

19th June 2026

After months of planning, meetings, spreadsheets, WhatsApp messages, tea consumption and at least three moments where someone dramatically announced “I’m never organising anything again”, Fairfest ’26 finally arrives this weekend. But before we throw ourselves headlong into the village’s annual celebration of bunting, questionable parking and bouncy castles, let’s begin with some excellent news.

Despite weather conditions so grim that even the ducks appeared to be reconsidering their life choices, last week’s Village Hall Fair raised a record-breaking £1,635. The Village Hall Committee would like to thank everyone who baked, volunteered, donated, ran stalls and turned up, proving once again that Fairlight residents remain completely undeterred by wind, rain, or basic meteorological warnings when homemade Victoria Sponge is involved. Every penny raised helps keep our wonderful village hall thriving and, once again, Fairlight has demonstrated that village spirit is alive and well... and apparently fuelled almost entirely by tea and cake. Well done all concerned.

One of this year’s undoubted highlights has been the ABBA On Show concert held in the village last month. It sold out faster than Southern Water can dig holes, and left many unlucky villagers asking whether knowing all the words to Dancing Queen counted as a ticket. Unfortunately it didn’t, but if you were unable to get tickets, there’s another chance. They’re back. OK, not in Fairlight this time, but just down the road in Ore, on 29th August at Ore Community Centre. Tickets are available online and early booking is strongly advised for anyone wishing to relive the 1970s, while wearing entirely sequinned clothing.

Church services continue as normal this week, because even Fairfest cannot entirely disrupt divine scheduling. Holy Communion takes place at St Andrew’s at 11am, while Pett Methodists meet earlier at 9:15am. As it’s the third Sunday of the month, there’s also a 9:15am service at St Mary’s & St Peter’s in Pett. And for anyone seeking refreshments with slightly less singing and a little more conversation, Café Refresh returns on Thursday 18th June from 10:30am–12 noon at St Peter’s Church on the corner of Broadway. Tea, coffee, and homemade cakes will all be available, so do pop along, either alone or with a friend.

Before we get into Fairfest, a quick question: can you get out of your chair and still touch your toes without making mysterious noises? If the answer is “possibly”, or even “absolutely not”, Move it or Lose it might be worth a look. This award-winning fitness programme for the over-60s focuses on flexibility, balance, strength and aerobic health, helping to keep you active, independent and one step ahead of unexpected wobbles. Classes are held weekly at the New Hall in Winchelsea. The first class is free, with some excellent offers afterwards. Interested? Give Lisa a call on 07939 323937.

But now... Back to Fairfest, arguably this year’s biggest event in the village calendar. Some would say Christmas comes close, but Christmas doesn’t usually feature steam trains, donkeys and dog shows. Yes, Fairfest ’26 is here, this Saturday, 20th June, at the Recreation Ground from 12 noon until 10pm. There’s still time to volunteer, donate a raffle prize or, if you’re one of those highly organised people, even bake a cake. Entry to the event is completely free. Yes. Free. Which in 2026 feels almost rebellious. Southern Water, who by this point seem to have quietly become permanent residents of Fairlight, have very kindly volunteered to assist with car parking duties. Armed with high-vis jackets and what one assumes is experience gained from digging up our village roads and well accustomed in using the phrase “sorry mate, you can’t go down there” they’ll be helping people park safely and letting visitors know when the car park reaches capacity. If you’re told parking is full, please park sensibly on the surrounding roads, and remember: “I’ll only be five minutes” remains one of humanity’s greatest fictional statements. Disabled parking will, of course, be available on the field, but please note, this does not include people who simply don’t fancy walking. For anyone feeling unexpectedly athletic, the tennis club will be offering free pickleball coaching between 12pm–2pm. Register interest via Gingerbrendan@yahoo.co.uk and

discover the sport everyone's suddenly become an expert in, despite only learning the rules last Thursday. As for the festival itself... Expect the usual glorious collection of local arts, crafts and gifts. What often begins with "I'll just have a look" all too often ends with buying a hand-painted wooden puffin, but don't worry, every home should have at least one, maybe two, and think how lovely they'll look on your mantelpiece, or wherever you put them! Food and drink will be available throughout the day with a BBQ, a bar, teas, coffees and enough ice cream to make weather forecasts totally irrelevant. Children can enjoy a steam train, a bouncy castle, donkeys and assorted activities carefully engineered to ensure they sleep exceptionally well afterwards and their parents briefly remember what silence sounds like. Elsewhere there's archery, hopefully held at a safe distance from the bouncy castle (what could possibly go wrong), a dance workout display from Rise 'n' Shine, a tug of war competition, a fun dog show, where the dogs remain blissfully unaware they're competing, performances by The Fairlight Players and Village Voices, afternoon music from The Pett Slip Buoys and The Blues Cats, before The Kytes round things off into the evening. All this is entirely free. It's a village fête run by the village for the village, although non-Fairlighters are not only welcome but positively encouraged. After all, somebody has to admire our organisational brilliance and pretend not to notice us panicking behind the scenes. At the time of writing, the weather forecast is looking encouraging, which means there's every chance Fairfest '26 won't become "Fairfest: The Mud Years". On the serious side, remember, an enormous amount of work goes into making this event happen each year and whether you're helping, attending or simply turning up for one of the legendary Pett Level Independent Rescue Boat Burgers, do come along and support it, it's Fairlight at its very best.

And once Fairfest finally folds away the gazebos, untangles the extension leads and collectively agrees "we'll never do this again"..... until next January, along comes The Cove....

They are preparing for something a little more continental. On 10th and 11th July, "Fête à Fairlight" arrives, bringing French village charm, Pétanque, (Google it) French wine and enough frites to make you briefly question your nationality. Friday evening features a communal Moules Frites feast, while Saturday offers a Tour de France of wines, French-inspired food, live music and countless opportunities to confidently misuse the word "magnifique". So get your onions ready to hang around your neck and dust off your beret. More details to come.

And finally...

Broadband.

Remember that super-fast, ultra-reliable full fibre service we've all been encouraged to embrace? After last week's outages, some villagers may be questioning whether "full fibre" refers to broadband or simply something printed on a packet of Kellogg's breakfast cereal. Depending on who you ask, the issue is either entirely Openreach's or your internet providers' fault – a level of disagreement usually only seen in village Facebook groups. Whatever the cause, for 36 hours internet speeds were roughly comparable to a determined snail travelling toward a dish of garlic butter. As for reliability? Somewhere between British Leyland and a bacon sandwich at a Bar Mitzvah.

Still... Remember, keep calm, this is Fairlight, and it's Fairfest.
See you there.

Bob Scattergood
fairlightvillagevoice@gmail.com