

The Parker and Ashcombe Alms House Charity

No. 210835

Report for the Bodiam Parish Assembly 14.05.25

Report presented by Pippa Weddle, recently retired secretary

I have been asked to deliver this report on behalf of the Parker Ashcombe Trust or PAT as it is known by its trustees, as unfortunately none of them are able to be here this evening. I have recently stepped down from the role as secretary of the trust due to family commitments, and therefore take this opportunity to say that if there is anyone who may be interested in taking over this role the trustees would be delighted to hear from you. But before I do that perhaps I should quickly outline what the charity does, and a bit of its history.

The current charity was formed in 1965 and is an amalgamation of two older charities; The Parish Cottage and Almshouse Charity formed in 1887, and the Charity of the Right Honorable Henry Ashcombe (2nd Baron Ashcombe) formed in 1918.

The name Parker comes from Mrs Mary Parker who lived at the old Vicarage (what we now know as Claremont School and Bodiam Manor before it). Mary was married to Charles Parker who was vicar of Bodiam between 1861 and 1881. Mary was born a Cubitt and it was her brother Charles who purchased Bodiam Castle and lands in 1849. Charles was made 1st Baron Ashcombe in 1880.

The original objective of the 1965 charity was to provide affordable accommodation for single ladies from the village of Bodiam and the surrounding areas. Recently the terms of the charity were altered to also accept single men.

To achieve this, the Trust owns two properties in the village, the Alms flats, which comprise four, one bed flats providing the means for independent living, and Rectory Cottage the rental of which contributes very significantly to the running costs of the overall estate. The Trust also owns and maintains a small garden area for the flats, the village's Parish Room and the village's Ice House, located in the grounds of the Rectory Cottage.

Lastly, before we move on to the charities current position and report for this evening, as a fun fact I wanted to just add that Henry Cubitt, 2nd Baron Ashcombe, after whom the charity is also named, is Queen Camilla's Great Grandfather, her mother being Rosalind Cubitt.

To date the trustees are John Barnett, the Trust's Treasurer, Graham Peters, the Chairman, and Ellie Pottinger the Welfare Officer. Since we are in an interregnum the charity does not have the presence of the Vicar of St Giles to complete the full complement of trustees, or indeed a secretary.

At this point I would like to just say in their absence that Graham, John and Ellie do amazing work to keep this charity not only going, but extremely well managed both practically and financially, which provides an important service, and although often overlooked, is a big part of the village and it's history.

The Trust has a paid maintenance officer who inspects and organises all maintenance and building matters. This is an important role as it provides the trust with the ability to plan repairs and maintenance in the long term as well as deal with smaller day to day issues with speed and ease.

On the residential side the last twelve months has been a peaceful year for the trust, with a stable letting of Rectory Cottage to a local family, and with all four alms flats occupied for the full year by long term tenants who are part of the community. Lettings

of the Parish Room has continued, with Bodiam Pre-School being the main user of the Parish Rooms, and occasionally other village groups including the Parish Council also make use of this facility, with lettings to village organisations at nominal rates.

As the result of a very generous bequest from a previous Chairman, Mrs Dora Churcher, the Trust is undertaking archaeological investigation of the ice house in the grounds of Rectory Cottage. When this is complete a programme of restoration and refurbishment will take place providing an interesting asset for the history of the village.

The trustees' objectives of maintaining adequate cash reserves and achieving full occupancy at reasonable rental levels will continue in future years.

So, lastly, if I could end as I began by saying that if anyone would like to make enquiries regarding the vacant position of secretary for this longstanding, historical and important charity (with it's Royal links!) please contact Graham Peters who is also on the Parish Council.

Thank you.