

High Halstow Parish Council

Annual Report

2015/16

Home of the Heron



High Halstow Parish Council

**53 Capelands New Ash Green Longfield Kent DA3 8LQ
tel: 01474 871269 mobile: 07956 677731
e-mail: roxana.brammer@highhalstow.org.uk
www.highhalstow.org.uk**

Chairmans Report 2016

Today we mark the first year of a four-year term of our new Parish Council. To all, I say thank you on behalf of High Halstow for your time and effort in continuing to make our community a great place to live.

The Council employs a workforce of three to undertake the day-to-day running of the Parish. Roxana our Clerk looks after all the administration and legal work, Jack and John who are both well known in the village keep our streets clean and tidy. We appreciate all you do on behalf of the village and of course thank you for the effort you individually make.

Thanks too to our contractors, Cousins Print for printing the High Halstow Times and Turfsoil for keeping our verges and green areas tidy and doing the jobs we cant find volunteers to do.

So what's new this year?

The first of the new bus stops in Christmas Lane is now installed and I think you will agree it goes a long way to enhance the rural feel of our village. Thanks to Brian for heading up the steering committee. Lets hope it's not too long before the other older stops are renewed in this same style.

The completion of a new all weather path from The Street to Ruggles Close has had mixed response. All agree, I believe, that it is a good idea and in the right position although some perhaps think that we should have gone all the way and laid it in tarmac, who knows what this coming year will decide. Thanks again to Brian for heading up the steering committee.

The Defibrillator is now newly installed on the front wall of the Doctors surgery. Thanks to Steve Joyce in sourcing and help and offer to train villagers in its use., Thanks to Stuart, Martin and Ray for installation. I feel safer already; let's hope it's never needed.

The Zebra crossing in The Street is just finished with new railings to the school side of the road and plenty of road markings to warn drivers of the approaching hazard. May I remind parents when dropping off and picking up children from school, that the crossing, in its entirety, is there for the safety of their children and as such parking within the safety zone is not allowed. Thanks to Justine and friends for their petition and persistence. Special thanks too to Phil Filmer for pushing the proposal through Medway Council.

We must of course not lose sight of all the maintenance work that goes on in the village. The planting and up keep of the flowerbeds around the village signs by the gardening club, repairing fences, gates, swings and signs, painting and decorating at both our halls, the ongoing refurbishment of our village Hall (now just starting phase 4), the up keep of our cricket club and grounds , these are all are extremely important and take a tremendous effort by all those who volunteer. May I thank all involved and on your behalf say, "we really do appreciate the time effort you put in".

There are a lot of people who will not get a mention tonight who, without their efforts, our clubs, societies and village events would not happen. So thanks to ...The relief in need (just think for a minute what relief in need is and understand it was started by a person just like anyone of us from the village who had the foresight to realise that there are folk who perhaps from no fault of their own are found in need of support),. the Church and their prayer chains, Youth Club, Cricket Club, Gardening Club, Walkers, Drama, Investors Club (maybe now offshore?), Fishing Club (maybe now at sea?) the RSPB Thursday and Friday working groups (down in the woods today) and others that I can't bring to mind.

All this, and I haven't mentioned the businesses in the village who contribute too. Perhaps the foremost in people's minds are the village shop and village pub. Please continue to support these and all local business. They are adding value and opportunity the community and are integral to village life.

There are not many opportunities to bring all these together at one time. This year the Queen's birthday may just do that. And hey !!! there you go ..! there's another committee working in the background supported by the Parish Council organising a collective event for us all to share in and celebrate together.

Let's not forget either the administrators of our Facebook page Tony, Wenda and friends and of course Gary for the website.

Once upon a time each and every club and society in the village would report to this meeting once a year. Sadly that does not now happen. I can understand that the pressures of everyday life probably makes attending or writing a report to submit, a bridge too far..!! But it would still be great to know a little more about you all..??

We should not lose sight of, and should perhaps reflect on the quality of life we have here on the Peninsula. Not a million miles from London in a relatively cheap idyllic rural setting on one of the most well protected estuaries in the world and in the bosom of a thriving community. I for one count myself as very fortunate.

Thanks

George Crozer

High Halstow Parish Council Chairman

Rectors Report

We come again to the end of what has proven to be a very busy year but, I believe, a very successful year. Last year we had more weddings than the past 5 years put together. With no full time clergy at Grain, Stoke, Cliffe All Saints Frinsbury and St. Francis Strood we have been helping to cover funerals, baptisms, weddings and communion services. All Saints and St. Francis now have full time clergy so that part of the work has been eased. A huge vote of thanks needs to go to our four Readers who have also worked so hard taking services in the parish and at Stoke and Grain and beyond. Without their efforts we could not have coped.

A big thank you too to our church wardens too for the amazing work they do behind the scenes as well as the more obvious upfront things. I am very grateful for their work in looking after our building and being responsible for opening our churches and getting things ready for our services. It takes a huge commitment and sacrifice and it is greatly appreciated.

Sadly we have seen a number of our old established brothers and sisters called home to receive their reward this year. We praise God for their many years of faithful service and although we are sad at their departure from this world we have the confidence that we will be reunited once more when our Lord returns or he calls us home too.

I have been very busy in the work of the schools on the Peninsula taking three assemblies every week and another one once a month. These are very popular and it is a great encouragement to see the children get involved and sit with rapt attention as they listen to bible stories and messages with a biblical or Christian theme. It is a real privilege to have these opportunities to share the love of Jesus with over 400 children every week. In addition I am involved in taking RE lessons at the Hundred of Hoo school.

The Garden Party and Taste of Christmas events were again very successful this year with literally hundreds of visitors enjoying the stalls, entertainment and the general atmosphere. There is always such a wonderful sense of community at both events which is what makes them so successful. We are always looking for more helpers with these events so if you're able to offer an hour or two on the day please let me know.

The Cooling road Home group deserve special mention, they have a group of ladies who knit blankets for a charity called S.E.E.D who provide help for refuges in Serbia and elsewhere. They have now produced 1000 blankets, an amazing task from a very dedicated group. They are always looking for more wool so if you have any spare that you no longer need please do get in touch.

After a very encouraging heritage open day we are pressing ahead with our heritage project and hope to have our first permanent heritage board up outside St. Margaret's church in the next few weeks so watch out for it. The aim is to develop a heritage trail around the Peninsula visiting all our ancient churches. We hope this will increase awareness of the amazing place in which we live and help stave off more and more building on unique landscape.

Rev. Stephen Gwilt

High Halstow Village Hall

Last year I started the Annual Report by saying we were about to go out to tender for Phase Three of the Refurbishment programme. This had been hoped at this time that this would be the final part of the building works but due to costs we have had to split the work into a further stage, which I will talk about later. Phase Three finally saw the new main entrance and most importantly the kitchen works completed. Thanks must go to High Halstow Parish Council, Medway Council and Relief in Need as without their support this work would not have been possible. Even though all the works programmed are not yet complete we would like to think that the Hall has improved to what it was only a few short years ago.

Not only has the Village Hall Committee been responsible for the improvements to the Hall but we were extremely fortunate that Dramarama, with their funds and their successful grant applications with Relief in Need, paid for the improvements to the stage works including curtains, lighting, sound and stage framework. Not only will Dramarama use all these increased facilities for their shows, but this enables other hirers to use them as well. I would like to thank Dramarama and the Relief In need for their support.

We have welcomed additional users of the hall over the last year with new clubs becoming regular hirers. Last year saw the full year of Deja Vu and St James Centre and a new club setting up, Martin Mitchell's Martial Arts class. Hiring is up again and it appears as the hall continues to improve the facilities it provides, the greater the use of the hall, which helps the community as a whole.

What is coming next? Phase Four, at the time of writing this we have engaged B W May's to carry out Phase Four. They are the same contractors who carried out Phase's Two and Three and this part of the work will involve the stairs for the room upstairs which was built when Phase One was first started and we cannot wait for this extra facility to be available for hiring. Windows will be put in upstairs to provide some natural light for hirers. In addition there will be a floor added behind the stage for storage. This will leave us to resolve the bar facilities which we are going to review after Phase Four is completed

I would like to thank all the people who have given the Hall Committee donations this year as this has enabled Phase Four to happen this coming year. I am not able to name them all but would like in particular to thank the family of Mary and Dennis Follett who were keen users of the hall, in particular with the Gardening Club. This is a generous gesture and touched by your kindness.

There are a number of people I wish to thank as follows:

As always someone who is valued by the Committee and hirers alike is Elaine Slatcher, our cleaner. She carries out her work without fuss and takes a great deal of pride in this work for that I am grateful. Prospective hirers who are shown around the hall do comment on how well the hall is presented and much credit for that must go to Elaine.

Crystal Wakefield works tremendously hard and enthusiastically as the Booking Clerk. Crystal gives up much of her time in showing perspective users around the hall, makes the bookings, takes the deposits, answers the hirers questions etc. It obviously works, as the number of bookings is yet gain up this year, so thank you for this.

When Phase Three costs came in as a committee we thought we would only have a shell of a kitchen, but then stupidly forgot about the fact we had Ray Collins on the Committee. Ray not only sourced the items required, but fitted them in next to no time and hirers of the hall over the past year have all commented on the fact as to how good the kitchen is. In addition Ray carried out all the pre work to Phase Three and Four again saving time and money. Ray is a tremendous asset to the Village and this Committee in particular as he goes about the job quietly but so efficiently. The day-to-day maintenance is taken care of with no fuss and it would be easy to see how the hall could slip backwards if it wasn't the case that Ray is looking after this aspect.

Lesley Munday, not only takes the minutes of the meetings, but is always there when there are events on, has much to contribute and more importantly keeps me in check when necessary is really appreciated by me.

George Crozer's support is important to the Committee as again his knowledge and knowhow is very much appreciated.

Normally I am writing to say thank you to members who have left the committee but this year I am pleased to say that two new members have joined the Committee. Chris Peek and Margot Sturt and would like to say thank you for the time you have given up to help the Committee.

Margaret Church, although not a Committee Member, organises along with Lesley Munday and John Pink the quarterly Quizathon's. Margaret hasn't been well recently but pleased to say now on her way to recovery. I would like to thank her for her continued support and hope her health continues to improve.

Fund raising activities included

- 1 Quizathons. Many thanks to Margaret as well as Lesley Munday and John Pink for this event. Nearly £1000 was raised during the past year with this popular event which see four events run over the year
- 2 High Halstow Open. This event into its third year has continued to grow. Many thank to Dave Walsh and Rosewood Facilities for sponsoring this event. This is now becoming an established event in the Village so please look out for this again.
- 3 Dramarama – Summer Show and Murder Mystery. The change in the format for the Summer Show where we had a bar along with the Murder Mystery later in the year proved a successful combination.
- 4 Calendars. Thank you for buying the calendar and again many thanks to Carl Mitchell who donates the cost of the printing towards the Village Hall.

Many thanks must go to the users of the hall be it a regular or one off users. As I have said before community groups in particular help make the Village what it is and you should all be proud of the part you play in making this the special place it is to live.

Thank you all.

Gary Thomas
High Halstow Village Hall Chairman

Youth Club April 2016

The Youth Club has had an active year and is going strong; it is now 23 years old and will be celebrating with a Birthday Party on 19th April. The Club is for local children aged 9 and upwards and meets each Tuesday (term time only) from 7pm till 8.45pm in the Recreation Hall. There is still a Waiting List for Membership; we currently have about 35 members and another 15 youngsters waiting to join. Some on the Waiting List are still only eight so they will need to wait till their ninth birthday before they are invited to join. See contact details below for adding names to the Waiting List.

We do not impose an upper age limit and have never made anyone leave because they are too old. At the moment our oldest member is 14. The only reason that we have ever made someone leave the club is due to bad behaviour, but we haven't done that for a very long time. We have a strict set of Youth Club Rules which each child signs up to when they join and their parent signs up to as well.

The regular activities at the club continue much as always with indoor football, table tennis, art and craft, skipping or just sitting and chatting. We have our very popular tuck shop where we keep prices fairly low but still make a little profit. We have recently purchased a second hand games computer which is a popular addition to the table tennis room. Starting soon we will be having outdoor play on the Recreation Ground (weather permitting).

We have had several themed evenings throughout the past year including our summer end of term barbecue, a sponsored Children In Need games evening, a Halloween event, Steve Joyce came with a defibrillator and a dummy that needed reviving, we made Christmas Tree decorations for the Tree Festival, had our Christmas Disco, did pancake making, decorating cakes for Easter and making Easter cards, a sponsored Sports Relief evening and our Birthday Party.

On 24th May is our AGM - all YC parents and adult helpers are invited to attend; this is when we vote in the members of the Steering Committee.

We are pleased to be enjoying the refurbished rooms at the Recreation Hall and new Storage Area and are looking forward to the next phase of development when we might be able to make use of the new upstairs room. We have an idea that it might make a good quiet area for chatting, particularly for our older members.

We are continually looking for adults who might be interested in helping at the club on Tuesday evenings. Also we like to have some young helpers; these are sometimes ex-members and sometimes not. Often the young volunteers are working towards one of the Duke of Edinburgh awards or just want to be able to put some volunteering on their CV. If anyone is interested or knows anyone suitable who might be interested in getting involved in the Youth Club please get in touch with me and we will arrange for an initial visit so you can meet us all and find out if it is the sort of thing you would enjoy doing. The Club will pay for a DBS check to be done (Disclosure and Barring Service) and we also pay for training courses if our volunteers choose to do any. One thing is for sure, you would have to be able to put up with the noise, as the members can be very noisy and boisterous but it can be very rewarding to see the young people interacting with each other and having lots of fun!

We have enjoyed having visits from the Parish Council. When the members made their "Happy Birthday" banner we were pleased to have George there to help. On several previous occasions we have had Chris there in fancy dress helping with the Halloween activities and at the Christmas Disco and also Gary and Martin have dropped in after a committee meeting in the Green Room. Several Parish Councillors are still "strangers" so don't be shy - the children don't bite - BITING IS AGAINST the Youth Club Rules!!

Thank you.
Chris Peek.

Contact details:

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

Cat Archer 07749 178530 (email carcher1391@gmail.com) Club Secretary

Friends of St Margaret's Church

This is the third Chairman's report looking back over the past year of the Friends.

Subscriptions have continued to grow with a steady stream of income coming in each month which is the main source of income for the group.

Half the money raised is to be set aside for the roof works which will need completing in a few years time with the rest to be earmarked for more short to medium term works. Within the Church of England every church building must be inspected by an architect or chartered building surveyor approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) every five years. This regular system of review is designed to ensure that church buildings are kept in good repair. This is known as the Quinquennial. We had been waiting for the Quinquennial report in respect of the repair work needed to be undertaken in the Church. At the time of writing this report this had been undertaken and were waiting for a report/price on the electrics, which had been highlighted as an issue. I would like to think this work will be programmed for the coming year.

In terms of Fund raising events we had the following:

1 Cake Festival

This year saw the second High Halstow Cake Festival organised by June and Ray Collins. It really is a tremendous event and fast becoming a regular feature.

2 Christmas Tree Festival

The Tree Festival is becoming a regular event in the Village. Trees from all parts of the Village by so many groups were entered. Again thank you to Karmann Dancers, Dramarama and the Church Choir for the entertainment on the day. We are lucky to have so many talented people in the village.

3 Santa's Visit

Can this event get any bigger? Santa came to High Halstow and this year the proceeds went to the Friends. Many thanks to all of those who make this happen as this is the Village Event of the Year.

4 Christmas Cards

Ray Collins once again organised the printing and sales of Christmas Cards for the charity. They are such great reminders of the Village we live in especially for people who have moved away and still receive a card.

Thank you Fred and Hazel Beringer who once again let us use their house for the meetings including the refreshments. Thanks must go to Wendy Brunt, June Collins, George Crozer, Mike Meredith, Lesley Munday and Di Welch for their continued support during the past year.

Thanks has to go to all who continue to support the Charity. This will be with payment of subscriptions, help with events or by attending events.

With your continued support we will ensure that the Church is here for many years to come.

Gary Thomas

Friends of St Margaret's Church Chairman



High Halstow Cricket Club

2015 opened with a degree of uncertainty following the relegation of the 1st XI from the Kent League at the end of 2014, returning to the Kent Regional League (Premier). Eight seasons in the KCL delivered three promotions and three relegations – hardly the stability that makes life easy! The 2nd XI had retained their position in Kent League V (2nd XI), but finished uncomfortably close to the bottom. The 1st XI found themselves in a division probably stronger than Kent League V, so both teams faced an enormous challenge.

Bolstered by a few new players, and some sterling performances from a few old hands, both teams got through 2015 unscathed despite finishing towards the bottom of their divisions. Further encouragement came from some of the club's colts, particularly Harrison Hume, Tyler and Clarke Dockwray. All showed genuine ability and are fine examples to other youngsters – and indeed the older fraternity as well. The 1st XI were ably led by former High Halstow colt, Adam Colgate.

The Sunday League XI contested 2 leagues – Medway Area Sunday League and Kent Village League VI. They finished 2nd and 3rd respectively, although it has to be said that the MASL fixtures were not all completed by all sides. In 2016, the Sunday League XI will play in Kent Village League V.

The Club continues to nurture a successful colts section, although there were insufficient players to run a viable U17 team in the Medway Youth League. However, the U15 XI finished 3rd in their division. It is they that will progress to U17 in 2016 and 2017, as well as providing players to the adult sides.

U11 Softball in 2015 were seriously U11, with many having 3 or 4 years ahead of them in the age group. They enjoyed their introduction to the sport and we have high hopes for them in the coming years! The U11 Hardball team are the older group better able to cope with a hard cricket ball. Their season was very successful, finishing 2nd in their division of the Medway Youth League.

The star team, yet again, was the U13s who finished top of their league and went on to win the League Play-off. Clarke Dockwray has already bridged the gap to adult cricket, and he will hopefully be followed by Archie Lally and Josh Regan who played with distinction throughout the season.

Our thanks go to all the colts' coaches, helpers, parents and supporters who made each game an event. It is now 10 years since the Colts Section formally came together, and the consistency of performance throughout those years is the hallmark of its success. Players have represented the club at county and district level, a clear indicator of the progression possible.

Despite a few personnel changes in the close season, the club moves in to 2016 with confidence, with new members coming in at all levels. We welcome further additions, particularly young players from 5 upwards. League cricket is designed to be competitive, but no season is a failure if all members (players and supporters) enjoy the summer. We look forward to a thoroughly enjoyable season.

David Laphorn

Life President

RSPB North Kent Marshes



Winter Work Programme

At Northward Hill we have completed our winter work programme within the woodland. Certain areas of the woodland have been 'coppiced' which means they have been cleared of the smaller trees to allow sunlight to the ground to encourage flower and scrub growth, and also by cutting down the Hawthorne and Elder in that area will start the woodland life cycle again. So the woodland as a whole will contain trees and scrub of different age groups which in turn provides the ideal nesting and feeding sites for a variety of different birds. Within these plots some of the trees have been left standing and this is to allow them to mature and there are also some deadwood piles to encourage invertebrate activity which in turn provides some of the birds with food.

At Cliffe Pools, as part of the winter work, we brushcut the islands within the pools, removing the tall



vegetation, ready for the bird breeding season. When waders look for somewhere to nest, not only do they look for suitable feeding areas which is usually muddy areas of land that occasionally become submerged in water, they look for sites that are clear of vegetation so they can make a nest scrape, and have visibility for potential predators, which makes the islands at Cliffe Pools perfect when the vegetation has been cleared. Birds we hope to see breeding there include Avocets, Terns, Lapwing and Redshank to name a few.

The Memorial Hall

We have had another good year from a financial point of view, which has meant we have not had to do any fund raising. Maintenance is ongoing and in that respect the lower half of the main hall has been covered to help keep the warmth in during colder months. Raymond Collins has prepared a book showing pictures of the men whose photographs are in the hall, and they were the reason this building was given to the village. Details, as far as can be ascertained, of each man are also given and we are most grateful to Raymond, and should you wish to see this please call Ann Smith on 251914 or Angela Forward on 251756. There are other photographs of the village and the Hall is becoming an archive of times gone by (see letter from Mike Meredith). Mother and Toddlers are really struggling to survive, and if they do not get any new Mums, Grandmas or any one else who looks after a toddlers, this facility will close. This would be a great shame as this group have been in the Hall for many years. Thank you to all the clubs who continue to use the Hall.

Memorial Hall Committee.

Sugarbabes

We meet every Thursday evening from 7pm til 9pm. We do anything and everything to do with cakes, modelling, flowers, icing etc. We are a very friendly group which has been going now for fifteen years. We have a Tutor (Trina) who is brilliant at all aspects of cake decorating and achieves some amazing results during our classes.

Come along and see if it is for you, you could be a complete beginner or someone who has some experience or ring Crystal on 251849 for more information.



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.

High Halstow Football Club

Promotion to division 2 greeted High Halstow at the start of the season, a stern test but one the team were relishing. A slow start to the season picked up after several games and High Halstow began moving up the table, however being knocked out of all 4 cup competitions in the early stages took the wind out of our sails. Several games called off in December and January meant High Halstow would have a busy finish to the season. Unfortunately, we were unable to recover and have been relegated. A disappointing season in comparison to last year. However, the team are looking forward to the new season and are aiming for cup and league success. We are looking to add to our squad and are keen for local players to join a tightly knit squad and for a sponsor for the upcoming season. If anyone is interested or knows of anyone who may be interested, feel free to contact Tom Pauley on 07527622765 or tompauley8@gmail.com for further details.

High Halstow Hikers

We are an informal group that walks once a month. We take routes of between 5 and 8 miles, nearly always on the second Sunday of the month and select routes that are no more than moderately strenuous. We vary our walks from local ones to those further afield, limited to an hour's drive away. Over the last year we have begun occasional weekends away that involve two walks. The first of these was in Rye and included walks around Rye Harbour and Winchelsea. In May this year we will spend a weekend in Norfolk partly to see the so-called "wader spectacular" that occurs a few times each year as the Wash experiences very high tides. Over the last year we also walked around Hawkhurst; Ranscombe Park, Cuxton; Cliffe and the surrounding fields and marshes: Hollingbourne; Higham, doing a Dickensian route; Allhallows; Conyer, near Sittingbourne; Cobham; Hadlow; and circular routes from High Halstow to Cooling, and to Egypt Bay. The last of these was particularly popular being in June and with good weather allowing us to have a bbq on the beach. We intend to repeat it this year also in June. Many of our walks start and finish at a pub and some of us have had some very good Sunday lunches at them this year. We generally have between 15 and 20 on the walks but occasionally have had close to 30. All are welcome as are well-behaved dogs –since we often walk across farmland with stock grazing, on most walks they need to be on leads at least some of the time. If you are interested in joining us just come along: the starting point for each walk can be found in the High Halstow Times of the respective month. Or queries can be made with Mitchell on mitch.dowsett@bopenworld.com 01634-254428.