



CRANBROOK & SISSINGHURST

PARISH COUNCIL

ABOUT US

Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council serves an exceptionally beautiful and commercially significant swathe of the Weald of Kent. The attractive market town of Cranbrook and the nearby pretty village of Sissinghurst form the nucleus of a vibrant and diverse community bounded by ancient woods and forests and enclosing rich farmland.

The varied landscape and the vagaries of history have shaped both the character and appearance of the area. The Union Windmill symbolises the crucial role of agriculture in the region while the magnificent St Dunstan's Church recalls the prosperous medieval cloth industry. Cranbrook School, founded in 1518, is a powerful presence in the town, a constant reminder of the importance of youth and the future within a historic context. The potent attraction of historic buildings is perfectly exemplified by Sissinghurst Castle Gardens – a world famous, much visited National Trust property with a fascinating past.

Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council is dedicated to preserving its remarkable legacy by fostering an environment in which farming, education and tourism can continue to thrive and benefit local businesses and services.

Our Parish falls within the Borough of Tunbridge Wells and is represented in Parliament by the Member for Maidstone. Roughly equidistant and easily accessible to these two important urban centres, the Parish has nonetheless preserved its rural aspect and a remarkably high level of self-sufficiency.

A market town since 1289, Cranbrook is still the obvious choice of shopping for the surrounding villages as well as residents and workers in the town. The diversity of retail outlets includes several specialist stores that attract shoppers from a great distance. Sissinghurst has a thriving village shop and popular public house. There are monthly Farmers' Markets in the Vestry Hall and Sissinghurst Castle Gardens which underlines the continuing importance of agriculture to the local economy.

Importantly the Parish Council took on the car parks in Cranbrook to ensure that they remain free to the end user. They have been much improved and an enormous amount of work has been carried out to make them all more attractive and an asset to the Parish.

The offices of the Parish Council are based in The Old Fire Station situated in the centre of Cranbrook at the top of Stone Street adjacent to St Dunstan's Church steps.

The Old Fire Station has been stylishly converted to create the Weald Information Centre, housing the Parish Council and officers from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. A meeting room named after a local hero, Addison VC, provides a useful venue for parishioners to access advice and information.

Details of the 15 elected Parish Councillors, 4 of whom represent Sissinghurst, are displayed on the wall outside and notices of community events and activities are regularly updated in the roundel on the pavement opposite the doors.

Lori Ham, the Parish Clerk, and Laura Larkin, her Deputy, oversee the day-to-day business of providing the services and co-ordinating the needs of the community. All the activities of the Parish Council are reported in quarterly newsletters available free from the Weald Information Centre. The Council is always answerable to its electorate and residents of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst are invited to attend public meetings of the Parish Council where they can witness and influence the workings of this important engine of local government.

The responsibilities of the Parish Council are many and varied and include the management and maintenance of the Churchyard, the burial grounds at Golford and Sissinghurst, the War Memorials, recreation grounds, allotments, litter bins, public seats, street lighting and Vestry Hall.

The Parish Council is supportive of all initiatives to promote the prosperity of the town. Sensitive to the potentially conflicting interests of historic preservation and commercial development, the Parish Council plays a pivotal role in defining policies that affect the quality of life in the town.

Projects like “Cranbrook in Bloom” foster a sense of pride in the town while enhancing the attractiveness of the streets and public places. The Parish Council is keen to endorse schemes that boost the economy without compromising the natural beauty and historic context of the town.

The aim of Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council is:-

To improve the quality of life for our parishioners

VESTRY HALL, CRANBROOK

The Vestry Hall was built in 1859 from the proceeds of the sale of stock of Sissinghurst Castle Farm.

Originally there was a market under the Hall; this was later used by the Fire Brigade to house the fire engine and after the Second World War it was used as an Ambulance Station.

In 1906 the Council Chamber was built over the flat roof of the open space between the Hall and the Caretaker's Cottage.

The management of the Vestry Hall passed into the care of the Parish Council from The Vestry in 1894.

Vestry Hall Cottage is currently let to the Caretakers of the Vestry Hall. The Undercroft of the Vestry Hall was converted into the Weald Information Centre in 2005 and the accommodation is shared with the Borough Council. It contains the Parish Office, a one-stop-shop for the Borough and an area known as The Addison VC room which is hired out for surgeries. The postal address is officially known as The Old Fire Station and many of the original features such as the old fire station doors were retained.

The Main Hall and Council Chamber are let for many different purposes. The balcony in the Hall is also to let at an additional charge. The Council Chamber is still used for the majority of Council meetings.

BURIAL GROUNDS

The Churchyard of St. Dunstan's Church, Cranbrook

The Churchyard became a closed burial ground in 1935, and at the request of the Diocesan Authorities, the Parish Council became responsible for its maintenance. This entails the mowing of all grass and the care of certain paths, walls and trees. The paths from Jockey Lane Car Park to the Churchyard steps and from the steps to Cranbrook School and from Jockey Lane Car Park to Cranbrook School are Public Rights of Way and the responsibility of Kent County Council. The land (including trees) still remains the property of the Church.

All burial records are held by the Church and The Friends of St. Dunstan's.

Cranbrook Cemetery

The four and a half acres of land for the cemetery in Golford Road was acquired by the Parish Council and opened in 1905. Full records of all burials are kept by the Clerk.

There is a Chapel at the Cemetery, which is non-denominational and unconsecrated. The Chapel was built in 1905. The Architect was Alfred Williams of Convent Garden and the Builder was F. Marshall and Son.

The Parish Council are entirely responsible for the management of the Cemetery, the mowing and general maintenance of hedges, ditches and drainage and the maintenance and upkeep of the Chapel. The Mortuary in the Chapel was converted into a disabled toilet in 2007.

Burial fees are fixed by the Parish Council, and their permission is necessary for the erection of memorials. The rules and regulations of the Burial Grounds are set by the Parish Council.

Grave digging and payments to the Clergy are all arranged by the Funeral Directors.

The Chapel now benefits from beautiful stained glass windows, designed by the late Michael Woodford with the glass designer being Isobel Ackery. The first window was installed in 2004. Fundraising by Garry Blanch enabled a further seven windows to be installed and a final dedication service was held in May 2008.

Sissinghurst Cemetery

The Cemetery of 1.5 acres was bought by the Parish Council from Lord Cornwallis in 1902 and is situated behind the Primary School with absolute right of access over the former primary school property for vehicles and pedestrians. The Parish Council is entirely responsible for the management, mowing and maintenance of hedges and drainage. The first burial took place in 1905.

Burial fees are fixed by the Parish Council and their permission is required for the erection of memorials. Rules and regulations of the Burial Grounds are set by the Parish Council. Grave digging and payments to the Clergy are the responsibility of the undertakers. The new section was laid out and a drainage system installed in 1996.

Cranbrook War Memorial

The War Memorial is the property of the Parish Council. The Parish Council is responsible for its maintenance and upkeep. The Memorial was erected on land gifted by Colonel Campion CB and unveiled on Armistice Day 1921 by Colonel Walter C. Horsley and dedicated by Rev. W.R.F. Addison VC. The Architect was Major J. Burgess Scott, who was also the designer of the tablet in St. Dunstan's Church which was part of the scheme, and the carving and construction was carried out by Messrs. Jenkins & Co. of Torquay, the memorial is made of Portland stone. The Parish Council is also responsible for the grounds and the perimeter walls.

Sissinghurst War Memorial

The War Memorial is in the grounds of Trinity Church and the Parish Council was asked by the Parochial Church Council to take on the responsibility for the Memorial. This was agreed in April 2012 and subsequently the Parish Council is now responsible for keeping the Memorial in good order.

RECREATION GROUNDS

Ball Field, Cranbrook

The Ball Field and land in Jockey Lane (now a car park) were given in Trust to the Parish Council in 1928 by Mrs. Murton. The Field amounting to seven and a half acres was given as a recreation ground for the Parish and no charges may be made for any activities taking place on the field apart from collections for charity and a small payment by the Cranbrook Town Football Club for the use of their pitch. The Ball Field and Jockey Lane Car Park are now part of the amalgamated Tomlin Murton Playing Field Trust.

The fields are presently maintained by our grounds contractors as is the hedge on the boundary with Waterloo Road.

The Playground equipment is provided by the Parish Council, as are the seats and litter bins.

The bowling green was bequeathed to the Parish Council under the terms of the Will of the late Lord Amulree. It is leased to the Bowls Club, and maintenance of the grounds and hedges are their responsibility.

Jubilee Field, Sissinghurst

The Jubilee Field was originally acquired by the people of Sissinghurst for the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria and was transferred to the trusteeship of the Parish Council in 1956. The Field is 1.91 acres and is for the recreational purposes of the residents of Sissinghurst.

The field is currently mown by our grounds contractors. The hedges are the responsibility of the Parish Council.

The toilets are on ground leased to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. These toilets were built and are maintained by the Borough Council.

At the rear of the Jubilee Field is an area given to the Parish Council (part by Mrs. Bringloe and part by Mrs. Skinner). This area is used as tennis courts by the Tennis Club who pay the Parish a peppercorn rent.

Crane Valley

The Crane Valley was sold to the Parish Council by the former Rural District Council. It was originally an Adventure Playground. It proved very difficult to maintain as such, due to vandalism, and it is now an open space with some play equipment and seats which are maintained by the Parish Council. It has the River Crane running through it at the lower end. The area is mown and the banks of the River Crane are strimmed by our grounds contractor who also cuts the boundary hedges. An area to the south of the Crane Valley and Crane Brook is registered at a Nature Reserve and is maintained and managed by the Kent High Weald Partnership under contract. There is a skate/bmx area which is the responsibility of the Parish Council.

A further small area near the public toilets was purchased by the Parish Council in 1986. Land known as The Orange Land which is between the Tanyard Car Park and Crane Valley was acquired for £1.00 from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

King's Head Well, The Tanyard, Cranbrook

Dr. Thomas Joyce handed over the King's Head Well to the Parish Council in 1896 for the benefit of the inhabitants of Cranbrook generally. Dr. Joyce was the first Chairman of the Parish Council of Cranbrook.

Tomlin Ground, Angley Road, Cranbrook

The Tomlin Ground of six and a half acres was given in Trust to the Parish Council in 1930 by Mr. Tomlin of Angley House. The Cricket Club had a 99 year lease of their ground under this gift.

The Cranbrook Rugby Football Club have a lease of all the grounds at an annual rent. They are responsible for the maintenance of the grounds, adjacent hedges and woodland. They have a Club House which is the responsibility of the Club to maintain. In 1987 an additional area of land at the rear of the Tomlin Ground was given to the Parish Council and is also leased to the Rugby Club.

The Ambulance Service have a Hub on the entrance into the Tomlin Ground following the closure of the Ambulance Station in Doctor Hopes Road.

Angley Cottage which is part of the Tomlin Murton Playing Field Trust is at the edge of this land and is currently let by the Parish Council. The rent derived has to be spent on the upkeep of the Cottage and the recreation ground which form part of the Tomlin Murton Trust i.e. The Ball Field.

CAR PARKS

Jockey Lane Car Park, Cranbrook

Jockey Lane Car Park forms part of the Tomlin Murton Trust. The car park was previously leased to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council but was handed back to the Parish in August 2013. The Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance of the car park.

Regal Car Park, Cranbrook

The Parish Council lease the car park from the Borough Council. The handover took place in August 2013. The Parish Council is responsible for the upkeep of the car park and lighting during the lease period.

Tanyard Car Park, Cranbrook

The Parish Council lease the car park from the Borough Council. The handover took place in August 2013. The Parish Council is responsible for the upkeep of the car park and lighting during the lease period. We are also responsible for keeping the culvert grill clear.

ALLOTMENTS

The present allotments cover an area of 4.83 acres. Approximately .85 of an acre of which is under the ownership of Kent County Council, but the main area is the Parish Council's property including the entrance from Oatfield Drive.

In 1964 part of the original allotments was sold and from this sale is a sum of approximately £2,010.34 on deposit in the Bank, which may only be used for any scheme to benefit Cranbrook parishioners.

Allotments are let in 5, 10 and 15 rod plots, at rents fixed by the Parish Council.

Allotment holders are responsible for mowing around their own plots, but the Parish Council are responsible for keeping hedges trimmed and the entrance mown, and all other general maintenance.

FOOTPATHS

Public rights of way are the responsibility of the Kent County Council and are thereby maintained by them.

PLANNING

Before reorganisation in 1974 of Local Government, planning applications were only shown to the Parish Council at the discretion of the Rural District Council.

Since reorganisation, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is required to show all applications to the Parish Council. The Parish Council may, and do, comment on all applications but they are not the planning authority and their recommendations are simply comments and have no force in law.

The Borough Council are the Planning Authority.

Because of the large number of applications and the short time scale, a sub-committee was set up by the Parish Council in 1974 to look at the plans, and they are authorised by the Parish Council to make recommendations to the Borough Council without prior approval of Full Council.

STREET LIGHTING

The Parish Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of some of the lighting columns in the Parish. Footway lighting is exactly what it says and is meant only to light the footway between one column and the next. The Kent County Council is responsible for the majority of the lighting on the highway.

Over the last several years, a number of areas have been upgraded by the Council from footway to highway lighting and therefore the responsibility for these lights has moved to the Kent County Council.

The Parish Council currently has a contract with a company to maintain the lights. However, additional costs are incurred for repairs, whether just from normal wear and tear, or due to vandalism. A separate contract is held with another company for the energy supply to the columns.

PROPERTY OWNED OR HELD IN TRUST BY THE PARISH COUNCIL

Angley Cottage
Vestry Hall and Cottage
Cranbrook Cemetery Chapel
War Memorials
Bus Shelters
Benches
Noticeboards

LAND OWNED OR HELD IN TRUST BY THE PARISH COUNCIL

Tomlin Recreation Ground
Ball Field
Jubilee Field, Sissinghurst
Tennis Courts at the Jubilee Field, Sissinghurst
Cranbrook Cemetery
Sissinghurst Cemetery
Jockey Lane Car Park
Crane Valley Recreation Ground & Nature Reserve
Allotment Gardens
Bowling Green
Orange Land, Crane Lane
King's Head Well, The Tanyard

LAND LEASED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL

Regal Car Park
Tanyard Car Park

REPRESENTATION ON CHARITIES AND OTHER BODIES

Age Concern

Dence and Weller Charity

Citizens Advice Bureau

Cranbrook Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Cranbrook Business Association

Cranbrook Museum

Kent Association of Local Councils

King George's V Playing Field, Sissinghurst

Spicers Apprenticing Charity

St. George's Institute, Sissinghurst

Transport Accessibility Group

Cranbrook Tourism Group

Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group

Katharine Elisabeth Wood Trust

Thomas Adrian Veitch Memorial Fund