a cause for concern – it was surveyed the week before last and this was the report from IDB:
"We have now carried out a site visit of the watercourse we have been discussing about recently, and have decided we presently do not have the correct equipment to carry out this task, so I will now have a contractor to carry out the maintenance work which is required, which will then give us the ability to access this rhyne in the future. The watercourse itself looks to be in good condition and doesn't hinder the flow in most places. So some light maintenance will bring it back into order once more, therefore leaving it better for our team to gain access in future years."
 - The residents of Bridgefoot Farm, David and Sue and Bridgefoot Lodge, Martin and Jules, whose land borders the rhyne, both express their concern as to their knowledge, clearance of the Rhyne has not been completed for at least 5 years and there are some serious blockages.

Signed.....

- o Jeremy has the contact for IDB and will be following up with them to define a clear timeline for the works. Assistance from the Parish members (people and tools!) may be required to help the clearance effort later in the year.
- Good news that David and Sue have moved back into Bridgefoot Farm in late January after more than 12 months being displaced. Sadly within that week we had another flood on the A37 which was similar in nature and flow to last years events. Thankfully, due to some measures put in place last year (front gateway boarded to stop water getting through and front door sandbagged) water did not enter the house. Their gravel driveway was washed away again which has since been put back. They have action in hand with a company called Floodstop who will install flood gates to ensure that any future flood water will remain on the A37 and enter into the Brue via the rhyne below the first weir.
- We understand that other residents were also affected (Lou Lou – West Lydford?) hence we need to review the risk map and update it. The issue is that the nature of flooding cannot be predicted effectively, what stayed dry in one event may flood during the next. We need to be better prepared across the Parish.
- It was good to see in the last week or so that Mill Farm have commenced clearing the mill stream adjacent to their property, which will help alleviate the volume of water in the Brue during high rainfall. It would be good to see the millstream cleared all the way along its length to the top of the second weir at some point this year, subject to property owners support.
- Jeremy will liaise with Jim in regard to flood kits for the Parish and engage again with the Rotary Club EVAG team to provide the required kits, subject to PC approvals.
- Jeremy & Jim will finalise the Flood Risk Plan in the coming months to enable access to the Government Grants via Somerset Rivers Authority to fund flood mitigation measures.

(10) On behalf of the Trustees of Lydford Forest Gardens

Lydford Forest Garden has continued to thrive, thanks to the recruitment of two new Trustees who have helped to galvanise involvement from new friends and supporters at our Work Days.

The herb garden was planted up with herbs donated by villagers in a metal trough and three trugs that were also donated by villagers. Two new benches have been made by one of our Trustees, which are awaiting installation. We have made a start on the wilderness area, where we hope to install a bog garden in addition to the existing fern bank.

The biggest job, completed this year, after much work and effort by a number of villagers and friends, was the laying of the riverside hedge. The garden is now visible from the public footpath and we hope that this will reduce any antisocial behaviour. The spare brush was used to create a dead hedge to protect the adjoining riverbank which is suffering erosion due to overuse by wild swimmers.

At our last Work Day, the fruit trees and bushes were given a good prune and the perimeter hedge tidied after its annual trim. At our next Work Day we are hoping to replace the double gates, install the benches and a second herb trough and make a start on the bog garden.

Work is currently taking place on redesigning our website to make it more interactive. Another ongoing project involves creating a leaflet to distribute to new villagers and those who don't know about Lydford Forest Garden.

We are hoping to have a social event one evening in the summer – details to follow.

The donations from the 'Friends of Lydford Forest Gardens' fund the costs of maintaining the garden and paying for our public liability insurance with Zurich.

We are always keen to recruit more 'Friends' and further Trustees to oversee the maintenance of this lovely village resource and thereby ensure its future.

Naomi Pauley

Signed.....

(11) Report to the Parish Assembly April 2025 for St Peters Church

The church building of St Peters is in some ways at the centre of the village, being near the hall and car park where people meet to go to church, hall functions or go for local walks. We do aim to keep the area looking tidy and an attractive place to visit.

The service rota throughout the benefice has remained the much the same as in previous years. The services here are a 10.30 service on the first Sunday of the month and an 8.30 on the last Sunday of the month. These services alternate between Holy Communion and Morning Prayer to accommodate parishioners preference for different services. We also hold the main festival services and occasional benefice service. There were 5 baptism services over the year with 10 being baptised, 6 funerals or services of thanksgiving, but no weddings.

Attendance to services has risen slightly over the past year, especially for the larger services, Remembrance Sunday, Carol Service and Keinton School Carol service. We have also continued with our Tea and Talk meetings on a Sunday afternoon, roughly on alternate months, when we invite speakers from different organisations or charities to come and speak to us, with any money raised at the meetings going to the organisation or charity concerned. This is run on as a benefice initiative and become very popular and open to every one. We also hold bi monthly House Communion in the hall on a Wednesday afternoon, to enable those who are unable to attend church on Sundays to come, and also to enable us to give lifts to those who need them.

On a finance note, the Parish Share we have to pay to the Diocese of Bath and Wells has now risen to roughly £14000 per year, to cover cost of clergy and the diocese expenses. Although this may seem high, we are subsidised by other parishes as this does not cover the full cost of our Parish. This amount is raised from donations and collections before we think about spending on the building, in the community or giving to charities, which as costs keep rising is becoming ever more difficult.

A team of volunteers has kept the churchyard in good order over the year, with all the rain last year it was non stop. In November we had an Autumn tidy up morning with many volunteers from the village coming down to help which was very much appreciated. For the coming year we are paying for a contractor to keep the grass cut, to give our ageing volunteers a break. We are very grateful for all those who help the PCC in many ways in keeping the church open, be it, cleaning, flower arranging,,unlocking the church at weekends, watering, visiting, churchyard tidies, reading etc at services, all very much appreciated.

The fabric of the church is in reasonable order, though we are having to look at the parapets of the North Aisle as they are starting to lean into the building. We also are having the path to the vestry relaid this summer with reconstituted, blue lias stone as the present path has become uneven and very slippery when wet. The work on extending the parking area of the car park should also be started shortly. We, the Car park committee with the PCC have raised over £ 8000, from events, donations and grants to cover the cost of this. On behalf of the committee and PCC, I should like to thank all those who help raise the money and especially those who contributed to the fund and the sizeable donation from the Parish Council. We trust that this work will not only make the car park more user friendly, but also help protect the War Memorial from damage by vehicles. During the coming year we are also looking at improving the heating in the Church, as the present heaters are very out dated and some are ceasing to work.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as wish to come to services or visit the church in the coming year.

(12) Lydford & District Gardening Club

The Lydford and District Gardening Club has been in existence for over 20 years. This is approximately 20 times longer than the average tenure of a modern-day football manager.

It has a membership of approximately 45, a figure which has been consistent for the past few years.

Members come primarily from all parts of the Lydfords with a good number also coming from Keinton.

The Club meets 11 times a year giving itself a rest during August when most members are on their yachts in the Mediterranean. The usual format is to meet in the Parish Hall and have a speaker, chosen for their knowledge, entertainment and understanding of the needs of keen horticulturalists. However, refreshments are also offered on the second Tuesday of the month and the home-made biscuits, which are always available, have developed a reputation of their own. If only a member had suitable technical skills, these biscuits could have become a viral social media phenomenon.

There is also a raffle at each meeting and prizes have included socks from Glastonbury festival, home baked loaves of bread, bird houses and peanuts!

A recent development has been the creation of a website - lydfordanddistrictgardeningclub.co.uk which carries lots of interesting articles and is attracting members.

Signed.....

Subscription rates are very reasonable, coming in at less than the price of a decent bottle of wine for a whole year's entertainment and instruction. There are moves afoot for the Club to take over the responsibility for the floral decoration around the war memorial in the Parish Church car park. Mrs. Cooper will be an impossible act to follow. Meetings are the equivalent of wrapping oneself in a gorgeously soft and comforting, green-fingered blanket. Who could wish for more than that?

(13) Walters & Pope Charity

Since 1716 a Trust Fund, with a small annual income, has existed for the well-being of the people in Lydford. The Trustees are keen to maintain this tradition which also keeps alive the names of the original benefactors. A get-well gift may be sent to parishioners who are recovering from illness, but one-off support can also be offered by purchasing books for students undergoing tertiary education, or tools for apprentices, or even to those starting a second career or business.

In practice, this has not been required much in recent times, but it was suggested a few years ago (when the village shop closed and a local focal point was lost) that a Welcome and Pop-in Café could provide a regular meeting place for the benefit of people in Lydford. (The name of "Welcome and Pop-in" comes from the first initials of the Trust!)

Three of the Trustees (Ann Parkhouse, Lynne Mitchell and Caroline Seehra) took on the responsibility of setting up the Café in the Parish Hall and initially provided free tea, coffee and home-made biscuits/cake (donations welcomed!) once a month. This was expanded to soup lunches in the winter – with three choices of soup, together with rolls or cheese scones – and all free.

In 2024 the Trust offered 4 soup lunches, 6 coffee mornings and one Christmas Special Café – with mulled apple juice, mince pies, etc. Any costs incurred were covered by donations received, with the exception of the Christmas Café donations, which were sent to Crisis at Christmas. These occasions are quite popular and seem to be well-supported.

The Trust also purchased two defibrillators for the village, and sent out a hamper or flowers to 4 residents recovering from illness/hospital stays.

Trustees of the Trust are:

Rev. Jane Durham, Ann Parkhouse, Lynne Mitchell and Caroline Seehra

(14) ScrapBags

ScrapBags is a quilting group that started up within the village.

The contact person for the group used to be Marion Topp.

As most of you will know Marion and Andrew have now moved away from the village to be near their children.

So the new contact person for Scrapbags is now Anne Fleming

Currently the group only have 5 members, which is why they have decided, as a group, to open up their meetings to encompass most crafts; like knitting, crochet, embroidery or macramé and bobbin lace.

The group meets on the first and third Thursday of the month between 2 and 4pm in the parish hall.

If anyone is interested in joining the group you would be most welcome.

And further details can be found on the notice boards.

Anne Fleming

Signed.....

(15) Third Tuesday Group

Lydford Third Tuesday is a friendly women's group who meet 10 to 12 times a year, usually on the third Tuesday of the month. We have a varied programme each year which includes outside speakers, talks and demonstrations by members, outings and social evenings. And there is always time for coffee and a chat with friends.

We are self-funded and annual membership has been reduced this year to £12. We welcome women visitors from Lydford and surrounding areas to all our events - and we invite men & children to those where we think the topic is of more general interest. Visitors pay £2 or £3 depending on the event.

This year's programme includes:

- Talks on subjects such as Animal Welfare; Skincare & Beauty; and Hedgehog Rescue;
- Outings to Kilver Court and the Owen Barry factory in Street;
- Social events in the parish hall or at the Cross Keys, plus a summer picnic and a Christmas get-together.

We have 24 members this year. Some of our members have lived here for many decades and others have only recently moved to the area - so Third Tuesday provides a nice way to meet up with friends, old and new!

If anyone would like further information please take a look at our website: <https://thirdtuesday.wixsite.com/thirdtuesday> or contact us at lydfordthirdtuesday@gmail.com

Signed.....