

High Halstow Parish Council

Annual Report

2013/14

Home of the Heron



High Halstow Parish Council

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Chairman's Report

(As read out on April 9th Parish Council Meeting)

Once again it is only right that on your behalf I thank councilors and the many volunteers who give their time (and in some cases money) to maintain the community of High Halstow.

Please feel free at any time during my report to help yourself to our buffet and can I begin this report by thanking Lesley Munday for the preparation!

May I formerly welcome our Ward Councilors to our midst and take this opportunity to thank them for their continued support and finance afforded to High Halstow this year.

Thank you to Roxana our Parish Clerk for keeping us on the straight and narrow.

Thank you to Carl Mitchell editor of our High Halstow Times. I haven't had my April copy yet!! Apparently he was "holding the front page" for someone!!! I can't guess who that was...! So it's my fault if there was no April fools joke ... Or perhaps I was the April fool and he was actually holding the front page!

Carl's efforts would of course be all in vain if we didn't have the team of volunteer "paper people" secretly delivering snippets of news to each house in the village, sometimes under the cover of darkness with total disregard of personal safety. Stealthily organised by "Mr Smith" ! locally known yet unnamed and very very much appreciated by all..

Thank you to Margaret Church for continuing to maintain our staff wages system. Margaret who now lives outside the village continues to be part of our community. She is very active with both our halls helping with Quiz nights and general fund raising.

Thank you to Jack and John for continuing to maintain the cleanliness of our streets. You may have noticed of late that Jack has stopped taking the sun on his bench outside the church. He has gone into hospital for a while for a planned operation this means he will be out of action for several weeks. We are being kept upto date with his progress and wish him a speedy recovery and a full return to operational duties. In the meantime John has kindly taken on some of Jack's duties.

Thank you to all our Parish Councilors for their continued support and understanding. They all undertake their many unpaid duties with a great deal of zeal and dedication.

Being a Parish Councillor does not just involve attendance here once a month. Councilors are expected to attend other meetings throughout the year. These could include:-

Visiting neighbours of planning applicants that we might understand the impact of the application, attending regular meetings of Finance, Planning, Personnel, Police Liaison, Rural Liaison and other forums and surgeries.

High Parish Council and its employees of course do not constitute the whole community of High Halstow. It is merely the final tier of government and focal point of political and statutory debate.

The real community are us as a whole... The 'Relief in Need' and 'Friends of St Margaret's' charities providing support, The School, Church, Doctors, Shop, 'Red Dog', Village Market and others providing services to the village. The Hikers, Youth, Badminton, Cricket, Deep sea fishing, Drama, Investors clubs, they all provide opportunities for residents and others to become active within the village and feel that they are part of its community.

Fundamental to any community of course must be somewhere to meet on a regular basis. We are fortunate here to have two great halls.

This, The Memorial Hall, built to celebrate the safe return of our men and women from the Great War is lovingly maintained by its Trustees, chaired by Ann Smith. The Hall of late is probably best known for its monthly over subscribed Quiz nights which provide a steady stream of additional finance to help with its upkeep. Many of us, and our children, will hold this building in their long-term memory as the place where they had their first real party.

The other, The Village (formerly Recreation) Hall just across the road was built in 1961 with donations from BP when the village went through its post war expansion. Maintenance and recent refurbishment of this hall is in the hands of its trustees under the chairmanship of Gary Thomas.

I am please to say that trustees have now completed phase two of the three phase project to bring the hall into the 21st century as a warm, inviting, safe place to meet.

Thank you to both those groups of trustees for the work they do. It is much appreciated by all but a few who have problems containing the natural effects of youth and the sudden burst in testosterone.

I must say a special thanks to one trustee in particular, Ray Collins who has seemingly dedicated his entire diary to the day-to-day maintenance of, I believe, both halls.

This year the Council resolved to budget additional monies for a youth project. We are currently considering bringing this project forward and we will of course be consulting local people as to their opinion.

I'm weary to announce that Father Christmas and his ever growing band of helpers delivered over 300 presents to both the young and the old all around the village on Christmas Eve. After already having delivered half that amount again to homes in Allhallows just two days before. I'm told it is hard work but very satisfying!

I was pleased to see that finally this year we have resolved the issues around ownership of the Britannia Road /Longfield Ave bus shelter site. The bus stop has raised some additional concerns, however it is the Council's resolve to maintain the stop in its present position for the foreseeable future.

This has brought into question ownership of other parcels of land within the village and we continue to assess costs and the need to register Parish Council ownership of these, for the benefit of the whole village.

Once again the Council has renewed its contract with Turfsoil to maintain our green spaces around the village. I am pleased to say this will include the regular cutting of grass around the graveyard at the Church.

We are now at the end of the first season of the newly ensconced **High Halstow Football Club**, who now consider the Recreation ground as their "**Home**" We have received no comments from residents and trust this return to regular organised sport on the "Rec" is a positive move.

I welcome the further new speed restrictions across the peninsula and echo residents from of the Isle Grain who say that the cameras on the A228 have drastically reduced fatalities. New road surface improvements in and around the village are a much-needed improvement too and I look forward to their completion. I note however that the dissemination of information about road closures was a little lacking, perhaps closer liaison between the Parish and Medway Councils would have helped with the confusion.

On a wider note I was very disappointed to learn that the **Ministry of Defence** and their delivery partner, **Land Securities** have submitted a revised Outline Planning Application at the end of

February to build around 5,000 homes at Lodge Hill, now the only nationally important site for nightingales.

Medway Council's Core Strategy was withdrawn at the end of last year after an independent planning inspector found that the allocation of housing at Lodge Hill was in conflict with the Government's flagship national planning policy. The proposal fails to meet the tests set out in Government policy to protect places important for wildlife. If allowed to proceed, it would set a deeply damaging precedent for many of this peninsula's most special sites for wildlife.

This Parish Council will this evening lodge its objections to this proposal.

I strongly urge you to do like wise as even if you have already objected to the former proposal, this new proposal will not take into account the objections previously submitted.

Perhaps our Ward Councillors present would like to comment later on their and Medway Councils position.

The Peninsula continues to be under the threat of the possibility of having its own airport!!

The Last government said it shouldn't be built here!

Many say it will never be built here!

Many say we shouldn't even be considered by the Davis commission!

I suspect that when Howard Davis delivers his interim report (in December I believe) we will still be under consideration.

Please don't become complacent!!

Please remember and continue to shout our unique argument

The Greater Thames Estuary is this country's second most important site for migrant wintering wildlife 350,000 wildfowl fly here every year and have done so for thousands of years and will continue to do so for the next thousand years. In fact it is so special for birds here that our own Government, the European Community and the International Ramsar convention have declared it a special place for birds... and don't forget the [RSPB](#) already have 1.2 million members saying the same message!!! Their motto gives it all away

"For Bird For People Forever"

Thank you

George Crozer

Parish Chairman

HIGH HALSTOW PARISH COUNCIL

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2013

	2012/13	2011/12
RECEIPTS		
Precept	40,000.00	40,000.00
Bank interest	887.01	622.78
Rural Liaison Grant	12,336.00	8,333.00
Magazine income	180.00	515.00
Street cleaning	17,539.66	16,897.56
Grounds maintenance contract	17,776.30	16,026.30
Allotments	67.50	5.00
Other income	215.75	154.91
VAT repaid	8,225.57	3,754.81
TOTAL	<u>97,227.79</u>	<u>86,309.36</u>

PAYMENTS		
Clerk's salary (nett)	5,245.32	6,064.16
Clerk's reimbursable expenses (mileage etc)	482.67	594.40
Street cleaners (nett)	13,877.06	13,626.09
Payroll Clerk	200.00	200.00
Tax & NI	2,534.79	2,605.41
Street Cleaning expenses	765.85	441.53
Training	0.00	355.00
Section 137	3,515.00	85.00
Grants other powers	11,009.00	68,350.00
Rural Liaison Grant	3,050.00	8,333.00
Magazine expenses	5,815.00	4,897.00
Administration		
Clerks admin expenses	504.83	534.96
general	397.00	332.00
insurance	1,994.58	1,715.15
audit	550.00	550.00
telephone	310.59	335.57
subscriptions	597.37	625.66
Chairmans allowance	99.50	125.00
hall hire	120.00	0.00
Grounds maintenance contract	17,254.55	18,206.13
Recreation Ground/Forge Common/noticeboards	13,720.10	12,820.47
Project day	211.75	177.01
Bus shelters	5,041.00	0.00
Events	2,137.38	0.00
Other expenses	140.52	0.00
Garage/shed rent	800.00	600.00
VAT paid	7,224.99	8,458.64
TOTAL	<u>97,598.85</u>	<u>150,032.18</u>

Excess income over expenditure -371.06 -63,722.82

BANK BALANCES

Barclays Current Account	7,976.47	535.58
Barclays Base Rate Tracker Reserve Account	6,708.94	12,192.72
Medway Council Deposit	58,000.00	58,000.00
TOTAL CASH ASSETS	<u>72,685.41</u>	<u>70,728.30</u>

FIXED ASSETS

<u>nil</u>	<u>nil</u>
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Approved by the Council on 12 June 2013

George Crozer
Chairman

Roxana Brammer
Responsible Financial Officer

RESERVES

Hall Refurbishment Fund	4,441	0
Replacement bus shelters		15,000
Bus Shelter Legal Fees	2,000	
Hedge maintenance		18,000
Speed Watch	5,000	
Youth Projects	4,000	
Church	1,635	

Airport Contingency	3,500	
All Weather Path	3,000	
Elections	2,000	
Unallocated reserves	<u>44,662</u>	<u>37,608</u>
	70,238	70,608

The Parish Surgery

The monthly Parish Council Surgery is held on the second Tuesday of every month at the Kings Kitchen in the Memorial hall, and is an opportunity for residents of the village to meet representatives of the parish council in order to air their views, ask questions or ask for advice.



The Surgery was started by Councillor Chris Watson on the 14th February 2012, and she was later joined by Councillor Gary Jerreat in August of the same year.

Over the years, Chris and Gary have been asked to deal with a wide variety of problems from parked cars causing an obstruction, to a neighbour's overhanging hedge.

A typical example is when residents were complaining about sports equipment installed on a grassed area in front of a house on the new estate, this area did not belong to the householder. In response the land-owners (Taylor Wimpey) were contacted and asked to request that the householder remove the equipment. Taylor Wimpey were also contacted when residents complained about the ranch style fencing between Topley drive and Valentines way which was badly damaged, they have since removed the damaged fencing prior to replacing with new. Dog bins being full is another regular complaint, Medway council are contacted and generally the problem is solved quickly.

Chris and Gary also take the opportunity to meet with organisations during the surgery like the Police and Age UK, in order to discuss problems they have encountered or just to get an update on from them.

The Parish Council is very grateful to the people who run the Kings Kitchen for allowing the surgery to be held during their coffee morning.

Why not pop along and have a chat with Chris and Gary whilst enjoying a cup of coffee and maybe a toasted tea cake.

HH Parish Council

Cllr Phil Filmer, Cllr Chris Irvine and Cllr Tony Watson.

Recycling – Medway Council introduced weekly recycling collections last October and they have been very popular with residents. In the first three months of operation Medway residents recycled or composted around 7,300 tonnes of waste – the weight of the Eiffel Tower!

Lodge Hill – Your Ward Councillors are opposed to a new town being built at Lodge Hill in Chattenden. We feel it would damage the character of neighbouring villages, cause traffic disruption and destroy the natural environment. A refreshed planning application is currently being consulted on and is expected to go before Medway Council's Planning Committee in May.

Primary School places in Hoo – We are working to increase capacity for primary school children going to school in Hoo. Hoo alone has seen a population increase of more than 21.6% since 2001 – impacting on local amenities and services. We are campaigning for the existing primary school to either be made bigger, or for a completely new school to be built.

No Estuary Airport – Your Ward Councillors and local MP are strongly opposed to an airport being built anywhere in the Thames Estuary. Although the Grain option wasn't short listed in the recent Davies Commission's interim report, the Thames Estuary option wasn't ruled out. We therefore encourage residents to submit their feedback to the Davies Commission's interim report by the deadline (23rd May). These can be sent by email to: estuary.studies@airports.gsi.gov.uk

Cllr Phil Filmer

Address: Bridgewater House, Parbrook Road, High Halstow, ME3 8QG
Tel: 01634 254196
Email: phil.filmer@medway.gov.uk

Cllr Chris Irvine

Address: c/o Democratic Services, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, ME4 4TR
Tel: 07713 615550
Email: chris.irvine@live.com

Cllr Tony Watson

Address: 17 Grandsire Gardens, Hoo, ME3 9LH
Tel: 01634 255588
Email: tonywatson2006@btinternet.com
Website: www.hoo-peninsula.co.uk

High Halstow Primary School 2013-2014

All involved at High Halstow Primary School have been working tirelessly over the last year to ensure our pupils experience the best opportunities as we continue on our journey to be a good and then outstanding school. We aim to inspire all learners to set their sights high, to achieve to the best of their abilities, and to excel in all that they do in order to prepare them to live and work as successful, active citizens.

Last year was a successful year in many ways, particularly when considering the improved outcomes for pupils in the end of Key Stage Two SATs. We are expecting our pupils to do as well or better this year as well.

The School Council have been working hard once again to organise events in school to raise money for our three chosen charities. Events during the past year have included:

- Wearing something spotty for Children in Need and paying £1 towards the charity
- Barnardo's Charity Day where pupils paid £1 to wear their own clothes. They also got the chance to take part in a 'Care and Share Challenge' and one lucky pupil won the charity bear to take home!
- A Dogs Trust Charity day in which pupils paid money to come to school in their own clothes and they also got the chance to work with visitors from the Dogs Trust.

Pupils have also taken part in three Enterprise Afternoons led by the School Council. The PTA kindly donated £20 to each class with a view that they had to decide on something to make and sell. The aim for each class was to make a profit by the end of the school year so that something could be purchased to improve the classroom or the school in general. We are busily working out the final totals for each class so that they can begin to purchase their items to improve school!

The Parent Teacher Association, (PTA), have been very active in the past year again. Events that have been organised in the past year to raise money for the school include: Cake Sales, The Christmas Shop, Christmas Fair, Pampered Chef Evening, Quiz Nights, Lady you Love shop, Man of the Moment shop, school disco and many more. The funds raised have provided the pupils with many experiences. They have been able to support by funding the coach travel to the Globe Theatre in London for all of Key stage Two pupils earlier this year, subsidising the cost of the theatre group to come into school to do a pantomime for pupils, subsidising the cost of the Fizz and Quiz for pupils, buying a water bottle and coloured House Team PE T-Shirt for each pupil, contributing towards a new bike rack for pupils as well as purchasing items for the book areas in each classroom. We are always extremely grateful for the time that members of our school community give up in order to make a difference for our pupils. Remember, if you have a child at the school you are automatically a member so why not come along to a meeting if you haven't before.

We are also grateful to the number of volunteers that we have coming into school in different capacities. We have several reading volunteers, parents who help in the classrooms as well volunteers who help as with administrative jobs in the office. It really does help everyone involved in the school and we know how rewarding it can be to be.

Pupils have had an increased opportunity to take part in a range of clubs and sporting activities. Clubs that have taken place this year have included: SMILE Club, Magic at Maths, Writing Club, Green Team, Zumba, Martial Arts, Gymnastics, Badminton, Dodgeball, Multi Skills, Football, Tag-Rugby, Badminton, Table Tennis 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 this year including: Tri-Golf, Multi-Skills, swimming competitions, Kwik-Cricket and Athletics.

A Breakfast Club was introduced in January meaning that pupils can arrive at school from 8am. They get a choice of cereals, toast, crumpets, yogurts, fruit and juices. Pupils then get to enjoy a range of activities before going to their classes for their day's learning.

If you have a particular interest and would like to be more involved in the school community then please get in touch. We are always looking for keen gardener to help improve our grounds or maybe you would be able to help with listening to children read.

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

Head of School

Memorial Hall

In spite of the very wet Winter, the Hall has stood up without any leaks!! Which is quite surprising in view of the age of the building. There have not been any major expenses this year just routine maintenance which we are able to cover with the income generated by booking fees, which once again have been very good, due to Local clubs continuing to thrive and also parties, especially for children. There is one club finding it difficult to continue and we are sure Natasha will not mind us mentioning, Mother and Toddlers on a Thursday need more people to attend otherwise it could be in danger of closing.

We will be holding an Afternoon Tea on the 27th July 2014, in Remembrance of the start of WW1, as it was the return of soldiers from the village our Hall was erected, if you have never been in the Hall, the names of 55 men who returned are displayed together with photographs of some of them and the village in days gone by, another 11 who died are mentioned in the Church. Reminders will be made in the next two HHT and hope you can make time to visit.

Memorial Hall Committee

Memorial Hall Quiz Nights

Quiz nights - Memorial Hall years and we regularly have 12 tables of quizzers. We have at least 10 quiz's a year (none in August and depending when Christmas falls). They are always held on the last Friday of each month commencing at 7.30. The evenings are enjoyable, mostly at my expense (Margaret's music) and there really is a family atmosphere. The competitiveness is always light hearted, particularly between Ian's table and Dramarama. We currently have a spare table so if you are feeling like a fun evening out with no travelling involved please give me a ring on Medway 244203. Bring your own drink and nibbles - £3.00 per head plus a raffle. All profit raised goes towards the upkeep of the hall.

The qu

Margaret Church

Friendly Club

We are still on a sharp learning curve after the departure of Sheila Marchant and Judy Southwell. Sadly numbers have dropped due to various reasons, but we hope that these will pick up with promoting the club by word of mouth and some advertising. We meet in the Memorial Hall on the 4th Wednesday of each month, and 3 of those meetings are in the form of a trip out by minibus, and with more members it would be easier to fill the seats. We are going to Torquay for 6 nights in September by coach from the village, spaces are still available.

Ladies Badminton

We still meet on Tuesdays at 2pm in the Recreation Hall. All levels are welcome be it novice or expert. No annual membership, just pay for the afternoon, which includes a cuppa and the inevitable chat.

Queens Badminton

We have enjoyed another year of badminton at the hall. The club, which meets Monday at 8pm is always a good opportunity to keep fit and socialise. The games are often competitive but at a standard that should not intimidate new members. Although the club has around 12 members, there are normally between 6 and 8 players each week. The ideal number is 8 which enables us to cover costs but not too many that will reduce the number of games possible. So why not come along and join us, there is no membership fee, just pay weekly when you play.

Youth Club April 2014

The Youth Club is now 21 years old. It is for local children aged 9 and upwards and meets each Tuesday (term time only) from 7pm till 8.45pm in the Recreation Hall. As existing members leave the club, new members from the waiting list are invited to join; this happens at various times throughout each year. We encourage parents to give us the names of their eight year olds so that they can be put on the waiting list; waiting time is currently less than a year.

Some of the popular activities at the club include the following...

Each week there is usually football or basketball in the main hall; these sports are 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 or a game of Dodge Ball. Bingo is also popular, along with jigsaws, drawing, colouring or simply chatting!

The tuck shop is open each week from about 7.30 and is very popular. We offer a selection of sweets, crisps, popcorn, biscuits and drinks at competitive prices.

The club once again took part in the Christmas Tree Festival in December, when all the tree decorations were hand made by the children. We do not usually have a Craft Room during the summer months due to better weather (hopefully!) and outdoor play, but we plan to reintroduce craft activities in the autumn.

The adult helpers who supervise at the club each week work on a rota system and they each decide for themselves how frequently they would like to come and help. The club is always looking for new people to take an interest and to join the Helpers' rota. 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 DBS check for you (DBS used to be called CRB) and also various training is available (free of charge to volunteers).

As you will have read in the recent High Halstow Times, we have been struggling in recent months to get enough adult helpers to supervise at the club and as a result of this the club remained closed for two weeks before Easter. We are now hopeful that new people will come forward to enable the club to be open each week as it is such a worthwhile meeting place for local young people.

We now look forward to hearing from some new members of the community, even if you can only offer a few hours each month. Also, if you have a particular skill that the club's youngsters might benefit from please let us know.

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)

Friends of St Margaret's Church

This is the first Chairman's report looking back over the first year of the Friends

Let's start with income raised. Unfortunately we had an issue with the banks accepting some of the Direct Debit Forms and at long last I have managed to get to the bottom of this and new forms will be available shortly. Having said that we have managed to raise a credible £975 from subscriptions either by cheque, Standing Order or Direct Debit. Our monthly Subscriptions now equate to £130, which should rise on receipt of the new forms. I must thank all of you who have completed the forms or sent through cheques. I must thank May Smitherman who has been extremely patient with me in trying to get her subscription sorted – nearly there May

In terms of Fund raising events we had the following:

1 **Jazz Festival**

Superb entertainment by Chris Buckwell and Chris Irvine on an evening where rain threatened but I should have trusted Stephen when he said it would all be right on the night. Many thanks to both Chris's for such a wonderful evening

2 **Christmas Tree Festival**

This was the second year this event has been put on and is well on its way to becoming a regular community event. Many thanks to the various groups and individuals who put a tree in for the festival as well as Dramarama, Karmann Dancers and the Church Choir for the entertainment.

3 **Santa's Visit**

Again Santa came to High Halstow and this year the proceeds went to the Friends. Many thanks to Santa and his army of helpers who make this a magical night for all

4 **Christmas Cards**

Many thanks to Ray Collins in pursuing the making and selling of Christmas Cards for the charity. Sending these cards to people who no longer live in the Village is a great way of reminding them of what they are missing

Expenditure was kept to a minimum with leaflets and insurance. If you remember we had a grant from the Ward Members to help kick start the charity the previous year to pay for this. Again this was very much appreciated

We have helped the Church in our first year which to be honest I wasn't sure we would have sufficient funds to do so, but they asked for help with the pointing and with the Church also putting some money towards this, we were able to provide over a £1000 towards pointing

As a result we have a surplus for the year of £1141.43 taking our funds to £3057.93, not bad for a quiet year

For the future we are looking at other fund raising ideas and will shortly be announcing details of a Cake Festival so please watch the space in the High Halstow Times

Other issues for us to resolve include bringing the web site up to date and will make this a priority during the coming months

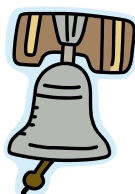
I must also thank the Committee over the past year. Thank you Fred and Hazel Beringer for the use of their house for the meetings including the refreshments, it really is appreciated. Thanks must go to Mike Meredith for his continued support during the past year. Thanks to the Church representatives, Stephen Gwilt, Bob Prichard and June Collins for the liaising between ourselves

and the Church. The Parish Council representatives have changed during the year following Josh Gordon's resignation and we welcome George Crozer in his place. Many thanks to both of them and Lesley Munday for their continued support

Once again thank you to you all for your support and if I can sum up a steady start, which has set the foundation for the group to grow

Gary Thomas

Friends of St Margaret's Church Chairman



ST MARGARET'S BELL RINGERS

St Margaret's Church Bell Ringers meet every Tuesday Evening from 7.30 to 9pm. There have been Bells in the church for approximately 350 years. The bells have been rung to call people to worship on Sundays and to celebrate Weddings or special National occasions and are rung half muffled as a mark of respect for funerals or Remembrance Sunday.

Bell ringing is part of English History and the way the bells are hung and rung is unique to this country. A bell is mounted on a wheel with the rope passing around it. This allows control of the movement and led to Change Ringing as opposed to chiming as in most countries.

St Margaret's Bells are a ring of 6. There were originally just 5 bells and when cast the work was probably done in the churchyard. In 1983 when the bells and the old oak frame was in need of repair a new steel frame was made and the bells fully restored by David Jack with help from other parishioners and work by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. Many people have learnt to handle a bell since then and have moved from the village and unfortunately we now have few village ringers and often have to rely on friends from other towers to help out.

It is a very sociable activity – as well as practicing it is usual to go into the Pub afterwards for a theory lesson! Once a ringer is confident to handle a bell they are welcome in other churches as a way gaining experience and by meeting new people. Tours are sometimes organised by individual towers or a District Event where we travel round the country trying out different bells. There are some churches with as many as 12 bells and others with just four. They can offer the challenge of having to climb 50 steps up a spiral staircase – duck under beams and some towers can make you feel seasick as they sway once the bells start to ring.

All St Margaret's Bell Ringers are members of the Kent County Association of Bell Ringers and meeting are held at regular intervals throughout the year giving members the opportunity to ring at other churches and have tea together. On some occasions there is a short service and some business to be discussed.

We would be delighted to welcome anybody interested in having a go to come along on a Tuesday.

Alan Driver- Tower Captain

June Collins- Tower Secretary

Kings Kitchen

The King's Kitchen has been running for over three years. It is run by a team of volunteers for St Margaret's Church.

We have a regular clientele who come every week, we also have people who come perhaps once or twice a month. Then we have occasional visitors either from the Village or people passing through. The men employed by the firm responsible for the upkeep of our park and green areas also regularly come in

Although the original plan was to provide a place for young parents to meet and have a drink, over the years it has evolved into something quite different

Many of our customers have raised their families and are finding the warmth and friendship at the King's Kitchen

When we started we just managed to pay the rent each month and cover costs. Now we cover costs easily and have money left over. In 2013 we gave £200 to Medway Foodbank and we bought an urn for use in Church

Already this year we have given £200 to Medway Foodbank, £150 to Christian Aid and £84 to Morning Star Orphanage in South Africa

We extend our very grateful thanks to all our customers whose support has enabled us to make these donations

E Meredith

High Halstow Cricket Club

"By the law of averages the 12 months starting now must be better than the period just ended. Mustn't it?"

Thus ended the 2012/13 report. Reference was being made to performance on the field and to the weather. Whilst the summer of 2013 was, on balance, an improvement on its predecessor, the winter certainly wasn't. With more rain and less snow and ice, Rayner's Meadow became a paddy field. Without the foresight to plant rice, 2014 saw outfield grass at record lengths and, in common with other clubs around the county, a real threat to be beginning of the season. The rescue will be reported next year!

The law of averages did not kick in to affect the 2013 playing season for the adults. So much so that the 3rd XI was suspended in May due to a lack of adequate numbers, and there is so far little sign of a return. Those available players found themselves moving up to 2nd and even 1st XI sides, where despite their relegations the previous year, both sides continued to struggle. Only the speed of decline was noteworthy, with a further relegation for both sides to Kent League Division 5 1st XI and KCL Division 5 2nd XI respectively. The 1st XI won only one game all season, and the 2nd XI waited until the final game to secure their only win. All this makes clear the need for players (young and old) to apply themselves in the pursuit of Kent League survival in 2014.

The Sunday League XI enjoyed a better season in the Kent Village League, where 4 wins saw them finish in mid-table of Division 7. This was their inaugural season in the Village League where Division 7 sees all new entrants, so is often much stronger than Division 6, and therefore quite difficult to get out of. The Sunday Friendly XI continues the tradition of a quiet Sunday of relaxing cricket on the village green, now in its 119th season at High Halstow. Results matter less than the enjoyment of the day – and long may that be the case.

The undoubted stars of the game in High Halstow are the colts, where, yet again the U11 Herons and U13s carried (almost) all before them in the Medway Youth Cricket League. The Herons achieved the league and cup double, completing an undefeated season, whilst the U13s topped their league but lost the playoff final to Borstal. Their consolation was retention of the U113 cup they won in 2012. The U15s also won their league. Congratulations to all who contributed to these successes.

Clearly the progression from colt to adult cricket is a bridge that needs to be crossed if the club is to retain its position in the Kent League. There is no ready answer to this question, which has been posed every year for a very long time. It remains incumbent on the club to make sure that everyone who plays wants to continue to play and support cricket in the village through their youth and adult lives.

Despite the repetition, deepest thanks go to all who helped and supported the Charity Day in September, where over £6,300 was raised for JDRF. It was a humbling experience for those who set of to raise a few pounds for this great cause.

Finally, we were saddened to lose our longest serving club member, Reg Billings. He was a stalwart of the club during his playing days and was a Vice President for nearly 40 years following his retirement from the game.

David Laphorn
Life President

Sugarbabes

We continue to meet every Thursday from 7pm till 9pm in the Memorial Hall

We do anything to do with cakes i.e. Modeling, Flowers, Icing, Decorating.

We do Wedding, Birthday and Christmas Cakes and Cup Cakes

We range from beginners to the very advanced

New members are always welcome and we have a fully qualified tutor

Come along and see what we do we are a very friendly bunch



Annual Chairman's Report for High Halstow & District Gardening Club

It was an extremely eventful year for the club. The evening programmes were all well attended and we had some excellent speakers. With far more outings than on previous years it was a struggle at times to fill all the seats but fortunately none were cancelled and all trips went ahead.

The final meeting of the year was the Christmas Social which was a great success, with entertainment by a singing duo. The catering as usual was superb (nothing left to take home!) and the quizzes kept every one engrossed.

We were sorry to see Margot Sturt retire as Treasurer. She had done a sterling job over the past 3 years. Bob Wells has stepped into Margot's role. We also have a new secretary, Liz Flack who has succeeded Jill Norton.

Both the Spring and Summer show were successful, the latter proving extremely stressful considering the condition of the Recreation hall having to use the side entrance and avoiding getting paint on one's cloths from all the decorating that was being undertaken. Plus the torrential rain did not help.

Marj Ives organised great speakers for 2013 and for the 2014 programme. Wendy White and Janice Hughes are busy selecting speakers and organising the programme for 2015. Margaret Shuter, our Social Secretary, carries out a demanding job keeping tabs on the membership and providing good prizes for our raffles, and also arranging the Annual Dinner – an onerous task! All our committee members do a lot of work and give a lot of time outside their remit for which the club is very grateful, this also applies to their other halves who lend a hand when required.

Our President Dennis Follet is very active in assisting and giving a helping hand where he can considering the tragic loss of his wife Mary last year. Regretfully the club also lost two other members, Roy Johnson although he was no longer active in the club affairs he was one of the founder members. The other member lost to the club is Alan Kelford although confined to a wheelchair he still managed to keep an interest in his garden.

We contribute monthly to the High Halstow times on news of our meetings and forthcoming events. Again, the Garden Club are nurturing petunias for planting around the three village signs to give a summer splash of colour in the village.

Women's Institute

High Halstow WI continues despite a slight fall in numbers. The members enjoy monthly meetings with excellent speakers, and venture further afield with local pub lunches, theatre visits and several minibus trips have taken us to Greenwich and Tenterden. A friendly group that are always pleased to see ladies that would like to know more about the club.

High Halstow Hikers

High Halstow Hikers are an informal group who enjoy taking walks together in the lovely countryside around us and occasionally in more urban surroundings. Nearly all of the walks are on the second Sunday in the month and start at 10.00. They range from 5-8 miles in length and are selected to ensure that they are no more than moderately demanding. The average numbers of walkers over the last year has been around 12-15; the maximum over our 4 years of existence was 30.

During the year the routes have ranged from Stoke Marshes to Greenwich Park and the Isle of Dogs. We are infrequently deterred by the weather: the Cliffe Woods one started and finished in a heavy drizzle with heavier interludes in between. But good clothing and an appropriate choice of route made it still enjoyable.

Particularly memorable walks over the 12 months were the one around the Leeds Castle area (memories include the splendid castle and the less than splendid muddy woodland after an unplanned detour!), the lovely one around Meopham through the field of hundreds of new borne lambs and their mothers, and the Greenwich one with the surprise of finding a farm just a mile from Canary Wharf.

Anybody is welcome to join us for one or all of the walks. Notification of the starting point of upcoming walks is through the High Halstow Times and through email contact for those that wish this. If you are interested either turn up on the day or give Mitchell a call on 01634 254428 or email to: mitch.dowsett@btopenworld.com.

High Halstow Investors Club

It seems impossible but we have just begun our Eighteenth year of trading. In those early years we learnt a lot the hard way and quickly, not always choosing the 'right' companies to invest in and adopted buying and selling policies supposedly tried and tested over decades. Investing can be quite an exciting pastime, especially when you are in profit ! but you need to carry out a lot of research into a company's history, performance and how events in far away countries can easily affect your decision making, the removal of billions of dollars from Russia since the Ukrainian crisis is an ideal example. We still meet monthly, in Members homes and keep in touch by E-mail especially should something require immediate attention. We build up a pot by each putting in £25 every month. New members are asked to invest an initial £100 all of which is invested. You will learn so much about politics and finance. At the moment we have investments not only in the UK but Africa, India and Asia. Do we need to warn you that however you choose to invest you should only do so with money you can afford to lose.

Allotments



We now have 10 allotments in the village, which are in the recreation field along by the all weather path.

All 10 are presently being used and there are 2 people on the waiting list.

It's nice to see that all of them are tidy and well looked after and I believe they are a very useful addition to the village and a good source of exercise!

Also, a good way to achieve fresh vegetables, there is nothing like eating vegetables that have just been picked or pulled from the ground and to know that you grew them.

There are regular pieces in the HH Times regarding free plots and the waiting list.

Chris Watson

High Halstow Pre School

2013-14 has been another (as always) busy year for High Halstow Pre-School. The school year started with very few children enrolled. This was due to nearly three-quarters of the children leaving to go to school last July. However over the last 5 terms numbers have increased dramatically.

Since last September funding for 2 year olds has been available for some families. The criteria is set by government and families that qualify are automatically contacted by letter through Medway Council Early Years team. This has changed the dynamics of the Pre-school with the children starting younger and also leaving younger. This follows the change a few years ago to one intake per year into school.

We continue to development the pre-school and continue strive to do our best for children and parents. The year started with a visit from Zoo Lab, a company that brings animals to nursery to teach children in an interactive workshop. This was a great opportunity to give children experiences that they may not otherwise have the chance to have.

Later on in the term we supported Breast Cancer Research and Children in Need by raising money for two very good causes. At the end of term 2 we supported the Friends of St Margaret's Church with their Christmas tree festival. The children made a small decoration that was hung on the tree in the village hall.

Zoo Lab returned for our Christmas Party. They bought various traditional foods and games were played and of course a visit from Santa. In addition other foods and stories from different cultures and religions that celebrate festivals around December, January and February were also experienced.

In terms 3 and 4 we have improved our outside area. We have added a mud kitchen that promotes imagination, gross & fine motor skills as well as social skills. We also added an outside construction area for the children to build walls with bricks and mortar (well sand and water!) with hi Vis jackets, hard hats and other building equipment.

We are about to start term 6 where we work closely with local schools to ensure a smooth transition for our leavers so they start their school life in the best possible way.

Anita Russell

Church Report

Looking back on this year it seems to have flown past at the an amazing speed. My oldest son tells me that the reason the years go faster as you get older is that each year represents a smaller percentage of your life. So for a five year old one year is twenty percent of is life so is a very long time where as for a fifty year old it is only two percent of your life and so seems so much shorter. This bending or elasticity of time may well be part of the answer to eternity. Scripture tells us that for God a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. Like most years this year has seen some ups and downs. On the up side there has been the launch of the two "Friends" organisations at Allhallows and High Halstow. These are both developing into a great success story, not only in raising much needed funds for the repair and maintenance of the church buildings but also in raising the profile of the two churches. A huge vote of thanks goes to the committees of both organisations for their hard work and dedication. One of the big downs has been the loss of Sheila and Judy. They have both been such an important part of our Christian family that there is a very real sense of bereavement at their moving away. Our loss is someone else's gain and we pray that the Lord will continue to use their many gifts and talents in their new spiritual home. Once again we have held a number of very successful events, with the garden Party being the biggest and most successful. It is an event that many people look forward to all year and has become very much a part of the cycle of events on the Peninsula. Shortly after the Garden Party I was very fortunate to have a 3 month sabbatical. This was a great blessing and a time to reflect and think about my life and ministry, after being here ten years it was helpful to look back at what went well and what didn't and what I can do better in the future. It was a real privilege and I want to say thank you to all those who stepped up and took on more responsibility to enable that to happen. Our Christmas events this year went exceptionally well. We also have a great year with lots of new faces at our "Messy Christmas" event and near record attendance at the carols by candle light. Looking forward to the future I think 2014 will be a very interesting time as we make a serious attempt at making some substantial changes to our Church buildings. These are long overdue and could well be the catalyst for us to grow. With God's blessing and aid the changes will mean that our church buildings can at last be useable for all sorts of events and provide the comfort and accessibility that presently exclude many of the people in our communities. Change always brings problems but it is only as we deal with those problems in a loving and thoughtful way in reliance on the Lords strength that we can begin to grow and see Him at work.

High Halstow Village Hall

I am going to start this years report by thanking Elaine Slatcher who as the Hall Cleaner now for many years carries out a terrific job. I am hoping that with the refurbishment programme well on its way we have made your life a little better and it is easier for you to see the fruits of your labour when perhaps before the refurbishment that was not always the case.

At the time of writing last years report we were announcing the works would be commencing for Phase Two. This is the biggest phase of the refurbishment of the Hall and am pleased to say this Phase was completed successfully during last summer

This was made possible by grants received from

Veolia Environmental Trust (Subject to Contract)

Kent Downs and Marshes Leader Programme (RDPE)

High Halstow Parish Council

Garfield Weston

As well as thanks to the organisations who kindly awarded these grants we were extremely lucky

to receive donations from two groups that use the hall, Youth Club and Soundhole. It is pleasing to see that the work being put in to bring the hall up to date is well supported by the users of today and tomorrow

Much credit for the work being completed must go to Ray Collins who seemed once again to live here dealing with architects and builders queries as well as coming up with solutions to the issues raised when there were changes in particular to meet the requirements of the Doctors Surgery

As well as this Ray organised the internal works the Hall Committee had agreed to for Phase Two. This was to keep prices down and enabled Phase Two to happen. Many thanks to Angela and Mick Forward, Mick Woolmington, Trevor Clark, Stephen Gwilt, Margaret Church, George and Jane Crozer for their contribution and not forgetting Lesley Munday who kept the painters and decorators fed and watered. Without this level of commitment from Ray and his army of helpers it is doubtful we could have achieved Phase Two and for that effort and commitment I am extremely grateful

We haven't finished and work continues to seek the monies to finish the refurbishment programme with an ambitious aim that this will be this year. Phase Three will be for the following:

- a) New kitchen
- b) Stairs to the room built into the loft as part of Phase One.
- c) New main entrance including new wall

We believe the estimated costs will be in the region of £60,000 and subject to formal agreements can say we have raised half of this sum already

Fund raising activities included

- 1 Village Market. Once again many thanks to Michelle King for the organising of this event, which saw attendances improve in the second half of the year following her idea of adding some additional Boot Fair Stalls. We had to use not only the main hall, but the stage and Doctors Waiting Room to accommodate all stallholders. There will be a break until September but please come along to support this great community event. Money raised from the Market will be used to service the loan that was taken out to help pay for Phase Two of the refurbishment. Many thanks to the stallholders who come out each time and create such a good atmosphere
- 2 Nicky Moore and Friends. We are extremely grateful that Margaret Church is able to bring Nicky along to support the hall. With him bringing his cast of talented singers not only are we able to raise money for the hall, but also manage to have such an entertaining evening. For those who do not come along you really are missing out on some wonderful talent
- 3 Quizathons. Once again thanks to Margaret as well as Lesley Munday and John Pink for this event. This has now changed from once a year to four times a year and was pleased to say the team I was on came first earlier this year. I also have to note that the same team came last when I was unable to make it that evening. I am sure it was purely coincidental
- 4 High Halstow Open. It was pleasing to see a new event last year with what I am sure will be the 5th Golf Major in a few year time. The event is being run again this year with both the Hall and the PTA benefiting from this. It is always good when more than part of the Community benefit and this is not the first time the hall has run events with the PTA and hope this continues to happen

- 5 Cook Book. This didn't go ahead as planned due to the number of recipes not forthcoming. So this will be held back for a later date. Thanks though to Jeanette Dowsett in trying to drum up support for this. The time spent on this is still appreciated
- 6 JDRF. In September there was the annual event, this time for JDRF put on by the Cricket Club and supported by so many groups in the community. We are lucky to live in a community that does come together so often and does make this a special place to live. I cannot name all the helpers for fear of forgetting someone but please accept my appreciation for all the work put in

For this year we are still looking at other ideas for events, which will not only raise money but help bring the community together, so please keep an eye out in the High Halstow Times

I also have to thank Wenda Taylor and Joanne Mitchell for selling tickets for the various events as well as Carl Mitchell for printing them. Again many thanks to Bob in the shop who not only sells the tickets but also helps out with ensuring the bar is stocked at good prices. Sorry for repeating myself but it is really rewarding when different parts of the community support one another

Many thanks must go to the Committee members who with the effort and support keep this hall open for all. Thanks to Josh Gordon who moved away this year and good luck to him for the future. To Crystal Wakefield as Booking Secretary who has to answer queries about availability of the Hall, when works were to finish etc and takes great pride in her role, many thanks. This is such an important role as filling the diary with bookings raises the income needed to keep the Hall open.

Margaret Church as previously mentioned brings so much time and enthusiasm in what she does for the various events and this is greatly appreciated. Not only do I have to say thanks to Ray for overseeing the refurbishment but thanks again for being the Maintenance Man. He is always there fixing this, fixing that, including clearing much of the loft, improving the lighting on and behind the stage and building storage under the stage.

Lesley Munday, not only as Minute Secretary but keeper of me in cups of tea as well as running the kitchen along with Jane Crozer and Chris Peek at the Village Market, running of bars etc. What would we do without you? George Crozer who always has an answer to problems and has given so much of his time especially when he is really busy himself. Stephen Gwilt who I appreciate is also extremely busy supports not only the Committee but the Village Market.

This would all be for nothing though unless there were users of the hall either as part of local groups, supporting events or private bookings. I hope the year was not too disruptive but please accept my thanks for your support both now and in the future.

I hope when next years report is written then the building works will be finished

Thank you all

Gary Thomas

Village Hall Chairman