

HEYSHOTT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES: Annual Parish Meeting of Heyshott
Held on: Wednesday 9 April 2025 beginning at 7.00 pm
At: Cobden Hall

Present: Fiona McKay, Chairman of the Parish Council, was Chairman of the meeting
Jane Crawford, Parish Clerk, took the minutes

In attendance: District Councillor Francis Hobbs, Parish Councillors Bridget Adler, Jane Constanduros, Anthea Philip, Simon Hook and Christopher Weeks, Penny Masterton (Cobden Club), Jane Riley (Playground) and 10 other parishioners.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** County Councillor Tom Richardson, Parish Councillor Robert Harris, Father Jonathan Jong, Laura Parry (Bonfire and May Day), Nicholas Sherwin (Murray Downland Trust)
2. **TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2024:** The Minutes had been previously agreed by HPC and it was agreed that the FM should sign them.
3. **THE PARISH COUNCIL**
 - a. **Chairman's report** was published in the Parish Magazine and is on the website.
 - b. **Finance: Budget 2025-26.** Precept: £10,500 (Band D £58.88). For several years HPC had been running a deficit and decided that the budget for this year should be balanced. The Clerk/RFO ran through the figures which included £18,531 of expenditure by the playground and playground lottery grant and fund-raising of £17,399 (the balance was paid from the playground reserves). There were no questions. The budget is on the website.
 - c. **Planning update** – JCD reported
 - Canine Partners site:** The sale had not been gone through yet but was virtually completed subject to various documents being agreed. It was estimated that this would happen by the end of April after which the purchaser would make a Change of Use application to turn the site into a veterinary practice. The new owner would like to meet HPC probably when the plans were ready.
 - Dunford House:** All outstanding planning applications had been withdrawn. The owner had leased the site to a company which planned to turn it into a private members club. As a result of the successful appeal, there was a limit of 139 people at any time and no tents outside. HPC would like to make contact with the new tenant and visit the house.
4. **TO INVITE PARISHIONERS' SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS BY HPC**
 - Rectory common:** JR was concerned that the reed grass was being mown and could damage the orchids. FM said it had not been mown, but there were no sheep this year as they did not like the reed grass and there was not much else for them to eat.
 - Horses using footpaths:** HPC had received an email from a parishioner saying that some people walking along footpaths did not like meeting horses on them. FM asked everyone to pass the word around for riders to please stick to the bridleways.

5. **REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS**

a. **St James Church:** Father Jonathan had sent a report which was read by FM:

“Thank you for inviting a report from the parish church—and I am very sorry not to attend in person: I had so looked forward to being able to come this year.

2024 was a year of stability for St James’s in many ways. The size of our congregation, and attendance at special services, especially during Christmas, remained more or less the same as in 2013. Financially, we have again managed a modest surplus. Our church electoral roll—not to be confused with the civil electoral roll—also remained at the same size. Speaking of which, the electoral roll needs to be entirely revamped this year. Its main official function is to permit you to vote in the election of churchwardens: but it also functions as the unofficial list of members or supporters of the church. If you’d like to join the electoral roll please contact Nick Sherwin. Happily, we celebrated four baptisms and two weddings at the church in 2024; and sadly, four funerals as well, for Mary West, Chris Clayton, Harry James, and Hazel Parry. We are also proud to have commemorated the 80th anniversary of D-Day at the church, with a well-attended service; we will hold services this year too, for the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day. Having completed the electric-and-heating project, we have just had our first winter with the new system in place: it is indeed much warmer, but this is also reflected in our new power bills! Nevertheless, we are pleased to have now spent the funds (meagre as they were...) we received from the sale of Heyshott Rectory, which previously accommodated the Boxley family. We are also especially grateful to Monty for building various things in the church, including the cupboard that hides away some of the electrical controls.

The church continues to offer services every Sunday morning and evening. St James’s continues to work closely with the other parish churches in the Benefice, especially during Holy Week when services are spread across the three churches. This year, Holy Week begins this Sunday, at 10am at St James’s, or 9.45am for the Procession from the foot of Manor Farm.

It continues to be a privilege to serve as your Rector here: you are an easy people to love, which is the essence of the job of the parish priest.”

b. **The Cobden Hall Trust:** Penny Masterton reported

It had been a busy year for the Cobden Hall charity.

The Hall had its usual events: the Murray Downland Trust talk; the Church cream tea and orchid walk; the annual summer show with a record number of entries very much enjoyed by what seemed to be the whole village; the harvest supper and Christmas bazaar. The cinema continued to flourish. The talks have been very successful and included a question and answer session with the MP, Andrew Griffith.

The main event was on 6 June 2024 when the 80th anniversary of D-day was commemorated with a short service in the church after which the congregation gathered outside where the flag of peace was raised followed by a bugle call and 2 minutes silence. Everyone then proceeded into the Hall for refreshments and to view an exhibition of wartime memorabilia belonging to the people of Heyshott which was organised by Martin West. It was planned to have a similar celebration and remembrance on VE 80 day on 8 May.

The first Young Person’s Bursary candidate was chosen, and she would keep the Charity informed about how she was getting on.

It had been a very expensive time for the Charity as they had completed the refurbishment of all three Black Horse Cottages which were now fully up to modern standards of heating and decoration.

c. **The Playground:** Jane Riley reported

The new climbing frame and nest swing projects had been completed in February and were proving to be very popular. The new safety surfacing was working well. Because the playground was so successful, there was a problem with not being adequate parking. Much of the problem was with people parking badly and she hoped word could be passed around. People could also park at the pub most of the time, but should only do so after having a word with Laura to make sure it was convenient.

The grand opening of the new equipment would take place on 19 April at 3pm with drinks and snacks. There would be Lottery Bunting and the Lottery plaque would be unveiled. All welcome to attend.

Playground maintenance: Monty and Laura were sourcing material for the old slide and would do the bolt at the same time. It had been too windy to paint the equipment, but it would be done as soon as the weather improved. The tractor needed a new battery.

They would be removing another dead Ash tree in the autumn.

They would be celebrating their 50th anniversary with a party on 19 July 2025.

The Playground was congratulated on this and on the completion of the new equipment and safety surfacing projects.

d. **The Bonfire and Mayday :** Laura Parry had sent her report

The better weather for last year's Bonfire improved attendance and they made a profit. This year's Bonfire would be on Saturday 8 November 2025.

They were looking forward to this year's May Day (Monday 5 May) with Anya, our May Queen.

e. **The Murray Downland Trust (MDT) Chairman's report** was also read out by FM.

"The Murray Downland Trust has passed its 30th year and is thriving. It now manages 6 grassland reserves across the South Downs, with its newest reserve a freehold reserve at Hurston Warren near Pulborough, and its income is increased following a substantial legacy. Its board has been strengthened with the appointment of a third conservationist, expert herpetologist and ornithologist Paul Stevens, known to many in Heyshott owing to his work supporting the reptile populations on Heyshott and Ambersham Commons.

Two of the MDT's 6 reserves are of course in Heyshott and 3 of its board members are Heyshott residents, so Heyshott remains central to its activities. Surveys show healthy floral and invertebrate populations on Heyshott Scarp and Heyshott Down and an upgrade to Natural England's assessment of the condition of the SSSI has been promised. In 2024 Heyshott Down was thought to be the only site at the top of the Downs supporting breeding populations of both Tree Pipits and Woodlarks and the MDT board will be conducting a site visit in mid-April in the hope that our migrating Tree Pipits will have returned. Weekly volunteer work parties have continued on Heyshott Scarp throughout the winter and the results of that management were rewarded with a good view of a healthy Adder, recently emerged from its hibernation, on the Scarp in early April.

The MDT's stated 50 year lease term of Heyshott Down and Heyshott Scarp comes to an end this year. Discussions have recently recommenced with the Cowdray Estate with a view to a formal extension of that lease. The MDT has security of tenure on the reserves and its management activities will be continuing unchanged regardless of the outcome of those discussions. However, the MDT does have funds which could be invested to improve the condition of Heyshott Scarp for future generations, by refencing to enable a conservation grazing regime to be reinstated and for trees to be underplanted to offset the ravages of ash die-back. The MDT board considers that it will only be able to make that investment once a

satisfactory agreement has been reached with the Cowdray Estate and would be most grateful for the support of the Parish Council should that be needed in ongoing discussions.

The MDT will be conducting Orchid Walks on Heyshott Scarp as part of the Cream Teas event at 3pm on Sunday 8 June in aid of St James PCC. The MDT’s Annual Talk will be given by archaeologist Mark Roberts in the Cobden Hall on the evening of Tuesday 18 November. All are welcome to these events. Please do also support the MDT’s Garden Event, hosted by world renowned sculptor Philip Jackson who will give tours of his work in his garden at Caster’s Brook in Cocking, from 11 am to 3.30 pm on Saturday 10 May.

Wednesday morning winter work parties on the Scarp will recommence at the beginning of October. Some of the current volunteers are not feeling as young as they used to and these work parties need further volunteers to assist in resisting the onset of scrub whilst the Scarp remains ungrazed. We should be grateful if the Parish Council would do what it can to encourage participation (whether regular or occasional) in these work parties – they are collegiate, great for fitness, very rewarding as the results of a morning’s work becomes clear, and all equipment is provided.”

- 6. **County Council:** Speed limits for minor local roads were in the pipeline. HPC had decided it would be best to have a blanket limit of 40mph with 20mph in the villages which would include at Bex Mill bridge.

- 7. **District Councillor:** Francis Hobbs reported **Devolution and local government reform.**

There will be a mayor for the whole of Sussex and the whole county will have to decide on the new unitary authority boundaries for recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Timetable:

2026	Mayoral elections
2027	Shadow Unitary authority elections
2028	New Authority April 2028

The mayor of Sussex would be responsible for strategic decisions. There would be greater pressure on SDNPA which would have to engage with the mayor.

Small grants of £1,000 were available for environmental groups to buy for example fruit trees. CCD would pay 50% towards a project.

The Chairman thanked FH for his time and support during the past year.

- 8. **Date of next Annual Parish Meeting: Wednesday 15 April 2026**

CONCLUSION: 8.00 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

Date.....