

High Halstow Parish Council

Annual Report

2012/13

Home of the Heron



High Halstow Parish Council

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Chairman's Report

Today Wednesday 17th April 2013 we mark the death of Margaret Thatcher who was born on 13th October 1925, the daughter of grocer from Grantham she died on 8th April 2013. She was this country's first and only woman Prime Minister and the longest serving Prime Minister of the twentieth century, serving between 1979 and 1990. Margaret Thatcher was a great leader and has been compared to Winston Churchill and Arthur Wellesley (the 1st Duke of Wellington). Both were considered great and controversial leaders. Whatever your opinion may be, she will go down in history as a landmark in British politics. May she rest in peace and may we cherish freedom.

I invite you to help yourselves to the buffet. Please feel free at any point in the proceedings to tuck in .. and thank you yet again to Lesley and Jane for the spread.

Much has happened in High Halstow in the last twelve months. I must again pay tribute to the many who continue to contribute to the village, without payment and without proper recognition by the community as a whole. There is not sufficient time tonight to mention all by name but I know you would want me to say thank you to them on your behalf. I will however mention a few!!

Thank you to Michelle King for all the work she does in the organising and running of the village market.

A big thank you to Ray Collins who is rock solid in his commitment of the day to day maintenance of both of our halls. Always there on project day! Our lighting and props man at Dramarama - to mention just a few of his talents.

Project 90 is now in its 10th year and has attracted many volunteers over time, not all I might add from this village. Sadly we are no longer able to litter pick the arterial routes into the village since we lost funding from Medway Council who now have the responsibility to keep them tidy. Thanks to Ken, Trevor, Margaret Whitbread, June Collins and Parish Councillors and all those who continue to attend on the first Saturday after the Parish Council meetings.

The High Halstow Times continues to thrive and is now delivered to St Mary Hoo and Cooling as well as the village. It caught out one RSPB volunteer this month when I was told that dogs' loos were a step too far! We are grateful to the editor Carl Mitchell and the dedicated team of distributors who brave the weather to ensure it arrives on time every month. A special thanks to retiring Ann Smith who has for some time organised distribution. This important task is now in the hands of Nigel Smith.

Earlier this year we bid farewell to Pat Sanford who retired as Head Teacher from High Halstow Primary School. She served our children well for close on 10 years.

I'm glad to welcome Gary and Bill to the Red Dog and pleased that they have settled in and are happy to host live music once in a while!

This time last year my report began with the news that phase one of the village hall was complete. It marked the end of a ten year long period of fund raising and the gradual realisation that High Halstow is considered a relatively prosperous place to live and as such would not attract the raft of normal funders seemingly tripping over themselves to dish out an endless supply of cash. Privately I was very worried that phase one would be the total extent of our village hall refurbishment. Fortunately Gary Thomas did not share my fears - or if he did he didn't share them with me! His continuing efforts before and since this time last year has resulted in the raising of a further £190,000. I can now announce on behalf of the Hall Committee that we are about to start Phase Two. Without Gary's leadership of the Hall Committee I'm sure we would have floundered. His commitment to this project is a credit to him, and I would like to thank him on behalf of the village for his inspiration and tenacity.

It would appear that spring has finally sprung after a particularly long and cold winter. We may now be able to take full advantage of our new Outside Gym. Installed in the late summer of last year it is aimed at the older amongst us who feel that keeping fit will improve our life style. This project did attract some unsolicited funding and under the wing of Chris Watson has been successfully completed. Chris has also overseen the installation of the new fencing around the allotments which continue to attract a long list of would be market gardeners. Thank you Chris.

This year has also seen the start of a weekly Parish Council surgery where parishioners can informally meet

councillors to discuss problems. Chris Watson and Gary Jerreat are available to talk to at the Kings Kitchen which meets here every Tuesday morning.

Thanks must also go to:

Margaret Bufford for representing the Parish as a trustee of the Relief in Need Charity. Margaret has retired this year after giving many years of loyal service. Her position on this very worthwhile village charity has been taken by Stuart Bailey.

Maureen Short who has served on the Recreation Hall committee since 1979 resigns this year. Maureen was treasurer for many years and has contributed much to the running of the Hall.

Back in June our community had the opportunity to come together to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. In the run up to our designated day it rained non stop. Celebrations in London were rain soaked. I remember watching it unfold on television and thinking "what are we going to do"? It was a bit touch and go to say the least. We did have a contingency plan in place to erect marquees on the recreation ground in the event of bad weather but they wouldn't have been enough! On the day, miraculously, the rain finally stopped and the sun broke through... what a close run thing! A big thank you to Jo Mitchell and her band of willing helpers who decorated the hall inside and out, co-ordinated a fantastic outdoor tea party for around 200 children, organised stalls, games, arranged bands and youth entertainment. I don't recall how many people attended but the subsequent comments confirmed that everyone enjoyed the day. Thank you also to the Gardening Club who planted out the bases of the home of the heron signs in red white and blue annuals. I'm pleased to note that they have replanted this year too. We were honoured to be selected as a site for one of the many beacons that were lit around the country commemorating the sixty years. I had managed to borrow a beacon from the Fenn Bell (as you do!) It must have weighed 5 or 6 cwt. getting it down and bringing it to site was relatively easy, as I had the help of the fork lift and driver from MLI from Fenn Corner... Putting it up though was to be reminiscent of the Egyptians building the pyramids... After arriving at the agreed site for the beacon to be erected and while waiting for help to arrive, I was inundated by 10 or so infants from the school for whom the beacon was like a magnet. "What's that"? "How you going to put it up?" they cried. "With your help" I jokingly said as I lined them up along the full length of the 20 foot beacon. With all in place, I again jokingly said "after three one - two - three - Lift"!!! (thinking there is no way they could even move this let alone lift it). To my total surprise the beacon support rose from the ground!!! Fortunately for me adult help soon arrived and I had to dismiss the amazing class of 2013. It might have been easier for me had I dismissed the adults and let the children erect it! After much discussion, John Pink who had for many years been our village post master was chosen as our celebrity beacon lighter. At exactly 10.10pm, June 4th 2012, the designated time, he performed his task with the utmost dignity.. We should have a Diamond Jubilee every year!

One event that I'm sure is set to be part of our annual calendar is the Christmas Tree Festival. This did surprise me I must say! It seemed to be the one event that brought all the village groups together in one place at one time. Fantastic!! I wish it had been my idea. Well done Gary! If I'm not mistaken it was the very first event in aid of the ew Friends of St Margaret's Church, the second being the ever popular Santa's visit. Now set, and ready to be officially launched later this evening it is an ideal medium for the secular amongst us to contribute to the upkeep of the building so that it can be preserved for future generations to use and enjoy. It will also send a clear message to the Diocese of Rochester that residents of High Halstow value this important and historic landmark.

I'm glad to note that the Parish Council is continuing to support the youth of our village and recognised a need for a skate park. Although at some £50,000 of investment this will take a few years to achieve unless we can identify a source of additional funding.

Some years ago Lesley Munday (who was then or had been a Parish Councillor) had the bright idea to start a Youth Club for the village ..Now twenty years later with the help of Chris Peek and over the years, many volunteers they still meet on a Tuesday night at the Village Hall. Now with a membership of over sixty and a healthy waiting list High Halstow Youth Club is still going strong and if I'm not mistaken it is the longest running youth club on the Peninsula. It has certainly been the longest running hirer of the Village Hall. High Halstow Youth Club has also been the inspiration and backbone of Sound Hole and Allhallows Youth Club. In twenty years it must have impacted on 100s of youngster's lives and there may even be old members out there who have children of their own attending today. It is only right that we celebrate this achievement and pay tribute to Lesley and Chris for their commitment and enthusiasm over the past twenty years.

In 2000 the Parish Council organised a consultation among residents to find out what was important in the community. I believe its time to look again, to see if hopes and aspirations have changed. What do we consider important? What are our priorities for the future? What extra facilities would we like? My wishes are simple ... wi-fi

in the hall, wooden bus shelters and street furniture which would be more in keeping with our rural setting and of course the hall finished sometime soon... but what do you think.???

We may be in a minority here in High Halstow but I do know that there are a significant number of residents who have reservations about the proposals to build a new town on our doorstep. It was therefore heartening to hear that a significant part of Chattenden Woods has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) for its 1% of the country's population of nightingales. I understand that Medway Council have appealed against the decision. We already know how important the North Kent Marshes are to hundreds of thousands of wintering wildfowl who migrate here every year from the arctic. It is no wonder that the relative remoteness of the Peninsula makes it ideal for other species too. The designation of Chattenden Woods also highlights the validity of the unquestioned precedence of brownfield over greenfield development.

Finally we look forward with bated breath, once again, to hear the findings of yet another set of experts, looking into airport hub capacity in the UK. The Davis Commission will submit its interim findings to government at the end of this year and is expected to publish the full report sometime in 2015. When will we realise that precious places are exactly that precious? Especially in this small country where they are few and far between. Developing them should not even be an option. After all that's why we have a whole government department to look after them. To date building an airport somewhere in the Thames Estuary remains a possibility... for now, therefore, I must end this report by once again shouting "No Estuary Airport"!

George Crozer
High Halstow Parish Council

Some of the entries to the High Halstow Photo Competition



HIGH HALSTOW PARISH COUNCIL

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2012

	2011/12	2010/11
RECEIPTS		
Precept	40,000.00	43,410.00
Bank interest	622.78	582.34
Rural Liaison Grant	8,333.00	0.00
Magazine income	515.00	870.00
Street cleaning	16,897.56	16,077.00
Grounds maintenance contract	16,026.30	35,050.05
Allotments	5.00	50.50
Other income	154.91	24.32
VAT repaid	3,754.81	4,162.53
TOTAL	86,309.36	100,226.74

PAYMENTS

Clerk's salary	6,064.16	6,185.10
Clerk's reimbursable expenses (mileage etc)	594.40	538.40
Street cleaners	13,626.09	13,349.91
Handyman	0.00	0.00
Payroll Clerk	200.00	160.00
Tax & NI	2,605.41	2,450.20
Street Cleaning expenses	441.53	266.92
Handyman expenses	0.00	0.00
Training	355.00	0.00
Section 137	85.00	150.00
Grants other powers	68,350.00	150.00
Rural Liaison Grant	8,333.00	0.00
Magazine expenses	4,897.00	4,384.00
Administration		
Clerks admin expenses	534.96	367.68
general	332.00	275.00
insurance	1,715.15	1,681.67
audit	550.00	400.00
telephone	335.57	263.84
subscriptions	625.66	614.47
publications	0.00	12.50
Chairmans allowance	125.00	85.57
hall hire	0.00	80.00
legal	0.00	0.00
Grounds maintenance contract	18,206.13	17,040.86
Recreation Ground/Forge Common/noticeboards	12,820.47	1,289.00
Project day	177.01	242.92
Other expenses	0.00	34.48
Garage/shed rent	600.00	780.00
VAT paid	8,458.64	3,593.07
TOTAL	150,032.18	54,395.59

Excess income over expenditure -63,722.82 45,831.15

BANK BALANCES

Barclays Current Account	535.58	2,301.18
Barclays Base Rate Tracker Reserve Account	12,192.72	74,149.94
Medway Council Deposit	58,000.00	58,000.00
TOTAL CASH ASSETS	70,728.30	134,451.12

FIXED ASSETS

nil	nil
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Approved by the Council on 9 May 2012

George Crozer
Chairman

Roxana Brammer
Responsible Financial Officer

RESERVES

Hall Refurbishment Fund	0	58,000
Replacement bus shelters	15,000	12,000
Hedge maintenance	18,000	18,000
Unallocated reserves	37,608	46,451
	70,608	134,451

2012/2013 Parish Council Report

Cllr Phil Filmer, Cllr Chris Irvine and Cllr Tony Watson

Last year when we spoke to you we started by outlining the difficulties which we as a Council face during the continuing global economic downturn. I think it is fair to say that it has been a challenging year not just for us as an authority, but for the country as a whole. This is why we believe that the actions which we have taken here in Medway to keep Council tax low while protecting and enhancing our frontline services are balanced and fair.

Despite the pressures placed on Medway Council by central government, namely a 3.6% cut to the allocated formula grant, an 18.6% cut to Council tax benefit, and top slicing of the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant and Early Intervention Grant, we managed to deliver a budget which was balanced, and one which we believe delivers for Medway. The 1.99% increase in council tax is equivalent to less than 43p a week for Band D properties.

Despite this nominal increase, council tax in Medway still remains the lowest in Kent and we have managed to protect those services which matter most to our residents – our libraries, our Sure Start centres, our schools, highway repairs and social care for those most in need. Weekly bin collections remain, and, thanks to our recent bid to the DCLG being accepted, we will shortly be introducing weekly recycling for all of our residents which should further drive up our current excellent recycling rate of 41% of household waste.

We have also reaffirmed our commitment to keep free swimming for all of our elderly residents and local children, something which I know is greatly supported. Similarly, we have continued to support efforts to increase opportunities for our young people's career chances through apprenticeships.

We continue to offer a superb array of free festivals for all tastes – the Sweeps festival, our Dickensian weekends, the new River festival to name but a few - which last year attracted a huge amount of visitors to Medway providing a huge boost for our small businesses and the wider local economy. Tourism alone is worth £292 million pounds to the Towns' economy each year, and more than 6,000 people are employed in tourism-related businesses so we can see why it is so important that we maintain our support for our festivals. 2012 also saw a number of big national occasions and I am proud that Medway played its part by making 2012 a year of celebration. Medway held its first ever River festival to commemorate Her Majesty The Queen's diamond jubilee. Medway also hosted Olympic teams from Egypt and the Republic of Congo, and we also saw 75,000 people line the streets when the Olympic Torch made its way through the Towns. It would be remiss of me not to mention also the bicentennial celebrations which were held to mark the life and work of Charles Dickens, our most famous former resident.

With regards to education, I am delighted to report that our bid to create a UTC college was successful at the second attempt. The Medway University Technical College will cater for 14 to 19-year-olds and will specialise in engineering and construction. The new school will offer a range of practically-based courses leading to qualifications, including GCSEs and A levels, and vocational qualifications such as BTECs and NVQs.

Further, I am sure that we were all delighted to see the Hundred of Hoo Academy go from strength to strength following its recent Ofsted inspection where the school was considered to be GOOD, one short of outstanding. This follows the school's best ever GCSE results last year, and is quite a remarkable turnaround. My congratulations to all the staff and pupils for working so hard to ensure that the Hundred of Hoo is increasingly becoming the first choice destination for our young students here on the Peninsula.

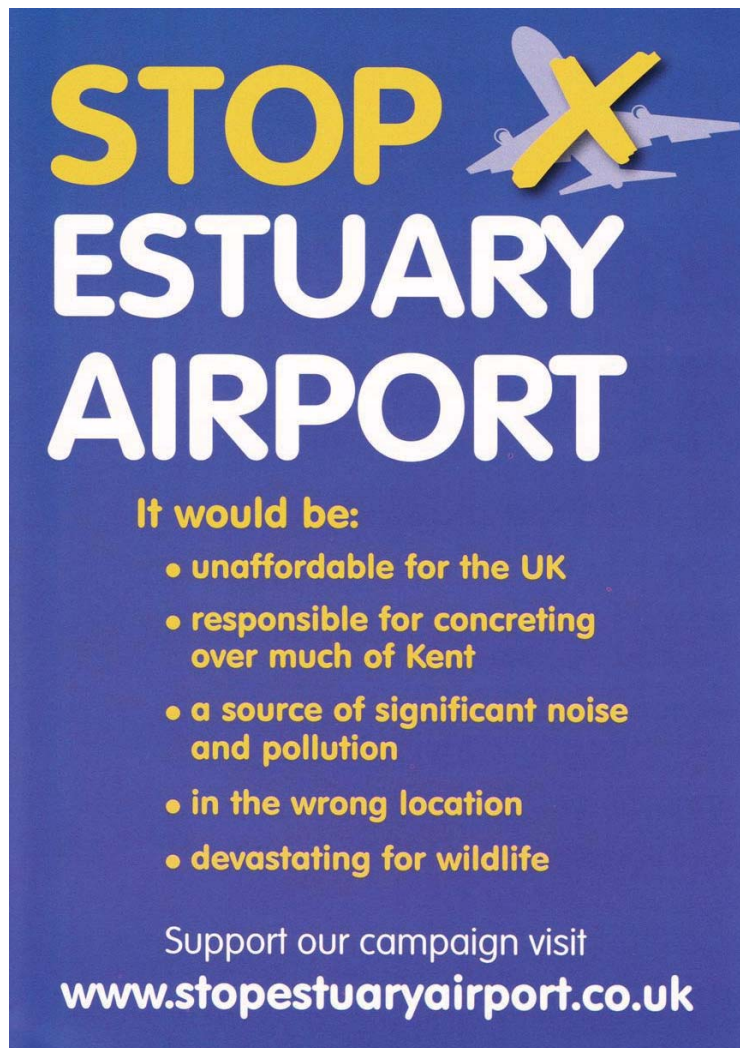
It should also be noted that, thanks to pressure from your local councillors, girls from the Hoo Peninsula wishing to go to a Grammar school are now treated more favourably in the nearest Grammar schools' oversubscription criteria, namely Fort Pitt GS. This inequitable issue has been a real bone of


contention for many years and we are pleased to see schools such as Fort Pitt listening and acting upon our concerns. With The Williamson Trust taking an increasing interest in our primary education here on the Peninsula we hope that this will lead to further opportunities for our brightest students to achieve and excel.

It is fair to say that KS2 results in Medway remain challenging. Despite our best ever results in KS2 last year, with 72% of children gaining a level 4 in both English and Maths, overall results remain stubbornly on the low side. Steps have been and will continue to be taken to accelerate improvement. We recently appointed a new Director for Children's service, and further funding has been made available to address this issue. We hope that the benefits of this are realised as soon as possible.

Medway's future as a strategic centre in the South East was cemented with the recent announcement of a number of major infrastructure projects. Peel Holdings has brought forward a huge £650million scheme to transform Chatham Waters which will provide up to 3,500 much needed jobs. Development of Chatham Waterfront is also ongoing, while we will soon see the completion of the first housing units on Rochester Riverside. With the further announcement that Rochester Railway Station is set for a major multi-million pound upgrade, I think it is fair to say that regeneration, which should benefit all of our residents, is happening at pace in Medway.

Finally, we want to once again reaffirm our strong opposition to a Thames Estuary airport. Medway Council has made its submission to the Davies Commission and we are currently seeking to have the commission visit the Hoo Peninsula in order that it may see for itself why we need to protect and preserve this special place in the hearts and minds of not just our generation, but for future generations to come.



STOP 

**ESTUARY
AIRPORT**

It would be:

- **unaffordable for the UK**
- **responsible for concreting over much of Kent**
- **a source of significant noise and pollution**
- **in the wrong location**
- **devastating for wildlife**

Support our campaign visit
www.stopestuaryairport.co.uk

St Mary Hoo Parish Council Annual Report

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 28th May in the function room at the Fenn Bell Inn. All are welcome and a 20 minute period will be available for members of the public to report on local activities or comment on Parish issues. This meeting will then be followed immediately by the Annual Parish Council meeting.

The longstanding vacancy for councillor was filled by Terry Ballard of the Fenn Bell and we welcome his very useful local knowledge and involvement. Another resident, Mike Windsor, volunteered as Footpaths Officer and we thank him for his time and energy in walking the paths and reporting problems. Thanks are also given for our volunteers who assist with magazine distribution.

Ward Cllr Tony Watson and Village Voices editor Michael Pearce are planning to produce a magazine for the St Mary Hoo and Stoke areas in the near future. This will provide the ideal media for exchange of information and for local advertising. We also hope to distribute the Hoo Village Voices magazine which will give a wider overview on activities, events and services.

Medway Highways Dept recently joined the south and north ditches at Fenn Street by pipeline to alleviate the road flooding problem. Road closure and traffic diversion was essential to allow machinery to operate in the narrow area and to avoid delays and tailbacks due to temporary closure for slinging, lifting and resurfacing work. Apologies are extended for the inconvenience caused. A decision is also awaited on our request to reduce speed limits on the Ratcliffe Highway from Fenn corner to Allhallows where high volumes of fast traffic are often experienced.

Now that the weather has improved significantly we have recommenced maintenance on the Parish amenity areas and we hope to progress the provision of a pathway within the Newlands Farm Road nature reserve. This will be subject to suitable quotes and successful application for funding from Rural Liaison.

The Lodge Hill development proposals for 5000 homes and associated infrastructure at Chattenden have been set back by 'Natural England' extending the boundaries of the existing Site of Special Scientific Interest 'SSSI' to include the development area. This follows a survey which identified rare nightingales, ancient woodland and meadow grasses in the location. Medway Council Planners and Land Security Development are expected to respond by appeal and to forward alternative proposals.

Network Rail have announced their intention to submit a planning application to build a new Rail Station at Corporation Street in Rochester. This is to cater for increased passenger numbers and to provide closer access to the town centre. It is hoped that their design will be in sympathy with the 'Historic Rochester' theme.

This report would not be complete without mention of the ongoing consultations regarding a hub airport in the South East. Mark Reckless, MP for Rochester and Strood, and Medway Council are strongly opposed to any proposals that include the Hoo peninsula and Thames Estuary and will continue to petition and campaign as necessary.

Finally my thanks go to Roxana, our clerk, for her service and support, to Clive, our webmaster, for his quiet efficiency and to my fellow councillors for all their interest and work to improve local conditions for all.

Wishing everyone a good and happy summer season.

Bill Budd - Chair of St Mary Hoo PC.
01634 270192 buddbil@aol.co.uk

High Halstow Village Hall

I have to start with a big thank you to Maureen Short who has decided to stand down from the Committee and I believe she has played a part on it since 1979, almost as long as it has been standing. Maureen continues to support the Hall and I have no doubt that she will continue to do so in the future but she feels it is time to let someone else take over. Her help over the years though has been very much appreciated by past and current Hall Committee members

It has been another eventful year following the completion of Phase One of the refurbishment programme in January 2012. The Hall Committee is pleased to announce that the works for Phase Two have been put out to tender and the contract awarded to BE May. The work is started to commence week commencing 27th May and should last approximately 12 weeks. This work has only be made possible with the grants from the following organisations:

Veolia Environmental Trust (subject to formal approval)
Kent Downs and Marshes Leader Programme (RDPE)
High Halstow Parish Council
Garfield Weston

The remaining part has been funded by way of a low interest loan repayable over ten years. The cost of this Phase will be in the region of £190,000 including costs and the Hall Committee would like to express its gratitude on behalf of all the residents of High Halstow for making this project happen. Phase Two will see the roof over the front part of the building being replaced, a new doctors surgery, new toilets including facilities for the disabled, plumbing, heating etc. The estimated cost for Phase Two is £190,000 and this cost has been kept down due to some of the work to be carried out by ourselves. We are already looking towards Phase Three which will include a new kitchen, proper stairs to the room in the loft, a new wall between the existing doctors and the back of the hall and a new main entrance.

In terms of the hall for the past year, we have seen a record number of bookings with an increase in particular relating to children's parties. We can only assume with Phase Two and the improved facilities then this trend will continue

Fund raising activities saw the Annual Quizathon, which is always so popular and many thanks must go to Margaret Church, Lesley Munday and John Pink for this great event. The Quizathon for this year will have taken place by the time this goes to print and this would have taken the money raised from this activity alone to over £5000, a terrific achievement.

We rebranded the Farmers Market to the Village Market and I have to thank all the stall-holders and people who come along to support this each month. We are looking at ways to encourage more of you to come along as we see this as a major way of raising money for Phase Three. Many thanks to Michelle King who spends a considerable amount of time organising this event and is always looking for ways to improve it. This year saw the return of the Books Stall to the market and many thanks to all those who donated their books as well as those who purchased them. In particular Tim and Lesley Munday who donated enough books for us to start our own library

In June we saw Jubilee in the Park and what an event. From start to finish there were so many people there running stalls, providing refreshments, entertainment etc. it seemed the whole village came out. It is difficult to thank all of the helpers by name as their were so many; but from the Hall Committee side I would like to thank Claire and Dave Harris who ran the bar so well, Chris Watson and Mealvyn Mears for running the Book Stall and of course Lesley Munday, Jane Crozer and all the helpers in the kitchen.

Margaret Church brought Nicky Moore back with a number of his students he has been teaching for a fabulous night of entertainment. Many thanks to Margaret and Nicky who continue to support the Hall and guess what they are due to come back again later this year. If you want a great night out at terrific

value then why not come along this year, it is well worth it.

Take on Take That Tribute Band were so good that we had to get them back twice. Although numbers down for this event the people who came along certainly enjoyed it with one particular table trying to drink enough to pay for Phases Two, Three and Four all by themselves.

The Village Cook Book was a new venture, which seemed to go down so well that we are planning the next edition. Many thanks for all of those who contributed their recipes and in particular to Jeanette Dowsett for bringing this together and Carl Mitchell for organising the printing.

Bel Shearman and her army of helpers is to be thanked for running the Table Top Sale during the last year and is planning another one in July. It is always appreciated when new ideas are brought forward by different people and it comes off.

Even though the Hall will be partly out of action this year we will be looking to raise money for the Hall so that the project can finish. You will see in the May HHT details of the first High Halstow Golf Tournament, which we hope the golfers amongst you will see as an event you wish to participate in.

We will look to have another Tribute Band later in the year subject to fitting it in after Phase Two has been finished so keep an eye on further details in the HHT.

Thanks to Wenda Taylor and Jo Mitchell for selling tickets for the various events as well as Carl Mitchell for printing them. Thanks to Bob who not only sells the tickets but also helps out with ensuring the bar is stocked at good prices.

I would also like to thank all the committee members who work tirelessly to keep the hall going. In particular Crystal Wakefield as Booking Secretary who takes so much pride in keeping users happy which is not always easy when she has to let them know about all the works planned and trying to get answers out of me. Ray Collins and George Crozer who have provided so much help with the architects, and assorted consultants in order to get to the answers required in order to bring the tender documents altogether which will allow Phase Two to happen. Lesley Munday, the Hall Secretary who is always there if a job needs doing as well as keeping the kitchen and various bars we run open. Stephen Gwilt who although very busy has found time to help the Hall and this is greatly appreciated/ Josh Gordon who although relatively new to the Committee and is another extremely busy person, also finds time to help out. Elaine Slatcher who has the task of keeping the Hall clean which is not that easy where it is run down but again the Hall Committee would like to express its thanks for her hard work.

I would like to thank all of the hirers be it regular or casual as without you there would not be a need for a hall. I hope the current year will not be too disruptive as we strive to keep the hall open during the refurbishment works and for next years report we can show Phase Two finished and Phase Three underway.

Thank you all.

Gary Thomas
Village Hall Committee Chairman

High Halstow and District Gardening Club Annual Report

Committee members 2012

Chair: Gwen Bucknall; Vice Chair: Christine Panter; Treasurer: Margot Sturt; Secretary: Christine Wilson; Membership and Social Secretary: Margaret Shuter; Show Secretaries: Ingrid Dalton Brown and George Tharby; Lecture Secretary: Marj Ives.

The year commenced with our annual AGM followed by the Annual Dinner in February which was held at the Village restaurant in Bells Lane for the first time. It was a great success and very well supported.

Four outings took place in 2012; the first to Batemans, a National Trust Property on 31st March. Batemans was Rudyard Kipling's delightful house, but it was such a cold day that although we enjoyed the gardens we had to make several visits to the café to warm up! The next was a lovely visit to the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley on 15th April incorporating the stunning orchid exhibition in the new glasshouses. On Saturday 5th May we went to Winchester for a superb day out. We had an excellent guided tour of the cathedral and enjoyed free time in the City. We went to the National Trust gardens at Mottisfont Abbey in Hampshire on 24th June to see the beautiful old fashioned roses in the walled gardens at their peak and also visited the house. The colours and scent of the roses were out of this world. Lastly we managed to go for our cruise on the Princess Pocohontas trip to Southend on 8th July and had a great time in spite of the wet weather on the voyage downstream. We even had a sunny interlude on Southend beach whilst we ate our fish and chips!

A Hog Roast was held in the garden at The Oast on Sunday 17th June and we were incredibly lucky with the weather as it was the best day of the whole week, so we were able to sit outside and enjoy the sun as well as the excellent food. The committee members all made different deserts which were absolutely delicious!

For the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, money for the member's plants was used to purchase red, white and blue petunia plugs which we grew on and planted out round each of the 3 heron signs in the village. This will be continued in 2013. The petunias have been replaced by daffodil bulbs donated by BLM Ltd. The committee ran a stall representing the Garden Club at the Village Diamond Jubilee event in the grounds of the Recreation Hall and offered activities for the children, making a vegetable monster, a treasure hunt and supplied sunflower plants for the children to grow on and bring in to the summer show.

We held a highly successful wine and cheese evening in October which was so greatly enjoyed that no-one wanted to leave! Marj Ives, with the assistance of her husband Roy, organised this event very effectively. Another new innovation was the free Christmas Social, where the committee provided mulled wine and an assortment of nibbles.

The Garden Club participated in the Christmas Tree Festival in the Memorial Hall in December by dressing our tree in garden accessories such as vegetables, seed packets etc. with sprays of foliage, holly and other berries round the base.

The Spring and Summer shows were very efficiently organised for the first time by Ingrid Dalton Brown and George Tharby, so many thanks for all their hard work. They were ably helped by Dennis Follett, Darren Campbell, Roy Ives, John Wilson and members of the Committee. Due to an unfortunate double booking of the Recreation Hall, the Summer Show was held on Bank Holiday Sunday, which meant that we had less entries than usual which was disappointing considering all the hard work that goes into organising this event. I hope that in 2013 when the Annual Summer Show is back on August Bank Holiday Saturday that it will be better supported again.

At the Feb 2013 AGM, I retired from the post of Chairman which I have held for the last 3 years, due to the pressure of personal commitments. I had a wonderful time and greatly enjoyed serving the Garden Club. During that time, the committee have worked very hard to organise many more events for you to attend, we have improved the financial situation and moved the club forward into the 21st century.

Unfortunately some of our highly valued Committee Members have retired. Trevor Jones resigned from

his post as President, so we would like to thank him for all he has done for the Garden Club. Dennis Follett has been appointed as Trevor's successor and I am sure he will be excellent and highly committed for the good of the club. Christine Panter has been a committed and loyal Deputy Chairman but has now moved too far away to be as involved with the committee. Christine Wilson, has been our hardworking secretary and resigned due to pressure of commitments. Oonagh Elliott resigned from coordinating the seed orders and Jill Norton has taken this responsibility on. Margot Sturt is the Club's Treasurer and is extremely organised and efficient in dealing with the club's finances and does an admirable job. The financial position of the club is healthy and we were able to invest in a laptop, projector and screen for the Club's use in August 2012. Margaret Shuter is the Membership and Social Secretary and is enthusiastic and works tremendously hard for the good of the club. During 2012 membership numbers remained constant, although sadly Brian Medhurst and Sue Arthur's husband passed away, and Sue has since moved from the village. John Pink had already organised the lectures for 2012, when Marj Ives took over as Lecture Secretary in Feb 2012 and they proved to be excellent and highly entertaining.

I would like to thank all the committee members not only for their enthusiasm, commitment and hard work, but also for the fact that in the last 3 years they have never claimed for their expenses. I would also like to thank all members of the club who are so supportive and help out in so many ways.

Gwen Bucknall

High Halstow Investors Club Annual Report

Sadly, one of our founder members died in November, fortunately Members were able to attend his funeral and subsequently made a donation to his choice of the Renal Unit. Since our formation in 1996 he and his Wife regularly took their turn to act as hosts at our meetings. These started with having coffee, or tea but for a long time now discussions take place with the benefit of a glass of wine, or two and some nibbles. The change seems to have improved our decision making and this financial year has been one of our most successful. Despite earlier market jitters, recent months have seen a steady rise in the value of our portfolio, currently invested in 21 companies. Some cash has been used to buy Premium Bonds resulting in several small wins but £100 in February. We continue to meet monthly and keep in touch by E-mail. Trading is carried out on the Internet. We ask for an initial input of £100, always invested, with a minimum of £25 each month. I need to point out that the value of our portfolio can go down as well as up and anyone interested should not invest money they cannot afford to lose. Otherwise it is great fun trying to beat the so called "experts" !

High Halstow Relief and Need Charity Report

This year the charity has come to the end of era for the charity with the retirement of two of our longest serving trustees with over 50 years of service between them. Both Doreen West and Margaret Bufford have been stalwarts of the charity since it was formed as an amalgamation of a number of smaller charities in the mid 1980's. Their knowledge of our community and their extensive experience has been invaluable in the smooth running and efficiency of the charities operations. It is with great sadness that we bid them farewell. We now have three new Trustees, Gemma Gillies and Chris Peek both of whom are co-opted and Stuart Bailey who is nominated by the Parish Council. We welcome all three and look forward to working with them fruitfully in the years to come.

The trustees of the charity have been thinking of ways in which we can make the charities services more accessible to people in our community. To this end we will soon be publishing a new leaflet to explain how we work and what our aims and objectives are. We also hope to launch a new website to make it easier to apply for assistance and find out more about the charity and how it works.

High Halstow Primary School Annual Report

The past year at High Halstow Primary School has seen several changes. In April 2012, we became an academy, joining The Williamson Trust. The Williamson Trust currently includes the Sir Joseph's Williamson's Mathematical School, The Hundred of Hoo Academy, High Halstow Primary School and Elaine Primary Academy.



After being Head Teacher at High Halstow Primary School for over a decade, Mrs Sanford retired in July 2012. Mrs Sanford dedicated herself to the school for so long and she inspired so many children. She was given a great send off, with staff, pupils and parents, both past and present, sharing their memories and thanks.

In September 2012, the school adopted a new leadership model with a Head of School, to focus on Teaching and Learning and a Primary Executive Head Teacher in a strategic role, supporting the Primary schools within The Williamson Trust. It has been an exciting time for High Halstow Primary School pupils and will continue to be as we head towards the end of the school year.

Pupils took part in a 'Times and Tides Project' earlier in the school year and part of the project involved members of the village community coming in to share their experiences of the village in the past. The pupils enjoyed asking questions and listening to the villagers. The pupils work from the week was then shared in an exhibition in the village.



The PTA have been very active in the past year. The annual Summer Fair was a success as always with a variety of stalls and activities to entertain everyone involved. Other events organised in the past year include: The Christmas Shop, Christmas Fair, Christmas Pantomime, Lady you Love shop, Man of the Moment shop, Fizz and Quiz for Key Stage Two Pupils, Tea and Treats for FS2 and Key Stage One pupils and many

more. The funds raised have provided the pupils with many experiences. They have been able to support by funding a theatre group during book week, buying a water bottle for each pupil, new sports kits and much more.

The School Council have been working hard to organise events in school to raise money for our three chosen charities. Events during the past year have included: 'Bring a Bear to Show You Care,' 'Wear Your Party Clothes to School Day' and 'Crazy Hat and Hair Day' amongst other things.

It has also been exciting to see increased numbers of volunteers being welcomed into school to support our pupils with their learning, whether that be on school visits, supporting in specific classes or listening to children read. Pupils have had an increased opportunity to take part in a range of clubs and sporting activities. The Green Team continue to work hard to ensure we are being environmentally



friendly. They encourage our pupils to walk to school so as to reduce pollution in the village, they take care of the compost bin in the school grounds, plant bulbs and plants to make our grounds appealing as well as reminding staff and pupils to not waste water or electricity by placing posters around school. Other clubs include: SMILE Club, Magic at Maths, Writing Club, Sewing, Zumba, Martial Arts, Brazilian Soccer, Gymnastics and many more. Clubs are always changing so as to offer a range of opportunities for our pupils. Our pupils have participated in several competitions and festivals including: Tri-Golf, multi-skills, Indoor athletics, swimming competitions and Kwik-Cricket.

The past year has been as busy and exciting as ever for the community of High Halstow Primary School and we anticipate the following year to be no different.

Mrs G. Stangroom

Acting as Head of School

High Halstow Pre-school 2012-13

At High Halstow Pre- School, we have fun filled days that follow the children's interests and ideas, providing a stimulating and educational environment.

The statutory framework for the Early years Foundation Stage is designed from birth to five years and is the curriculum created by the government for children aged from birth to five years. The framework promotes learning and development as well as keeping children safe and healthy. We incorporate the standards into our planning and everyday experiences, providing high quality care in an early learning environment.

We have had an exciting year celebrating events such as the Queens Jubilee and the Olympics. We changed our snack area into a "Tea room" and the children made crowns and tiaras. For the Olympics we made bunting with the children's hand prints in red, white and blue. We also held our own mini Olympics obstacle course and the children were presented with medals. Our academic year ended with a teddy bears picnic and summer fete. Unfortunately the wet weather let us down so we were unable to arrange this event outside and eventually used the Recreation Hall. We were however able to release the butterflies outside that we grew from very small caterpillars.

We have a fantastic outdoor area and have waterproof clothing and wellington boots so that we can explore the garden in all weathers. We have had fun playing in the snow, making snowmen and the children even took buckets of snow inside and placed it in the water tray, to see how long it would take to melt. The children were fascinated with footprints in the snow so they made footprints wearing their wellies and using lots of bright coloured paints. Some children also walked on long lengths of paper with bare feet covered in paint.

The growing area is very popular and during 2012 children enjoyed growing strawberries, raspberries and vegetables such as potatoes and pumpkins. They planted the seeds, watered and looked after them until it was time to help pick the crop and prepare them for snack time. This was a natural link to harvest time. The children made tractors and combine harvester models from recycled materials. The process of sowing, watering and harvesting is about to start again as we look forward to some warmer weather.

We are proud to say we have raised some money for charities such as "Wear it pink" and Children in Need, by inviting the children to come into Pre-school as their favourite character and by wearing spotty clothes.

Anita Russell
Senior Practitioner/Manager

Memorial Hall Annual Report

2012 was a good year for our Hall, bookings are strong and they are repeat business which is great. Our main expense this year was to refurbish the kitchen and has received many good reports on the improvement. Obviously fund raising has to play a large part and this has been in the form of selling items at Boot Fairs which have generously been donated, but had to resort to sending goods to Auction which turned out to be a much better way than getting up at 6am on a Saturday or Sunday morning!! At present we have no projects in mind but bearing the age of our Hall cannot get complacent. We thank you for supporting us. Hall Committee.

High Halstow W.I.

Monthly meetings are on the first Wednesday at 7:30 in the Memorial Hall. At present we have 26 members, several that live outside the village. There is an annual membership fee which comes with a monthly magazine. Most months we have a speaker covering a wide variety of subjects. We do lots of extra activities from theatre trips, walks, visits to places of interest (usually includes tea), and the opportunity to join larger groups that arrange day schools and special events. There is also access to our own college in Oxfordshire that has courses on every conceivable subject. We would welcome any ladies who would like to come along and see what we get up to.

High Halstow Cricket Club Annual Report 2012/13

One problem with writing a report on the past 12 months is the recall of unhappy events, which resulted in the relegation of both 1st and 2nd XIs from their respective Division 3s. Much has been said of the weather throughout last season, which had a material effect on everyone and everything. What has not been stressed is the frustration of having a ground ready for action in March. Unfortunately, no sooner had the first coin been tossed in April than it rained, and continued so to do for weeks – usually on a Friday. It was difficult for players to comprehend the lack of cricket under blue skies on a Saturday, until they walked on the bog-like outfield. We were, however, not alone and clubs throughout the county suffered a loss of cricket and most importantly, a significant loss of revenue. The knock on effects will be with us for some time.

Almost a third of fixtures throughout the club were lost through weather, but amongst the carnage were a few brighter spots. The 3rd XI finished mid-table in the Kent Regional League Division 1B (Central), despite struggling for players from time to time. Also holding their own in a weather-restricted Medway Youth Cricket League were the U11s and U17s, whilst the U15s – many of whom were much younger – found the competition to have significantly more strength in depth. These sides also found their cup competitions to be a sporting challenge too far.



By far the brightest stars in the firmament were in the U13s who won their cup competition and ended the season as runners up in the MYCL U13. Unfortunately the game against eventual champions, Cobham, that effectively decided the league, was cancelled – due to the weather! Most of this group of players is still U13 for the 2013 season, so hopes are high for continuing success.

Whilst the ground has been variously baked hard, frozen, flooded and just plain boggy, players have been getting together during the winter, with nets at Kings School for the colts and Hoo for the adults. It is fair to say that spring has not sprung until after the period under review, in marked contrast to last year. As a “post balance sheet event”, the first 2 weekends of 2013's season were lost to ground conditions. By the law of averages the 12 months starting now must be better than the period just ended. Mustn't it?

David Laphorn
Life President

Pilates With Joy

What is Pilates? Pilates is based on the exercises developed by Joseph Pilates (1880-1967) who studied various sports such as yoga, gymnastics, skiing, self-defense, dance and weight training, selecting their most effective features to devise a system which had the perfect balance of strength and flexibility. Pilates exercises target the deep postural muscles of the body to increase flexibility, build strength, improve stamina and encourage free flowing movement. Emphasising quality over quantity, a limited number of repetitions of slow controlled movements, performed with good core stability will help to improve posture, alignment, muscle tone and body awareness.

Pilates is suitable for all levels of fitness and ability, from those who have never taken part in sport to top athletes and dancers who use the programme to keep their muscles toned. The benefits of Pilates include improvement in flexibility, develops body awareness and improves posture, better joint movement through correct alignment, improves strength and develops lean muscles, increases bone density and is therefore good for sufferers of osteoporosis, promotes a natural girdle of strength, achieving a flatter stomach and a slimmer waist! reduces stress and tension.

Pilates classes are held in High Halstow Memorial Hall on Fridays at 2.15pm to 3.15pm. Classes are £8 per session, normally booked in blocks of 6 weeks although if you are new to the class the first two are on a pay as you go basis. The classes are small and friendly. If you would like to join the group please ring me, Joy Weavers on 07967493351 or 01634 222275, as spaces are limited to 12 people per session.

Friends of St Margaret's Church

This is the first report from the new group formed in the last year. The group was formed in October and a committee duly elected. The first few months have involved sorting out the bureaucracy including setting up bank accounts, charities registration, insurance etc

The Committee would like to thank our Ward Councillors Phil Filmer, Tony Watson and Chris Irvine for the donation, which will pay for the insurance and the printing of leaflets, which will enable people to pay a monthly subscription

A website has been set up and can be found at <http://thefriendsofstmargarets.org.uk/>



The first few months saw two fund raising events with the inaugural Christmas Tree Festival which saw 27 trees spring up in the Village Hall overnight. To see so many different designs by so many groups was a joy to behold. The amount of work that had gone into the design and building of the trees was fantastic. It was so good that there will another event this year. Along with the trees we were entertained by St Margaret's Choir who performed for well over an hour as well as Karmann Dancers with their singing and dancing. Many thanks to all the people who put trees in and supported this event.

The second event was Santa's Visit and although this was the tenth year of Santa and his helpers coming to High Halstow on Christmas Eve, this was the first year that the monies raised went to the Friends. There were a record number of presents delivered and record number of helpers and a great evening had by all.



For the coming year there will be further events including a Jazz Festival (details in the May HHT) in June, a Flower Festival as well as the next Christmas Tree Festival. Along with subscriptions we are hoping that we can help the Parochial Church Council (PCC) in its aim of preserving the building for future generations. The PCC will be letting us know shortly some of projects they would like us to assist with in terms of fund raising and hopefully it won't be long before we see some of the improvements.

This year saw nearly £2000 raised from the various events and private donations which we are extremely grateful for.

Gary Thomas

Sugarbabes

We meet every Thursday at 7pm until 9pm in the Memorial Hall. We have been established for about eleven years now and we do anything from icing modelling to wedding cakes. We have a mix of beginners and the more experienced and are lucky to have a Tutor who will show you all the skills of cake decorating. There are quite a few long term members but we would like some new recruits who could start from scratch or who would like to improve their cake decorating skills, such as making flowers or just learning how to ice a cake.

We like to think we are a friendly bunch and we would make you very welcome. Anyone interested in joining should call Crystal on 251849.



Dramarama

We had another successful year at Dramarama performing our two annual shows, as well as taking to the stage at the Jubilee event and the Rectory Garden party.

Our Summer Show back in June 2012 will be remembered for its synchronised air swimming routine, some fabulous dance and comedy routines, and our very colourful condensed version of the Lion King featuring some terrific animal costumes and a marvellous African plain backdrop.

This years' Pantomime, Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, which was performed in January over 3 nights plus a Saturday matinee show (all just before the snow arrived). Again had some fabulous scenery, including what was probably the worlds' largest bed, plus lots of hard work by the cast and backstage crew really did justice to this classic tale.

Rehearsals run for the 4 months proceeding each show and really intensify in the 2 weeks leading up to show time, with all hands to the deck helping with set building, costume making and learning those dreaded lines.

Ticket prices are £4 each and the support of the local community is always very much appreciated, as without your support we wouldn't be able to carry on. Our next show was scheduled for June, but has had to be put back to later in the year due to Phase 2 of the refurbishment of the hall. We hope you will all come along and see our 'later than usual Summer Show'. We are planning to do a variety show with songs, dances, comedy and a condensed version of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, its got to be worth the entrance fee to see the flying car!

That's all folks...



Ladies Badminton

We continue to meet on Tuesdays from 2pm 'till 4pm in the Recreation Hall. We are a friendly group with about a dozen members, and welcome ladies of all standards. There is no membership fee, you just pay when you play. We also arrange a meal out at least once a year.

St Margaret's Bell Ringers

St Margaret's church bells have been rung for over 350 years. Bell Ringing is part of English history and the way bells are rung is unique to this country.

A bell is mounted on a wheel with the rope passing around it. This allows control of movement and led to the development of Change Ringing, as opposed to chiming as in most other countries.

As a village we are privileged to have a lovely ring of 6 bells (the five original bells and one extra) restored to full working order in 1983 by David Jack with the help of other parishioners.

Since then many have learnt to handle a bell but unfortunately we have few village ringers and often have to rely on friends from other towers to have a full band.

We meet regularly on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 to 9 pm to improve handling and call changing and to master methods.

Call Changes are ringing each bell in an order called by a Conductor. Methods are a series of changes run in an order that has been standardised and named and which because each ringer knows the work of his bell, should be rung without any assistance from the conductor. (At least that's the theory!) Methods have grand names such as Grandsire Doubles, Stedman doubles, Stedman Triples. Doubles are methods rung on 5 bells and Triples on 7 bells right up to Maximus on 12 bells.

Our priority is to ring to call people to worship on Sundays and when requested to ring for Weddings and funerals. For funerals and Remembrance Sunday bells are usually rung half-muffled which means a leather pad is attached to one side of the bell clapper. This gives a lower pitch to the second strike like an echo.

Anyone is welcome to come along on a Tuesday evening to watch and find out more about what is involved in bell ringing. Children have to be 11 years with signed permission from parents if they wish to learn to ring.

Alan Driver
Tower Captain

June Collins
Tower Secretary

High Halstow Mothers and Toddlers

In the last year the toddler group has struggled to stay open but with our advert in the HH times and word of mouth and a big help from the Relief in Need Charity we have hopefully one through the bad times and are now into the good as we have lots of new faces joining us each week.

The toddler group is a welcome sanctuary for parents to have adult conversation with a Cup of tea and cake and a great place for children to develop friendships and play in a safe environment.

Toddler group continues to meet on a Thursday (term time only) between 9 and 11 and we are currently attracting about 15 children each week.

Natacha Robbins



Toddler Group

Come and join us for a cake & a coffee while the toddlers play!

A great way for Mums & Kids to make new friends.

Babies to 4 year olds, just £1 for two hours of play.

Every Thursday, 9am to 11am at the Memorial Hall, High Halstow.

Your first session is FREE!

For more details, call Natacha on 254178

High Halstow Youth Club

High Halstow Youth Club continues to thrive. It all began on Tuesday 21st April 1993, so this year is a big year for the Club – it's 20 years old! Preparations have been under way for a birthday party to celebrate this remarkable achievement; the youngsters have already been told about their party and will have received their invitations by the time you read this.

The Youth Club meets each Tuesday (term time only) in the Recreation Hall from 7pm till 8.45pm and it's for local children aged 9 and upwards. The club is currently full but new members from the waiting list are invited to join several times throughout each year. Parents are encouraged to give us the names of their eight year olds so that they can be put on the waiting list; waiting time is usually around one year.

The adult helpers who supervise at the club each week work on a rota system so they each decide how frequently they want to come and help. We are always looking for new people to take an interest in the club and we are particularly looking for anyone who might be willing to help with some of the background tasks that are required to keep the club running smoothly (e.g. we need a Club Secretary at the moment and there are various other tasks that we need some help with). If anyone reading this feels that they could help, please get in touch; we will arrange for you to visit the Club and we can have a chat about what sorts of things you might want to be involved in. We can arrange a CRB check for you and also various training is available (free of charge to volunteers).

The activities at the Club include the following... The Craft Room continues to be a very busy and popular place to spend time during the evening. There have been Valentine and Mother's Day cards, Easter activities as well as jigsaws being done and general chit chat and socialising between the youngsters and the adult helpers. The Club also took part in the Christmas Tree Festival in December, when all the tree decorations were hand made by the children.

In November the children donated some of their spare pocket money to help support Children in Need (as they do each year) and in March we supported Comic Relief. The Youth Club added to this from Club funds and the donations were sent off to these worthy causes.

Each week there is football in the main hall; this is enjoyed by both the boys and the girls. The table tennis room is another popular place to be; this is usually supervised by one adult and one of our young helpers. Sometimes at the end of the evening we have skipping and sometimes we have Dodge Ball which is extremely popular, very noisy and there is little sign of any rules being followed, but it's always a fun way to end an evening.

The tuck shop is open each week from about 7.30 and usually attracts a long queue. We try to offer a good selection of sweets, crisps, biscuits and drinks at competitive prices and we seem to succeed!

Sadly we can no longer offer the electronics and soldering sessions that were so popular over the last four or five years. This is because "Mr T" has moved from the village but we would very much like to hear from anyone who might have some skills that they could perhaps teach/impart to the children and we could arrange a visit and discuss the possibility.

Please do get in touch with one of us if you feel you could help the Club in any way. Thank you.

Lesley Munday 01634 250276

Chris Peek 01634 252604 (email chris.peek@lineone.net)

Jubilee Celebrations 2012



High Halstow Calendar 2013



Youth Club Party Celebrations Past and Present

