

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Friends

The timing could not have been worse when Highways England decided to announce that their preferred route option for the new Lower Thames Crossing was Option C on the exact day of our Annual Parish Assembly in 2017. Although we were unprepared for the timing of this announcement I am pleased to report that over the past year the Parish Council has had several meetings with Highways England in Higham to inspect the progress of the planning of this scheme and to make comments accordingly. We are pleased to confirm that the latest maps and drawings will be available for you to view at our Annual Parish Assembly this year and members of Highways England will also be on hand to answer any questions you may have, both before the start of the Assembly and during the interval. It is hard to imagine that when completed we will have the third largest bored tunnel on our doorstep....

During 2017 we lost several familiar faces within the village. Sadly, our much-loved ex-Parish Councillor Dougall Goring, who had devoted so much of his life to our village, died just before our Assembly last year and will be sadly missed by us all. Jo Raff left our thriving Higham Youth Club at the end of the Summer and this is now run by the team from The Gr@nd (Gravesham Network Development Community Interest Company). Jo had been with us in Higham since 2007 and we would like to thank her once again for all that she has done for the youth of our village over that time. We also want to thank Parish Councillor Pam Holmes and her husband Mike who both assisted Jo to ensure that all seven members of the Youth Club were able to achieve their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Our Kent Community Warden, Steve Gray, left just before Christmas and we welcome his replacement, Paul Hassell, to Higham (please see [Paul's report](#)). Steve had met many of you around the village, at events and at his regular monthly surgeries in Higham Library and we wish him an enjoyable retirement. We also welcome a new PCSO, Kirsty Lowe (please see [her report](#)).

I am sure that we are looking forward to the forthcoming Royal Wedding in May. I understand that our new Community Development Committee is already considering what sort of event we may hold in the village to celebrate this occasion and is also planning to mark Firework Night (5 November) with another of our spectacular firework displays much enjoyed by you all – so please put this date in your diary.

In closing I would like to thank all those who support our village so well. My Parish Council team of Councillors, including our Clerk Linda Carnall, our Kent County Councillor Bryan Sweetland and Borough Councillors Harold Craske and Les Pearton, Liz Jeffery for her reports for The Bridge and local press, the Age Concern Luncheon Club (Barbara West, Carol Mason, Anne Carroll and Joan Campbell) with their team of drivers, cooks and hostesses, the uniformed leaders within the village, the Youth Club volunteers and the Memorial Hall Committee headed, of course, by Keith Bradley and Peter Morriss.

Especially this year, a huge thank you goes out to our farmer friends for their help clearing our roads after 'The Beast from the East'. A thank you also to those of you who helped during the time of the snow whether by use of your 4x4s to rescue vehicles, shopping for residents, looking after the elderly and your neighbours, clearing roads, getting people to hospitals/appointments and collecting prescriptions. What a huge Community Spirit!

I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Parish Assembly in April.

My best wishes to you all.

Jennifer

FROM THE PARISH CLERK

We were delighted when our own Borough Councillor and current Mayor of Gravesham, Cllr Harold Craske, decided to call into the Higham Village Club for refreshments whilst walking the Higham portion of the traditional Beating the Bounds walk over the weekend of 7 and 8 October 2017.

The Boundary Walk is an annual event in the Mayor's calendar whereby they relive the ancient tradition of Beating the Bounds by knocking boundary posts into the ground at the furthest points of the Borough (one of which is Higham). The perimeter of the Borough of Gravesham is about 35 miles long. Of this approximately 29 miles is covered on foot over two days with the final six miles being travelled by boat on the River Thames. Refreshment stops take place along the route (usually in pubs) and funds raised, either by the sponsorship of walkers or collections in buckets, go towards the Mayor's Charity Fund.

Harold received a great welcome in the village with a Ploughman's Lunch reception at the Higham Village Club with entertainment provided by a local Ukelele Band, the Ukelear Subs, who are based at the Stone Horse Public House (please see report on page 40). Our special thanks must go to both the Village Club and the Ukelear Subs band both of whom provided their services free of charge to support this charity event for the Mayor. We would also like to thank all the Love Higham team helpers who arranged the event and prepared the lunch.

As this event in Higham was so well received it may become an annual event so watch this space! If you would like to make a donation to Harold's chosen charities which are the House of Mercy, Salvation Army, Ellenor Hospice and Beams, you can still do so by sending a cheque to Jackie Denton at the Borough Council made payable to 'GBC Mayor's Charity'.

Did you attend our Assembly in 2017? If not, make a note of this year's date (**12 April 2018**) and make sure you come along for an excellent evening with refreshments. Our speaker will be Andrew Rootes and his talk is entitled 'Life on the farm in Higham'. Andrew will give us an insight into farming in Higham over the years with his collection of farm photographs.

Linda Carnall
Parish Clerk

DATES FOR PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS – 2018 at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall on:	
Monday, 9 April	(Easter Monday 2 April).
Thursday, 12 April	ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY.
Monday, 14 May	Annual Parish Council Meeting.
Monday, 2 July	
Monday, 10 September	
Monday, 15 October	
Monday, 19 November	Budget and Finance meeting only.
Monday, 26 November	Christmas meeting with the Mayor of Gravesham.
Members of the public are welcome to all meetings.	

DON'T FORGET!

Hard copies of the Agendas and Minutes of all our meetings are available within Higham Library, as well as [here on our web site](http://www.higham-kent-pc.gov.uk), which is: www.higham-kent-pc.gov.uk

Dates for Parish Council meetings during 2018 are listed above. Members of the public are welcome to all meetings.

Linda Carnall
Parish Clerk

SIMPLIFIED DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2017/2018

INCOME	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Balance B/Fwd	72,960.92	Recreation Ground	3,000.00
Precept 2017/2018	78,780.51	General Administration	7,398.56
Allotment Rents	1,095.00	Allotments	830.91
Other Receipts	2,332.51	Miscellaneous Expenses	16,532.90
Flexi A/C Interest	67.52	Subscriptions and Fees	1,091.60
National Savings Investment a/c Interest	3.07	Clerk's Salary, N.I., PAYE, LGPS and expenses for provision of office	21,332.78
VAT Reclaim	2,480.42	VAT Paid	1,879.60
Grants received	0.00	Grants made	665.00

CDC/Village Plan	<u>139.15</u>	CDC/Village Plan	<u>5,373.50</u>
	<u>£157,859.10</u>		<u>£58,104.85</u>

BALANCES IN HAND AS AT 31.3.2018

	£		£
Lloyds Current Account	41,411.80		
Lloyds Flexi Account	57,687.21		
National Savings Investment Account	654.24		
Lloyds Special Projects Account	<u>1.00</u>		
	<u>£99,754.25</u>		<u>£99,754.25</u>
			<u>£157,859.10</u>

The balance carried forward reflects the unused general and specific contingency funds, as well as funds for work carried out, and for which invoices are still awaited.

A copy of the audited accounts for the financial year ended 31.3.17 is available for public inspection in Higham Library.

INVITATION

**You are cordially invited to attend the
ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY
at HIGHAM MEMORIAL HALL
on THURSDAY, 12TH APRIL 2018 at 7.30pm**

.....
ANDREW ROOTES

will give a talk entitled

‘LIFE ON THE FARM IN HIGHAM’

Andrew will give us an insight into farming in Higham over the years with his collection of farm photographs.

Buffet table will be provided.

LOWER THAMES CROSSING

Following Highways England's 2016 consultation on a new Lower Thames Crossing, the Government announced in April 2017 that their preferred route was Route C3. This route goes through the countryside to the east of Gravesend. Firm details of the route are still to be announced.



Representatives from Lower Thames Crossing Association (LTCA), including Adam Holloway MP, Gravesham Councillors, Parish Councillors and key local group representatives continue to meet and discuss the route with Highways England.

We have strongly expressed concerns about the scheme and continue to campaign to reduce the adverse impacts. This has included fierce opposition to any junctions on the A226. **The proposed junction has now been removed from the plans.**

We are now pushing for the tunnel portals to be extended as far south as possible.

We are emphasising the need for:

- Cut-and-cover green bridges either side of Thong Lane.
- A redesign of the A2 junction to improve access to the A2 and to avoid creating a rat-run through Thong.
- Appropriate measures to minimise the impact of additional traffic through Meopham and Sole Street.
- Consideration of non-pedestrian traffic.

The Parish Council will keep residents informed of any new information and decisions.

Find [out more here](#) or www.ltca.org.uk or telephone 07480 518493.

Sue Sparks

VIRGIN CABLES BROADBAND CONNECTION SPEED

If enough people register, then Virgin will consider laying cables, which would make a huge difference to the Broadband connection speed available in Higham. For more information, please go to:

<https://cablemystreet.virginmedia.com/#!/new-build>

It only takes a couple of minutes to register.

Thank you.

Amanda Mendzil



HIGHAM VILLAGE PLAN

Following on from the **Love Higham Day in February 2017** the Village Plan Steering Group have been busy collecting more comments and ideas to feed into our Plan. Groups of residents met over the summer and discussed what was important to them. A survey was carried out and the results analysed to help inform the key topics to be included in the Plan.

At the time of writing the final draft of the Plan is almost complete – this has taken a little longer than originally planned – you all had a lot to say!!

We aim to publish the full Plan towards the end of March 2018. A **summary version will be delivered to every home in the village**. The full Plan will be available on-line and a small number of paper copies will be available for residents to look at in a number of key locations in the village – including the Library, Doctors and the Railway Station.

The Plan includes a range of Actions which will shape how we deliver improvements in the Village. This Action Plan section of the Plan will be monitored, updated and added to – over the next 10 years.

For more details:

www.lovehigham.co.uk

E-mail information@lovehigham.co.uk

Telephone 07480 518493

Sue Sparks

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (KALC)

Higham Parish Council is a member of this organisation which exists to give assistance, advice, training and other essential services to the Kent Parish Councils and also to individual Councillors and Clerks. In 2017 it celebrated its 70th year.

Locally, Higham Councillors attend committee meetings with Parish Councillors from other parishes in the Gravesham area and discuss local issues. These have included lorry parking, housing development, fly tipping and, of course, the Lower Thames Crossing.

A county-wide conference was held in July at Downswood attended by two Higham Councillors. We heard from guest speakers on a variety of subjects including Employment Law, work of Parish Clerks, Parish maps, Rights of Way and Parish legal issues.

In November, the 70th anniversary meeting took place at Ditton with two Councillors attending from Higham. We were introduced to Lord Sackville-West, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent and then Amanda Cotterell OBE, Lord Lieutenant of Kent.

John Grey and Alan Howard

HIGHAM COMMUNITY PAVILION

The Pavilion on the Recreation Ground now has a Management Committee which will be working to complete the refurbishment and set up the building for use by our community. If any residents are interested in joining the Committee please contact Peter Allinson.

We are currently awaiting a third quote for the building works required to improve the kitchen and the toilets – the necessary permissions from Gravesham Borough Council are already in place. The Committee is also working up an application to achieve charitable status.

Peter Allinson

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Kent County Council is approaching the start of another financial year facing an immense challenge in setting the Council's budget. In the coming financial year, KCC has a budget gap of £113 million out of the Council's net budget of approximately £1 billion.

Savings of £53 million are needed as government funding reduces by £45 million, coupled with the rising demand for services, particularly for children's and adult social care, and linked to inflation costs are currently rising at more than 3% a year.

KCC is continuing to make savings through efficiency and productivity, effective commissioning and procurement, service transformation and judicious use of the Council's reserves, however, KCC is fast reaching the point where frontline services are now threatened. Two recent significant announcements by the Government namely the acceptance of the Kent and Medway bid to become a Business Rate Retention pilot scheme and the fact that the amount that local authorities can raise Council Tax has been increased by 1% without the need for a referendum, will both deliver additional resources for the County Council for the forthcoming year. As a result, the percentage increase for the financial year

2018/2019 will be just under 5% which will add £1 a week to the annual charge of the average household in Kent.

Each year I receive £20,000 grant money for community projects and I have used part of my grant this year to provide funding for a defibrillator in Higham.

Bryan Sweetland
Gravesham Rural Kent County Councillor

COUNCILLOR HAROLD CRASKE, MAYOR OF GRAVESHAM

It has been a very great privilege for Veronica and I to serve as Mayor and Mayoress of Gravesham during the past year. As first citizen and the Queen's representative in the Borough I have tried to carry out my duties to the best of my ability.

At the time of writing this we have been to well over 220 events. We have visited all parts of our great Borough and have been to several events in Higham. I am particularly pleased that with the help of my Chaplain, Father James, we have resurrected a Civic Service at St John's Church after many years. It was a wonderful occasion.

My summer Garden Party was held at The Knowle and was a great success. I am very grateful to Michael Baragwanath and the staff of The Knowle for their hospitality.

I am also indebted to the good people of Higham for their generous contribution to my charities during the annual Beating the Bounds walk in October. I particularly thank the members of Ukelear Subs for their entertainment and those who provided the splendid food. Much of the second day of the walk is through Higham. It was a great success and the weather was kind. My charities are The House of Mercy, Salvation Army, Ellenor Hospice and Beams who do so much to help local severely disabled youngsters. I have been raising monies for them through the whole year.

My thanks go to all those who have helped and supported me throughout my term of office.

Harold Craske
Mayor of Gravesham

PARISH WEBMASTER

Question – Where to find your single source on-line for local Higham events, news, photographs and information on village organisations, as well as Parish Council meeting dates and documents??

Answer – Simply visit www.higham-kent-pc.gov.uk for coverage of the main village events and celebrations plus information on: Lower Thames Crossing, Higham Youth Club, Councillor & Community Warden Surgeries, Gardens for Pleasure Competition, village Litter Pick and much, much more.

Any village group or society is welcome to publish important information for the community. Please contact Linda Carnall, Parish Clerk, on 01474 822642 or e-mail enquiries@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk

Clive Stanley

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Residents' Planning Applications are plentiful and it's pleasing that so many wish to improve their homes rather than move on. I am happy to report that the majority of applications are approved by Higham Parish Council and recommended to Gravesham Borough Council which takes our comments into consideration. Higham Parish Council does its best to support any application although this is not always possible if plans are not suitable for the neighbours or in keeping with the immediate area. Neither do we support applications infringing on green belt land as retention is so precious to maintain the village ethos. However, at the end of the day, it is the Borough Council that has the final say as to whether plans are approved or not, even if we have recommended them or have no objections. Please keep them coming in as, where possible, we welcome improvement and enhancement of the village especially for the benefit of the community but providing Higham village maintains its stature and roots without unnecessary and unbecoming expansion.

Les Pearton

RURAL HOUSING

There have been several housing concerns during 2017, mostly queries about Borough Housing Lists, Tenancies and Exchange of Tenancies.

However, whilst you all know that I am always looking for small pieces of ground for 2/3 units for our Parishioners and young people, the Borough Council has a proposal to build 10 homes on the site of what used to be the 'Old Boys Club' on Canal Road. The Parish Council has visited the site and is concerned at the lack of pavements on this narrow road and the volume of heavy traffic using Canal Road to access both industrial sites and Hoo Junction. At this site visit we noted that one lorry every four minutes drove down this road and we regularly receive complaints from Parishioners regarding noise, dust and damage to the walls of gardens in this area.

Your Parish Council will therefore be objecting to this proposal on your behalf.

Pat Oakeshott

HIGHAM PARISH ALLOTMENTS

The Allotments are thriving - with new and long-standing tenants growing a wide range of fruit and vegetables. Although always at the mercy of the weather, many people are enjoying the health benefits of fresh produce and, of course, the exercise from weeding, digging and planting.

There are a small number of allotment plots available – the annual rent is £25. Half size plots can be arranged and you are welcome to join up with friends, family or neighbours to work a whole plot together.

Contact Sue Sparks if you would like to visit the plots: sue3906@gmail.com or telephone 07480 518493.

Sue Sparks

RIGHTS OF WAY AND PUBLIC FOOTPATHS

Another year has passed and, once again, I have been asked to write a report about the footpaths, bridleways and byways in the parish of Higham.

I have observed that there appears to be more people using all the Rights of Ways within the Parish which is good news. I do not know of any blocked Rights of Ways. If you know otherwise please let me know.

Our Rights of Ways join up with the River Thames paths, the Parishes of Shorne, Chalk and Upnor. If you want to explore further afield why not think about joining the Meopham or Luddesdown Rights of Way groups who have organised walks every month.

Happy walking, cycling or by-way pursuits.

Anne Waugh

RECREATION GROUND

Analysing the results of the Love Higham Village Survey it has become obvious that the Recreation Ground is a very important village facility and is well used by village residents. The survey has also shown that residents would like to see the Recreation Ground improved in a number of ways for the benefit of the village.

Taking these comments into account the Parish Council intends to investigate what can be done to improve the facility, increase its usage and value to the village. It is hoped that this investigation will produce a forward going strategic plan, as part of the Village Plan, which will be enacted over the coming years.

If you have any specific comments to make or ideas for the Recreation Ground please go to the Love Higham website: www.lovehigham.co.uk/contact-us/

Peter Allinson

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL RESIDENTS OF HIGHAM VILLAGE

We would like to thank all the residents of Higham Village for their generous donations and support for the 29th Annual BBC 'Children in Need' Appeal and the Sixth Higham Christmas Fayre.

Starting the day at 5.45am at the Station and ending at 8.30pm on Friday, 17 November 2017, the 1st Higham Scout Group raised £2,020 for the BBC's 'Children in Need' Appeal.

The next month on Friday, 15 December 2017 the Sixth Higham Christmas Fayre was held outside the Greengrocers and Chemists in School Lane. It was a very cold day and, again, the

hot mulled wine, mince pies and homemade cakes proved to be very popular. Along with the raffle, Christmas toys and decorations the Market raised £230 which was split between The Kent Air Ambulance and the Ellenor Hospice.

We would like to thank all those residents who donated prizes for the raffle and the cakes, along with the shops in School Lane and the Post Office for their generous support, sponsorship and some quite magnificent raffle prizes.

We would be grateful for any help for our Seventh Christmas Fayre to be held on Friday, 14 December 2018.

Please contact Peter Allinson on 01474 823806 to help or for more details.

Peter Allinson and Nigel Gillett

VILLAGE CORRESPONDENT

Higham has a village correspondent who is your link to the local press in the Gravesham area. If your group or association has any news they wish to share please contact **LIZ JEFFERY** on:

Telephone: 01474 747090 E-mail: jefferyelizabeth18@googlemail.com

HIGHAM YOUTH CLUB

2017 has been a year of change for Higham Youth Club as Joanne Raff, who ran a very successful Youth Club for many years, decided to give this up in July. However, with new youth workers in place, the club has continued to be a happy and active venue for the young people of the village to come to on a Wednesday evening.

After finishing in July, Joanne continued to work with the DofE (Duke of Edinburgh) section of the Youth Club to see them through their bronze awards. We are happy to report that, with the help of Mike Holmes, seven young people completed their Bronze expeditions in September. They had all completed several practice weekends and for the assessed weekend had to plan and complete two long walks, set up camp overnight and feed and look after themselves and each other during the whole weekend. The assessor was very positive about their efforts and they all passed the expedition with flying colours.

Over the summer holidays several meetings took place to find new leaders for the club and we are very pleased that the Gravesham Network Development Community Interest Company, known as the Gr@nd, liked the look of the club and its facilities and agreed to provide the required youth workers. The club, with the new youth workers, has now been running under their leadership since September.

Each Wednesday evening, several activities are made available including team games, badminton and table tennis, as well as quieter activities in the small hall such as crafts, baking cakes, pizza making, first aid, martial arts and many more. The youth workers, who have experience with Youth Clubs in other villages around Gravesham, have lots of plans and exciting ideas for taking the club forwards over the next year, for example football coaching and camping in the summer.

Before leaving us, Jo had been successful in applying for and being awarded a grant from the Police and Crime Commissioner. This grant is going to be used by youth workers from The Gr@nd on a project to try and engage with other young people that are out and about in the village. These outreach youth workers will have their official identification on them and residents are encouraged to chat to them if they see them around the village.

Young people aged 10 to 16 are welcome at the Youth Club which runs on a Wednesday evening from 7.30 to 9.30pm in the Memorial Hall. Also welcome are new adult volunteers. The Gr@nd relies on us providing two or three adult volunteers on the evening to run the tuck shop and to supervise some of the activities. Even if you can only manage to help once in a while it would be very welcome so please call in and see if it would suit you.

For information on Higham Youth Club, please contact Amit Hayer as follows:

Telephone: 01474 320123 9.30am to 5pm.
 07583 784019 6 to 9pm.
E-mail: amit.hayer@thegrand.org.uk

Pam Holmes

PROBLEMS!

If you should spot a street light not lit or a pothole developing in a road please personally report it direct to Kent Highways on 03000 418181 or via their web site at www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem providing as much information as possible, for example, which property is the problem outside of, number on lamp standard, how deep the pothole is, etc, as this means that it will be dealt with more quickly.

Thank you.



SNOW!!!

A big thank you to those residents who cleared snow from their roads and pavements and helped their neighbours this winter.

We have a group of volunteers for our village Snow Team. They will respond to requests from residents – who need help clearing snow or getting shopping, as well as gritting some of the communal areas.

If you, or someone you know, needs help during snowy/icy weather – contact the Parish Council (highampc@hotmail.com or telephone 01474 822642 or message us via the Higham Parish Council Facebook page).

Information about salt bins and gritting is on the Kent County Council website www.kent.gov.uk or contact the Parish Council (e-mail and telephone number above).

The Parish Council has installed some additional salt bins and has supplies of extra salt.

The salt/grit in the KCC bins and the Parish Council bins is only for use on the village pavements and roads. Please do not use it for your own drives and paths.

If you would like to volunteer for the Snow Team, please contact the Parish Clerk (details above).

Sue Sparks

HIGHAM GARDENS FOR PLEASURE COMPETITION 2017

This is an [annual competition](#) organised by Higham Parish Council and judged on our behalf by horticultural officers from Gravesham Borough Council. There are no entry forms for Parishioners to complete as every front garden in the village is considered when the judges tour the Parish looking for gardens that give the passer-by the most visual pleasure. In reaching a final decision the judges award points for colour, choice of plants and cultivation, and the overall design of the garden.

Last year marked the 33rd anniversary of the competition. The following prize-winners received their awards at a presentation before the Parish Council Meeting which was held on Monday, 9 October 2017.

<u>FIRST PRIZE</u> (Silver Rose Bowl Trophy, Garden Gift Token and framed certificate) Alison Sutherland, 'Blue Haze', 2 Carton Road.
<u>SECOND PRIZE</u> (Garden Gift Token and framed certificate) Jennifer Stopher, 2 Martins Close.
<u>THIRD PRIZE</u> (Garden Gift Token and framed certificate) Gary Stowers, 42 St. John's Road.
<u>'HIGHLY COMMENDED'</u> (Framed certificate) Lisa Ward, 30 Brice Road.
<u>'BEST HANGING BASKET AND CONTAINERS' – JOINT FIRST PRIZE</u> (Garden Gift Token and framed certificate) Sarah Wall, 5 Providence Cottages, Crutches Lane. Mary and Nigel Wright, 6 Providence Cottages, Crutches Lane.
<u>'BEST HANGING BASKET AND CONTAINERS' – SECOND PRIZE</u> (Garden Gift Token and framed certificate) Heather Golding and Trevor King, 'The Banks', Chequers Street.
<u>'HIGHLY COMMENDED'</u> (Framed certificate) Shelley Ford and Andrew Ramsell, 45 Bull Lane. Evelyn and John Leach, 32 Telegraph Hill.
<u>'MOST COLOURFUL COMMUNITY FACILITY WITHIN HIGHAM'</u> (Framed certificate) Not awarded this year.

MEMORIAL HALL

Another year goes by just as quick as the last one. Apart from the on-going maintenance of the hall this year we are embarking on a major decorating project inside and out. We hope to fit this around the regular users of the hall without too much disruption. The chair store will have a revamp allowing better storage. We have had quite a few tables damaged over the last year which we have had to replace. Hopefully, these being much sturdier will last longer!!!

After many years of sterling service our much-valued Treasurer, Marion Twyman, has decided to hang up her calculator and has retired. On behalf of all the Hall committee I would like to extend our sincere thanks to her for all her hard work and dedication. This takes me on to the subject of finding a replacement to take over as treasurer. If anyone would like to volunteer for this role please get in touch (01474 824150).

Keith Bradley

www.highammemorialhall.btck.co.uk

HIGHAM VILLAGE SPORTS ASSOCIATION

The multi-purpose courts down at the Recreation Ground have had continual use during the last year, with the Higham Youth club using them on Wednesday evenings for five-a-side football and tennis courts being used in the spring and summer months.

A reminder to anyone wishing to hire the courts: keys can be obtained from the Village Greengrocers at a very reasonable price of £3 per group of children and £5 for adults for one hour. A deposit of £5 is required for the key which is refunded when the key is returned to the greengrocers.

Pat Jeal

HIGHAM CHORAL GROUP

Our Spring Concert in 2017 was held at Groombridge by kind invitation of the church wardens. We were made very welcome and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the programme. In July, St Mary's Church, Lower Higham was the venue for our Summer Concert. We always look forward to singing at this beautiful setting. We shall be returning there again this year. We sang our usual selection of Christmas music along with congregational carols in December, at St John's Church, a good start to the festive season. In May two of our members arranged a concert for us at their local village, close to Deal. Most of the choir enjoyed a social weekend in the area as well as performing an excellent concert.

Our concerts for 2018:

24 March	St Peter's Church, Fordcombe. We will be joined by the school choir.
8 July	St Mary's Church, Lower Higham.

15 December	St John's Church, Higham.
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In May we shall be travelling to Silsoe in Bedfordshire for our weekend tour.

We are a choir of about 25 members. If you are interested in joining us please contact Mary Davis on 01634 718818 or e-mail mary.davis59@btinternet.com

Mary Davis

SHAVES CHARITY

The Trust's capital earned no interest in 2017 so no distribution was made. The Trustees remain unchanged and will meet during 2018 to consider how to use the remaining money in accordance with the Charity's objectives.

Les Baker, Trustee

THE PARISH CHURCH OF JOHN

Church of England Parish of Higham with Merston

The Church is open daily for prayer, reflection or just a look around. CCTV, security lights, members checking it and daily acts of daily worship enables this to be so. The centre aisle down lights need to be replaced this year but a legacy has arrived which will cover most of the cost. The yew by the gate was removed some years ago because it was pushing over the 19th century churchyard walls.

Weekday worship in St John's is announced by the bell tolling, as required by law. However, the six bells are pealed on Sundays and Festivals by our well-established bell ringers. In Lent we run weekly Saturday Charity Lunches raising hundreds of pounds for work with the world's desperately poor. Also, each month we collect gifts for Gravesham Foodbank. If you'd like to contribute drop your gifts in the Green Box in Church on the last weekend of each calendar month.

This year the Vicar has been (until May) the Chaplain to Gravesham's Mayor. The Mayor joined us for Carols at Christmas and our Dedication Feast in January. Our Parish Reader, Simon Walker, will be ordained a deacon in September 2018 (and priest in 2019). He will be serving at St Mary's, Swanley. Fr. Buik's ill health meant he left us for a clergy retirement home in November. We hope a retired, resident assistant may be with us by September. Fr Davis and Fr Matthias, both Medway residents, have been very helpful in the gap.

Baptisms (Christenings) on some Sundays at 11am are now also well-established. Moving beyond that event, Bishop Norman will be with us in the Summer for Confirmation. Those wishing to be confirmed should get in contact with us ASAP. A children's weekday choir 'Voice Rejoice' started in 2017 and meets late on Thursday afternoons. If you know anyone 8-12 years who might be interested let us know – and Catherine will contact them.

Many thanks for all the practical help or assistance offered by many in too many ways to mention. For any further details regarding St John's or the Churchyards please contact the

Vicarage - Telephone 01634 717360 or e-mail: saintjohn.higham@yahoo.co.uk or visit highamparishchurch.org.uk

Fr James Southward, Vicar of Higham

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
(2 Timothy 3:1)

The Victorian era was a time that left much to be desired. The rich were enjoying life and the poor were suffering. In those days the Lord raised up men like Lord Shaftesbury to shine a light in the darkness and to give hope to many. Around this time a well-known member of the Higham community, Charles Dickens, wrote a book titled 'The Life of our Lord'*. It has been described as a beautiful account of the life of Jesus. We in the Chapel in School Lane have a much older work, 'the Bible' that tells of God's love for a sin sick world. For 200 years this has been the unchanging message that has been proclaimed here. You are always welcome to join us on Sunday mornings at 11 o'clock.

The Coffee Mornings continue to be successful and we thank you for all your support in 2017. Come and have a chat and a cuppa with your neighbours from 10am to 12 noon. The dates for 2018 are:

28 April	In aid of	Ellenor Hospice.
26 May	In aid of	The Fishermen's Mission.
30 June	In aid of	The Gospel Printing Mission.
28 July	In aid of	BLESMA.
25 August	In aid of	Medway Breast Cancer Unit.
29 September	In aid of	Kent Air Ambulance.
17 November		Christmas Fayre.

* I can get a few used copies for about £2.50 or new for about £7.

Contact the secretary, Peter, on 01474 322195.

Peter Relf, Secretary

THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH

2017 was another successful year for The Friends of St Mary's. We began our events programme in April with the launch of the book 'On the Marshes' by local author Carol Donaldson. In May we held tours of St Mary's and surrounding area followed by a cream tea. In June we held a Midsummer Quiz night which will return this year due to its popularity. Our very popular Jazz night returned in July with the fabulous Claire Harper and the Dave Bowdler Trio telling the story of Doris Day.

In September we held an event in association with the national Big Draw, which encourages people to get creative. We had artists and crafters demonstrating their crafts and encouraging

everyone to get involved. October saw our second Vintage and Collectables Fair which was a very busy, and enjoyable, day for all involved.

As well as the events we planned, St Mary's was the chosen venue for This is My Theatre's production of 'Macbeth' in August. They will be returning in May 2018 with a production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Higham Choral Group also held their Summer Concert in St Mary's in July and will also be returning this year.

If your organisation would like to hire St Mary's then please contact the Churches Conservation Trust direct via www.visitchurches.org.uk for information on doing so. We have a full events list planned for 2018 including a concert by a quintet from The City of Rochester Symphony Orchestra, as well as the return of favourites such as the jazz and quiz nights.

Our events list will be available soon and we look forward to seeing you there.

Homepage: The Churches Conservation Trust
Website: www.visitchurches.org.uk

The national charity protecting historic churches at risk. We care for over 350 irreplaceable buildings which attract almost 2 million visitors a year.

Katie Lee, Secretary

HIGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

2017 was another busy year for Higham Primary School. Staff, governors and children continue to work incredibly hard, and this was rewarded with a fantastic set of academic results, with the school remaining above the national average across the board and placed in the top 10% of schools nationally for progress in maths.

In 2017 we introduced clarinet tuition for all our Year 5 pupils and continue to teach recorder and ukulele. The number of pupils who benefit from our early morning music clubs has grown and we have a very large choir who gave a wonderful performance at the Choral Festival in the summer.

Our School Council members have been very active, and ably represented their class-mates views and suggestions. They have organised various fund-raising events over the year including a highly successful Children in Need day.

Our Year 6 pupils always make us very proud. Our House Captains and Vice Captains show great maturity and take their responsibilities very seriously. Our dedicated librarians run our school library at lunchtimes, and our 'buddies' have done a great job assisting younger pupils at lunch and breaktimes. In the summer term, Year 6 pupils organised a highly successful Enterprise Week which was enjoyed by all, with some very innovative and well thought out ideas. They raised record sums for their end-of-term barbecue which was a great send-off for them!

As in previous years Higham Primary School has been well supported by parents, and we are very grateful to our dedicated PTA which has worked hard to raise additional money. They

have been able to provide funds for workshops, trips, a pantomime and many other activities which enhance the curriculum. As well as this they have funded some much-needed resources for the curriculum, which otherwise we would not have been able to have in this time of financial pressure on schools, and we are very grateful to them.

Mrs T Coombs, Head Teacher

GOVERNORS OF HIGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

You will recall from my report last year that 2016 had been a successful year with the first set of results under the new National Curriculum.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that, once again, Higham Primary School exceeded the national average and Local Authority average in EVERY single expected measure of reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling and maths. The progress in maths for all pupils was in the top 10% of schools nationally at Key Stage 2 and Mrs Coombs received a congratulatory letter from the Head of Kent Schools for the Higham Primary School's achievements.

The Governors of Higham Primary School are extremely proud of these results and are as a result of all of the pupil's hard work throughout the year.

Once again, I will reiterate that these national results are as a result of the team ethic that has become 'the norm' at Higham Primary School. The Head Teacher, Mrs Coombs, along with the Senior Leadership Team have worked with the class teachers, teaching assistants, premises staff, kitchen staff, office staff, volunteer parent helpers and Governors to ensure that the children of Higham Primary School receive the best possible learning experience in a safe and friendly environment.

I am very proud of the progress that is made by our pupils with Special Educational Needs and disabilities. Our Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Mrs Grattan, along with her team provide fantastic support to the pupils and also do their very best to ensure that when these children leave Higham Primary School that they make this transition as smooth as is possible.

For this reason, I am also proud and indebted for the support that the Higham PTA provide financially from their hard work in organising school fayres, pupil discos and other fund-raising events. The parents and staff on the PTA work tirelessly and voluntarily for the good of the school. Thank you.

As the school provide so many young ambassadors for the village, I would, once again, like to issue a plea to everyone in the village who drives past the school, particularly in the mornings and afternoons when pupils are arriving or leaving school. Please, please respect the rules of the road in terms of speed limits, zig zag lines and parking. The safety of our pupils is our paramount concern as Governors and my fear is that one day a child attending the school will be seriously injured outside the school in the morning or evening, particularly when it is darker in the winter months.

Once again, I would like to leave my final thanks to the Board of Governors who have supported me through the year. There have been a few changes this year on the Governing

Body and I would like to acknowledge each and every one of them who give up their time voluntarily for the benefit and progress of the school.

Brian Maynard, Chair of Governors

HIGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION

We are pleased to report that Higham Primary School PTA continues to go from strength-to-strength. Picnic in The Park in July 2017 was a particular high point for us. This event alone raised in excess of £4,500 profit which went towards the total of over £9,500 which we raised in 2017. This was a tremendous boost for the School and a fantastic achievement for our small team of hard-working volunteers.

Please SAVE THE DATE for Picnic in The Park 2018: SATURDAY, 30 JUNE from 12 noon to 4.30pm.

If bungee trampolines and inflatable slides are not your style, there is still plenty for you to see and do. Invite your friends and enjoy our beautiful homemade cakes, watch our stunning birds of prey display and browse a variety of speciality craft and gift stalls in the sunshine. We work hard on these events so that the village community as a whole can come together and make happy memories.

Perhaps you would like to volunteer for an hour or two on the day, your company would like to sponsor the event or you have any ideas on how we could optimise fund-raising. If so, e-mail secretaryhighampta@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you.

Thanks to the support of school parents and the local community we have not only funded fun activities such as workshops and a pantomime for the children but also provided the school with basic materials such as books, stationery and learning aids for numeracy and literacy; items which the school would struggle to fund with today's budget constraints.

Thank you to everyone in the PTA and for your hard work and much-needed sense of humour, and to the parents for their support.

Thank you and best wishes,

Nova Molloy (Chair) and the team

GAD'S HILL SCHOOL

Gad's Hill School is to welcome a new Headmaster in August 2018. Mr Paul Savage, 37, will take over from Headmaster, Mr David Craggs, who retires after 18 years this summer.

Current Head of Gad's Senior School, Mr Savage said: 'It will be a privilege to lead Gad's Hill School following the retirement of Mr Craggs.'

'The independent Higham school's recent inspection reported pupils are "confident and articulate communicators" and "display positive attitudes towards their work and their extra-curricular activities".'

Mr Savage continued: ‘The happiest children are always those who are making good progress.

‘We know our children – we know their strengths and their needs. We know their interests and their learning styles. We will keep classes small and ensure that we remain, always, caring, and yet consistent and insistent on the highest standards.’

‘A great number of our leavers go on to their Sixth Form of choice, university and exciting careers. When I write their references, it is a delight to be able to present young adults who are so well-rounded and more than a set of predicted grades on paper. Headteachers often tell me they know pupils from Gad’s Hill will be eloquent, well-mannered and adventurous.’

Mr Savage is extremely proud of the school’s links with Charles Dickens and will ensure that all children in the school have the opportunity to explore the rich history of the school site.

He will be working closely with the Dickens Trust to revitalise parts of the mansion and bring them back to former glories. Children will have the chance to benefit from a living museum set within the school’s very own walls.

Nina Carr on behalf of Mr David Craggs, Headmaster, Gad’s Hill School

HIGHAM LUNCHEON CLUB

Our purpose is, of course, to provide a first-class lunch and a place to meet and chat for elderly villagers who live alone and may find it difficult to get out. Our problem of attracting volunteers continues and, consequently, we are still only able to meet fortnightly.

Again, we must thank our cooks, hostesses and drivers for their continued support and patience. Also, thanks to the Parish Council and other village supporters for their continued help.

My usual plea is to anyone who would come and help us by giving a little of their time. Please get in touch!

Barbara West, Co-ordinator

HIGHAM LIBRARY

Higham Library has had a successful year in terms of visitors and events that we have held at the library.

A new project has been implemented at Higham Library; the library was chosen to take part in a pilot for Kent Libraries, Registration & Archives and, as this report was written, we are working towards the library becoming an Open Plus Library where customers will be able to apply for Open Plus access and will be able to access the library outside of normal opening hours enabling extended access to our services.

We have a new Knit & Natter group which meets weekly on a Tuesday evening between 6 and 7.30pm. This group is for anyone that is interested in Knitting or Crochet.

Our Games & Crafts group meet weekly on Saturdays between 10.30 and 11.30am.

If you are interested in books, our new Higham Book Club meet on the first Thursday of each month between 6.45 and 8:45pm, all are welcome.

Our regular Wednesday morning Talktime group meet at 10.30am. This group is thriving with meetings still having over 20 people attend on a weekly basis. They, once again, held a very successful coffee morning in aid of Macmillan and raised a substantial amount for the charity.

Our lively and friendly Rhyme Time session for parents and grandparents with babies and toddlers is led by our volunteer mums on Friday mornings during school term time at 9.30am. The session is followed by a Parent and Carer Talktime group at 10.30am.

Our Coffee & Chat group have read some enjoyable books over the past year and meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 2.30pm. If you enjoy reading, come along and join them.

Throughout the year we organise events around a calendar of reading initiatives. One of our main events is the children's Summer Reading Challenge. Last year's theme was Animal Agents. Children had to read six books during the summer holidays to help our animal agents solve the crime. Higham Library had 79 children join the scheme over the holidays; of these children 39% finished the challenge by reading their six books. This year's theme is to be launched soon and should be just as exciting. We are hoping that more children will take on the challenge this summer and come along and join in with our fun activities!

We have free access to computers within the library for those of you looking to improve your skills or learn the basics or you can look at our online resources including information on health, local and family history and a great deal more. All of our libraries have Wi-Fi access which you can log on to with your library card.

We offer a free Home Library Service to people unable to visit the library because of ill health, disability or caring responsibilities. Volunteers deliver books and other library items to the individual's home.

Many of our groups and activities run so successfully due to the commitment we receive from our volunteers. If you have some spare time on your hands and are interested in becoming a volunteer, Time2Give offers a wide range of volunteering opportunities in Kent Libraries, Registration and Archives.

If you are interested in any of the groups or activities that have been mentioned, please contact the staff at Higham Library on 03000 413131.

Nicola Tubbs

Customer Service Development Librarian, Gravesham District Libraries

HIGHAM BOOK CLUB

There is a new book club which runs in Higham Library on the first Thursday of the month from 6.45 to 8.45pm (times can be flexible). The Librarian has the featured book in the library so please ask.

Amanda Mendzil

HOME LIBRARY SERVICE

Are you unable to visit the library because of ill health, disability or your caring responsibilities? Let the library come to you. Our friendly volunteers can call at your home on a regular basis bringing you books (including large print), audio books, films and CDs of your choice. They will be happy to chat about the books you are enjoying and listen to what you would like to read.

If you are interested in this service or know of anyone else who may need it, please contact us on 0300 333 6022.

Kent Libraries

HIGHAM SPEEDWATCH

Higham Speed Watch is one of several schemes in Kent supported by Kent Police which monitors traffic speeds throughout the County. Although no drivers are prosecuted persistent offenders do receive a letter from the Police reminding them of the dangers of speeding. They may also carry out their own checks in areas where there have been a high number of speeding vehicles reported. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer to help keep Higham roads safe, please go to the Community Speed Watch website: www.communityspeedwatch.co.uk and click on register and follow the links to Higham Speed Watch Group.

Volunteers can come to as many or as few sessions which last one hour as they wish.

For more information, telephone 07815 721966.

Peter Leakey, Group Co-ordinator

PCSO

My name is Kirsty Lowe and I am a Gravesham PCSO, currently covering Meopham South and Vigo, Higham, Singlewell and Riverview Park. I will be spending a large amount of my time patrolling these locations, including Higham, in order to deter crime and Anti-Social Behaviour and will be a visible presence as often as I can, along with my colleague PCSO Frankie Stack.

Crime often leaves victims feeling uncomfortable in their own homes – something that nobody should have to feel. Local police officers and PCSO's will continue to work hard to identify offenders and gather intelligence but we would also like to take this opportunity to encourage you to take measures to help protect your property by taking the following simple but effective measures:

- If you are out of your home ensure all windows and doors are shut and locked, even if you are just in the garden.
- If you have not got one already, consider installing an alarm or security lights as they act as a deterrent.
- Keep valuable items and keys out of sight and away from windows and doors.
- Security mark your valuables. This makes them less desirable to thieves and can also help us to trace stolen goods. You can also register your valuables on immobilise.com which is a national property database.
- Record all serial numbers of your property, for example IMEI number on your mobile phone – on most mobile phones you can obtain this by simply typing *#06#, serial numbers on televisions, laptops and other electrical equipment.

In conclusion, we will continue to endeavour to attend community events such as fetes but please keep an eye on the [Kent Police website](#) and our social Media such as Twitter, for any upcoming crime prevention events in the area.

PCSO Kirsty Lowe

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY WARDEN

My name is Paul Hassell and I am your new Community Warden. I have taken over from Steve Gray who retired in December. I am sure you will all wish him a happy retirement. Steve was here for a good many years and I hope I will be too.

When the opportunity came up to take over Steve’s area I jumped at the chance to do it. Higham is a very nice village and I only live 15 minutes away. All the things Steve started will continue, especially the Warden Surgery that takes place in Higham Library on the last Thursday of the month from 2.30 to 4pm and any other activities that takes place.

You can contact me on Steve’s telephone number that I will be using on 07811 271256 or by e-mail paul.hassell@kent.gov.uk.

I have already been approached by members of the public regarding dog fouling. If you are not aware dog bags can be obtained from the Library free of charge. If your dog is seen fouling and you do not pick it up you are liable for a fine – remember children walk where there is dog fouling and it can cause blindness.

I would like to thank the Parish Council for making me welcome. I hope you all have a good summer and we can all work together to make Higham a clean and tidy village that other villages look up to.

Paul Hassell

CROSSING POINTS AND FOOTPATHS

PARISHIONERS ARE RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED NOT TO OBSTRUCT MOBILITY SCOOTER CROSSING POINTS WITH DROPPED KERBS WITHIN THE VILLAGE BY PARKING OVER THEM AS THESE ARE NOW BEING MONITORED BY THE POLICE.

PLEASE TAKE CARE NOT TO OBSTRUCT THE FOOTPATH IN ANY WAY FOR OTHERS.

BECOME A KENT POLICE VOLUNTEER

Help make your community safer

Kent Police is recruiting now for volunteer police staff and you could make a real difference to your community. Use your skills, knowledge and enthusiasm to help provide a first-class service protecting and serving the people of Kent. Take on exciting roles, alongside police professionals, that fit around you and the time you can spare. Opportunities include supporting officers/staff in a range of roles. Taking part in community safety and crime reduction initiatives, assisting with CCTV monitoring, general maintenance, including vehicle fleet care, gardening and assisting with facilities. Training will be provided. For more information, please call 01622 653212 or e-mail catherine.mulholland@kent.pnn.police.uk

Kent Police

Website: www.kent.police.uk

POWER CUT? CALL 105

105 is a new three-digit national power cut phone line that people can call to report, or get information about, power cuts if you find yourself without power during severe weather or other incidents. Instead of calling your energy supply company (that you pay your bills to) the new 105 number will put you straight through to your local electricity network operator (in the case of Higham this is UK Power Networks).

You can also call 105 with any welfare concerns related to a power cut, or if you are worried about the safety of over or underground electricity cables or substations.

You can call 105 from most landlines or mobile phones and calls are free of charge.

More information can be found at: www.powercut105.com

HIGHCLIFFE MEDICAL PRACTICE

We have had a busy year at Highcliffe Medical Practice.

Dr Stone still leads our fantastic GPs and we are lucky enough to still hold our status as a teaching practice. We have, yet again, had some fantastic trainees this year that I am sure a lot of you will have had the pleasure of meeting. Dr Bell is now well-rooted in the role of Partner and Dr Hossain continues as a Partner with a dual role within the clinical commissioning group.

Kevin Creasey is still in his ever-expanding role as Practice Manager and our excellent reception team have expanded to a team of ten part-time staff.

The nursing team has welcomed Jade Sa'adadin as a practice nurse. Jade is now fully qualified in all aspects of practice nursing and has just started a course in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Vienna Griffiths has also joined our team and has fitted in very well. She has taken on the role of Health Care Assistant and is currently near the end of her Foundation Degree. Our loyal and lovely Assistant Practitioner Cheryl remains with us doing a fantastic job. Caron Waters is still leading the nursing team.

Sadly, our fabulous practice nurse Amie will be leaving us in the next few months for pastures new. She has had a fantastic opportunity to take on a new role and we wish her all the luck in the world. Our loss is their gain.

This would seem like a good time to remind everyone of the appointment service we provide:

EMERGENCY DOCTOR APPOINTMENT

Available daily via doctor's triage. Telephone the surgery at 08.15am and the doctor will contact you within the next hour to allocate an appointment on the same day.

ROUTINE DOCTOR APPOINTMENT

There is normally a 7-10 day wait for this type of appointment dependant on demand and if you would like a specific doctor.

TELEPHONE CALL FROM DOCTOR

These are available every day. You may have to wait if you need to speak to a specific doctor.

NURSING APPOINTMENT

These will vary according to the nurse. You will usually be able to see a nurse within 7-10 days.

NURSING TELEPHONE CALLS

Available daily.

Do not also forget other services such as your local pharmacies, walk-in centres and minor injuries units.

Our flu campaign has been very successful this year. We have vaccinated over 1,300 patients including all of our house bound patients. We are still able to provide vaccinations so if you are eligible and would like to be vaccinated please contact the surgery.

Lastly, the surgery has purchased a new ECG machine this year that was not funded by the NHS. We have done this in the best interests of our service users to ensure safe and prompt diagnosis of heart issues. This, we felt, was justified due to our rural location.

For further questions or support please do not hesitate to contact one of our team at Highcliffe Surgery.

Kevin Creasey, Practice Manager

UKELEAR SUBS

Based in Higham, the UKELEAR SUBS is a ukulele band whose members come from wide ranging professions and backgrounds. They first played at The Ship in Upnor (hence the name Ships Ukulele Band). We then subsequently added Ukelear to the title. The band later moved to the Stone Horse Pub. Membership has gradually increased, as have requests to play gigs for a wide variety of organisations, clubs and charities. The band has been known to have as many as 17 players on stage!

The SUBS (as they are generally referred to) entertains with a good selection of music including country, rock and roll and hits from the past to name but a few... (and because it's almost expected, they do include 'When I'm Cleaning Windows'!!!). Usually dressed in bright Hawaiian shirts, their aim is to provide music and fun. They have a number of gigs already lined up over the next few months including the Mayor's Evening of Entertainment at the Woodville Halls, Gravesend in April.

The pub offers a good food menu and a selection of beers and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages so if you would like to hear the SUBS play why not come along to the Stone Horse Pub and make an evening of it and enjoy a drink and a meal whilst being entertained.

They meet every Wednesday from 8pm in the Stone Horse Pub, Dillywood Lane, (off the B2000, Cliffe Road).

Sylvia Mann

2ND HIGHAM BROWNIES and RAINBOWS

Higham Brownies have had another enjoyable year.

The later part of last year saw a temporary change with the way Brownies operated. Due to the departure of one of the Rainbow Leaders and to keep the Rainbow Group open, they merged with the Brownies. The two groups ran together until February. The two groups now meet again independently from each other.

The girls have enjoyed many activities during the last year such as pizza making, rounders, Ready Steady Cook, Diwali and an evening of Highland Games. We have had themed evenings such as Beauty and the Beast, Roald Dhal, and Pooh Bear. They have also enjoyed crafts for Easter, Father's Day and Christmas. The girls entertained Mums and Grandmas with a show for Mother's Day. We were also involved in trialling new resources for Girl Guiding UK and voting for a new uniform design.

The Brownies have been bowling at Rochester and visited the trampoline park in Gillingham where the girls received a special Guiding trampoline badge. We joined Gad's Hill on Remembrance Sunday and paraded to the church with them for the Armistice Day Service. The girls organised a Bring and Buy sale and raised over £100 which was donated to Battersea Cats and Dogs Home who visited us to talk about the work they do. December

saw us finishing the year with a special party to celebrate Higham Brownies 40th birthday. During the party, their Divisional Commissioner presented both Brownie Leaders with long service awards. Later in the year, we are looking forward to a special day for Guiding at Leeds Castle and to our residential trip to Kingswood Activity Centre.

We are pleased to continue supporting youngsters in the village who are participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award with the volunteering aspect of the award.

We very grateful to our Young Leaders Laura and Charlotte who help each week. They continue to be excellent role models to the Brownies. Without the help of our parents, Brownies would not operate so we would like to take this opportunity to thank those who regularly volunteer.

If you would like your daughter to join our fun Brownie Group then please visit www.girlguiding.org.uk/interested to register her details or alternatively e-mail us at 2ndhighambrownies@gmail.com.

Sharon Maynard & Krissi Higgins (Tawny Owl & Sooty Owl)
Vik (Rainbows)

Mole

1ST HIGHAM SCOUT GROUP

Higham Scout Group moved from strength-to-strength in 2017. We have a membership of approximately 66 young people and 14 adults and young leaders who give up their time voluntarily to enjoy a fun time together. We participated in the Remembrance Day service at St John's making poppy wreaths and celebrated Christmas by taking part in the District Christingle Service with our rendition of our Scouting 12 days of Christmas. As always, we collected an excellent amount for 'Children in Need' in November.

We have received a generous donation from Mrs Theresa Matthews in memory of her father, Kit Rice, who worked with Sam Weller in the early days of scouting in Higham. The money has been put towards the purchase of new tents which will be well used in the months ahead, particularly at a family camp and when the Scouts go to camp in Ypres, Belgium to commemorate the end of World War 1.

The Beavers and Cubs have enjoyed many activities, including outdoor ones thanks to good weather. These include Cubs on Water, visits to Shorne Country Park, BikAbility for the Cubs and games evenings on the Recreation Ground. Scouts have a full programme of activities where they are developing their outdoor and team building skills. We ended the year with our annual BBQ and AGM with 150 children and adults enjoying the evening.

If you like the sound of what we do come and join us, either as a young person or an adult helper. There is a waiting list for Beavers and Cubs but Scouts have vacancies.

Our meeting times are:

Scout Group	Meet	Contact
Beaver Scouts	Fridays: 5.30-6.30pm	Andrea Jarman: 01474 822192
Cub Scouts	Fridays: 6.30-7.50pm	Andrea Jarman: 01474 822192

Scouts	Fridays: 8-10pm	Peter Allinson: 01474 823806
Explorer Scouts	Various	Carolyn Shulver: 01474 823187

If your son or daughter would like to join us or you would like to help, please contact Carolyn on 01474 823187 or csh_55@hotmail.com.

Carolyn Shulver, Group Scout Leader

HIGHAM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The WI is changing, we are encouraged to enter the 21st century, and we are all endeavouring to do this.

We have been extremely lucky over the last few years to have new younger members join our Institute and they have whole-heartedly contributed by being very active members. We know that the WI has, unfortunately, been labelled in the past as a 'jam and Jerusalem' body of women, but we have proved that we can be quite a force to deal with and the Women's Institute has been responsible for forcing many issues connected with the environment.

Our ladies have had several visits to London to see shows all of which were most enjoyable. We have had a themed evening which included a meal, Royal Ascot was the topic, and, as usual, we were not disappointed with the effort everyone made, the hats and outfits were brilliant.

Our Drama Group has provided some entertainment during the year, craft and art sessions still remain fairly well attended. A visit to Kensington Palace proved popular and the weather was great making our day most informative and interesting.

Plans for our 2018 programme are in hand and we look forward to another successful year. We are always happy to welcome new ladies to our group and would recommend they contact our Secretary if they are interested in coming along to our first Thursday of the month evening meeting.

Kay Lakin, Secretary Telephone: 01634 718479 E-mail: malakin@msn.com

HIGHAM ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION (HiARA)

HiARA continues to flourish(!) with over 173 members, who, in 2017 listened to various speakers with varying degrees of enthusiasm at our monthly meetings. Two very popular talks spring to mind, one a sheep farmer from the Romney Marsh and her tales of her dog who has his own website! The lecture on the restoration of a Vulcan Bomber aircraft was very interesting and loud. We even had a 'Royal' visitor at our September social in the guise of Henry VIII. This year we have incorporated suggestions on topics or speakers recommended by our members, which has proved to be a good idea and this will continue in 2018, where we already have a full schedule booked.

Our Rambling Club goes from walk to walk around Kent, despite the weather. The weekly Arts and Crafts group are well supported and our quiz afternoons continue to attract enthusiasts.

During 2017 we held special social events which continue to be popular, a Race Night which was very well organised and included some 'lucky punters' – and some not so lucky. Some members still enjoy a holiday or day trip out but these are now arranged directly with local coach company, Jewels Tours.

During this year we look forward to new and interesting speakers and, of course, our social activities which will include a 'Rat Pack' tribute evening in March.

Donations for our 2017 nominated charity: The Friends of Wisdom Hospice have been steady and in February we had a Bring and Buy sale which increased the contribution. The charity for 2018 will be decided in March.

Our Chairman, John Wheatley, is retiring from the position after a number of years, during which he and his wife, Diana, have taken the club from strength-to-strength, and we have all valued his and Diana's hard work and service to HiARA. The dedicated committee, refreshment and chair rota team, book and raffle table helpers and many others all work together to make the club the success it is.

Do come along, join in our activities and enjoy yourselves, we do.

Pat Oakeshott, Publicity

HIGHAM VILLAGE HISTORY GROUP

We were lucky that all the speakers at our bi-monthly talks were entertaining as well as informative and these evenings are still very well attended. Topics relating to the local area are always popular, so the talk about the Lottery funded community archaeology project entitled 'Cobham Landscape Detectives' was particularly well received.

Another highlight of 2017 was a guided walk in September. Andrew Rootes took us to the important houses in the upper part of our village including Gad's Hill Place, Gad's Hill House and the site of the Great Hermitage which burnt down in 1938.

We continued sorting and indexing our photographic and document collections and began the process of integrating Andrew Rootes' amazing material, which he has donated to the Group, so that we can all have easy access to this wonderful information. Our thanks go to the volunteers who help with these tasks.

Our printed programme, with full details of our events, is delivered to every house in Higham. Our first talk is on 17 May, 8pm, in the Memorial Hall, when the ever-popular Christoph Bull will deliver a new talk 'Who's Who in Hoo': the glories of the Hoo Peninsula. Non-members are welcome.

For more information about the Higham Village History Group:

E-mail: highamvillagehistory@gmail.com

Website: www.highamvillagehistory.org.uk

Kate Woollacott, Secretary

DICKENS COUNTRY PROTECTION SOCIETY (DCPS)

The Society has been very busy as usual this year, continuing the basic work of monitoring and commenting on (when considered appropriate) the various local planning applications being submitted to both Gravesham and Medway councils.

- **The Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) consultation:** The outcome of the 2016 consultation, that the LTC should follow the Western Southern Link route (from Chalk, through Thong and to the A2 at the site of the former north-side petrol station) was announced just after our last report was submitted. Throughout the past year DCPS has kept a watch on what has been happening and, along with Parish Councils (including Higham) and community organisations etc, has been participating in joint meetings with Highways England and continuing the fight in various ways. The Society welcomed the removal from plans of the suggested junction on the A226 but there is still very little detail available about the final proposals for the exact route and its format. The proposed junction with the A2 is poorly designed at present, does not meet the needs of local residents and threatens local villages with additional through traffic.

Other items that are particularly worth mentioning are:

- **Housing Threats to the Green Belt:** As well as the LTC, the Green Belt (and many other green areas locally) is under threat from Government dictated housing targets. For Gravesham and Medway, respectively 78% and 23% of land is supposedly protected from development, but the Government is suggesting annual new housing targets up to 2026 of 506 for Gravesham and a staggering 1665 for Medway.
- **Medway Local Plan:** The equivalent plan for Medway is also about to be launched. Housebuilding in Medway will have impact on life in Higham, particularly through increased traffic, so residents should also keep aware of what is being proposed just across the border.

On lighter matters:

- The Society will be holding its annual Barn Dance on Saturday, 5 May this year.

Mrs Susan Lindley, Committee Member of DCPS

GARDENING VOLUNTEERS

Gardening is a great way of enjoying the outdoors and keeping fit – much better than pounding away on an indoor treadmill! So, if you want to get some exercise, save on expensive gym subscriptions and get involved in your local community – why not join our group of volunteer gardeners? We offer a gardening service to elderly clients and we are currently looking for volunteer gardeners to join our friendly team. Giving just one hour a week of your time could make a real difference to the clients' quality of life and to your waistline!

For further information, you can contact us as follows:

Telephone: 01322 272476.
E-mail: volunteer@nwkvoleunteers.org.uk
Or visit: www.facebook.com/nwkvoleunteers

Thank you.

North West Kent Volunteer Centre

DOGS

Supplies of dog waste bags continue to be available for Higham residents from Higham Library.

DON'T FORGET AS LONG AS YOUR DOG WASTE IS IN A BAG IT CAN BE PLACED IN ANY RUBBISH BIN WITHIN THE VILLAGE.

BAG IT -- BIN IT!

THAMES AND MEDWAY CANAL ASSOCIATION

2017 was a trying year for the Thames and Medway Canal Association. Due to lack of security between the canal and the railway line at the eastern section at Higham, Network Rail, the canal owners, have instructed the Association to cease work. However, work continued on the western section with a visit from one of the Waterway Recovery Groups, BiTM (Bit in the middle) joining us for a weekend.

Unfortunately, the licence from Network Rail that allows work to be carried out on the canal expired at the end of August and despite much effort Network Rail were reluctant to renew. We were, therefore, limited to basic litter picking and, once the breeding season had ended, hedge trimming and pruning in the short section that does not belong to Network Rail.

In September we received notification that Network Rail proposed to fill in part of the canal to provide an access pathway to the power supply compound that they had upgraded in 2015. Although they were to install a culvert, this proposal would block any boat passage along the canal. After much letter writing and appeals, including involving our local MP, a meeting was arranged at the site in December. Network Rail had now revised their plans and had drawings of a bridge. Unfortunately, this bridge was at footpath height and still blocked passage of boats. After a great deal of discussion an agreement was reached that a raised bridge would be constructed providing 1.7meter of headroom to water traffic.

At the site meeting, one of the Network Rail representatives was able to confirm that Network Rail had agreed to issue a new five-year licence to the canal Association. This will enable the Association to apply for grants to fund further restoration projects.

Work has continued at the vista (about halfway along the canal) as well as regular litter picks. Wildlife continues to be attracted to the canal and there are now several swans which make regular visits.

New volunteers are always welcome whether as navvies or paper pushers. We can always find a space for willing hands.

Several talks have been given to local groups in the area during the year and we had a stand at the 50+ Forum Day.

Contact us at: info@thamesandmedway.co.uk

David Rouse, Chairman and Angela Acott, Programme Secretary

HIGHAM VILLAGE CLUB

Our Village Club is over 120 years old and continues to provide a welcoming atmosphere for members and their families. We regularly have entertainment and special events throughout the year and our main hall and facilities can be hired for parties, weddings, funerals and anniversaries, for a small hire charge to members and non-members.

We continue with our monthly Friday quiz night, Sunday evening bingo starting at 8.30pm, as well as the first Wednesday of every month starting at 2pm, along with special themed nights.

All events are posted on our new web site and also posted on Facebook and within the Club. If you visit our web site www.highamvillageclub.co.uk and 'sign up' you will be the first to know of events and offers within the Club.

We welcome Slimming World to the Club on Thursday evenings and our darts teams meet on a Monday and Tuesday night also. The Club boasts a full-size snooker table, as well as a Pool table and holds cards evenings and our Golf Society remains as ever active, even if you are a high handicapper! We also have a pigeon club. We can even cater for the gardeners within the village with allotments to the rear of the Club.

If you have never been inside the Club come and see us and take a look. Membership is now open. Alternatively check out our web site www.highamvillageclub.co.uk or telephone 01474 822456 or e-mail highamvillageclub@aol.co.uk. We look forward to seeing old and new faces throughout the year on a regular basis.

Mark Gray, Secretary on behalf of the Management Committee

HIGHAM WRITERS GROUP

Higham Writers are up and running again after a break last year. We are now meeting monthly at the Higham Village Club and I am glad to say we are almost at full capacity again.

We are a group of mainly retired people who are thoroughly enjoying tackling what is for some a new personal project. There is a lot of undiscovered talent out there. The aim of the tutor Denise Leppard, a freelance writer herself, is to bring everyone's work up to publishable standard – though no-one is obliged to get into print. Enjoying the process of writing is enough for most of us. As a by-product of our efforts we have intrigued, terrified, amused and impressed each other. Since the start of 2018 we have been planning murders, thefts and

other crimes and shortly will be tackling science fiction and supernatural ideas before moving on to other genres which will include non-fiction and memoirs. At our age, there is a lot we can remember in our own past lives which can still surprise and fascinate readers.

There is a wealth of previous and present writing matter on our website, stories, plays, memoirs, so if anyone wishes to know what we get up to, it is all there.

For further information, telephone Denise Leppard on 01474 822881 or e-mail deniseleppard@btinternet.com or, alternatively, visit our website: <http://highamwritersgroup.wordpress.com>.

Denise Leppard

TAI CHI GROUP

A Tai Chi group now meets in St John's Church Hall on a Wednesday morning from 8.30 until 9.30am. The cost is £4 per session. Beginners especially welcome. For further information, please contact Steve on 07999 346050 in advance as numbers are limited and also do visit our website at www.shizendo.co.uk

YOGA FLOW WITH LEAH

The Yoga Flow with Leah club meets at St John's Church Hall on Tuesdays from 9 to 11.30am, Wednesdays from 6.15 to 8.30pm and Fridays from 9.30 to 10.30am.

For booking or further information, please contact Leah on 07565 392320 or visit the website: www.yogaflowwithleah.com

Leah Ferreira, Yoga Therapist & Health Coach

EAGLES FOOTBALL CLUB

Eagles Football Club is now in its 39th season and have 12 teams running this season from under 7s to under 18s. The younger teams U/7 to U/11 are in the North Kent Youth Football League and U/13s to U/18s in Medway Messenger Youth League and six-year-olds training at Higham Primary School on Saturday mornings. All of our teams are managed by FA Level 1 Qualified coaches. We are a FA Chartered Standard Club, ensuring we meet the coaching, first aid, child protection and organisation standards required by the FA.

The ethos of the club remains unchanged. We provide football opportunities to local children in a fun, safe and positive environment, where they further their football ability through encouragement and quality coaching. We play to win, but we do not win at all costs.

We have a number of club events throughout the year to bring all teams together and our end of season presentation day is a fun day for parents and players alike.

We are always open to new joiners. If interested, please contact Pat Jeal on 01474 822607 or use our club website: www.highameagles.co.uk

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the local businesses who have so kindly sponsored us over the last year.

Pat Jeal

KNIT AND NATTER GROUP

This group meets in Higham Library on a Tuesday evening from 6.00 to 7.30pm. Beginners, experts and those in between are all welcome! Tea and biscuits and good company.

COPPERFIELD QUILTERS

We continue to meet at Merston Court lounge fortnightly on Thursday evenings from 7.30 to 9.30pm. New members are especially welcomed at this time.

We do not hold teaching classes as such but meet as a sewing bee of ladies with various stitching talents. We work on our own projects (always with fabric) making many items from cot quilts to king size quilts, cushions, bags, wall hangings, pin cushions, etc. Also, there is a wonderful choice of quilt shows around the country to visit.

If you would like to know more about us ring Linda Parr on 01474 823129 or pop in and see what we are making, you could do it too!

Linda Parr

CRAFT CLUB

Higham ladies are still attending the Craft Club although the location has now changed. We have moved from St John's Church Hall in Higham to the Church Community Hall in Lower Higham Road, Chalk. We always welcome new ladies to our classes which are every Tuesday morning from 10am till 12.30pm and still £10 a class (you will make at least one card). This includes tea/coffee/biscuits. If anyone is interested in joining us, please call Pauline on 07766 768180.

Pauline Powling

THE CLAIRE BUCKLEY SCHOOL OF DANCING

The Claire Buckley School of Dancing offers dancing classes at the Higham Memorial Hall every Tuesday from 4pm and on Wednesdays and Thursdays at Cliffe Woods Primary School.

We teach ballet, tap and jazz for both boys and girls from the age of three years. Our aim is for children to dance for enjoyment and this is a fun way to exercise and keep fit whilst also learning different styles of dance.

In 2017 we held our annual show at the Brook Theatre in Chatham which was a remarkable success. We are currently preparing for our 2018 show. We were fortunate enough to have a guest choreographer, who is currently appearing in 'Thriller Live' in the West End, come to the dance school and take a workshop.

We currently have spaces in all of our classes, so if you would like some information about any of the classes we offer then please do not hesitate to contact me on the number below.

Home: 01634 220766
Mobile: 07813 050493
Email: cbuckley046@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/clairebuckleydance/

Claire Buckley

TURNER IRISH DANCE ACADEMY

Classes take place at Higham Memorial Hall on a Monday as follows:

4pm: Age 3 – 5	4.45pm: Age 6+	6.15pm: Advanced
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Both boys and girls are invited to a free trial lesson. Please e-mail to book: Turneracademy@live.co.uk

Website: www.turneracademy.co.uk

DANCE FITNESS CLASS FOR OVER 50'S

This group meets at the Memorial Hall every Friday morning at 11am for one hour. No need to book just pay as you go. Cost is £6 per session.

For further information, contact Rebecca Grumbridge on 07968 482762.

Rebecca Grumbridge

HIGHAM BOWLS CLUB

It is very pleasing to report that our club continues to grow. We meet at the Memorial Hall on a Monday evening between 8 and 10pm. We have welcomed some new members and are now getting close to full capacity but anyone interested in short mat bowls is welcome to come along and see us in action. The first visit is free. It is our intention to upgrade and replace our equipment as necessary and we have already purchased a new mat and have new score boards. This together with our three-mat storage rack is being used to full advantage.

We held a club lunch at Deangate Golf Club in February and are very keen to have a strong social side to our Club and will continue to pursue this.

The Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all members for making this a great club and look forward to another good year.

Gerry Davies