

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021

What a strange year this has been for everyone. I have realised since March 2020 that we are so lucky to live in this part of the world and that all the residents of the Branscombe Parish have worked tirelessly to help others and keep the wheels rolling in very trying times.

As you know we were not able to have an AGM last year but fortunately the powers to be decided relatively quickly that we would be allowed to have "Virtual Meetings" using the now well known "Zoom/Teams" platforms. This has, at least, enabled the BPC to carry on functioning although this has presented its own problems, mainly due the lack of Broadband speed and consistency.

Firstly I would like to thank all the Councillors, Parish, Local and County, Adam Spears/Beth Salter (D&C Police) and Rob Skinner (National Trust) for all their support and help during the year.

Also a very special thank you to John Bass who has decided to hang up his boots after serving well over 30 years on the Council, with 15 of those as Chairman. John took over the Vice Chair position in 2018 when I was elected as Chair and has been always been there to guide and support me since then. In his own words "I have come to the decision it is time for someone more enthusiastic to replace me". His experience and knowledge of the parish will be missed but I know he will be more than happy to lend an ear if required.

It is also with great regret that Nicky Langley who joined us in 2018 as Clerk and RFO has found herself a full time job locally and will be stepping down once we/she have found a replacement. The knowledge and enthusiasm she has brought to the Council has been above and beyond what I expected and she will be sorely missed.

The Clerk's very detailed report covers all that has happened this year so I will not cover the same ground but will summarise the salient points. We started having Zoom meetings in June and have had 10 meetings and considered 14 planning applications. The Devon Air Ambulance night landing project was completed and is now operational - the non-compliant website has been completely restructured and the compliant version is now fully functional – our road wardens have done a superb job of filling in potholes around the village that didn't fulfil Highways requirements for attention – the stream by the village hall has been dredged and the culvert under the road jetted.

Many of these projects have been funded by grants from the DCC and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Shaw for all his help in obtaining these.

We continue to tirelessly report all the road problems to Highways and with much help from Cllr Shaw have at last managed to get somethings done, with more in the pipeline.

Finally this will be the last Zoom meeting as it has now been ruled that all Council meetings must be face-to-face. Hopefully this indicates that there is very much light at the end of this long tunnel.

County Councillor's Annual Report 2020-21

The pandemic

This year has been one like no other because of the pandemic. We have been very lucky that our infection rates have been consistently lower than in the rest of the country. Nevertheless we have suffered repeated care home outbreaks, with the deaths of at least 8 residents in one Seaton home and a care worker in another. There are still outbreaks in local homes, despite residents being vaccinated. There have also been community cases from time to time, but I am not aware of any deaths.

I joined the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee early last year, and together with some other members raised issues including

- (1) the urgent need for a lockdown in March 2020, when the Government was prevaricating,
- (2) the need for local Public Health to be involved in contact tracing, and
- (3) the need to keep hospital patients from being sent to care homes.

I advocated using community hospital wards for Covid-secure hospital care, supporting the proposal by Cllr Jack Rowland, chair of Seaton Area Health Matters, that our hospital could be used.

I also pressed for free school meals to be continued and, when this was agreed, supported the successful efforts by Seaton community group, Re:store Axe Valley, to distribute Christmas parcels to children from schools across the area.

Future of Seaton Community Hospital

I am now pressing for a new Devon NHS Plan to anticipate future waves or new pandemics, including a plan to fully use our community hospitals. I welcome the use of Seaton Hospital - previously over a third empty - as a vaccination centre, but will press for a long-term plan to fully use the hospital, after NHS Property Services, which owns the hospital, rejected Seaton Area Health Matters' proposals.

On Health Scrutiny, I have played a major role in opposing the closure of Teignmouth Community Hospital, finally ensuring that the proposal was referred to the Secretary of State (which in 2017 the Committee refused to do for Seaton and Honiton).

Seaton and Colyton Traffic Group and the state of our roads

I have continued to chair this group throughout the year and, although it is an uphill struggle, we have had some successes in improving the worst rural roads. In several cases, however, the refurbishment of the ford at Farway, Highways have simply said that funding is not available. Underfunding is a key problem, but also the rules that restrict which potholes contractors repair, leading often to one being fixed while nearby holes are untouched.

Stop Line Way cycling and walking route

After a long period of pressure on my part, the County applied for a Compulsory Purchase Order for the land needed to complete the missing section in Seaton Wetlands. The landowners have objected to the CPO so this will likely go to an Inspector with a decision later in the year. Funding to complete the section is fully budgeted. However the remainder of the route, from Colyford to Axminster, has been dropped by DCC, against my protests. I shall continue to fight to put it back in the programme.

Traffic calming and 20 mph limits

The proposals of a DCC working group, which I contributed to, to make it easier to get 20 mph zones in town and village centres, have been accepted in principle, subject to a trial in Newton Abbott, which was delayed when the pandemic hit. I have encouraged interested parishes to put themselves on a Highways waiting list for 20 mph zones, and Seaton, Colyton, Beer and Offwell have done this.

Seaton Seafront Enhancement

I allocated substantial funding towards Phase 1 of this much-needed project and was involved in lengthy negotiations for Highways approval. I was therefore very disappointed that, due to an error, the planning permission lapsed. I have pressed strongly for the Town Council to secure a new permission and supported Jack Rowland's efforts to obtain EDDC support. Once these are secured I will look for any support possible from DCC.

A35 in Wilmington and Offwell

I have continued to work with the two parishes and the A35 Action Group to get Highways England's scheme, which includes speed calming, average speed cameras and crossings in Wilmington, approved and underway. As ever, this is proving a very slow and frustrating process, but it appears that progress is being made.

Local projects funded by the locality budget

In 2020-21 these have included Re:store Axe Valley, the installation of a defibrillator at Northleigh Village Hall, new noticeboards and support for the play park at Offwell, the Re-Store Christmas scheme, road-mending material for Branscombe, support for Colyton Caterpillars, repairs to a wall and steps in Beer, and TRIP community transport.

EDDC councillors report 2020/2021

The 20/21 year has as you would expect, been dominated by Covid. This has meant that there have not been any face to face meetings since March 20. All meetings have been via Zoom with all meetings being relayed live via the EDDC Youtube link.

The majority of the functions of the council have continued, albeit in an amended form. There has been no appreciable difference to the refuse and recycling service, street scene have maintained street cleaning, litter collection and toilet operation. Planning meetings were initially postponed but once the zoom meetings with multiple members and public plus appropriate application presentation was mastered these were restarted and now operate efficiently.

The major increase in workload was in the revenue and benefits section that had to administer all the business rate grants and rebates as well as the additional business interruption grants, hardship grants, food parcels to mention just a few. The range of grant schemes and different qualifying criteria meant that while many grants were allocated virtually automatically, there were a great many that had to be analysed individually. Officers undertook the basic assessment but a new committee was set up, the Emergency Business Interruption Grants board to adjudicate allocation. There will inevitably be businesses and individuals that did not qualify but in the overwhelming number of cases I feel that EDDC efforts with the available government helped secure many jobs and businesses. The revenue and benefits teams supported by the economic development teams have done an amazing job in distributing grants.

As at 23 March 2021

Grant name /period	Approved	Total paid
National restrictions LRSG (C) Addendum 16 February - 31 March 2021	1,402	3,414,834
National restrictions LRSG (C) Addendum & CBLP 5 January -15 February 2021	1,704	11,450,890
Tier 2/Tier 3 Local Restrictions - 2 December to 4 January 2021		
LRSG (O)	644	1,193,862
LRSG (C)	393	143,417
Christmas support payment –Wet Led pubs	62	62,000
Additional Restrictions Grant - January restrictions	303	1,329,579
National restrictions – 5 November to 1 December 2020 LRSG (C) Addendum	1,614	2,421,206
Additional Restrictions Grant - November restrictions	137	134,950
Scheme 1 - Small Business Rate Relief Grant (Spring 2020)	2,759	27,590,000
Scheme 2A & 2B Retail Hospitality & Leisure Grant (Spring 2020)	926	15,365,000
Discretionary (Summer 2020)	299	2,310,000
Total	8,841	62,000,904

In May of 2020 a new administration took over leadership of the council. Whilst there have been various issues made more complicated by the Covid restrictions the basic operation of the council has continued.

Following on from the previous administration there is an increased emphasis on green and environmental issues which will be costed into council expenditure.

Geoff Pook

Hi Nicky,

I just wanted to quickly contact you regarding tonight's meeting as I am currently deployed on an immediate log in Seaton and am likely to be tied up dealing with this and may not make it in time for the meeting! I will try and provide you with a quick summary of what I was going to speak about:

I am unable to provide you with any specific crime figures as we have had an embargo on them for external release until after the ONS publication of crime figures on 13th May. I am happy to send the end of year statistics after this date should the Parish Council like to see them.

What I can say is that there has been a decrease in crime recorded in Branscombe of 14%. We have seen an increase in non-dwelling burglaries and in rural areas we have recently seen an increase of thefts of old tractors, motorcycles and catalytic converters. Please can everyone remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity! As previously stated we do have OFFICERS within the East Devon Team looking into rural crime offences and engaging with the communities.

We are expecting to see a huge increase in visitors to our area over the summer and myself and Mike will visit Branscombe to patrol as much as we are able to.

I apologise for not being able to call in and hope this suffices, unfortunately as I am dealing with log I can't get back to my computer to get any more information! However, if there are any questions that the councillors have please send them over to me.

Kind regards,
Beth

2020 National Trust Rangers Annual Report (May 2021 BPC AGM)

COVID-19

Unfortunately, it's impossible to start any round up of the past year without talking about the huge implications of the Coronavirus. For us, as a Ranger team it meant staff on furlough, restrictions on volunteer work groups, projects delayed and very restricted budgets. From April to the end of Dec the team was restricted to just two members of staff conducting essential tasks and incurring limited spends. This has resulted in quite the backlog of jobs across the whole east Devon estate which, now a year on with all our team back from the furlough scheme, we are starting to get on top of. In some ways the Covid-19 period has helped sharpen our focus in ways of working but we are far from working back at 'business as usual'.

Events

As to be expected, in light of the pandemic, we have completely shelved our events program until further notice. Even the seemingly small events take a long time in the planning and its simply not feasible in the current changing climate. Therefore, until we have some clarity and certainty, all public engagement activities have ceased.

Manor Mill – Unfortunately we were not able to run the mill throughout 2020 and its looking as though we will not open throughout the 2021 season, due to ongoing uncertainty of government restrictions and public health guidance.

Valley path

Over two weeks in October contractors put down over 120T of stone to resurface over 1Km of Valley path, from Manor Mill barns to the Sea Shanty. We also took the opportunity of the Right of Way closure to replace the bridge at the triangle. Much of this bridge is made from Devon Sweet chestnut from the National Trust Arlington Estate so should be good for a good number of years as Sweet chestnut will outlast inferior, quick grown softwood timber.

Annual works

Our summer activities were of course hit by the lock-down period, furloughed staff and not being able to facilitate volunteer groups but from mid-June onwards we were able to operate at a limited capacity and kept the main access routes open (if not to our usual high presentation standards). Heading into the winter of 2020/21 we were able to run volunteer parties again where we focused efforts around health and safety areas (felling trees succumbing to Ash dieback or works on our Rights of way networks).

Ash dieback

Although we have been aware of Ash dieback (*Chalara Fraxinea*) in the area for several years, we are only now starting to feel the true force of this tree disease. No doubt compounded by dryer summers, we are now seeing far more Ash trees showing advanced signs of Chalara. Throughout the year of 2020 we had to fell more ash across the whole property than ever before. Unfortunately, the feeling is that this will be a recurring issue in subsequent years as further ash become infected by the disease or succumb to secondary infections.

Volunteer recruitment

No doubt as people were experiencing more time inside as a result of lockdown, we saw an increase in people getting in contact regarding volunteering opportunities in the countryside. Throughout the Autumn and Winter of 2020/21 we saw an increase in volunteer numbers in our regular weekly work parties. That being said, we are always on the lookout for volunteers to join our team in our varied volunteer roles. If this is of interest, please do not hesitate to get in contact with our rangers on 01297 680507.

Rob Skinner
Lead Ranger
May 2021



National
Trust

Branoc Hall 2020 Annual Report for the PC AGM

Hall Business 2020

Covid -19 hit us in February 2020 and the hall was closed when the Government put the country into “Lockdown” at the end of March. The Covid Pandemic events caused every aspect to be put on hold. The booked weddings and other events had to be cancelled with no other bookings accepted in the foreseeable future. This of course caused a significant loss of revenue, which continues to be endurable because of the financially stable situation maintained by our treasurer, and help from the Government Covid Support Grant.

Devon Air Ambulance. The changes required for night landing of the Air Ambulance on the field behind the hall have been completed. Extra remote-controlled lighting is installed and the required protection for the cricket square changed to meet safety needs.

Christmas Fair. Although this could not be held we were able to sell Christmas Trees to the village as usual thanks to James at Combe Garden Centre. This has proved to be a very profitable fundraiser and we hope to be able to continue to offer it to the village every year.

The Hall Trustees met in March to agree our Covid 19 plan for the hall during “lock down”. It was clear that we would not be able to make the Hall Covid Secure and therefore no bookings would be taken while the constraints remained in place.

Our chairman Rod Hart resigned from the committee in October 2020 and David Lamb was elected as our new Chairman.

Sara Bedford, recently moved to Branscombe, was elected as our new Bookings Officer.

The Trustees continue to consider the installation of an EV charging point in the Hall car park. The general consensus is that more research is required to ensure that we take full advantage of the developing technology in this field.

OFFICERS for Branoc Hall Trustees are:-

Chairman – David Lamb

Treasurer - Robert Kerr

Deputy Chairman - Abi Fuel

Secretary - Viv Lamb

Bookings Officer – Sara Bedford

Viv Lamb

Secretary

05/05/21

THE BRANSCOMBE PROJECT
2020-2021
Barbara Farquharson

Things started well in 2020 – AGM in the Autumn and the first two winter well attended winter talks. We pushed on with preparations for the Easter exhibition – talking with small-holders and Nicky at Manor Mill Farm, researching Branscombe woodlands, photographing church and house graffiti.

Then came the pandemic and lockdown and everything came to a grinding standstill. No more talks, no exhibition.

We started contributing History Snips to the Parish Newsletter; Sue Dymond is bringing the website up to scratch; John Torrance and I worked on a book about the Burnt House at Weston.

John died in March. It's devastating for me, and a huge loss for the Project. I think we'll try to resume the winter talks and put on the exhibition that didn't happen. But that's for the future.



ST WINIFRED'S CHURCH, BRANSCOMBE

Churchwarden: M R Willmington, Woodhouse Farm, Branscombe, Seaton, Devon EX12 3BX

Telephone: 01297 680264 Office: 01297 33122

5th May 2021

PCC REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

As with all village organisations it has been an extremely difficult period for St Winifred's Church during the Pandemic, with the suspension of weekly services, celebrations such as weddings/baptisms and all fundraising events.

Balancing the books has been a struggle for a number of years with less people attending regular Sunday services. The running costs of a Grade One listed building of considerable historic importance such as St Winifred's continue to increase year on year. The PCC continues to do our best to keep the church active and in good repair and is very thankful for the support that we receive, particularly from the Friends of St Winifred's.

Regrettably we have had to approach the Parish Council this spring requesting support with maintenance of the churchyard and we sincerely thank the councillors for the contribution donated. Increasingly our committee feel the burden of running St Winifred's cannot be met going forward by the 20 or so (mainly elderly) regular worshippers and we may need to call on the wider village if the church is to have a long term future.

We are busy planning fundraising events for when restrictions allow including our annual church market and open day on 17th July. I would urge villagers to support the church and our events as much as possible, as we attempt to recover our financial position post Covid. The PCC want to ensure the church is there for life events such as funerals, memorial services, wedding and baptism celebrations – it is after all the village church and more than ever we need the villagers to support it.

Thank you

ROSS WILLMINGTON
Churchwarden

On behalf of Branscombe PCC





**THE FRIENDS OF ST. WINIFRED'S CHURCH,
BRANSCOMBE**

Registered Charity No: 1151031

30 April 2021

Dear Nicky

Clerk for Branscombe Parish Council

Annual Parish Meeting 2021

Thank you for the invitation to provide a report from the Friends for your above meeting.

As others will be echoing, the past year has limited activity due to the pandemic. Our committee has continued to meet switching to video format.

The various lockdown restrictions mean our year end 31 December 2020 accounts reflect the exceptional fact that no grants were made towards maintaining the fabric of our wonderful church building. The PCC being similarly unable to act on the various works required until very recently.

I am in regular contact with the Church wardens and PCC. My letters to all the Friends provided updates last year and I will be writing another letter to all our members very soon. We hope to hold our AGM on 14th August in the Branoc Hall where we look forward to seeing everyone again.

If anyone would like to join the Committee please do get in touch. Our Committee is getting smaller and new people would be very welcome.

Thank you,

Emma

Emma Cox

Chairman

Chairman:	Treasurer:	Secretary:
Emma Cox	Catherine Sparks	Nicky Langley
Sunnybank	The Fountain Head	Higher House
Branscombe EX12 3BL	Branscombe EX12 3BG	Branscombe EX12 3BH
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e.cox66@btinternet.com		



REPORT 2021

The Players face an uncertain future at time of writing, we have no plans to stage any productions in 2021. We have been struggling with attracting new members since well before the Pandemic and Covid has compounded this. We hope to organise our AGM in the autumn and will make a decision on whether we continue or close the group at that stage.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Ross' followed by a stylized surname.

Ross Willmington, Chairman

5th May 2021

PTFA REPORT

Unfortunately, due the current Covid-19 situation in the last 12 months or so, the PTFA has come to a standstill.

We did have our annual Quiz planned for April 2020, but sadly had to be cancelled.

All being well I will get the chance to organise again at the end of the year.

Hopefully the Harvest fair will go ahead, as this is our biggest fundraiser of the year. We do the refreshments from the pavilion.

The PTFA always contribute to the year 6 leavers, usually by doing treat for them, but this year due to Covid-19, we had to just give them vouchers, which they could purchase books. Hopefully when things open up again, we can get back to organising more events to raise money for the children and school.

Branscombe Branch
Royal British Legion.

As with everything else this past year so it was all stop, pause and try to think of safe ways that we could carry on in this our Centenary year.

There were several anniversary's to mark. Friday 8th May VE Day with over 30 people well spaced out at the War Memorial for a service led by Revd Dr Steven Martin and his Trumbone for Last Post, Silence, Reveille and a wreath placed by the Branch Chairman. No VJ Day event on Saturday 18th August so they were "Forgotten again" as the Poppy factory was closed as was everything else so we were unable to obtain a Wreath.

We managed to put out ten Static Poppy trays around the Village on October 19th just before the latest shutdown and were collected back early December.

As the Church was closed for services we held an outside Remembrance service at the War Memorial on Sunday 8th led by Revd Preb John Lees and Revd Victoria Chester. Again over 30 Folk gathered, 2 minute silence, Last Post, Reveille and Wreaths put in place. The 12 names of our fallen read out along with the 76 men and boys who came back.

Two long walks were undertaken for the Poppy appeal which were well supported and helped to boost our Village collection to £2121.

A fantastic result for a caring small village. As always thank you all.

On behalf of Mike King Chairman Branscombe Branch, Royal British Legion.



Branscombe Cricket Club – home of the mighty Ravens

The cricket club goes from strength to strength and there is always a growing list of opponents wishing to play us. We continue to attract many touring sides and overseas teams as well as our usual fixtures locally and in and around Exeter. We continue to 'feed' local club sides with our younger players (YOBs – Youth of Branscombe) and many have gone on to represent both the district and county.

We are passionate about the club and take enormous pride in the pavilion and the field. This is borne out when new sides arrive and are bowled over (sorry) by the beautiful location, warm welcome and facilities.

Like many, our usual fund raisers have taken a back seat although this has not stopped us investing in facilities for the club. New nets have been erected along the stream as well as a new boundary rope for the whole field.

We are currently working on a major development of the field. This will include a new pavilion and major upgrading of the field.

Work on the outfield commenced last September and will continue throughout the year.

To date we have scarified, top-soiled and re-seeded the entire wicket and square and once a month will scarify the entire field. The banks around the field are also strimmed on a regular basis.

We have invested £3,000 in a new mower, which all players have access to. This will not only provide an improved playing surface for the club, school and visitors but will also ensure the field is more suited for the overflow car park when no matches are taking place. This also dramatically lightens the load for our wonderful groundsman.

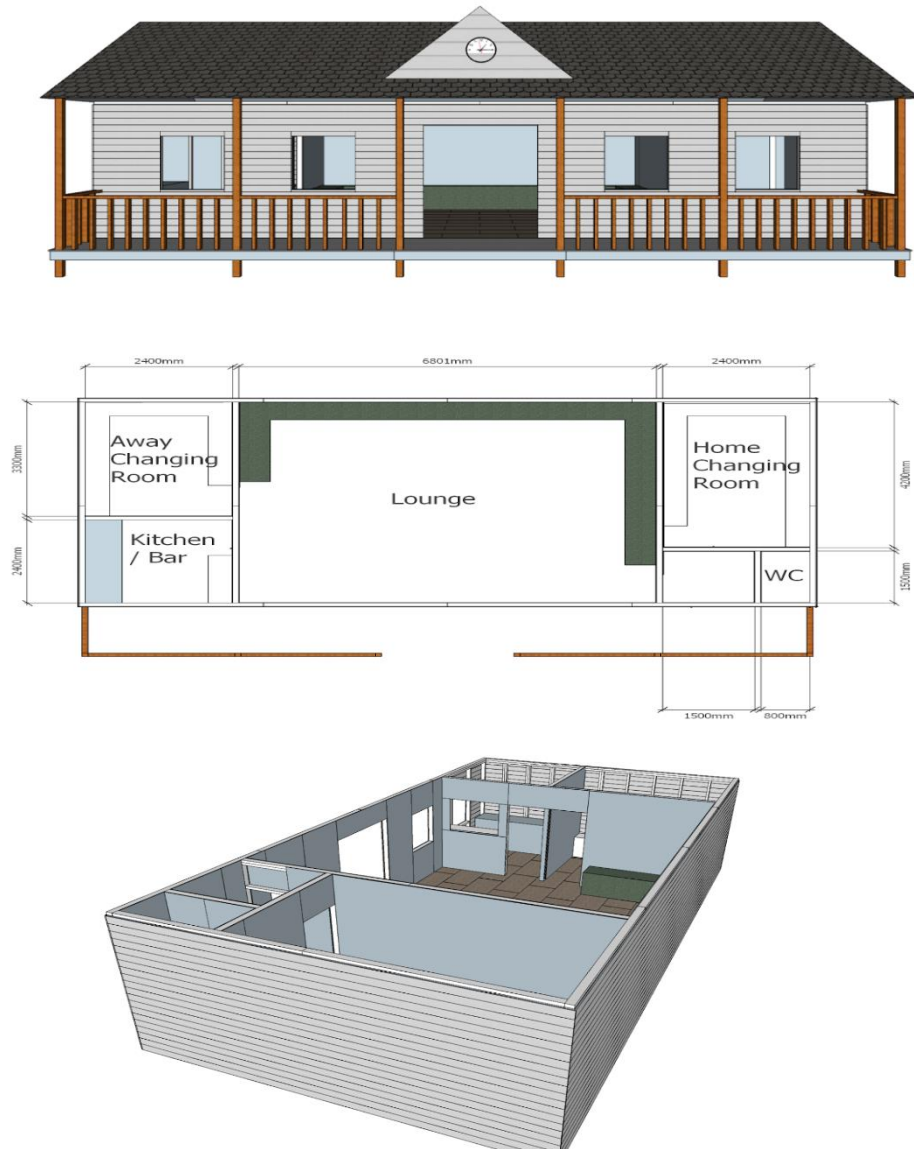
The current pavilion, whilst still in reasonably good order has started to twist and the base is rotting out. The club have been mindful of this for a couple of years and have carried out remedial repair work when necessary.

The idea of a new pavilion was mooted a while ago and has now gained momentum. We recently approached the Village Hall Committee with our proposal, and we received their full support.

Although the cricket club will have priority for the pavilion during the season, the entire village and school will be able to enjoy these facilities as well. This development will be a major improvement on the current facilities.

The cricket club will carry out the majority of building work although drawings and initial groundworks will of course be arranged with a local architect & builder. All necessary planning applications/permissions will also be undertaken by the club.

Funding for a substantial part of the project has already been pledged whilst the remainder will be met via the club's own fundraising and grants available via our affiliation with both the English and Devon Cricket Boards.



For those interested, we managed a good number of matches when the restrictions were lifted last summer and came out on top in all but one, which we contrived to tie.

We have around twenty-five fixtures pencilled in this season, including a (hopefully) welcome return from the Dutch who played here in 2019 complete with five former internationals! We are also looking to tour Holland again later this year and are looking to seek revenge after our two-match tour in 2019 in which we came second in both!

So far we have played four matches, drawn one, lost three (all very close)possibly the worst start to a season for a very long time. But we're Ravens – we'll come good!

All fixtures, match reports and photos can be found on the club's website – branscombecricket.com

We all look forward to the day when spectators are allowed back and we can offer the opposition teas and refreshments and generate some bar revenue for the Village Hall.

Gary Pinnock

Secretary General - Wicketkeeper - Low Order Batsman

Branscombe Cricket Club

HARVEST FAIR

With last year's fair being cancelled due to the covid-19 situation, the committee had a virtual meeting the other evening to discuss this year's 2021.

It has been decided to hold a scaled down fair on the 18th of September 2021.

This will coincide with the wacky races also.

Everything is being planned to be very local with a couple of bands, kids activates, and refreshment's being served by the PTFA and Cricket club doing a BBQ. A bar and some local stalls and Charity organisations from the village.