

## **Berden Annual Parish meeting 7.30pm in the Village Hall 8 May 2026**

**Parish Council members present:** Duncan Murdoch, Weston Steimel, Diane Holt, Kathleen Merino, Harry Wadsworth, Debbie Thomson

**Apologies for absence:** Councillor Janice Loughlin, Katherine Armstrong, David Williams, John Groves.

**Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting 2 May 2025** – Proposed by Diane, seconded by Kathleen, signed by Duncan

**Berden Parish:** Map showing the village boundaries.

**Berden Parish Council ‘What we own’:** Berden Village Hall, playground and equipment, Simon’s Field, street furniture, 3 x defibrillators, War memorial, Village sign, salt bins.

### **Financial highlights year end 31 March 2026:**

- Bank accounts £29,827 (up £1,637)
- Ringfenced £6,753 (election, playground, Repair Café, nature fund)
- Receipts £19,193 (up £3611) being precepts £9,973, grants £927, donations £3880 (Little London), footpaths and VAT reclaimed.
- Expenditure: £17,556 (up £4,665) being Admin £6,004, running and other costs £11,552 including grass cutting, village grants, footpath cutting, new Little London and phone box defibrillators.
- Precepts increased 2.9% to £10,280 (by £307 from £9,973).
- Assets £90,061 made up mainly of £55,901 playground, bus shelter, defibrillators.

### **Footpaths**

- The Parish Council continues to manage the footpath cutting for Essex County Council, this allows for greater control of timing. Two cuts are planned for 2026 if weather makes this necessary. Some paths will be added this year.
- The Parish Council also tries to manage footpaths crossing cultivated fields with **landowners**.

### **Highways**

- A Parish Councillor is still needed for Highways.
- Following a meeting with EEC Councillor Ray Gooding some progress has been made on pot hole filling but residents are still urged to report road defects on the ECC website.
- The Parish Council is currently applying to Uttlesford for a share in the use of a portable road speed sign.

## **Playground and Simon's Field**

- The playground is inspected regularly. A new roundabout for small children is currently being researched.

## **Defibrillators**

- A new defibrillator has been purchased and installed in Little London. The telephone box defibrillator has been replaced and the phone box repaired and painted.

## **National Grid North London Reinforcement Project**

- The Parish Council is being kept informed of the development of Pelham Substation and will make use of the offer of community grants (£535,000 is available for the wider area i.e. Bishops Stortford to Saffron Walden).

## **Planning**

- Two housing developments are currently being proposed.

## **Renewable energy**

- Pelham substation – built
- Crabbs Green – planning appeal hearing March 2026
- Greens Farm – granted
- Hixham Hall – granted
- Stocking Farm/Dellows – granted

## **Reports from Village Organisations**

### **Berden Sports & Social Club**

Membership: 180, which includes 4 Honorary Members, 12 “Free First Year” Members

Committee: 9 members

Bar Rota: Around 26 people

Aim: Our aim is to run the social club for the overall benefit of our village, to run events for members and their guests, and ideally to cover the costs of most of our events.

Social Club Bar: We are delighted with the recent upgrade of the Bar in the Village Hall. Thanks to Kev Smith, Hayden Smith and Harry Wadsworth we now have an upgraded bar that is both attractive and practical. We acknowledge generous financial contributions from the Fete, from the Village Hall Management Committee, and a significant amount of time given by Kev Smith free of charge.

First Aid Training: We are offering a free one-day First Aid training course to residents who are keen to make themselves available for village events. This year it will be on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June, with 9 people booked to attend.

Finances: We are retaining around £14,000 in our reserves.

Events: In the last 12 months we have introduced new and interesting events such as Games Night on the first Friday of every month, a Murder Mystery evening and a Wine Tasting evening. We opened the bar on Easter Sunday for the annual Easter Egg Hunt and served freshly cooked savoury and sweet pizzas.

On the second or third Friday of the month, depending on their availability, we host local food vans, who serve freshly cooked meals at reasonable prices, for consumption in the Village Hall or to take home and eat.

The regular Friday Night Bar is popular with regulars and their guests.

The annual Children's Christmas Party was a great success with around 40 children and their parents present.

We had planned to run a Barn Dance in the Village Hall on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2026, but the high cost of hiring the band coupled with the difficulties of attracting enough people and then guaranteeing break-even tickets sales has meant that we have had to re-think the event. The evening Quiz will go ahead instead as a family fun challenge event with food from the Fete BBQ team.

Other future events include a Murder Mystery on 19<sup>th</sup> September, Wine Appreciation on 10<sup>th</sup> October and a Christmas Sing Along on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

Unfortunately, we have to report that we have not been able to find a suitable location to hold Berden Family Fireworks. The difficulty being (a) to find a location where fireworks will not disturb animals such as horses, (b) to not be a danger to thatched properties and (c) to find a suitable car parking area. We have not given up hope completely, but, at the moment, it is looking increasingly unlikely that the event will go ahead in 2026. We would welcome any suggestions.

John Walker May 2026

Chair of Berden Sports & Social Club

### **Berden Film Club**

Berden Sports & Social Club pays for the annual Public Video Screening Licence (PVSL), which makes the club possible. Thus, all paid-up members of Berden Sports & Social Club are automatically enrolled in the film club, which shows a variety of films in Berden

Village Hall monthly on Saturday evenings. Although, we take a break during the Summer months of June, July and August.

The Social Club Bar is open, and we have a loyal following of around 20 regulars. We aim to show a variety of films from classic British films, through to foreign language films, especially comedies.

John Walker April 2026

### **Berden Book Club**

We are a small group of people, anything up to 10 people at a time, who enjoy reading books and talking about them. Over the past year we have read a wide variety of books suggested by members of the group. Not everyone enjoys every book and sometimes we give up before the end! One book that was a universal hit was about the life of Lee Miller, "Lee", which included many of her famous photos and led us on to show the film "Lee" at the film club.

Generally, we meet in each other's houses every four to six weeks.

John Walker May 2026

### **Berden Repair Café**

We held our first Berden Repair Café on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2025, and since then we have held three more cafés, in September, November and March 2026. Our next Berden Repair Café will be held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June.

Last year in May we were awarded a microgrant of £220 by Love Essex to buy some tools to get started; we were also awarded some money from the 2025 Berden Fete and again in November we received another grant from Love Essex of £220 to buy some additional tools. These have enabled us to buy tools such as a new workbench and grinder and an isolation transformer to make working safer for our electricians. We have a full Repair Café Insurance policy in place with Wessex Insurance.

We have a wonderful team of skilled volunteers who do our repairs, ranging from electrical and electronic repairs, IT problem-solving, bicycle repairs, sewing and jewellery repairs and of course our very popular scissors and tool sharpening. The repairers are very generous with their time, and all repairs are done free of charge, though donations are welcome to ensure the future of the Repair Café. We would love to have more repairers to join the team! We have also offered recycling of unused cables and small electrical items.

Weston has introduced an online booking system which has streamlined the process of making, receiving and logging bookings. Repairs carried out are recorded and the statistics sent to the International Repair Café website. We are also a Linux Repair Café, if you are interested in exploring this option.

An important element is the Café, as this is an opportunity for villagers to chat, and it also helps us to cover some of the essential costs not covered by the grants, such as hire of the village hall and insurance. Once again, we rely on volunteers to bring cakes and sausage rolls for sale and to give of their time to run the café.

In February we were awarded a Certificate of Achievement by Love Essex for helping people in Essex to reduce waste by sharing skills and offering repair services. In June, we will take part in the Uttlesford Big Green Festival, 6<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> June, and we are listed on their event calendar, so do come along to support us at our next Repair Café on 13<sup>th</sup> June!

Kathleen Merino and Weston Steimel May 2026

### **Berden Choir**

The choir performed in a successful and well attended Carol Service December 2025. We have had a couple of new members recently but to enable it to remain an integral part of the Christmas celebrations more people will be required. This year the choir are also taking a role in the Celebration of Music Through Time as a part of the Lottery Heritage activities.

Bronwen Burton May 2026

### **Berden Church**

The pattern of services for Berden continues to be more or less the same. There is a new Sung Evensong on the first Sunday of the month, with a Holy Communion service on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month taken by The Vicar. There is a Morning Prayer service on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month, taken by Mark Trapmore. There has been the introduction of a pet service and also a Sung Holy Communion which is going well. We have had all our festival services such as Harvest, Christingle, the Carol Service and Easter and these have been well attended.

We have also been able to run the Fish Supper and the Harvest Supper. These events continue to be well supported and a good fundraiser.

The Remembrance Day service at the War Memorial in Berden led by Mark Trapmore was, once again, very well attended.

The maintenance of the churchyard has been undertaken by contractors this year with Jon Howells and his volunteer maintenance team doing the occasional work. We would like to thank the Parish Council for their continued financial support with maintenance of the churchyard. John Burton continues to manage the composting bins. Paul

Chapman has continued his work as Treasurer, Janine Jackson-Barr has continued as Secretary and has played the organ for services. Mark Trapmore has continued as churchwarden.

Champing has proven to be very popular once again with many bookings throughout the year. Many thanks go to Natalie & Mark Trapmore for all their hard work with this.

The Friends of Berden Church have continued to support the church and the 50/50 club has also continued to raise money and continue to look for new members.

There have been several concerts which have been very well attended and have raised a significant amount of money for the church as well as various talks organised by Mark. John Burton has continued to run the Bus Stop Shops which are always popular. Much progress has been made with regards to the Tower Restoration work needed following on from the Quinquennial Report. Grants have been obtained and a huge fundraising project led by Natalie Trapmore has meant work will be able to commence late Spring. The PCC has had to register with the Charities Commission in its own right due to the size of income received in 2025.

Mark Trapmore April 2026

St Nicholas Church were successful in securing a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Thanks to National Lottery Players.

With this funding and the incredible support of the local community we have raised enough funds to carry out the tower restoration which is due to start on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May. As part of the grant we are also running a programme of Heritage Activities "Telling the Story of St. Nicholas, Berden"

We have already held bird watches, carried out a botanical audit of the churchyard, been on two trips to the Essex Records Office in Chelmsford, held a 2 day event cataloguing and digitising the Berden Village Archive, provided talks on Berden Church, Maps of Berden and we have lots more planned including Beating the Bounds on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May, talks on Patmore Heath and swifts of Berden, Maurice Ancells memories of Berden, The History of Berden Priory and a stargazing tour

We have a live Music event with Berden Choir on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June to celebrate Music through time and Berden Open Gardens is on 28<sup>th</sup> June with live music, Morris Dancing and vintage bus rides.

We will be reenacting Queen Elizabeth I's 1578 summer progress, where she stopped and had lunch at Berden Priory on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July.

We have an event planned to welcome wildlife to Berden and St Nicholas Churchyard on 15<sup>th</sup> August and an event and exhibition telling the stories of Berden on 5<sup>th</sup> September.

Chris Bishop will be joining us for an evening of short songs and tall stories on 3<sup>rd</sup> October and we will have an event and exhibition re the impact of WW1 and WW2 on Berden on 24<sup>th</sup> October.

We will be reenacting the Boy Bishop Ceremony on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2026 and hope to have a Tudor feast in the church on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2027.

Plus, we recently started our “Heritage Café” which is on the first Friday of the month 10.30-12 until September and people are invited to come and share their stories of Berden.

Natalie Trapmore April 2026

### **Berden Village Hall**

David Williams is stepping down from his role as Chair of the Berden Village Hall. He has been on the committee for 15 years and Chair for five years. He was thanked for his excellent work during this period.

His replacement is still to be announced.

Kevin Smith was thanked for his work transforming the bar.

Harry Wadsworth May 2026

### **Berden Fete**

What a Wonderful Day for Berden Fete 2025! Saturday 6th September 2025 was everything we could have hoped for: a bright, sunny afternoon, pleasantly warm yet not too hot. The Street was alive with visitors enjoying the stalls, games, food and drink, and it was fantastic to see so many smiles throughout the day. From the helpers, contributors, generous donors and volunteers who gave their time, to the entertainers and performers who brought so much energy and everyone else who came along to join in, the whole day had a wonderful community spirit! It was lovely to see so many leaving with great prizes, goodies, and happy memories of the day! The over £10K funds raised has helped support... • Berden Church Restoration & Maintenance • Village Defibrillators • The Repair Cafe • A Village Hall Bar Upgrade • First Aid Training • Uttlesford Food Bank THANK YOU to everyone who played a part in making the day such a success. We look forward to a successful Berden Fete in 2027.

John Groves April 2026

### **Berden Croquet Club**

In 2025 the organisers of the long-running Berden Croquet Tournament decided that it was time for a new look, so proposed a change to a Golf Croquet format, which is a shorter and perhaps less intense form of the game, though still requiring a surprising amount of strategy. The sixteen teams who entered all seemed to enjoy the novelty, and found it easier to arrange matches as these took much less time to complete. So this year we are continuing with Golf Croquet for our competition, and already have a good number of players lined up: if anyone else would like to think about joining, but doesn't

feel they know enough about it, there will be an open afternoon at Dewes Green Farm on Sunday May 17<sup>th</sup> from 3.00 pm for everyone who would like to attend – do please let Richard Little (07836 231 331) or Mary Nelson (07802 695 694) know if you are interested in coming – or just turn up!

Andrew Nelson May 2026

### **Berden Open Gardens**

This will be on Sunday 28 June, nine gardens will be opening. New this year: Vintage bus rides to Berden Priory.

Natalie Trapmore May 2026

### **Protect the Pelhams**

The six woman team that is Protect the Pelhams continues to challenge proposed unacceptable elements of solar and battery schemes.

A recent victory came from Uttlesford District Council refusing Low Carbon for a third time. The Planning Inspectorate will hold the latest appeal in the form of a hearing.

With four out of five Battery Storage Unit schemes already approved, work continues.

Claire Russell May 20206

### **The Parish Magazine**

The Parish News for Berden & Manuden continues to support its community by promoting societies and events and covering topics of local interest. We are keeping afloat, and feedback confirms that the magazine is valued, but we will need to get funds in promptly from subscribers in June/July to ensure we don't end up in deficit. Inevitably we are seeing more activity on social media including WhatsApp meaning fewer subscribers to the magazine, even though the cost of a subscription has not increased for some years (£10 for 10x issues per year for the print version, £5 for digital-only). Likewise, advertisers increasingly use social media to reach villagers, added to which current economic uncertainties have led some advertisers to cancel their spaces.

That said, the magazine is well-supported in terms of its contributors and distributors, and the editors Katherine and Martin would like to thank all those in Berden and Manuden who provide articles and ensure the magazine reaches its readers, as well as Andy at Printjuice and all the local businesses who continue to pay to advertise with us and without whom we could not keep going.

Katherine Armstrong, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2026

### **Cllr Janice Loughlin**

Janice sends her apologies, due to on-going cancer treatment. A vote at full council has allowed Janice a dispensation to be absent for over the usual six months.

She is disappointed not to be able to attend as she really enjoys this meeting!

UDC is in purdah at the moment due to the local elections. The main thing is Local Government Reorganisation.

The UK Government has approved a major reform of local government in Essex, ending the two-tier system of county and district councils and replacing it with five single-tier unitary authorities. This reform aims to simplify governance, improve service delivery, and align councils more closely with local communities and economic geographies.

The five new councils are:

- West Essex Council: Epping Forest, Harlow, and Uttlesford
- North East Essex Council: Braintree, Colchester, and Tendring
- Mid Essex Council: Brentwood, Chelmsford, and Maldon
- South West Essex Council: Basildon and Thurrock
- South East Essex Council: Castle Point, Rochford, and Southend-on-Sea

This model was chosen over alternative proposals, including a three-council option, because it better reflects local identities, community needs, and urban-rural distinctions, while providing a manageable population size for each authority.

### **To close**

Duncan thanked his fellow Parish Councillors and Parish Clerk. He also thanked the various clubs and organisation, the church and Protect the Pelhams.

Meeting ended at 8.30pm