

# South & South East in Bloom 2018



## Preston & Elmstone Village Canterbury, Kent

Report prepared by Josie Leicester, Chair of Preston & Elmstone Village Society

## Horticultural achievement

### A1. Impact

- Plants planted last year have continued to establish in the raised planter boxes and create an attractive focal point where they are placed.



- Planting has been carefully considered to ensure yearlong greenery with seasonal flowering in the summer. Plants were selected and planted to a formal design to give a good structural basis for further planting and development, providing an interesting range of textures and continual seasonal foliage. We have found this formula has been successful and the raised planters look even better this year now the plants have established.
- Each planter has its own character but common to most is a round Buxus topiary ball with Hebe's lined up along the edges of the boxes, variegated Ivy's drape over the sides, visually connecting the raised planters to ground level. Guara's were planted around the Buxus, softening formality and creating movement with their long flowering tails. The white flowers of Guara's and geraniums were deliberately chosen so the flowers can be seen in poor light.
- The colour scheme translates to a background of evergreen plants (Ivy, Hebe and Buxus), with red and white flowers (to commemorate WWI) where established plants exist and new seasonal planting has taken place.
- The village entrance gate has been moved and replaced as it was in a poor state and partially obscured by a telegraph pole. A new planter was installed here and completed the planned installation of raised planters through village verges and traffic islands. Planting here included variegated Ivy and Clematis to climb up the unsightly telegraph pole which previously stood in front of the gate, plants adhere to the design plan of red and white flowers and visually soften hard landscaping, giving a more pleasing aesthetic welcome to the village. One old gate post has been left in position for posters to be mounted on, to not to visually disturb the new entrance gate.



Old village gate and newly installed welcome gate to the village with new raised planter

- Bulb Bomb intuitive - 5000 spring bulbs of mixed daffodils (3000), tulips (600) and crocuses (1400) were planted throughout the parish in autumn 2017. The bulbs were planted in Preston over the course of three weekends. The resulting spring show of flowers was a lovely sight to be enjoyed by parish residents and was very rewarding for the community and the many who took part in planting.
- The spring bulbs will provide a long living annual legacy to be enjoyed for years to come by future generations who not only live here, but also all those who pass through the village on the main road.



Spring Bulbs in 2018



- Hanging baskets were provided and installed by the Village Society on the bus shelter to brighten up the site(image above) – the idea was that if you are waiting for a bus to come along, why not have something nice to look at?
- Local farmers have joined in the improvement of our parish by extending their cutting of field verges and general upkeep of land, particularly where fields are next to residential areas and main roads.
- The greatest horticultural impact on the village has been a gathering collective and cohesive awareness of joint responsibility to improve private gardens and common green spaces. Increasing pride and help from the community has gathered momentum and is having a positive visual effect in the area. Many local residents do many small things that together improve the horticultural landscape throughout our parish. We have found that increasingly more residents, farmers, landowners and businesses are joining in and enjoy the benefits of living in a cared for environment.

## **A2.Horticultural practice**

- Preston & Elmstone is essentially still a rural environment and the Parish Council and local residents are keen to maintain that identity.
- The community has been extensively consulted in the last decade and set up a Parish Plan Steering Committee with the sole purpose of creating a Parish Plan. When completed and published along with the Village Design Statement in 2008, it was felt that the committee should stay in existence but morph into a body known as the Preston & Elmstone Village Society (Village Society). Their aim was to pursue the Parish Plan findings and to facilitate the cultural and environmental wellbeing of the Parish and community.

- Long term maintenance of plants in raised planters are now watered, fed and weeded throughout the year by local residents. Many of the planted sites have been adopted and cared for by local residents who now take pride in maintaining the plants and surround grass areas.
- Weekly checks are made by Village Society volunteers to ensure plants and planters are healthy and well maintained. In summer daily checks are made for watering
- Maintenance, mowing and strimming of green islands by volunteers have transformed formerly neglected overgrown areas into little green gardens, helping reduce erosion of road islands
- Plants have been replaced if struggling – the Buxus suffered in the heat and was replaced with Fascia's at Grove Road end of Preston
- Village Society pays for new plants to be added to planters or baskets where any gaps become apparent and buys new plants and bulbs for planting campaigns.
- Soil for planters is donated from local residents, incorporating and making good use of the freely available local horse manure
- 7 hanging baskets installed in centre of village around bus top shelter and village shop to add further colour and compliment the existing planting across the road and the memorial red poppies.
- Encouragement for help from the community with watering plants in hot weather - with requests on Facebook and in newsletter articles
- We support our local businesses – all plants used in our planting schemes have been sourced and provided at cost from Preston Garden Centre who offer high quality plants, advice and service
- Preston, Elmstone and Stourmouth Gardening Club has had a resurgent of members in the last 12 months and has put on 3 annual shows where competitors can showcase home grown flowers, fruit and home-made cakes and crafts.
- Request were made to local the community to leave areas where bulbs have flowered for six weeks after end of flowering before mowing grass. The image below demonstrates verges being left un-mowed after bulbs finishes flowering.



### **A3. Residential and Community Gardening**

- We 'Bombed our village with Flowers' with the Bulb Bomb Campaign, whose aim was to brighten up the village in spring and have a long lasting annual flower display for years to come. This was a huge undertaking with 5000 bulbs to plant and with less than 350 households in the parish, it would not of been possible to complete without the help and support of the community who undertook the planting of the bulbs.
- The Village Society turned the Bulb Bomb into 3 weekend community events, dividing up the planting to 3 areas Preston, Elmstone and Robinson Meadow.
- Great turn out and help from many local residents completed planting after the bulbs were allocated to planting plans devised by Village Society.
- Spring bulbs were also gifted to residents who wanted to plant bulbs in their own gardens, which was encouraged by the organisers.
- Designated areas for planting included all sites where raised planters were sited, road side common lawn areas, Preston Community Centre car park, Preston Primary School entrance, Elmstone Church and Church Field.
- A raised awareness of the South East in Bloom initiative has seen an improvement in upkeep and development of many private gardens and businesses especially along the main road through Preston.
- New housing development in the village, Preston Grange has large front gardens to the houses facing Grove Road. These have been landscaped by developer David Wilson Homes and as new residents have moved in and occupied the houses, the gardens have established quickly, been well kept and improved by their owners.
- Social housing - We have 3 social housing sites which are maintained by their various agencies and which are ruled by regulations for the open spaces on their sites. However, residents do maintain their own small front gardens and take great pride in keeping them neat and tidy and with a variety of planting.
- Recreation Ground – maintained by Preston Community Centre, Preston Primary School and Preston Parish Council. Large playing field used by many local organisations, clubs and for village events. Large wild corridor surrounds the field which children love to explore and play in.
- Robinson Meadow – large wild meadow awarded Village Green status in 2012 – has mowed paths meandering through wild grasses, natural dew pond, picnic seating and fire pit. Maintained by local residents who mow throughout summer months. Parish Council maintains hedges with the help of volunteers.
- Preston, Elmstone and Stourmouth Horticultural Club – this year sees the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Flower Show being held on 29<sup>th</sup> July at the Community Centre. The show is open to all members of the public and encourages entrance to the many competitions for home grown vegetables and fruit, flowers, handmade arts and crafts, baking and photography.
- The Friends of Elmstone and Preston Churches maintain the Churches and Church yards and also have a team of dedicated flower arrangers who decorate the churches for the many services, weddings and open days that are held.
- Preston Primary School makes use of the recreation ground at playtimes and the children enjoy using the open space of the playing field and playing in the wilder areas that surround the field. The school have also made use of Robinson Meadow as an outside class room and

annually explore and immerse themselves for Forest School, an on-going school project at Hardacre Farm.

- Annual Plant Sale from Preston Community Centre and recreation ground in May. Plants, seedlings, fruit and vegetables are grown locally and supplied by local donation to sell, with all profit going to a Community Centre Renovation Fund.



This year's Annual Plant Sale on the Recreation Ground

#### **A4. Business Areas and Premises**

- Half Moon and Seven Stars public house has hanging baskets and large pots on display on its frontage and has a secluded garden for customers at the rear.
- Preston Garden Centre has a long frontage with dry stream bed which is planted with wild grasses, spring bulbs and shrubs. We have a good relationship with the garden centre and they have donated plants for the raised planters and supplied the bulbs for the Bulb Bomb at cost. The garden centre staff are very knowledgeable and helped us with the design for raised planters planting scheme.
- Preston Family Butchers has landscaped and redesigned its car park in the last 12 months and had a large formal garden added to the front of their premises. This has transformed a formerly barren shingle and grass verge into an attractive focal point. Seasonal plants are replaced and maintained by the business owners.

- Preston Village Stores has matching hanging baskets on its frontage to match the bus shelter and green opposite the shop. The shop owner Holly, waters all the baskets for the shop and bus shelter.
- David Wilson Homes are keen to make a financial contribution to the next Bulb Bomb in autumn 2018. We have suggested planting 2000 bulbs in the new development for this autumn. The following email was sent on 27/06/18:

*Hello Josie, I hope you're well. I'm just writing to find out a bit more information about your planned bulb planting in Preston for later this year. As discussed, we're keen to support the event. How many bulbs do you think we'll need at the entrance to the development? Please can you let me know costs as it's something that we'd love to be a part of. In terms of buying, is it better that you'd manage the buying with the garden centre or is this something that you'd like us to do?*

*Best wishes,*

*Roseanna Lane*

*Building Relations PR*

*David Wilson Homes*

- Within the parish boundaries we have extensive orchards, arable land and being close to Minster Marshes and Little Stour flood plain, acres of grazing for horses, cattle and sheep. We have a number of rural businesses whose horticultural activity contributes to the fabric of village life.
- We also have smaller independent farmers, Hatchers Farm is a small family run market garden farm and also boasts a small campsite set amongst its orchards. Hatchers Farm and Checkerfield Farm, both offer direct farm produce sales.
- Preston Forstal Marsh Apple Juice – Supplies many farmers markets and rural shops with their home pressed apple juice. They use only apples from their own orchards and local heritage orchards which are gently maintained to allow wildlife to thrive
- We have a number of large scale farmers operating on the surrounding arable land, mostly Grade A. This area is historically renowned for commercial market gardening and still under increasingly mechanised and intensive farm practices. Mostly cereal, vegetable, soft and top fruit and nursery cropping the fields are shielded with wind-break hedge rows of Alder, Damson and Hawthorn.
- One of the bigger local farmers in the village T & S Bradley, participates in the “Countryside Stewardship” scheme which dictates strict guidelines on the annual management of field margins, hedgerows and fallow land. Such schemes enable the most suitable farming practices to both encourage wildlife, as well as highly productive cropping.
- Park Farm Riding School – dedicated riding school for children of all ages and abilities. Making extensive use of the countryside for ‘out’ rides and hacks.
- Bridleway Horse Scheme – there is a lack of bridleways in this area but local farmers work together and participate in a local trot scheme. Allowing riders to enjoy the countryside and have access to fields and orchards for horse riding.
- We have two hugely popular wedding venues in Preston, Preston Court and Marleybrook House. Both are set in beautiful landscaped grounds at the south and north end of the village.



*Preston Court Wedding Venue*

#### **A5. Green Spaces**

- We are very fortunate to have a number of green spaces, not only fields, meadows and playing fields but also some very large private properties who take great care and interest in landscaping. As a community we aim to balance maintenance and stewardship over selected areas and also allow raw, natural plant, wild and wet life to thrive and develop as sustainable ecological systems.
- Large areas of hedges are left wild to encourage wildlife, striking a balance between allowing the natural beauty of the plants to grow and maintaining the areas so they don't become too overgrown.

#### **Robinson Meadow**

- Robinson Meadow is an area of open paddock (2 Acres) centrally positioned in the village, previously used for pony grazing and close to the school. Originally in private ownership the land was donated to the village by the owner in 2010. With the active help of Preston Parish Council, "Village Green" status was gained in perpetuity. The Parish Council asked residents to come forward with ideas for its use and possible planting plans. A small committee was set up and a natural planting scheme developed with an eye to biodiversity. Implemented in 2011/12 under the watchful eye and generous help of the then owner of Preston Nursery and a local resident landscape gardener, the area has been planted with British native woodland trees and shrubs.
- Over the last few years the paddock has been managed by a team of local residents to encourage the growth of wild flowers and grasses encouraging the meadow to flourish.
- Significant areas have been left un-mown for as long as possible, with walking paths provided.
- The natural dew pond is a haven for birds, insects and amphibians. The meadow is used as a place of refuge by villagers, a study area by the local junior school and for activities and an annual children's camp night.
- 800 bulbs were planted on the Meadow in autumn 2017 as part of the Bulb Bomb.

- The Annual Village Picnic is held in Robinson Meadow every July.



*Robinson Meadow*

#### Church Field

- A similar open area in Elmstone, Church Field, has recently been gifted to the parish by a Gothams local farming business for long term use by residents and passing members of the public.
- Church Field has been planted with trees and is also being managed by local residents although its development is still at an early stage.
- 1200 bulbs were planted in Church field as part of the Bulb Bomb campaign and residents have added their own plants and lovingly care for this relatively new open space.
- Due to its improved landscaping and interest in its up-keep, Church Field hosted the first Elmstone Village Fete in May and was well attended and supported by locals.



*Return of the Summer Fete, Church Field in Elmstone*

## Recreation Ground

- Located next to Preston Primary School and Preston Community Centre. The recreation ground has shared ownership between Preston Parish Council, Preston Community Centre, Preston Primary School and Kent County Council.
- It is a great space for outdoor village events and frequently becomes an extension for users of the primary school and community centre.
- The grass is well tended and kept short with weekly mowing in the summer.
- The rec is surrounded by wild edging which provides a buffer for wildlife and native plants between the fields and residential property, and provides a great place for children to explore and play.
- The playground is sited on the rec and provides facilities for children to play as well as recently added picnic tables and seating.



*A tug of war taking place at the annual School Village Fete on the Recreation Ground in June this year*

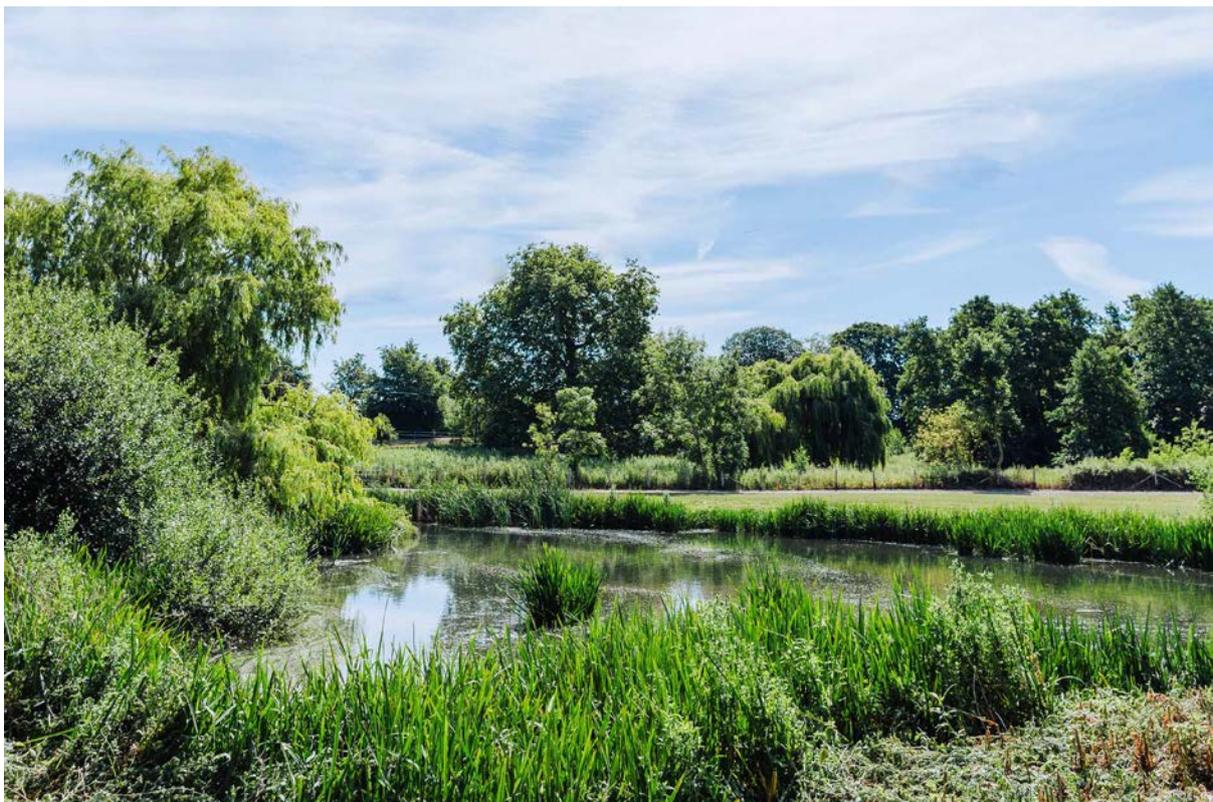
## Verges

- These have greatly improved in the last 18- 24 months with greater involvement from the community to keep the verges weed free and mowed. We are particularly proud of the improvement to verges as more care has preserved grass verges and road islands which were eroding away and were mainly overgrown and neglected.
- Local farmers have mowed more of the verges than in previous years to support the In Bloom competition. Most noticeable is the approach to the village from Wingham where fields run adjacent to the main road.

## Environmental Responsibility

### B1. Conservation and Biodiversity

- Environmental gardening/wildlife areas – there are a number of large residential properties and land owners who have turned over significant areas of their garden/land to wildlife conservation or small scale fruit and vegetable gardening.
- Several ponds in Elmstone, recently dredged and landscaped have opened up overgrown areas, allowing new plants to establish and welcoming wildlife back
- A natural swimming pond in the Forstal uses no chemicals and instead relies on a natural filtration system to clean and recycle its water. The pond attracts wildlife and is planted with an array of water filtering plants.
- Preston Forstal Marsh produces hand pressed apple juice from its own heritage orchards at the bottom of the Forstal
- A newly planted (2001) 12 acre English native woodland was planted at Hardacre Farm and is used by Preston Primary School for “Forest School” projects.
- Several bee keepers are resident in the Parish who sell their honey in local shops.
- The boundary to the Little Stour, Preston and Deerson Valley, is grazed marshland and under the governance of the Nature Conservation Agency – Natural England.
- Three appointed footpath wardens report to the Parish Council and conduct annual inspections, considering access, potential problems, drainage and signage.



Elmstone Pond

## **B2. Resource Management**

- The natural swimming pond in the Forstal draws and naturally filters its water from dykes
- Church Field has continued to be maintained by Gothams Farming, who donated the land to the parish. With new planting and upkeep from residents the farmer was asked to stop spraying weed killer as it was killing off the whole verge leaving bare earth. This practice has now stopped and natural grasses and plants are now re-populating the verge to the field.
- Preston Parish Council and Dover District Council agreed the planning application on the former Salvatori site on condition of a Section 106 agreement which states, that the developer maintains 3 open spaces totalling 8 acres. Part of this land has been remediated and is in the process of returning two former industrial sites into a natural landscape for the enjoyment of the community.
- There are a number of equestrian enthusiasts locally who give away manure and ask for empty bags to be returned so they can be used again
- Hedge trimmings are removed from around the Community Centre car park and Robinson Meadow, grass cuttings are left to mulch on the recreation ground.
- There is a composting area in the churchyard at Elmstone.
- A number of properties in the parish use solar panels to fuel water heating and electricity
- The village sign opposite the village shop has solar lighting.

## **B3. Local Heritage**

- The Parish has three distinct Conservation areas and some 34 listed Grade 1 & 11 buildings. Broadly the Parish is of a mixed housing type and does not reflect the homogeneity seen in some English villages. Nevertheless, the housing mix, type and period, their spacing and rural setting make for a unique settlement.
- The new housing development Preston Grange, has a mix of housing types to broadly reflect the diversity of the village's housing stock. New houses are of mixed design and layout with large front gardens common to many houses that are opposite the development and front Grove Road and The Street in Preston.
- We were delighted to have a new Village Fete in Elmstone this year which had not happened in living memory and reinstates the tradition of having a village Fete there.
- Village Bunting – In 2012 to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee, the community came together and produced over 30meters of bunting. A triangle template was laid out in Preston Parish Newsletter and the village shop collected contributions of material cut to shape from local residents. A local volunteer stitched all the pieces together and now, whenever there is a village event on, the bunting comes out – many people search for their own contributions when it is on display.
- There is an old fashioned red telephone box in Elmstone which has been neglected for years and has fallen into disrepair. Local residents who live by the phone box are in the process of renovating the box and plan to have it as a book exchange point, free to use for the community.
- Sustrans - Route 1, connecting Dover to the Shetland Islands. Preston sits on the national cycle route and we welcome many cyclists through the village on a daily basis. A marker for the route sits outside and opposite the Half Moon & Seven Stars.
- The newsletter has responded to correspondence from local residents who have sent in old photograph and articles of local social history, this has been well received by our readers with a number of positive comments on Facebook about historical articles and old photos.

- Further plans for the new village website include documenting old photos and stories of the parish, to keep alive social history and stories known by elderly residents.
- A Golden Jubilee Royal Oak Tree was planted in Robinson Meadow to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2012. This is growing well and will be a lasting legacy in the Meadow



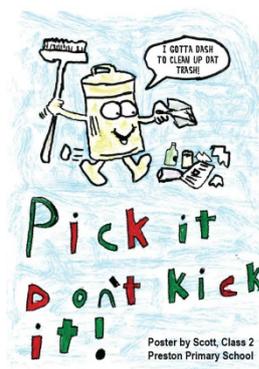
*The Royal Oak planted in Robinson Meadow*

- A symbol of Preston Parish is the Preston Deer which is used as an icon in the Village sign, the Parish Council, Preston Community Centre and Village Society logos. Its history dates back to 579AD when St Augustine converted the King of Kent and the Anglo Saxons to Christianity and give rise to the monasteries. In the 7thC, one of the royal families in Thanet had two sons killed through political intrigue. Their mother Queen Ermenburga requested land from the King in reparation rather than monies. Her daughter Mildred had a tame deer and the King instructed that the lands given would be decided by the free run course of this deer. Legend has it that Preston is the furthest point the deer reached. The Queen set up a convent at Minster, and was followed by her daughter Mildred as Abbess. The church in Preston, St Mildred's is dedicated to her and the deer has become the symbol of the village and Parish.



#### B4. Local Environmental Quality

- The Village Society organises litter picks in the parish and has increased from two to three litter picks this year. All residents are invited to join in and we hold a competition amongst the pickers to find the most unusual piece of litter and well as the largest haul, with the winners both receiving a bottle of wine.
- We encourage families to participate, hopefully passing on the 'looking after the environment' ethos to the next generation. All children receive a sticker and bar of chocolate for joining in.
- We have a number of residents who regularly litter pick on their own initiative which helps keep the village tidy between organised litter picks
- We have found that regular litter picking helps to reduce the overall amount of litter being dropped. i.e. people are less likely to drop litter if the environment is already litter free.
- With many local events advertised – posters are quickly removed from all posts once they have passed their event date, keeping the village looking tidy and preventing further litter.
- A new initiative this year is posters put up to ask people to clear up after themselves and keep Preston & Elmstone Litter free. The posters were made by school children at Preston Primary school and the Village Society paid for 16 A3 signs to be made and displayed around the village.



- Dog Fouling – this can be problematic and is something we report regularly in the quarterly parish newsletter. 'Poo Patrol' reports on any areas where there has been a particular problem and recognises where there has been an improvement. We have found bringing attention to particular areas where there are problems occur usually gets the message across to the dog owners.
- Formerly stagnant ponds in Elmstone were dredged and have been bought back to life, allowing natural and native to plants establish, which in turn has attracted wildlife and is now flourishing and repopulated with water fowl, birds and insects.

## B5. Pride of Place

- Preston Village sign - installed 11 years ago by the Parish council and refurbished and renovated last year. Previously a plain wood relief but now has a limited colour palette and natural wood to highlight the carving. It has solar lighting so it can be seen at night and takes pride of place on the small green in the centre of the village opposite the village shop.
- Preston Poppies – A local resident was inspired by the Tower of London installation, Blood Swept Lands by Paul Cunnings and Tom Piper. Coming from a military family, he wanted to honour the men from the Parish who gave their lives fighting in the First World War. 20 men from our parish lost their lives, and each one of them is remembered with a handmade poppy, which is on display in the raised planter, under Preston village sign. Each poppy has a soldier's initials, surname and regimental number. The poppies were originally made of clay but over the winter many broke. The poppies were all remade from metal this spring and we are pleased to have the poppies back on display, in the centre of the village for all to see as a permanent memorial.



- A sign was added this year to the outside of the raised planter naming all the men who gave their lives in WW1
- Street Furniture – Benches are located at the junction of Grove Road, Court Lane, in Robinson Meadow and Church Field, by the Community Centre, outside children's play area in the recreation ground and in both churchyards. A bench was installed under the tree in the centre of the village as part of the raised planters design and is used daily by many residents and visitors.
- The Parish Council has installed a number of memorial benches, that latest being installed in Church field.
- Picnic tables were installed in the play area in the recreation ground. Robinson Meadow and Church Field also have picnic tables.
- Our brick built bus shelter has had a makeover this year with brightly coloured half-moon hanging baskets fixed to the front and side. The red flowers compliment the Preston Poppies and really brighten up the village centre.
- Anti-litter signs – we made 16, A3 6mm Correx signs – four each of the four of designs that were created by the children of Preston Primary School, into permanent signage for the village. The cartoonish drawings are brightly coloured, are visually attractive and are displayed around the parish as a gentle reminder to residents not to drop litter.

# Community Participation

## C1. Development and Continuity

- In Bloom initiative – this is the second year the Village Society with the support of the Parish Council has entered the competition, last year we gained a Silver award in the ‘Village’ section, our village is very proud of this achievement and we welcomed the feedback of where we could do better.
- There is a greater awareness of the In Bloom competition than last year as we were a late entry and really just recapped on what we had achieved. This year there has been concerted effort to take on board recommendations and think carefully about what other things we could do to improve horticulturally, environmentally and with communication to the community. Many locals have responded by putting out extra pots and plants, hanging baskets and awareness of private garden development in time for the judging in July.
- We have continued to build on our accomplishments and were pleasantly surprised at the amount of community participation and support for the In Bloom initiative and the care for plants that have been planted in common areas in the village. Most evident was the amount of people who participated in planting 5000 spring bulbs for the Bulb Bomb.
- Many new families have moved into the village in the new housing development – over 40 houses are now occupied – many new residents wish to become involved in village life and community projects and say that is one of the reasons they moved to our village – the community as a whole has benefited from new people moving into the parish.
- The Bulb Bomb was initially a one off ‘hit’ campaign but we have found there is continuing support for this to continue annually with financial help from David Wilson Homes who wish to ‘Bomb the new housing development with flowers’ and have committed to purchasing 2000 bulbs for planting this autumn.
- We have also approached the Parish Council to commission a large Deer statue to take ‘pride of place’ in the village, reinforcing our links to the history of the parish – discussions are still on-going but it has been suggested that a wicker statue of a doe deer would be a suitable model for the artwork. Possible siting of this is the green opposite the bus shelter or in Robinson Meadow.
- The raised planters are now complete but will continue to be monitored and cared for by residents and the Village Society. Grass areas are improving with regular mowing, keeping weeds at bay and maintain attractive focal points throughout the main road that runs through the village.
- The many aspects of improvements we have made in the village have aroused a willingness to maintain green spaces, improve garden frontages, keep litter at bay and offer ideas and suggestions of ways we can improve our environment further.
- The Preston & Elmstone Village Society is made up of local residents who wish to see that our community and environment is well cared for and looked after, we plan events and projects which we aim to enhance, involve and respond to community needs and improvements. The Society celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and has a strong committee that meets every month.
- Many of the projects discussed in this brief have originated from the Village Society with the support of the Parish Council and will continue to develop with steering from the group.
- The new welcome gate installation is currently tanned wood, once this has dried out, we plan to paint the gate white so it will stand out at the village entrance.

## C2. Communication and education

- We have excellent communication in the village with 3 avenues of communication from the village Society, the newsletter, Facebook page and village website. Between the three channels of communication we reliably inform and invite discussion and feedback from the community



### Preston in Top 7%

#### National Parish Magazine Awards 2017

Out of curiosity and to see how we measured up against the competition, I very quietly entered our very own Preston Parish Newsletter into this year's National Awards. Out of 410 entries from across the UK, we were placed 28th - a fantastic result and means we are in the top 7% of all the parish newsletters and magazines in the whole country!

What makes the result even more rewarding is that the Preston Parish Newsletter is edited, produced and printed wholly by volunteers and published by the Preston & Elmstone Village Society which is made up of local residents.

We are fortunate enough to have great support from many corners of the community, who regularly send us reports, recipes and news of their clubs, groups and events. The newsletter is hand delivered to every address in our parish and is essential in sharing news and communication to all residents in Preston & Elmstone.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the editorial team - Jenny, Karen, Bazza and Clare and also everyone who sends in articles and snippets of news. I would also like to thank our many distributors - we couldn't function without you, especially Martin Ferber who co-ordinates distribution.

Josie

### 2017 Pumpkin Carving Champion



Elizabeth with her winner's certificate and silver cup.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Deveron from Elmstone for winning the Preston & Elmstone Pumpkin Carving Competition with her amazing display of pumpkins based on Beauty & The Beast theme. A miserable mash-up of Halloween ghouls, ghosts, witches and pumpkin pictures can be seen on page 11 if you dare look...

### Bulb-bomb-tastic

The Bulb Bomb is an initiative to 'bomb' our parish with flowers - literally! The bomb has well and truly gone off and our community can look forward to enjoying 5000 spring bulbs of crocus, daffodil and tulips popping their heads up in Spring.

The planting took place in 3 stages. Stage 1 was planting 3000 bulbs in Preston in the many green islands and frontages that line The Street from Court Lane through to Grove Road.

We had a great response of volunteers turning up on Saturday 7 October at Preston Community Centre where the plans and bulbs were organised into the specific areas to be planted up.

It was great to see so many local people turn up and participate in this community event, thank you to everyone who came along. I would especially like to thank the Village Society members who helped organise the hall and café. After the planting was done, everyone met up for a bacon sandwich and a well-earned coffee back at the hall. It was a really great atmosphere and I think although the planting was hard work everyone enjoyed taking part in the activity.

Stage 2 followed two weeks later and focused on Elmstone. It was a very wet and windy day but this didn't dampen our enthusiasm. Despite the recent rain the ground was

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very hard and it took a few pick axes and hard determination to get the 1200 bulbs planted in and around Church Field. Many thanks go to Janette, Jude and Rod for their heavy duty tools, Luke for his muscles and to Amanda for welcoming helpers to warming refreshments.

The final stage was to get the last 800 bulbs planted in Robinson Meadow. Our thanks go to Martin and Nicole for planting the last set of bulbs here. If the rabbits don't dig all the bulbs up we can look forward to a Spring time treat in the meadow.

So now we all have to wait patiently to see the fruits of our hard work. I am so grateful to the support the community has given to this initiative, to give further improvements to our environment.

I would also like to thank Sarah and Rochelle from Preston Garden Centre for all their help with ordering the bulbs.

The Spring flowers will be a beautiful annual reminder of what can be achieved when everyone works together and will return every year to give us a delightful display.

Thank you for everyone's help!

Josie



Images above: Generous helpers 'BOMBING' Preston with spring bulbs.



Our Annual General Meeting was held on the 14th November to discuss future plans for the club. At this meeting our Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Show Secretary decided to stand down from their duties. This has left these positions currently vacant. No one as yet has come forward at this time to fulfil these positions.

It was decided that there should be an advertising campaign to try and boost interest in the club, and remind people what we do each year. It was arranged that we would meet again on 9th January 2018 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall/Community Centre to see if there has been enough interest generated to continue in some capacity as a club, even if this means just having a produce show each year.

It would be a sad day if we can not get enough interest to continue as recently discovered the club has in fact been active since



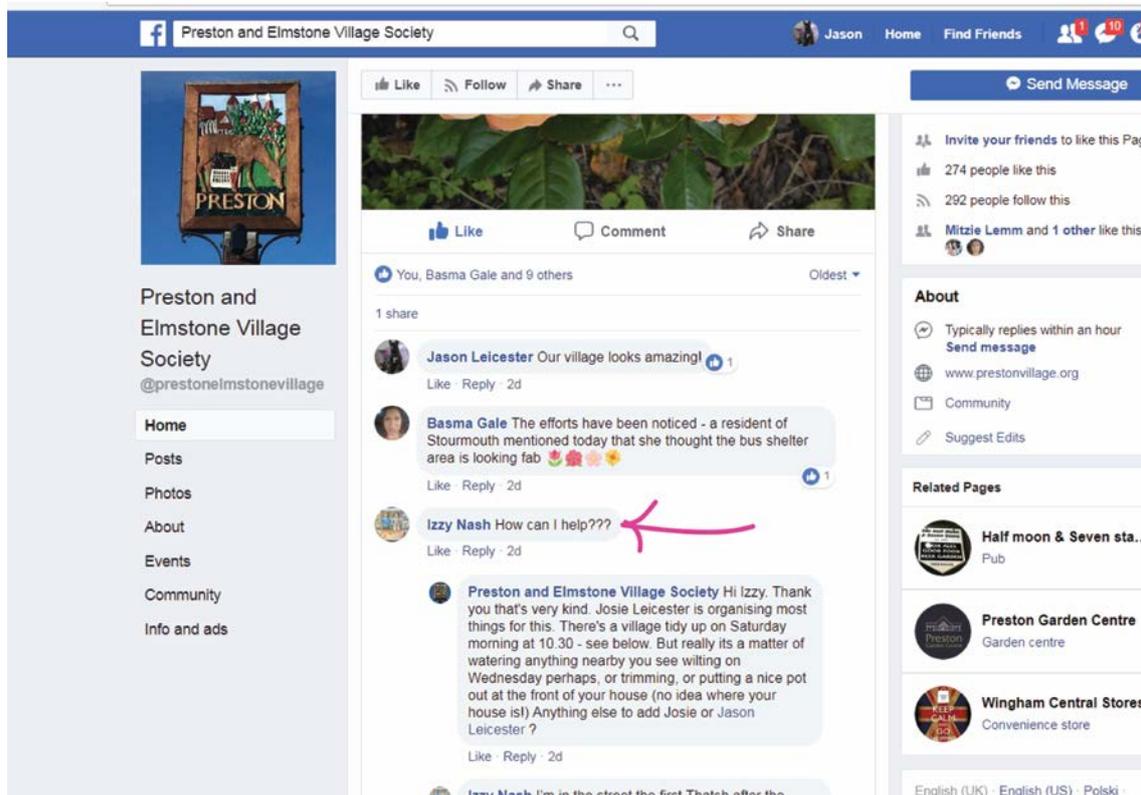
Above: Tables all laid out and waiting for judging at this year's Annual Horticultural Show, Preston Community Centre.

1945. It only took a break during the war, and then reactivated to run until the present day. So you can see this has been a very popular community event for some considerable time.

If you think you might like to get involved, please show your interest by contacting Esther on 01227 722051 to find out more, or come along to our meeting in January. No previous gardening experience required. All welcome.

- The parish council has its own website and runs an update of all parish council news in the newsletter
- Preston Community Centre published its own website in May, details of all regular clubs that meet are available here as well as contact details of how to book the community centre for events which are then published in the newsletter and on Facebook.
- The Preston Parish Newsletter is hand delivered by volunteers to every house hold in the parish and is well received by the community. We now print 400 copies every three months and the newsletter contains news, events, reviews, recipes, details of local campaigns, Parish Council News, social history and articles relevant to our parish.
- The Newsletter was entered into the National Parish magazine awards in July 2017 and was placed 28<sup>th</sup> out of 410 national entries, which put our newsletter in the top 7% in the whole country.
- The newsletter is published by the Village Society, edited and produced by Josie Leicester and a team of supporting editors, contributors and distributors. The Newsletter is run not – for – profit with the help of funding from local businesses and the Parish Council. Articles are supplied from many different contributors who report on the many club, organisation and committees that run in the parish. Residents also contribute their own news and often supply additional news or personal accounts and articles.

- Facebook – the Village Society runs a Facebook page for the village and has increased its followers by almost 50% in the last 12 months (292 followers). Local points of interest, notices and events are all publicised and discussed on the forum, community events and dates are advertised and urgent news posted such as closed roads, crime and adverse weather conditions. The Community section of Facebook invites posts and discussions from the community. Many of the local clubs and organisations request posts to be put in to inform to remind locals of events and news.



- We proudly launched a new village website at the beginning of June this year to inform visitors and new residents about the parish, events, the village Society, local businesses, community campaigns and local community groups. The website links to other village organisations and businesses and provides contact information for the Village Society and access to an online version of the newsletter and our Facebook page. The website has been in planning for some time and we plan to build further pages into the site as time allows. Website address is: [www.prestonvillage.org](http://www.prestonvillage.org)
- We hope the new anti-litter posters made by school children will remind locals not to drop litter and think about the environment.
- Meetings and events are increasingly well attended with new residents from the housing development becoming involved in village life, and provide an opportunity to discuss issues, socialise and make new friendships.

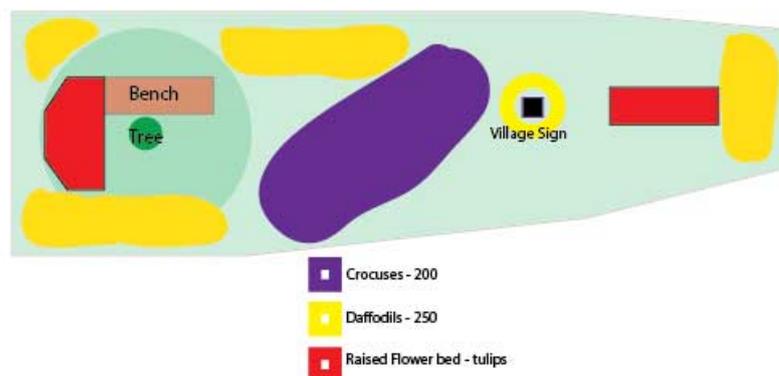
### C3. Community Participation



Bulb Bomb Posters advertising community events

- It would not have been possible to plant 5000 bulbs without the help and support of the community. Led and organised by the Village Society we split the planting into 3 weekend community events. We advertised these events in the newsletter, on Facebook and had posters put up around the village.
- The first event saw us set up in the Community Centre with bulbs counted out and laid on tables, each with its own planting plan for specific areas in Preston. We had a team leader for each area who took a group of volunteers to each site; here they planted the bulbs according to the plan – example of planting plan below.

Green Opposite the Shop  
Planting Plan



- We didn't know how many people would turn up but were amazed when the hall quickly filled up with volunteers – within 20 minutes the hall was empty, all the bulbs had been taken and everyone went off to do some planting. After about an hour most people drifted back and we all had a bacon roll, cuppa and sat round talking for an hour – it was a great atmosphere and rewarding experience not just for the Village society but also for all those who took part.
- The Elmstone event took place two weeks after, the weather was atrocious but we still had about 15 people meet us in Church Field to help with the planting including a few children. There was no plan for this area as it was evident where the bulbs would be best sited. We planted around the base of specimen trees and in in large swathes on the lawn area.
- The final planting in Robinson Meadow was completed following weekend by the local residents who look after the meadow, photos of this and local participation at the other events were documented in the newsletter.

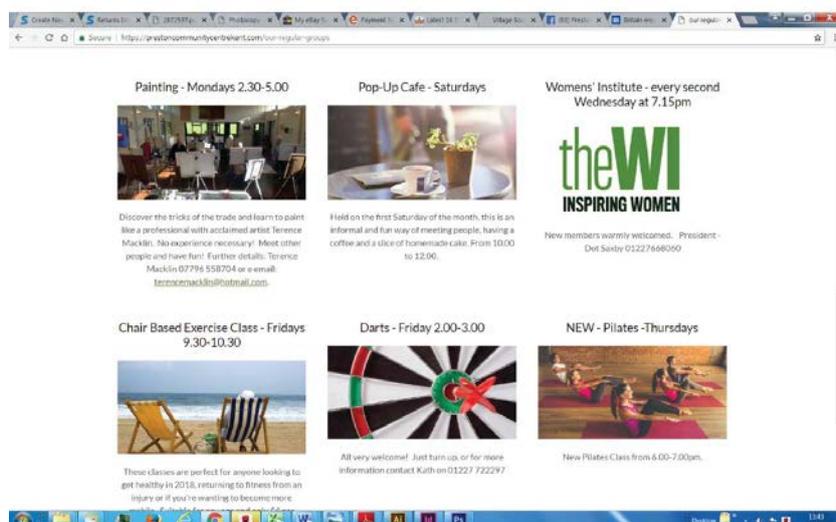
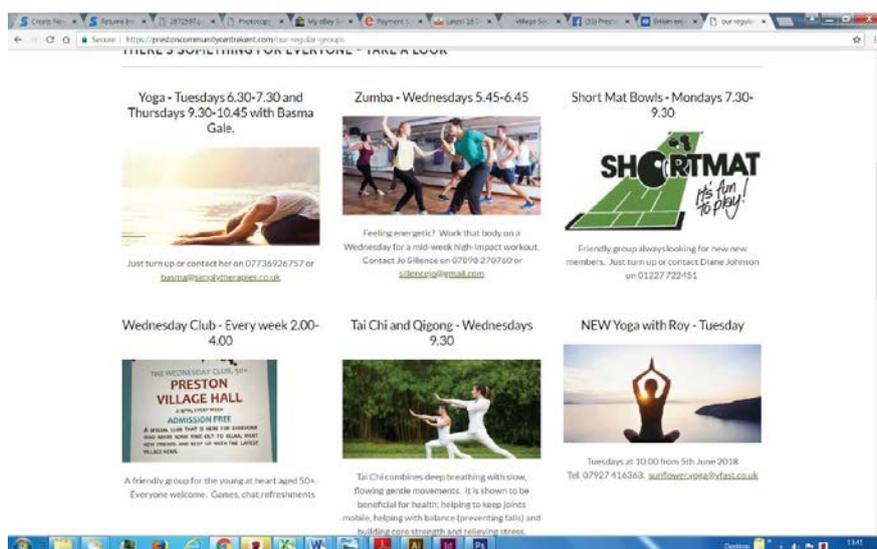
## Bulb Bomb Allocation List October 2017

Place	Name	Daffodils	Crocuses	Tulips	Total Bulbs Allocated	Total left
Robinson Meadow	Martin	500	300		800	
Village entrance South Longmete end	Gayna	300	300	10 + 40	650	4200
Top of Longmete Rd	Trevor	50	60	20	130	4070
Top of Forstal	Mitzie	75	100	60	235	3835
Green opp shop	Basma	250	200	30 + 20	500	3335
Top of Grove Road	Karen Trevor	250	200	40 + 40	480	2855
Village entrance north (Grove Road)	Jude	50	50	20	120	2735
Church Field Elmstone	Karen & Amanda	500	190	320	1010	1725
total		1975	1400	600	<b>3975</b>	<b>1025</b>
Remaining bulbs donated to residents for their gardens	<b>1025</b>					

- We have had increasingly good turn outs for our litter picks and a number of individuals now regularly litter pick on a monthly basis. Family groups and children are welcome and we aim to make each litter pick an inclusive event.
- The local primary school ran a competition to design posters to remind people to keep our environment tidy and letter free. These are now displayed around the parish on permanent A3 boards. It is great to see the younger members of our community contributing to the care of our environment.
- The Village Society is an informal group that welcomes all residents to open meetings which are held once a month. We have a core group of members who take on the role of Chair, treasurer and secretary but we also form sub committees when and where needed for specific events and campaigns. We work closely with the Parish Council and usually have 2 or 3 parish councillors attend our meetings so that communication between the groups is supportive and transparent.
- There is a greater awareness of the In Bloom campaign in the parish this year and the resulting effect of this is that, many more individuals have made more of an effort with their own gardens – particularly as the judging date draws nearer – putting out extra pots, flowers and improving their own garden maintenance. Preston Butchers has made a great effort to improve its frontage, the village shop is involved in the care for the recently added hanging baskets and the Village Society has less maintenance to do as people take on responsibility for the care of common areas themselves.
- An Increased social media following has meant that any messages sent out are reaching more people and households; in return we have experienced a greater turn out to events.
- The Friends of Elmstone and Preston Churches are an active local group who oversee the upkeep of the church grounds and organised fundraising events. The churches are also fortunate to have a group of ladies who volunteer make the floral displays – many of the flowers are donated from local resident's gardens to keep costs low.

#### C4. Year round involvement

- With many active groups and clubs in the parish there are many weekly and monthly activities and events that take place throughout the year. Regular clubs running in the Village include: WI, Tuesday Club, Art Classes at two locations, Table Tennis Club, Wednesday Senior Club, Yoga, Pilates, Zumba, darts, Preston Short Mat Bowls Club, Bell ringing and Junior Church.
- Voluntary community organisations in the village: Preston Parish Council, Preston & Elmstone Village Society, Preston Community Centre Management Committee, Friends of Elmstone and Preston Churches
- The back page of every newsletter shows a list of diary dates for the following 3 months. Details of these events are taken from requests to the newsletter from the various organisations that run them. Events that have taken place are also written about and reviewed in follow-on articles.
- Preston Community Centre has on its new website a detailed description of the weekly and monthly activities that take place there.



Two screen shots of activities at Preston Community Centre, accessed 06/07/18

- The 100 Club Draw asks the community to buy a number (1 -100) for £12 that is put into a monthly draw with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> prize given each month. To sell all the numbers we need 100 people to participate. The numbers are renewed yearly and this year, new numbers have sold more quickly than in previous years. This year's new draw starts in August.
- The Half Moon & Seven Stars hosts regular live bands, themed dining events and Bank Holiday festivals.
- The Village Society runs a number of free community events throughout the year:  
Easter Treasure Hunt and Cake Sale – Easter Sunday  
Litter picks in Spring, summer and autumn  
Village Picnic in Robinson Meadow 22<sup>nd</sup> July  
Pumpkin Carving Competition October 31<sup>st</sup> with Silver cup to the winner  
Halloween Party in Community Centre for families
- With many new families moving into the village there has been a noticeable increase in attendance to clubs and events and additional help with volunteering. The image below shows the winner of the Pumpkin Carving competition



## C5. Funding and Support

- The Village Society continues to champion the In Bloom initiative and has been extremely active in encouraging community support for improvements to the parish. Regular updates in the newsletter, on Facebook and on our website give details of our aims, news and progress.
- Due to the improvements made in the last two years, our parish looks well cared for, attractive and a clean environment to live in.
- The pride that many residents now take has become infectious and continues to develop within the community.

- The 100 Club Draw makes £600 profit per year, this sum is earmarked for community projects and is ploughed back into buying plants, gardening tools, building supplies (cement, wooden gate and posts) and other materials required for environmental upkeep. Last year the 100 Club proceeds bought the bulbs for the Bulb Bomb.
- The Parish Council gave £200 to the Village Society this spring to help cover the cost of buying the hanging baskets and plants for the bus shelter. They have also increased their funding to the Parish Newsletter as costs have increased due to increased pagination and printed copies for the new residents in the housing development.
- The Village Society holds a number of one –off events which are more focused on fundraising to supplement our funds however, the Society holds more than enough funds at the current time to finance this year’s initiatives.



A few of the Village Society members at the Community Centre

- The Bulb Bomb will continue this year with further planting in the new development. David Wilson Homes are keen to support this venture and have agreed to buy 2000 bulbs for planting in autumn. The development is now over 50% occupied and discussions have been made to celebrate completion and full occupation of the development with the planting of a wild meadow in the future.
- The Parish Council has a substantial sum of its budget earmarked for environmental development. We communicate well with the Parish Council and are in consultation with them to discuss and request funds for additional projects if costs cannot be fully met by the Village Society.
- Support from the community is very strong at the present time – as the judging date has got nearer we are seeing increased activity from many residents. This is evident in hedge and grass cutting, watering, help with litter picking and general offers of help. Many pots and new plants have suddenly appeared and are on display. It is hoped that goodwill will continue past the judging and our community will continue building its appreciation for the hard work and good efforts of neighbours and local residents.

## **Route plan for Judge's visit on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

1. Meet in Preston Community Centre Car Park, Mill Lane, Preston, Kent. CT3 1HB
2. Walk around village centre
3. Preston Businesses along The Street
4. Preston Grange/Grove Road
5. Elmstone residential gardens
6. Church Field
7. Top of Longmete Road/village Gate
8. The Forstal
9. Preston Garden Centre
10. Return to Robinson Meadow/Preston Community Centre and Recreation Grounds

Parking – please park in Preston Community Centre car park, opposite Robinson Meadow.  
Toilet facilities –available in Community Centre.

Contact person – Josie Leicester Tel: 07725 354954