

Copies of the Minutes of all Parish Council meetings are available for public inspection within Higham Library or on the Parish Council web site.

HIGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER and REPORTS 2020



<u>PARISH COUNCILLORS</u>		
<u>Chairman:</u> Cllr. John Grey	Cllr.Grey@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
<u>Vice Chairman:</u> Cllr. Amanda Mendzil	Cllr.Mendzil@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Anne Carroll	Cllr.Carroll@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Rob Gilby	Cllr.Gilby@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Pam Holmes	Cllr.Holmes@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Alan Howard	Cllr.Howard@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Liz Jeffery	Cllr.Jeffery@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. David Martin	Cllr.Martin@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Stewart Mackie	Cllr.Mackie@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Les Pearton	Cllr.Pearton@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
Cllr. Sue Sparks	Cllr.Sparks@higham-kent-pc.gov.uk	
<u>BOROUGH COUNCILLORS</u>		
Cllr. Les Pearton	16 Michele Cottages, Higham, Rochester, Kent ME3 7JZ	01474 822080
Cllr. Harold Craske	6 Pepper Hill, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 8EY	01474 567590
<u>COUNTY COUNCILLOR</u>		
Cllr. Bryan Sweetland	52 Downs Road, Istead Rise, Gravesend, Kent DA13 9HG	07976 309171
<u>MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT</u>		
Adam Holloway, MP	c/o House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA	
<u>CLERK TO THE PARISH COUNCIL</u>		
Mrs Linda Carnall	24 Chilton Drive, Higham, Rochester, Kent ME3 7BW	01474 822642
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PLEASE NOTE

The copy material in this newsletter was requested in January 2020 and so the contents do not reflect the current situation following the declaration of a national emergency by the Government in an attempt to stop the spread of Coronavirus Covid - 19.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

As I re-draft the start of my first Chairman's letter to you all, the Government has just declared a 'National Emergency' to try and stop the spread of the Coronavirus Covid – 19 and, as a result, we have seen the closure of most of the public buildings within our village which has had a huge impact on daily life as we know it. In addition, the introduction of 'social distancing' and 'self-isolation', as well as new restrictions on public gatherings of more than two individuals, has meant that both Parishioners and Parish Councillors alike are affected by these measures and we are unable to hold our 2020 Annual Parish Assembly or normal Parish Council Meetings as these restrictions are in place.

During the past year both Jennifer Papadopoulos and Pat Oakeshott retired from Higham Parish Council with 68 years of public service between them. Thank you to those of you who attended the most enjoyable Open House we held for them at the Village Club in June 2019 where all concerned enjoyed tea and cakes. Peter Allinson stood down from the Parish Council in December and I wish to thank him for all that he did for the village during his time as both Vice Chairman and Chairman of Higham Parish Council. Following the 2019 Parish Council elections we welcomed Stewart Mackie and Rob Gilby into our midst and, more recently, David Martin. We also welcomed our new accountancy provider, Emma Jeffrey, onto our team. Our long-serving Webmaster, Clive Stanley, retired at the end of 2019 having built our website in 2004 and maintained it for us since that time. I would like to thank Clive for his loyal service to our village and wish him all the best for the future. Who can forget the huge number of photographs that he took around our village during his time as Webmaster, especially those for the Tour de France and Olympic events.

When collecting together the copy material for this newsletter it came as a shock to discover that we had lost both the Higham Age Concern Luncheon Club and Women's Institute (WI) in recent months. I would like to pay tribute to both of these clubs and thank them both for the enormous contribution that they have made to village life. In particular, I would like to mention Barbara West (and her team of drivers, cooks and hostesses, including Cllr. Anne Carroll) who kept the Age Concern club going for almost forty years. It has become apparent that the loss of clubs such of these is due to a lack of people willing to come forward and take over the helm from those who are now 'ageing people'. I would particularly like to draw your attention to the appeal on pages 32 and 33 by the Memorial Hall Committee for people to come forward to serve as Trustees for the Memorial Hall. Please give this matter some thought and see if you could consider being one of a group of people who might take on this role otherwise this may be the next casualty within the village.

Please also give consideration to supporting our Village Club and Public Houses. If we do not use them, we may lose them.

It has been a busy year in the Parish with the continuing success of the Higham Library Extra scheme where the village is one of only three in Kent to pilot this new initiative. A controversial planning application for the re-development of the Nuralite site stirred many Parishioners to object to the proposal and a supplementary consultation for amendments to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing is currently underway. Fly tipping within the village continues to be a problem with frequent road closures needed to retrieve the debris. The Higham Village Sports Association has been successful in obtaining grant aid for its plans to re-develop the sports courts at the Recreation Ground and my Vice Chairman, Cllr. Amanda Mendzil, and her fund-raising team have secured grant funding of over £49,000 to replace the wooden play equipment on the Recreation Ground with an exciting new play scheme which is something I think we would all agree is long overdue.

Our Firework Display last year featured the theme of the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing and was enjoyed by you all. I think that we must wait to see the outcome of our current fight against the Coronavirus, and what restrictions are in place, before we look too far ahead to this November.

Our Community Warden, Paul Hassell, continues to hold his Community Surgeries in Higham Library each month and the PCSOs now hold regular surgeries in Hayley's Tea Room which are advertised by a poster in the window.

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 uniformed leaders within the village, the Youth Club volunteers and the Memorial Hall Committee headed of course by Keith Bradley and Peter Morriss.

Although they were not called upon this year a huge thank you goes out to our farmer friends who stand ready to offer their help in clearing our roads from snow.

My thanks to you all.

John Grey

LOWER THAMES CROSSING

Highways England launched a supplementary consultation at the end of January with residents being given the opportunity to view and comment on a number of design changes. Consultation events were held in a number of locations, including Higham Library Car Park and Higham Train Station Car Park. The consultation closed on 25 March and we await the outcomes.

To keep up to date with developments on the crossing, check out the Parish Council and Highways England websites or join our mailing list:

www.higham-kent-pc.gov.uk

www.highwaysengland.co.uk

To join the mailing list – contact the Parish Clerk e-mail highampc@hotmail.com or telephone 01474 822642.

Sue Sparks

**HIGHAM PARISH
COUNCIL**

Annual Parish Assembly

Thursday 9th April, 2020

Due to the announcement by the Government of new restrictions on public gatherings, to stop the spread of Coronavirus Covid-19, this meeting will not now take place.

Reports normally given at the Meeting can be found throughout this booklet.

FROM THE PARISH CLERK

CHARLES DICKENS AT GAD'S HILL

It is often said that Charles Dickens had always wanted to live in Gad's Hill Place in Higham since he was a boy living in Chatham. His Father reportedly told him that if he were to be very persevering and were to work hard he might someday come to live in it. This dream did come true when in 1856 he wrote a cheque for £1,790 to buy Gad's Hill Place and 26 acres of land. The house itself cost £1,700 and the extra £90 was to buy an area of shrubbery land on the other side of the road where his Swiss Chalet was later situated. Dickens had planned the purchase as an investment but following the sale of his London house he moved to Gad's Hill permanently.

Dickens did not move into the house until 1857 and, as it had fallen into disrepair, he commenced a programme of improvements. This included removing the wooden panels from the front door and replacing them with glass to make the entrance hall lighter. He also removed alternate balustrades from the staircase and inserted wooden panels which were then hand painted by his daughter Katy and remain to this day. The snug ground floor room at the front of the building, overlooking the front lawn surrounded by his favourite red geraniums, became his study. He constructed dummy bookshelves to the back of the door so that when it was closed he was completely surrounded by books. He invented amusing titles for these – one was called 'Cat's Lives' and consisted of nine volumes. His study was always kept locked when he was not occupying it and no servants were allowed to enter.

Writing to a friend in 1858 Dickens described his 'little Kentish freehold' on the summit of Gad's Hill as a 'grave red brick house which I have added to and stuck bits upon in all manner of ways, so that it is pleasantly irregular'. He later described Gad's Hill Place in a Christmas Carol as 'a mansion of dull red brick, with a weathercock surmounted cupola on the roof, and

a bell hanging in it'. In truth the house had to be extended to accommodate his large family. The drawing room was extended and this allowed him to add a conservatory to the rear of the dining room – an improvement which he only saw completed shortly before he died. He extended and converted the breakfast room into a billiards and smoking room and green and white tiles were thoughtfully added to the walls to stop them being marked by the ends of the billiards cues. He installed a large number of mirrors to walls and even doors at Gad's Hill as he liked to see how he appeared to others and used them to perform to whilst he perfected his readings for his next public performance.

One year at Christmas, Dickens received a present of a miniature Swiss Chalet from one of his friends. This arrived at Higham station in 94 pieces packed into 58 boxes. He erected this in the area of land that he owned on the other side of the road, which he referred to as The Wilderness, and for ease of access he had a tunnel constructed under the main road which remains to this day. It was in his Swiss Chalet in the summer months that he wrote his novels.

Charles Dickens was accepted locally and allowed local people to hold cricket matches in his meadow with him often acting as the umpire. On Boxing Day he held sports on 'Mr Charles Dickens's Cricket Field'. Once Hans Christian Anderson came to stay at Gad's Hill for a period of two weeks but caused great annoyance to Dickens when he decided to extend his visit to five.

Dickens died in the dining room at Gad's Hill on 9 June 1870 having suffered a stroke, leaving an unfinished novel entitled 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood'. During his time at Gad's Hill he had written some of the best of his works including 'A Tale of Two Cities', and 'Great Expectations'. Although he wished to be buried locally, he was buried in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey.

To mark the 150th anniversary of his death Higham Parish Council erected a new Dickens sign opposite Gad's Hill Place on the main road.

Gravesham Borough Council is planning a series of events to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Dickens' death this summer including both a play by the Dickens Theatre Company and tours of Gad's Hill. At the time of going to print these events had been postponed until later in the summer - see www.visitgravesend.co.uk/dickens-150

Linda Carnall, Clerk to Higham Parish Council

FROM THE PARISH CLERK - SIMPLIFIED DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

<u>2019/2020</u> <i>INCOME</i>	£	EXPENDITURE	£
Balance B/Fwd	120,981.16	Recreation Ground	7,550.00
Precept 2019/2020	86,520.68	General Administration	6,725.11
Allotment Rents	1,240.50	Allotments	3,414.73
Other Receipts	6.15	Miscellaneous Expenses	17,601.76
Flexi A/C Interest	57.48	Subscriptions and Fees	1,143.68
National Savings Investment a/c Interest	5.27	Clerk's Salary, N.I., PAYE, LGPS and expenses for provision of office	21,077.90
VAT Reclaim	3,609.89	VAT Paid	3,502.68
Grants received	899.00	Grants made	1,939.00
Defibrillators	802.13	CDC/Village Plan	<u>5,485.37</u>
Playground project	<u>14,071.72</u>		
	£228,193.98		<u>£68,440.23</u>

BALANCES IN HAND AS AT 31.3.2020

	£		£
Lloyds Current Account	64,957.62		
Barclays Community Account	36,279.98		
Lloyds Flexi Account	57,850.90		
National Savings Investment Account	664.25		
Lloyds Special Projects Account	<u>1.00</u>		
	£159,753.75		<u>£159,753.75</u>
			<u>£228,193.98</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 31.3.19 is available for public inspection in Higham Library.

**PROPOSED DATES FOR
PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS – 2020**

Please check on our website or Facebook page to see if these meetings will be going ahead in view of the government restrictions imposed on us at the present time.

Monday, 6 April	
Monday, 18 May	Annual Parish Council Meeting.
Monday, 6 July	
Monday, 7 September	
Monday, 19 October	
Monday, 23 November	
Monday, 30 November	Garden competition prize-giving 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 on our web site, which is:

www.higham-kent-pc.gov.uk

Dates for Proposed Parish Council meetings during 2020 are listed above. Members of the public are welcome to all meetings.

Our front cover this year commemorates the 150th anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens, our most famous Parishioner. The red geranium was his favourite flower.

For details of celebrations to mark 'Dickens One Fifty' please go to www.visitgravesend.co.uk/dickens-150

KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

It continues to be a very busy year at Kent County Council. At the moment we are just about to agree our budgets for 2020/21 and the council tax bill will be increased by 4% this year. That's a 2% increase in council tax, plus a 2% adult social services care charge which the government introduced a couple of years ago. County Council services have a major impact on local people's lives, through schools, roads and highways, social services for vulnerable children and adults and for elderly people and services that are important to families and their communities, such as libraries and country parks. You can read more about how your Council Tax is spent here:

www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/finance-and-budget/our-budget

Fly Tipping update: KCC has recently launched a campaign to highlight the damage unlicensed waste carriers can cause. As part of the Keep Kent Clean campaign, Kent County Council, together with the district and borough authorities, is urging residents to protect themselves from illegal waste carriers who often target householders with cheap rates to take their rubbish away. These unlicensed carriers often dump the waste along country lanes or farmers' fields, leaving the bill for removal and disposal with the council or landowner. However, if the waste is traced back to its original source, it can leave people with a fine of up to £400.

If you notice a problem on a road or pavement including:

- Street light faults.
- Potholes.
- Drainage.
- Traffic signal faults.
- Overgrown vegetation (including hedges and grass).

You can report it here... It's quick and easy...

www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem

To keep up to date with everything KCC is doing then take a look at our new News and Media Hub online at:

www.kccmediahub.net

Bryan Sweetland

Kent County Councillor for Gravesham Rural

E-mail: bryan.sweetland@kent.gov.uk

REPORT FROM HAROLD CRASKE - GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCILLOR

It can hardly be a year since the last Newsletter as so much has happened. Firstly, Les Pearton and I were greatly honoured to have been re-elected as your representatives on Gravesham Borough Council – for the third time. We really appreciate all the help we received from so many people during the election campaign. We pledge to continue to do all we can for you during our term of office.

I was further honoured when I was elected to the position of Vice-Chairman of the North Kent Marshes Drainage Authority. The joint Authority with Medway and some local farmers is responsible for the drainage and water management of our marshes from Denton to Allhallows. We are extremely lucky in that despite all the rain, the marshes have been so well managed by a small team of dedicated officers.

The Lower Thames Crossing debate rumbles on with even further amendments to the overall plan and yet more consultations. There has been an exhibition van at both the library and the station enabling residents to make their further views known. Gravesham Council is doing all it can to ensure that the crossing impacts as little as possible on residents and has, already, ensured some major changes to the route. There is still much more to be done.

Council Tax is a major worry for residents. Although the Borough has no influence on the KCC, Police Commissioner and Fire Service precepts, it has done all it can to lessen the impact on tax bills by producing a fair and balanced budget, supported by all parties. This means that the increase of the tax rate for Gravesham Council services will be less than 10p a week.

The Nuralite planning application is still under consideration by the Borough and, although I cannot comment on it (being Vice-Chairman of the Planning Board), I thank the Parish Council and so many residents for their constructive comments.

You are fortunate in having such an active Parish Council and in its members. They all do so much for the village in giving up their time to ensure the village is such a wonderful place to live.

Thank you all for supporting us in so many ways.

Harold Craske, Elected Member for Higham, Gravesham Borough Council

KENT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (KALC)

Your Parish Council is a member of this organisation providing guidance, training and legal expertise on a range of subjects.

Meetings for the Parish representatives within Gravesham take place on a regular basis and discuss topics including policing matters, the Lower Thames Crossing, planning issues and the constant problem we have with fly-tipping. Usually two members of our Parish Council attend these meetings.

Additionally, an annual conference takes place in Ditton where our Councillors are able to meet those of other Parishes within the county.

At the conference, some Parishes may put forward motions to be debated and if carried following a vote, are supported by KALC. These items may be for speed limits or traffic regulations for example.

A very useful and helpful organisation for our Council.

Councillors John Grey (Chair) and Alan Howard

PLAYGROUND PROJECT

I am delighted to announce that the Higham Playground Project Team has now raised **£49,071.72** towards the replacement of the wooden play equipment on the Recreation Ground.

The fund-raising team are: Councillor Amanda Mendzil.

Sylvia Rolfe.

Jeegna Patel.

Emma Aldous.

We would like to thank everyone who volunteered, contributed to and attended the Toy Sale.

We did have more fund-raising events planned for 2020, but due to Covid-19 these have had to be cancelled at the present time.

The breakdown of funds raised is as follows:

Higham Parish Council	£10,000.00
Awards for All	£10,000.00
Bryan Sweetland – KCC	£2,500.00
Toy sale	£226.76
Waitrose green tokens	£230.00
Fireworks night donations	£1,014.96
Quilting group	£100.00
Gravesham Borough Council	£25,000.00

A huge thank you to everyone who has helped, supported and donated. Playground Projects will be supplying the equipment and we are hoping to finalise the order in the next week or so.

Thank you for your continued support.

Councillor Amanda Mendzil, Vice-Chair, Higham Parish Council

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Yet another year gone by and it is still pleasing to see Residents' Planning Applications are plentiful and 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 who take 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 its retention is so precious to maintain the village ethos which is a continuing threat to being taken away from us. 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, unfortunately, if we recommend or have no objections. Please keep your applications 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.

Unfortunately, on a negative note, we are currently experiencing the possibility of the blight of the Lower Thames Crossing. Whilst, statistics show that another crossing is inevitable, the impact to accommodate one in this area will have a tremendous impact on our countryside and neighbouring communities, not to mention the impact on our roads and infrastructure around and through the village. We are, therefore, carefully monitoring and responding to the constant changing of proposals and amendments from Highways England to this end.

And finally, on the note of roads and infrastructure, the proposed development of the Nuralite Site is also one of our top priorities to ensure that our community is not blighted by this application. Please be mindful that it is not just Lower Higham that will be affected for many years if this development goes ahead. The impact throughout the village and all routes in and out will also be experienced by Mid Higham and Upshire, Shorne, Cliffe Woods, Cliffe, Wainscott and possibly as far as Frindbury, Strood and Gravesend.

I urge you to please consider carefully the impact these two proposals will have on our village.

Cllr Les Pearton

RURAL HOUSING

In early March a Rural Housing Needs Survey form was sent to every home within the Parish by Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council. The Borough Council has a statutory duty to investigate housing needs and examine ways of meeting those needs. Best practice recommends that in rural areas, Housing Needs Surveys are carried out as part of a rolling programme, every five years. The responses to the Survey will be analysed by a Rural Housing Enabler from ACRK who will then provide a summary report to both the Borough Council and Higham Parish Council.

Linda Carnall

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 (Monday to Friday 09.00-17.00). Emergency out-of-hours issues only can be reported on

03000 419191 (Monday to Friday 17.00-09.00 and all weekend). Please provide 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 and a specific reference number will be given for you to check on progress.

Thank you.

THE SUN POND RESTORATION

Higham Parish Council has for a long time had the desire to make the Sun Pond more attractive and to encourage more wildlife.

However, there are a lot of stumbling blocks in the way and any major works to 'landscape' the pond would cost a considerable amount, and one conservation charity advised us to 'leave it as it is – as it is a thriving pond'. As well as this, if Great Crested newts were to be found living there – the area could not be disturbed at all.

Taking this into consideration, the team of village gardening volunteers have worked on 29 February and 1 March to just tidy up the area between the roadway and the pond, cutting back brambles and making the view to the centre of the pond more distinguishable. Further maintenance will be scheduled for later in the Spring.

Higham Parish Council wish to thank the gardening volunteers who regularly have work parties to improve the village.

For more information on how to join in with this endeavour contact Linda Carnall, Parish Clerk.

Councillor Liz Jeffery

HIGHAM FOOTPATHS and RIGHTS OF WAYS

I hope you have all had a happy year of walking or riding around Higham. There is not much to report on our excellent Rights of Ways around the village but we would like to express our thanks to the volunteers who give up hours of their time to keep the paths and bridleways clear.

The Parish Council would also like to thank Anne Waugh for her reports on Rights of Way in Higham, and for keeping an eye on these on our behalf over many years, which has been very much appreciated.

Linda Carnall

RECREATION GROUND

Improvements have continued from last year's works. In December 2019 overgrown shrubs and small trees were cleared from around the edge of the Recreation Ground. During the spring, a lovely, surprising display of snowdrops emerged, having previously been hidden by the undergrowth. Volunteers are working on improving the cleared areas by removing weeds and leaves and keeping the Recreation Ground free of litter. Further works are planned for later in 2020 to ensure that our larger trees are safe and healthy.

If you would like to join the gardening and litter volunteers please contact the Parish Clerk e-mail highampc@hotmail.com or telephone 01474 822642.

Councillor Sue Sparks

ALLOTMENTS

Working an allotment is a fantastic way to keep fit, enjoy fresh air, and grow nutritious fruit, herbs and vegetables or flowers. The cost of renting a plot is £25 per year, with the allotment year running from 1 April.

There are a number of vacant plots, so if you would like to visit the allotments and have a chat about how it all works, then do get in touch. Contact: The Parish Clerk e-mail highampc@hotmail.com or telephone 01474 822642.

Councillor Sue Sparks

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 Councillor Liz Jeffery on 01474 747090 or by e-mail: jefferyelizabeth18@googlemail.com



If you see fly tipping in progress – phone 999 and report it to the Police.

If you find fly tipping – report it to Gravesham Borough Council www.gravesham.gov.uk/flytipping or phone 01474 337000.

If you are looking for someone to get rid of rubbish for you – follow these guidelines:



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!

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**](http://www.powercut105.com)

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**](https://cablemystreet.virginmedia.com/#!/new-build)

It only takes a couple of minutes to register.

Thank you.

Councillor Amanda Mendzil (Vice-Chair)

SNOW!!

A big thank you to those residents who clear snow from their roads and pavements and help their neighbours the winter months.

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.

Councillor Liz Jeffery

SNOW AND ICE – USEFUL INFORMATION

When snow and ice are forecast... just a reminder that the salt bins in the village have been filled by KCC. The mixture in the bins is for use on village roads and pavements. Please do not use it on your home drives and paths.

Updates on weather and road conditions will be posted on the Parish Council Website or you can contact us via e-mail at: highampc@hotmail.com or telephone 01474 822642.

Weather updates can be found at: www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/warnings.

The Kent County Council Twitter account is a good source of information: <https://twitter.com/KentHighways>.

KCC Highways Traffic updates can be found at: www.kenttraffic.info

Cold weather advice at <https://kccmediahub.net/cold-weather-warning-kent-urged-to-keep-warm-and-well745>

THE SHAVES CHARITY

The Trustees remain unchanged since our last report to you.

The asset of the charity is also the same as last reported, £6,239. No income has been earned or payments made.

We are in the process of removing the charity from the Charity Commissioners' Register. The Trustees met on 8 February 2020 to formalise this intention. We will then complete the removal by following the Charity Commissioners' procedure. The Trustees will also reconsider how best to use the capital asset, following the proposals made at a Trustee meeting on 11 August 2018 and reported to you last year.

Les Baker (for the Trustees)

PARISH WEBSITE

When compiling the Higham Village Plan (which informs the Parish Councils work), we noted that parishioners had requested a website update and an improvement in the promotion and

advertising of events. Responding to these requests, I took on the challenge of designing and delivering a new website. We launched in November 2019 and since then have had many positive comments about its fresh new look and updated content.

The website has been designed as a 'go to' on-line source for information on local events and issues, village news, village photographs and information on village organisations. We also publish Parish Council meeting dates, minutes and agendas.

It also provides detailed information on the Lower Thames Crossing, the Nuralite planning application, reporting services, Councillor & Community Warden Surgeries, Gardens for Pleasure Competition and much, much more. Any village group or society is welcome to publish important information for the community. Why not take a look at the new Higham Parish Council website and make it your first port of call for local information:

www.higham-kent-pc.gov.uk

Let us know what you think – use our [‘Contact Us’](#) form to send us your comments.

In response to the Higham Village Plan, and in addition to our new website, we have also recently launched (January 2020) an updated Facebook page. The Parish Council use this to further advertise events, information and initiatives that we are involved with to reach an even wider audience. Take a look and find [Higham Parish Council on Facebook](#)

Remember – you will be able to find a copy of this 2020 newsletter on our website (in our News section).

Councillor Rob Gilby, Parish Webmaster

THANK YOU CLIVE!

As a mark of our appreciation for his services in setting up our website and maintaining it as our Webmaster since 2004, the Parish Council gave Clive and his wife Judi a surprise visit to Bletchley Park, to mark his retirement, when they both attended our January Parish Council Meeting.

Bletchley Park, the home of British codebreaking, is considered to be the birthplace of modern information technology and also houses the National Museum of Computing. We all wish Clive a happy retirement and thank him once again for his support for our village.

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.

NEW DICKENS SIGN

We would like to thank local signwriter, Terry Morris, for producing our new Charles Dickens sign on the A226 in time for the 150th anniversary of the writer's death on 9 June 2020.

HIGHAM POPPY PROJECT

Work by the Higham Knit and Natter group to make poppies for this project continues. The poppies will be stored each year and gradually more poppies will be made so that by 2025 we will have a fantastic display and memorial to all those who lost their lives in WWII.

If you would like to make some poppies, we can provide instructions for knitting or crafting the flowers. We have some materials or you can use your own. Just get in touch with us – email address below.

If you would like to get involved in the project in any other way or have some ideas please let us know.

Contact us via e-mail: barbara.cousins@btinternet.com

HIGHAM GARDENS FOR PLEASURE:

COMPETITION 2019

This is an annual competition organised by Higham Parish Council and judged by the Area Plant Manager from the Millbrook Garden Company.

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 35th anniversary of the competition. The following prize-winners received their awards from The Mayor of Gravesham at a presentation held on Monday, 25 November 2019 in Higham Library.

<p><u>FIRST PRIZE – JOINT</u> (Silver Rose Bowl Trophy (share), Garden Gift Tokens and framed certificates)</p>
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<p>Anne and Robin Miles, 13 Highwoods Close. Margaret and Terry Greenshields, 'Courtlands', Crutches Lane.</p>
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<p><u>SECOND PRIZE – JOINT</u> (Garden Gift Tokens and framed certificates)</p>
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<p>Josephine and Reginald Walter, 'Goldmohr', Elm Close, Telegraph Hill. Jacqueline and David Jarvis, 12 Hollytree Drive.</p>

<p><u>THIRD PRIZE – JOINT</u> (Garden Gift Tokens and framed certificates)</p>

<p>Lisa Ward, 30 Brice Road.</p>

Alison Sutherland, 'Blue Haze', 2 Carton Road.

'HIGHLY COMMENDED' (Garden Gift Token and framed certificate)
John Thornton, 26 Chilton Drive.

'BEST HANGING BASKET AND CONTAINERS'
FIRST PRIZE – JOINT (Garden Gift Tokens and framed certificates)
Heather Golding and Trevor King, 'The Banks', Chequers Street.
Jacqueline and Timothy Cousins, 9 Vicarage Row, School Lane.

'BEST HANGING BASKET AND CONTAINERS'

SECOND PRIZE – JOINT (Garden Gift Tokens and framed certificates)
Shelley Ford and Andrew Ramsell, 45 Bull Lane.
The Clout Family, 'Arnecliffe', Crutches Lane.

'BEST HANGING BASKET AND CONTAINERS'

THIRD PRIZE – JOINT (Garden Gift Tokens and framed certificates)
Sarah Wall, 5 Providence Cottages, Crutches Lane.
Mary and Nigel Wright, 6 Providence Cottages, Crutches Lane.

'BEST HANGING BASKET AND CONTAINERS'

HIGHLY COMMENDED - JOINT (Garden Gift Tokens and framed certificates)
Rachel Burn and Bob Flood, 11 Irvine Road.
Doreen and Anthony Williamson, 6 Ash Crescent.
Mr and Mrs Hamer, 20 Beech Grove.

HIGHPARKS MEDICAL PRACTICE

Highparks Medical Practice continues to provide general medical services to its 15,500 patients at our four surgery sites in Cliffe Woods, Higham, Wainscott and Cliffe. We provide on the day appointments by calling your local surgery at 08.15hrs on the day to receive a call back from a GP who will allocate appointments appropriately. Routine appointments and telephone calls are available but you will need to book these in advance due to the volume of demand. When the demand for appointments has exceeded the capacity of the practice our staff are now offering patients GP appointments at local healthy living centres at Lordswood, Rainham and Rochester called the 'Local Hubs'. The doctors working from these locations will have access to your medical records and can prescribe medication as necessary. These appointments often become available outside of normal opening times in the evenings and at weekends so can be particularly useful for working families and children. If this is something that you would like to consider please enquire at your local surgery.

Please also consider using our on-line booking services for appointments and ordering prescriptions.

As some of you may be aware, in the summer of last year one of our GP partners died suddenly. Patients and staff have all felt this significant and sad loss. In November Higham and Cliffe surgeries held a memorial fund-raising day and with the support from staff, family and patients we raised just over £1,200 for the British Heart Foundation. Please accept a huge thank you from the family of Dr Hossain and the practice to all patients who supported this event.

The practice is still offering flu vaccinations to the over 65s and for other patients with long term conditions.

In other news the practice has been busy recruiting new members of staff to support our existing workforce. We have employed a paramedic to help out with home visits for patients.

In January 2020 two former GP trainees started working at the practice. Both are part time, however, between them they will provide an extra four days of GP appointments.

Finally, our patient participation group are always looking for new members. If you would like to get involved and be part of discussions regarding future developments or wider NHS policy that will affect the practice please contact any reception to receive invites to the next meeting.

Kevin Creasey, Practice Manager

CORONAVIRUS COVID - 19

The declaration of a national emergency by the Government in an attempt to stop the spread of Coronavirus Covid – 19 has had a huge impact on life in our village with amongst others the closure of Schools, Higham Library, Public Houses, Clubs, Memorial Hall and village associations. The new restrictions on public gatherings of more than two individuals and the concepts of ‘social distancing’ and ‘self-isolation’, of both Parishioners and Parish Councillors alike, mean that AT THE PRESENT TIME we are unable to hold either the 2020 Annual Parish Assembly or normal Parish Council Meetings.

Please check either our Website or Facebook page where we will keep you updated regarding future Government legislation and what impact it may have on the current situation.

Linda Carnall

HELPING HANDS - HIGHAM VILLAGE

ARE YOU SELF-ISOLATING DUE TO CORONAVIRUS COVID-19? ARE YOU ABLE TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE SELF ISOLATING?

Higham Parish Council has joined forces with the Helping Hands Facebook group which has been set up in the neighbouring villages of Cliffe, Cliffe Woods and Wainscott to ensure all those in Higham receive any assistance that they need.

Assistance given may include:

- Picking up shopping.
- Posting mail.
- Getting urgent supplies.
- A friendly phone call.

If you are able to help, or you need help, please contact the Parish Clerk by e-mail on highampc@hotmail.com or by telephone on 01474 822642 (e-mail is preferred). Higham Parish Council will use the bank of volunteers to ensure those who are unable to go out receive the support that they need.

If you are able to offer your help you will be asked to select a road in the village and fill in copies of the Helping Hands slips (shown below) with your contact name and a number for the self-isolating person to contact you, before posting through the front doors.

Hello! **If you are self-isolating, I can help**

My name is

I live locally at **My phone number is**

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19 I can help with:

Picking up shopping Posting mail A friendly phone call Urgent supplies

Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness.
Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep. #ViralKindness

IMPORTANT: Please be aware that people may be targeted by criminals who seek to take advantage of those who are in self-isolation. Please only deal with people that you know, or who have been arranged via the Parish Council.

For more information please contact:

Linda Carnall

Clerk to Higham Parish Council

Telephone: 01474 822642

HIGHAM SPEED WATCH

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. Kent Police 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. Or, you may e-mail me at peter@pleakey.co.uk

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

Peter Leakey, Group Co-ordinator

Telephone: 07815 721966

COMMUNITY WARDEN

I would like to thank the Parish Council for all their hard work over the past year. The Warden Surgery is held on the last Thursday of every month from 2.30 to 4pm in Higham Library.

I would also like to thank the Speed Watch team for carrying out speed checks in the village.

We have had some good results in 2019. To name but a few:

- The first one a Black Vauxhall Corsa seen racing around the village. We eventually tracked it down and the vehicle was stopped and found to have no MOT, no insurance and no tax hence to say the driver was dealt with and the vehicle crushed.
- The second one a Blue Transit Pick Up seen in suspicious circumstances. The registration number was given to me and the vehicle was traced back to a person in Essex who was found to be coming over and fly tipping in the Dartford area.
- The next one was a vehicle seen late at night and in the morning driving slowly around the houses. Luckily a resident got the registration number and passed it on to me. I passed the information on to our intelligence team and the Police found it parked in Gad's Hill layby where two young males were arrested for offences. The unroadworthy vehicle was seized and disposed of.

WELL DONE PEOPLE OF HIGHAM.

Please remember if you see anything you are not sure of call the non-emergency Police Number on 101. If they think it is an emergency they will divert to the right person to deal with it. Please do not be afraid to call them, you will not get in to any trouble and it could be the last piece of the jigsaw they need.

Hope you all have a Great Summer.

Office: 01474 814963 | Mobile: 07811 271256

www.kent.gov.uk/communitywardens

Paul Hassell, Community Warden

PCSO

Hello local residents of Higham, I am Police Community Support Officer Joanne Hartley your local officer. I have been your officer for the last few years and in this time got to know the area well and some of the local residents and businesses. I hope to meet more of you in the future, you can find me at local community meetings which I advertise in the local shops. I regularly hold a drop-in at Hayley's of Higham where you can pop in for a drink and let me

know any concerns you have or if I can be of help. I patrol the area when I am on early or late shift, often this is done by vehicle due to me covering such a large area.

I am in regular contact with the Parish Council and attend the Parish meetings when my shift allows me to.

My email address is: **Joanne.Hartley@kent.police.uk**

I do work part time hours but will respond back to you as soon as possible. If anything is of urgency then report this via 999/101.

Thank-you.

PCSO Jo Hartley

PCSO SURGERIES

Our PCSOs now hold a Surgery in Hayley's Tea Room in School Lane on a regular basis. The dates for such meetings are displayed on a poster in the shop window.

Linda Carnall



**YOUR MEMORIAL HALL COMMITTEE
NEEDS YOU TO CONSIDER BECOMING A TRUSTEE
OF THE MEMORIAL HALL**

'HIGHAM MEMORIAL HALL IS CLOSING---

---UNLESS the number of Trustees increases!!

This is what may happen **UNLESS** we increase the number of people that run and maintain Higham Memorial Hall including the Changing Rooms(ie all facilities on the Hall site).

The Memorial Hall is the **Biggest** facility in Higham that was built specifically for the use of its inhabitants.

The Trustees/Maintenance Committee has now dwindled to a few ageing people and the increasing work load and reducing ability makes it increasingly necessary for new (younger) members from local groups and/or local residents to join the committee as Trustees.

If sufficient support cannot be obtained Higham Memorial Hall Management Committee will be left with no option but to approach the Charity Commission to **DISSOLVE** the Trust. This is because Charity Law states that there must be sufficient Trustees to run the Charity/Trust ie The Memorial Hall. That means **NO** large purpose-built facilities in Higham for the Youth Groups, HiARA, Badminton, Dancing, Keep Fit, etc and **NO** Changing Rooms!! All these groups may, therefore, leave Higham which could mean the gradual decline of village life as we know it!!

NOTE!! The final decision on the future of the Hall and its facilities can only be made by The Trustees and the Charity Commission. If you care about the Hall's future please contact any Hall Committee Member. We are holding a Public Meeting (date to be announced) in the next few months to make people aware of the situation.

YOUR VILLAGE HALL NEEDS YOU!!

HIGHAM MEMORIAL HALL

The past year was very much business as usual in the day-to-day life of the Memorial Hall. As a self-funding committee, we rely on lettings for most of our income both from the regular village groups and from larger bookings for various events and parties. In addition, we have been holding indoor Boot Fairs for many years but at the end of 2019 we took the decision to stop. The main reason for this is the diminishing number of committee members needed to run the Boot Fairs.

On-going maintenance has included the installation of new fire doors, repainting of lines to the car park and cutting of the hedges and shrubs around the car park. All these major works have to be covered by our fund-raising.

During 2020 we will be continuing our on-going maintenance and one major project will be the refurbishment of the heating system. Our other major task will be to recruit new (and hopefully younger) committee members to enable the Memorial Hall to remain your hub for your village groups and for your function hall.

Keith Bradley

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

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST JOHN, HIGHAM

We are open daily (for prayer, reflection or just a visit) because of internal/external CCTV, members checking in regularly and the daily round of worship – announced by a bell. On Sundays our bell ringers put their practice (on a computer linked simulator) into action. Proper audible practice is on the first Saturday of a month; the same day and time as ‘Coffee and Conversation’. This ‘drop-in event’ is for folk to meet – especially if you’re a carer in need of a break or someone wanting just to chat. In Lent these become Charity Lunches from noon to 1.30pm and raise money for the world’s desperately poor. We continue, each month (the weekend beginning on the last Friday), to be a collection point for our local Gravesham Foodbank donations. Just drop your gifts in the large box under the War Memorial in Church. There is also a permanently placed RED box for your used stamps to help the Kent Association for the Blind.

A legacy meant we could buy a computerised music system to accompany singing when, occasionally, we are without an organist. This was eagerly obtained after our Higham Congregational neighbours very kindly loaned us theirs for a trial period. Other generous legacies, donations, and money set aside for it, has seen the roadside churchyard wall being rebuilt (a mere £28K!). KCC have improved drainage alongside meaning it should stay upright a bit longer! Clearance work continues annually in St Mary’s Churchyard. We remind you that, unlike a civil cemetery, graves/burial plots are not owned. They are covered by laws and people cannot do what they like with them. The Law also limits us with marriages: please check early enough because parts of Higham’s Civil Parish are not within the boundaries of the very much older Church Parish.

Baptisms now take place mostly at the 11am slot (monthly) rather than in the 9.30am Parish Mass. Junior Church (5-11yr olds) is held during the Mass (in school terms), numbers fluctuating erratically at certain times of the year. ‘Voice Rejoice’, a group of youngsters who sing, has participated during some of our important services in the year. New members always welcome.

Fr Peter Bolton (honorary assistant/retired priest) quickly settled into Church and Village and is an invaluable asset. He, and others, are in the process of setting up a fortnightly men’s fellowship. Monday’s evening mass has now moved to noon to combine with a BYO lunch and study group each fortnight – weekly in Lent.

Thank you so much for all the practical help or assistance offered in too many ways to mention from Church Officers and ‘organisers’ to the ordinary ‘doers’; both within and without services. More detail regarding St John’s Church can be found on our website

www.highamparishchurch.org.uk

our social media platforms or by ringing the Vicarage: Tel. 01634 717360.

Fr James Southward, Vicar of Higham

HIGHAM CHORAL GROUP

Our aim is to perform a wide variety of music to provide something for everyone to enjoy when attending our concerts. The year started locally in March at St Nicholas Church, Strood. The audience here thoroughly enjoyed our usual mixture of music – a selection of stage, screen, church and popular music. In July we were hosted at a new venue by St John the Baptist Church, Meopham. Our Christmas Concert was back at a local venue, St John's in Higham. This had a more traditional theme including Congregational carols, a range of Christmas music and festive readings.

We anticipate our concerts for 2020 to be as follows:

- 18 July St Mary's Church, Higham.
- 12 December St John's Church, Higham.

We are a sociable SATB choir performing a wide range of enjoyable music so if you are interested in joining us please contact Sian Miller e-mail shaney1@blueyonder.co.uk or telephone 07973 441433.

Sian Miller, Secretary

THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH

These days the church is rarely used for religious services, it is still used by the community of Higham for other events and 2019 was a busy year for the Friends of St Mary's who organise most of these events. 2019 began with a talk from the Churches Conservation Trust about the Inspire Project – created to raise much-needed funds for the repair of the spire which is deteriorating due to the elements. This was followed by a highly informative talk by John Vigar, all about marriages and other ceremonies. The church made a wonderfully atmospheric theatre for a superb performance of 'Wind in the Willows', performed by This is My Theatre. This was followed by a truly memorable evening with the David Bowdler Quartet playing to packed pews and everyone enjoying a glass or two!

Parking around St Mary's has always been an issue so everyone involved benefited from the mini bus, kindly lent to us by Gad's Hill School for the events. Visitors were able to park conveniently midway up the lane in a meadow and be shuttled the 30 seconds journey to the church.

This year we have more exciting events planned! We have a Pond Day with tours, talks and wildlife information; we have a Spring Dance in the Memorial Hall with the amazing David Bowdler Quartet (hire of Higham Memorial Hall and cost of the band has very generously been paid for by Higham Parish Council so even more of the money raised can go to the Inspire Project); we have an informative nature walk on the marsh with David Saunders from the RSPB; a Dickens Evening with performances from the pupils of Gad's Hill School and local poet, James McKay; the Higham Choral Group will hold their Summer Concert; This is My Theatre will perform The Three Musketeers and there will also be a Heritage Day. Further information on all of these events can be found on the Friends of St Mary's website: www.stmaryschurhigham.com and look out for the information leaflet

that will be coming through your doors. As well as these events, the church is always open to visitors to come and have a wander around the church yard and building, and to spend time in the tranquillity of this beautiful spot.

Emily Wright, Secretary

HIGHAM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

*Where there is no vision, the people perish:
but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*

(Proverbs 29:18)

As we look forward to the assurance of God's care and blessing upon us all in our community in 2020, we at the Chapel, also look forward to celebrating the 200th anniversary next year of the building of the first chapel on the School Lane site. The vision for the people of Higham of those Christians who visited us from the Medway Towns over 200 years ago lives on. Those of us who continue to meet in the Chapel are the legacy of their commitment to reaching out to our community with the message of hope of the Christian Gospel.

As 2020 unfolds, we would love that many more of you in our village would join with us in sharing that blessing. You are always welcome at any of our services and events.

Some of you will know from our recently circulated letter inviting requests for prayer, that we would love to pray with you and for you if you just let us know.

Our Coffee Mornings for 2020 as the Lord enables will be:

25 April	supporting	B.L.E.S.M.A.
30 May	“	Air Ambulance.
27 June	“	Fishermen's Mission.
25 July	“	Eleanor Hospice.
29 August	“	Gospel Printers.
26 September	“	The Leprosy Mission.
14 November	“	The Homeless Shelter.

Peter Relf, Secretary

Telephone: 01474 322195 / E-mail: pmyrw65@gmail.com

HIGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

2019 was another exciting year for Higham Primary School. In September 2018 I took over as Acting Headteacher and then in April 2019 this was made permanent, as I became substantive Headteacher. It is a privilege to work with such great children, staff, parents and Governors. Without the support and hard work of the school team I would not be where I am today and for that I am very grateful.

As we embarked into 2019, staff and pupils continued to work hard and make good progress. I am extremely proud of all of our pupils and their achievements, emotionally, socially and

academically. Our pupils work hard, both individually and as part of a team, leading to the success of our school.

In January 2019 we repeated the previous year's successful trip to the Young Voices concert at the O2. I was fortunate enough to accompany our junior pupils who took part. I was amazed by the quality of their performance and their behaviour was exceptional. Organising and running an experience of this kind is hard work at the best of times. Our 2019 trip put this to the test! Unexpected heavy snow arrived! On leaving the O2 we were met with blizzard conditions and a treacherous coach journey home. The children were fantastic and coped really well despite being tired and wet. Thank you to Mr Leeson, the landlord at The Falstaff, and everyone who pulled together to ensure the children were safe and offered stranded staff somewhere to stay for the night. This showed me how a community really pulled together. We are fortunate to be a part of such a caring community.

In June 2019 the PTA ran their first Colour Run on the school field. This was a huge success and we are now working hard to plan the 2020 Colour Run. The PTA worked with staff to ensure the smooth running of the event and everyone was a lot more colourful by the end. Team spirit and having fun were the key themes alongside raising money, of which we did lots. Thank you to our PTA who work tirelessly to support the school at a difficult time in terms of budgets and finance.

During 2019 Higham Primary School has worked hard to develop links with the community and work closely with Higham Parish Council. We have raised awareness of the Nuralite planning application during our Autumn parent consultation evenings and I have attended both the Parish Council public meeting about the application and a safer Higham meeting. During the period of remembrance we were proud to display some of the crocheted poppies, made by the village 'Knit and Natter' group, in school and on the school fence. In December our school choir performed a carol concert outside the parade of shops in the village. We are very grateful to the members of the village for donating half of the proceeds raised to school funds. I was, once again, proud of our children, they performed well and their singing was a pleasure to hear making us all feel very festive.

We are now looking forward to 2020 with 'World Earth Day' in April and our Eco-brick project. This is going to be another exciting year for Higham Primary School and I look forward to working with you all in the coming months.

Mrs Grattan, Headteacher

HIGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNORS

You may recall that 2018 was a dramatic year for the Governors at Higham School with an Ofsted visit and the challenge to make probably the most important decision that a Governing Body ever had to make in appointing a new Headteacher.

At the time of writing last year's report Mrs Grattan had been the Acting Headteacher since September 2018.

After three terms the Governors met as planned to review the School's progress and were extremely pleased with the leadership of the school regarding changes made since September, including our Tree of Positivity which recognizes pupils achievements in line with the term's stated focus, pupil learning initiatives and a thorough, well thought out, detailed plan for the School.

Coupled with excellent feedback from staff, parents and most importantly the children, the Governors made the decision to approach the Local Authority to request that Mrs Grattan was made the full time substantive Headteacher of Higham School. The Local Authority visited the school to speak with Mrs Grattan and the Governors and were in full agreement to ratify our request. Therefore, on 2 April, Mrs Grattan was appointed to the role as Headteacher at Higham Primary School. Mrs Levy was subsequently confirmed as full time Deputy Headteacher to work alongside Mrs Grattan.

Every Spring the Year 2 and Year 6 pupils undertake Key Stage Assessments to check upon their learning and progress. The results are then reviewed within the School, the local area and nationally and the Governors use these results to ensure the School is moving in the right direction.

I am also pleased to be able to confirm that, once again, in fact every year since the new National Curriculum, Higham Primary School exceeded the National average and Local Authority average expectation with Key Stage 1 and 2 results which benchmarks and ratifies Higham Primary School's achievements.

The Governors of Higham Primary School are extremely proud of the Key Stage 1 and 2 results which are as a result of all of the pupil's hard work throughout the years. To receive these great outcomes after a year of change is a testament to the quality of teaching delivered by all the staff at Higham Primary School. The results highlight the team ethic throughout Higham Primary School. Mrs Grattan, along with the Senior Leadership Team, have worked with the class teachers, teaching assistants, premises staff, kitchen staff, office staff, parents and Governors to ensure that the children of Higham Primary School receive the best learning experience in a safe and friendly environment.

The aim is to develop every child to achieve their maximum potential and to prepare them for secondary school education and ultimately university or employment. Following the Ofsted Report in June 2018 the Senior Leadership Team have developed the School Improvement Plan, in which they set the aspirations for the school and the focus areas to achieve excellence. This plan is reviewed at every Governors meeting to ensure that progress continues across the whole School.

One of Mrs Grattan's biggest challenges as Headteacher, is the financial management of the School, to use the funds delegated by Central Government in the best way possible. At a time when the delegated monies are reducing and costs are rising, the financial management becomes even more important. Increasing costs of utilities, food price increases, insurance premium increases, tax and pension changes all have an impact and so our learning resources have to be carefully managed. At our annual Governors Day in March, Governors were lucky enough to witness an external history workshop about medieval times that had the children re-enacting a medieval banquet and entertainment. The benefit of these experiences cannot be underestimated in bringing the curriculum to life. At Higham Primary School we will continue

to try to deliver these experiences, budget allowing. Hopefully, the new decade will see these financial constraints eased if General Election promises are delivered.

For these budgetary reasons, I am indebted to the Higham PTA for the support they provide financially following their hard work in organising a Colour Run, pupil discos and other fund-raising events. The parents and staff on the PTA work tirelessly and voluntarily for the good of the school. Without this support the School could not offer the extra events that it does so 'Thank you' for that support to anyone associated with the PTA and everyone who supports these events.

As Chair of Governors, I am confident that the School's high standards will continue and that the children attending Higham Primary School will have the best learning experience possible in a safe and secure environment with the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular clubs and activities to widen their learning, development and experiences.

As always, the Governors enjoy hearing the pupils contribution to the community and are a real credit to the School and the village, last year they participated at a concert at the O2 on a snowy evening in January, represented the School within Gravesham Borough at sports events and musical events, distributed food to those less fortunate following the Harvest Festival, as well as supporting 'Children in Need' and 'Red Nose Day' with fund-raising activities.

The Governors of Higham Primary School sent a letter to the Gravesham Council Planning Department objecting to the proposed Nuralite Development based on three key factors. Namely increased noise from increased traffic passing the School which will impact on pupil concentration and listening. Increased air pollution from increased traffic passing the School, this will affect every pupil's playtime and lunchtime. Part of the fun at Higham Primary School is the wide range of playtime activities in the playground or grass areas. This will especially impact on children with health issues like asthma.

However, our biggest concern is the morning drop off and afternoon collection times when School Lane has numerous parked cars, many parents, school children plus younger siblings around the School entrance. Numerous heavy lorries carrying materials heightens the risk of a traffic accidents and increases the chances of a parent or child being injured (or worse) outside the School. In the same vein, I make no excuse for reiterating 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, road safety and parking. The safety of our pupils is the paramount concern of Governors and my fear is that one day a child will be seriously injured outside the School in the morning or evening, particularly when it is darker in the winter months.

Finally, I would like to thank the Governing Body who all supported me through this past year. The Governing Body give up their time and energy voluntarily for the benefit of the staff and pupils of the School and undertake their important roles tirelessly.

Brian Maynard, Chair of Governors

HIGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL - PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

With another successful year of fund-raising completed, we feel fortunate to have the continued support of our school parents and local businesses and we are excited about the activities we have planned for the next year.

Due to the success of our sponsored Colour Run last year, we have decided not to hold a Summer Fayre again this year. We were incredibly lucky with the weather and had a fun-filled and very colourful afternoon that was enjoyed by all involved. We raised a staggering amount of money from the event and have decided to hold another Colour Run this year. Open to all pupils with on-the-day slots for their family and friends, children will complete an obstacle course whilst being pelted with coloured powdered paint! Needless to say, we are expecting a lot of mess and a lot of laughter again this year and will, hopefully, raise some much-needed funds for the school.

We constantly have to come up with new ways to raise money and often end up seeking help from the same people and organisations. If you feel like you are able to give up your time to help out at some of our larger events, or have access to raffle prizes, such as vouchers, excursions or even materials to assist in the maintenance of the school buildings we would love to hear from you. Achieving anything above basic educational materials is becoming more and more of a struggle. This is why the PTA is such a vital cog in improving not only the physical environment of the school but enriching the educational experiences of the children while they are there.

Thanks to the support of school parents and the local community we have funded many fun activities such as workshops and a pantomime, paid for the coach costs to and from a national choir event at the O2 and class Christmas gifts, as well as contributed towards class trips. We also have plans in the next few months to improve the school's outdoor learning environment. Raising funds to pay for these extras assists the school leadership team a little in allocating their already limited budget.

If you wish to get in touch with us, e-mail secretaryhighampta@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you.

We are a small team but do our best to give the children some fun experiences whilst raising money along the way. As ever, thank you to everyone in the PTA for your hard work and much-needed sense of humour, and to the parents for their support.

Justine Brown

GAD'S HILL SCHOOL

My sincere thanks to the community of Higham for working with Gad's Hill School in a number of ways over the last year. It has been a real pleasure to welcome local Cub Scouts and Brownies to the school to try out our new climbing wall and the Police Cadets who use our facilities for weekly meetings. Our catering team were delighted to donate fruit to 1st Higham Beavers and Cubs as part of their healthy living focus. We are also grateful to Higham Primary School for sending a team to our first mixed football tournament in October.

For slightly more experienced villagers, the solo marimba recital was attended by over 100 members of HiARA at the Memorial Hall, and the Pensioners' Tea Party here at Gad's Hill, remains a hugely enjoyable event in our annual calendar.

Our younger children love learning about village life, and have visited the Library, the Post Office and Gad's Hill Farm in recent months. Thank you to everyone who has hosted us!

Here in school, our Year 11s achieved some fantastic successes. Collectively, the school secured 100% pass rates in a number of GCSE subjects and our leavers secured the grades required to move on to a wide range of further education choices: including a number of students who took advantage of our exciting, new partnership with the University for the Creative Arts, the UK's number one creative specialist university and The Times' modern university of the year, to embark on extended diploma courses at their Rochester campus.

We seek to ensure our leavers can couple strong academic performance with the skills and character traits that truly prepare them for adult life. It is our aim that children should benefit from richly varied experiences to develop self-confidence, self-discipline, resilience, leadership skills and – most importantly – the ability to work successfully with others for a common good.

To that end, Gad's Hill challenges its pupils to step out of their comfort zones. An excellent example is our CCF contingent through which our cadets have braved the elements on camps, field and range days, parades and marches (including moving commemorations to mark Remembrance Day, other local civic ceremonies and as part of the annual trip to Arnhem in Holland).

Learning should above all be enjoyable and stimulating in the manner in which it presents the wonders of the world to our children. Sleepover trips for Juniors on HMS Cavalier, at the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum and London Zoo delivered this approach in spades. Likewise, our Kindergarten continues to make the most of our local environment in this beautiful part of Kent to present authentic contexts for learning beyond the classroom – our on-site Forest School proving particularly exciting and wonderfully muddy!

Paul K Savage, Headmaster

HIGHAM BOOK CLUB

There is a 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.

Councillor Amanda Mendzil (Vice-Chair)

KNIT AND NATTER GROUP

This group meets in Higham Library on a Tuesday evening from 6 to 7.30pm. Beginners, experts and those in between are all welcome! Tea and biscuits and good company.

HIGHAM LIBRARY

Higham Library has had a successful year in terms of visitors and events that we have managed to hold at the Library. Last year we reported on the Kent County Council Libraries, Registration and Archives strategy for the next three years, including a proposal to tier libraries and review library opening hours. Members of the public that took part in the consultation agreed to the proposed changes of library opening hours and these changes were implemented last September. Higham Library received increased opening hours following the consultation.

Library Extra has been piloted at Higham Library for the past year. This scheme allows customers that sign up to the scheme access to the Library whilst it is closed between the hours of 7am to 9pm. The pilot has gone extremely well and has been extended for another year and now includes access to the Library on Sundays between 10am to 4pm. Call into the Library during normal open hours to find out more.

We have recently been experiencing some technical issues with the automatic door which has meant we have not been able to offer Library Extra. This is being chased with our contractors and we hope to have it resolved soon.

The Library is a very popular service in the village and a focal point for the local community. Many regular activities are held within the Library and the groups and activities that take place are attended by many members of the local community, everyone is welcome to join:

Higham History Group drop-in sessions are held on the 1st Friday of each month between 11am and 1pm. Everyone is welcome to drop-in during this time and a member of the History Group will be happy to help with your local history enquiries.

Higham Quilters meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month between 7 and 9pm. This group is for anyone interested in quilting.

Our Knit & Natter group meets weekly on a Tuesday evening between 6 and 7.30pm. Anyone that is interested in knitting or crochet is welcome to come along and join.

Our After-School Crafts session meet weekly on Thursdays between 4 and 4.55pm.

If you are interested in books and reading, our Higham Book Club meet on the 1st Thursday of each month between 6.45 and 8.45pm, all are welcome.

Our regular Wednesday morning Talktime group meet at 10.30am; the 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 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 Space Chase; an out of this world adventure inspired by the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing. Children who took part in the Challenge joined our super space family, The Rockets, for a thrilling mission to track down books nabbed by mischievous aliens. Children had to read six library books during the summer holidays. Higham Library had 66 children join the scheme over the holidays; of these children 55% 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 held our Community Family Fun Day on Tuesday, 30 July; this was well attended. Many of our regular visitors came and enjoyed the many attractions that were on offer. Many thanks to all the volunteers and community partners who made this day the success it was.

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 on-line 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

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 YOUTH CLUB

During 2019 Higham Youth Club has continued to thrive with a good number of young people on the books. The Parish Council continues to be grateful to the Youth Leaders from the Gr@nd who, each Wednesday evening, provide activities and advice for a group of about 40 young people.

Throughout this year a range of structured and less structured activities have been made available including team games, table tennis and badminton in the main hall, and quieter activities in the small hall. A selection of new sports equipment and a range of board games have been bought this year to add to the activities. Some of the evenings are dedicated to healthy cooking and this year has seen the production of some delicious pizzas and fruit filled pancakes. Christmas and Easter were marked by parties and associated games and competitions, and this year's Halloween saw some very impressive pumpkin carving being achieved. Two successful trampolining trips to Gravity in Bluewater also took place again this year. A tuck shop is provided at the Youth Club with healthy snacks to buy and free fresh fruit. The young people have been very good over the move to healthier, less sugary snacks and really enjoy the fruit from our local greengrocers.

In an effort to make Youth Club a bit more special for the older attendees, we involve them in decision making and they are happily taking on some responsibilities such as running the tuck shop, organising games for the younger ones and running the entry and exit desk. This is useful experience for the older children and some are using it as their volunteering experience for the DofE schemes with their schools.

Young people aged 10 to 16 are welcome at the Youth Club which runs on Wednesday evenings, during term time, from 7.30 to 9.30pm in the Memorial Hall. Young People can start at the beginning of the term in which they turn 10 years-old.

We are grateful for the help of four regular volunteers but, with the growing numbers of children, more volunteers are needed. Even an odd evening here and there on a rota basis would be greatly appreciated. If you are at all interested in being involved contact the number below or just pop in sometime and we will be glad to talk to you about what is needed.

For information on Higham Youth Club, please contact Stacey Manley as follows:

Telephone:	01474 320123	9.30am to 5pm.
	07856 474595	6pm to 9pm
E-mail:	stacey.manley@thegrand.org.uk	

Councillor Pam Holmes

HIGHAM VILLAGE SPORTS ASSOCIATION

The multi-purpose courts continue to be regularly used by groups and individuals and our ambition remains to improve the facility for the benefit of our community.

We have successfully secured grants and donations from Sport England, Higham Parish Council, Gravesham Council and local groups, however we still have a £15k shortfall to meet to allow us to undertake the desired work by the set time of 1 May to ensure criteria for grants are met, or these may be lost. We would welcome any donations towards the works from local groups, businesses or individuals who value the facility as much as we do to help us meet our goal.

The multi-purpose courts continue to be available for hire through the village greengrocer or our Facebook page 'Higham Village Sports Association'. A £5 refundable deposit is required for the key.

Tennis will be available between May and September and costs are £10 per hour for adult hire and £6 for children under 16. Please note this is not per person it is per hire.

Teams wishing to hire the facility will be charged £20 per hour.

Mike Holmes, Secretary

THAMES AND MEDWAY CANAL ASSOCIATION

The Thames and Medway Canal Association (TMCA) has been busy as usual trying to keep litter under control and pestering Gravesham Council to clear fly tipping along Canal Road. We cleared around the Obelisk only to find some tyres dumped within a week of finishing.

For those that venture further along you will have noticed our hedging laid in the autumn to provide a different aspect. The pedestrian towpath now starts in a green canopy with shallow pools within the heavily wooded section, opening to the hedged section where the canal deepens, then to the open areas where the canal can be clearly seen, to close again where it can be glimpsed at through the rushes and tree lined edge. We will be siting a new bench on a small bank at the cleared area facing the river. This should provide a great view over the marshes and give a peaceful rest area for those who wish to take it easy.

The legacy department of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) asked members of Shorne, Higham and Gravesham councils together with local environmental managers to come up with ideas that could benefit the community. It is a long-term programme but eventually LTC should provide some local benefits in exchange for cutting a swathe through our area. The ideas put forward ranged from a bridge at Shorne Mead to a replacement for our very dilapidated Portacabin at the Sea School.

We will continue clearing cuttings and tidying along the Nuralite towpath, then work at the Gravesend end during the nesting season by creating a boat storage area. We plan to provide boat trips in early May during our Canal Open weekend on 2/3 May, so please come along if you are interested in the canal projects. *Dave Parnell, Chairman*

2ND HIGHAM BROWNIES

Higham Brownies continue to meet in the Memorial Hall every Wednesday in term time only.

We are very pleased to welcome back Krissi as the joint leader of the group with Sharon. We also have three young leaders Paige, Gabbi and Phoebe who give up their time each week to help. We would like to thank them for being such good role models to our girls.

2019 was a very busy year. The girls took part in a sponsored skip for the charity Well Child and raised an amazing £216.43.

Apart from crafts, games and learning new skills the Brownies enjoyed a trip to Creams in July and we are very proud to say that the management told us they were the most well-behaved group that they have had there. We also enjoyed our annual end of summer term trip to Shorne Country Park. We had an evening of random acts of kindness where the girls left a pot of flowers on doorsteps in Lower Higham. This resulted in us receiving many e-mails and phone calls from residents who enjoyed receiving such a nice surprise. We had a fantastic Harry Potter evening where the Memorial Hall was transformed into Hogwarts and the Brownies became Wizards for the evening. We also took part in the UK's Parliament week, where instead of political parties, we had crisp parties. We had girls talking about crisp varieties and then we held a ballot to find out which was the favourite. Pringles and Doritos were the joint winners! The girls chose to go to the Carvery for their Christmas meal which was lovely.

We have lots planned for this year and if you think your daughter would like to join our friendly and fun group and is aged 7 to 10 years old then please e-mail us at 2ndhighambrownies@gmail.com

Sharon & Krissi, Tawny Owl & Sooty Owl

1ST HIGHAM SCOUT GROUP

It has been a busy and very eventful 2019 for the ever-growing Higham Scout group, with 60+ youngsters from the ages of 5 to 15, and young leaders and senior helpers. There is a wealth of knowledge within the group developing the 'SKILLS4LIFE' for our younger generation!

Our Beavers are the youngest section in the scouting organisation.

Boys and girls aged six to eight years engage in both indoor and outdoor activities. Last year 24 beavers went on numerous adventurous outings.

Challenging and adventurous activities are two of the things we aim to include in our programme for our Cub Pack, open to boys and girls aged 8 to 10½ years old. The 2019 activities included archery, laser tag, climbing, body zorbing, kayaking and other water sports along with a trip to the RAF museum in Hendon & camping at the Hopehill campsite. Our programme is based around ideas set by the children. Cooking and games evenings are favourites. The ultimate challenge is for all cubs to earn their Chief Scout Silver Award before they move up to scouts. This is the highest level of achievement in Cub scouting where Cubs participate in a range of activities and challenges.

Our Scout Troop is open to any young persons between the ages of 10½ and 14½ and is a challenging and exciting atmosphere for all involved. The 2019 Scout Summer Camp was held in Norfolk where the Scouts undertook outdoor activities and day trips out.

We have an exciting programme planned for 2020 to enable our Scouts to become better adults and citizens in a fast-changing world.

If you or your child would like to be involved in our Scout Troop, feel free to contact the Group Scout Leader, Stuart Halls, on Highamgs17@gmail.com for more information on how to 'get involved'. We meet on a Friday evening and regularly have weekend activities for all.

We also welcome existing Troop member 'parents' as occasional helpers, just let us know your availability!

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	Phoenix, Shorne	Stuart Halls 07854 385552

Stuart Halls

THE CLAIRE BUCKLEY SCHOOL OF DANCING

The Claire Buckley School of Dancing offers dancing classes at the Higham Memorial Hall every Tuesday from 4pm, Cliffe Woods Primary School on Wednesday and Thursdays and now brand new classes in Hoo on Fridays. 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.

We are currently preparing for our 2020 show which is our 20th year of the dancing school. I am currently looking for past pupils to get in contact in the hope to perform a one-off dance at our 'It's a Celebration' show in June 2020!!

We have recently opened a Musical Theatre School working alongside the dancing school offering acting, singing and dancing. This is held on Saturday mornings at Cliffe Woods Primary School from 9am.

We currently have spaces in all 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

E-mail: cbuckley046@gmail.com

We can also be found on FACEBOOK.

Claire Buckley

HIGHAM BOWLING CLUB

In 2019 the Higham Bowling club still had a good variety of members that met on Monday nights at the Higham Memorial Hall. Unfortunately, some of the older members cannot always turn up now due to ill health. Our oldest member is now 90 years old.

We have had some new members start and anyone wanting to start playing short mat bowls are more than welcome. We have several younger members, but they can only play in their college/university holidays.

On average we use three mats on a Monday night, and on the odd occasion even four mats, with a good turnout. The Club has sets of bowls for anyone who would like to try the game before joining, and are welcome to use the bowls until they decide if they want to purchase their own bowls.

Higham Bowling Club is a strong club with new members welcome.

Susanna Potter, Secretary

YOGA FLOW WITH LEAH

The Yoga Flow with Leah club meets at St John's Church Hall on a Wednesday (6.15 to 7.15pm) and Thursday (7 to 8pm). For booking or further information, please contact Leah on 07565 392320 or visit the website: www.yogaflowwithleah.com

Leah Ferreira, Yoga Therapist & Health Coach

TAI CHI GROUP

A Tai Chi group run by Margaret now meets at 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 very limited and also do visit our website at www.shizendo.co.uk.

If the class is full, an alternative class runs at Cascades Leisure Centre.

EAGLES FOOTBALL CLUB

Eagles Football club is now in its 41st season and have nine teams running from under 7s to under 18s. The younger teams U7 to U12 in the North Kent Youth Football League and U13 to U18 in Medway Messenger Youth League. We also have four and five-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.

We have also this season had a men's team start in the Medway Messenger Sunday League. This team consists mostly of lads who played in our youth teams in the past and we are so pleased they have come back to join us. They have started very well and, hopefully, will continue to do so. 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 would like to take this opportunity to thank all the local businesses who have so kindly sponsored us over the past year.

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

Pat Jeal

HIGHAM ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION (HIARA)

Once again HiARA has had a very interesting and successful year.

We have had very many different speakers with a variety of subjects to speak about, including '50 Greys of Shade' (not the erotic sort) but grey plants which grow and some change colour over the seasons. Janie Ramsay spoke on Sotheby's Auction House and she related how she started in a small shop in Kent, selling small items and progressed onwards and upwards to bigger antique companies. Guy Bartlett spoke eloquently on

'Concorde' and we shall be having him back soon later in the year. Cheesemaking was another subject that members found interesting and many members bought samples brought by Carla, who told us how she started and now makes 500lbs per week of various cheese varieties.

Members elected the Alzheimer's and Dementia Support Services (ADSS) as the chosen charity for 2019 and we had a bring-and-buy stall to support the donations along with collections made at meetings and in members collection boxes from home.

Our other activities are continuing to thrive including lunch at the North West Kent College. Various outings and many social events with entertainment at Christmas, Easter and other events have been enjoyed by members, not forgetting the days out by coach to several interesting destinations. Our 'Ramblers' go from strength-to-strength, rambling around the local countryside and enjoying a pub lunch to follow. Our raffle ladies work hard to find different prizes and our library ladies are always well supported each month and keep the bookstall well stocked. The members who make the tea and refreshments are much appreciated by members and we do value the gentlemen who get the hall ready for meetings.

We have welcomed several new members this year and look forward to more in 2020, which makes us one of the more successful clubs in Higham.

Pat Oakeshott, HiARA Publicity Officer

HIGHAM VILLAGE HISTORY GROUP

We have continued to enjoy a series of fascinating talks on all aspects of general and local history including 'Gravesend Industry in WW2', 'Edith Cavell', 'Joan, the fair maid of Kent' and 'Shops and Trades in Higham'. We collaborated with the Friends of St. Mary's Church, to participate in the national Big Lunch event in June. Visitors were given a tour of the church and its environs, plus a hearty ploughman's lunch and funds were raised for the Inspire Project for essential repairs to the church spire.

Later in June some of us visited Owletts in Cobham, the birthplace of the renowned architect Sir Herbert Baker. Well worth the visit – an interesting guided tour and lovely cakes.

On the first Friday of every month, from 11am to 1pm, members of the organising committee can be found in Higham Library so that you can have access to the extensive photographic collection. We would love to see your photos and share your memories of Higham too. We also endeavour to answer your questions about Higham or refer you to other sources of information. This is a 'drop-in' session, no need to book in advance.

Some interesting talks are already booked for next season with topics including Horatio Nelson, A Smarden childhood, The Tidal Thames and Upnor Castle. A summer visit to Upnor Castle is also planned. There will be more tours of St. Mary's Church on 19 September as part of Heritage Open Days.

The printed programme for the season May 2020 to April 2021 will be delivered to all houses in the village later this year. If you would like to find out more about the group and its activities please visit our website

www.highamvillagehistory.org.uk

or telephone the secretary on 01634 718285.

Kate Woollacott, Secretary

HIGHAM VILLAGE CLUB

Our Village Club can boast history going back over 130 years and continues to provide a welcoming atmosphere for members and their families. Having been part of the history of Higham for all this time we look forward to seeing as many members and their families throughout the year and welcome your support to the many events that take place within the Club.

Your continued support is very paramount in this economic climate which continues to see Clubs and pubs closing at an alarming rate as we have seen in our own village. Don't forget Club prices are normally a few pence cheaper than other like establishments.

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, organised by the Entertainment Committee where we bring in entertainers for everyone's enjoyment.

All events are posted on our 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 darts on a Monday and Tuesday night also. The Club boasts a full-size snooker table as well as a Pool table 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 for a small annual fee, although you must be a member of the Club.

We are always looking for new members who wish to enjoy the facilities we offer, and our Bar Manager – Kerry and her team and Committee are grateful for the continued support we get from our members.

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

Higham Writers are still going strong, if not due to the age of our writers, rather more slowly, but nevertheless producing some interesting and excellent work. We are still meeting at the Higham Village Club on a Thursday morning, once a month. We are a small group which allows everyone a chance to read, talk and be heard. Some of our members have had success with on-line submissions.

My aim, as always, is to help today's writers to get to a publishable standard whilst at the same time keeping an eye on what modern day writers and editors want.

Our meetings are great fun; a lot of chit chat about writing and problems encountered.

Ring Denise if you are interested in joining us. Or have a look at our website HIGHAM WRITERS which will show you what our writers past and present have achieved: www.highamwritersgroup.co.uk

E-mail: Deniseleppard@btinternet.com; Telephone: 01474 822881

Denise Leppard

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 Society also continually keeps under review major plans affecting our area of interest and makes input and representations as and when possible. Detailed analysis can be found in our latest Newsletter which is sent out to Society members.

The Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) consultation: The previous Highways England (HE) consultation was held nearly 18 months ago and 29,000 people responded. Highways England had said that they might consult again about revised designs and that has now happened: an eight-week consultation began on 29 January 2020 and will run until 25 March. DCPS, along with other local organisations and Parish Councils, will be submitting representations. The changed designs look likely to affect traffic flows and volumes in the area. Predicting exactly what will happen is very difficult but there could be increased traffic on the A226 traversing Higham and at the junctions with the Wainscott Bypass. The next step after this will be a draft Development Consent Order, which, if approved by the Secretary of State, becomes a statutory instrument that will give Highways England sweeping powers to build the road.

Other items that are particularly worth mentioning are:

Shornemead Crossing closure: Network Rail have once again closed Shornemead Level Crossing to pedestrians, without any prior discussion and even though it is a registered footpath (following a protracted battle to get it put on the definitive map). This was because of a safety incident involving a mini-motorbike, which shouldn't anyway have been using the Crossing. The Society would like to hear from Higham residents who have used the Crossing and are now being inconvenienced – please contact Robin Theobald on 01474 823674 and send in your objections to KCC addressed to Richard Rusling Public Rights of Way and Access Service, Kent County Council, Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME13 1XX.

- Planning trends: The Society has noticed a worrying increase in the use of lawful and permitted development rules to build very large extensions and additional buildings without there being proper plans, opportunity for neighbours and Parish Councils to object and for the planning authorities to include conditions about any further building on the site. Also, people are buying houses with large gardens in the Green Belt and then completely clearing them of all trees and bushes etc, so removing all wildlife habitat and creating a sterile environment. The Society does what it can to influence matters.
- Passenger Railways on the Hoo Peninsula: Higham residents may not be aware that there are plans to reintroduce passenger train services on the Hundred of Hoo railway line that passes through Higham (but is currently only used for freight and industry). The hope is that this might reduce additional demand for road transport. The Society will be keeping an eye on these plans and will comment when possible.
- Local Plans: Both Gravesham and Medway Councils are still working to produce finalised Local Plans, without which our areas are vulnerable to uncontrolled housing development. The Society will comment on these once the draft documents become available.

On lighter matters: The Society will be holding its annual Barn Dance on Saturday, 9 May this year.

Society contact details: Mrs P Lippiatt, 01322 275389.

Mrs Susan Lindley, Committee Member of DCPS

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 £7 per session. The first class is free of charge. For further information, contact Rebecca Grumbridge on 07968 482762.

Rebecca Grumbridge

BUMBLEBEES

Land management recommendations for bumblebees and other pollinators

A range of open spaces were visited throughout the Parish of Higham on 26 November 2019. These sites are located on the Hoo peninsular on the North Kent coast and are comprised of areas of grassland, scrubland, wetland, hedgerows, amenity spaces and formally planted beds.

The Hoo Peninsular is home to five out of seven of the UK's rare and scarce bumblebee species and Higham has a nearby population of Shrill Carder bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) (the rarest bumblebee in the UK) at Northward Hill RSPB Reserve.

What do bees need?

Nesting sites should be warm, sheltered and undisturbed. Many bumblebees nest in disused small mammal burrows underground or in grass tussocks. Bumblebees often nest close to good areas of forage.

Hibernation sites are often cool and north-facing with loose soft soil, e.g. hedge banks, woodlands, ditch banks, dead wood, or under stones. Bumblebees burrow down a few inches and excavate a small chamber.

Food. Bumblebees need nectar for energy and pollen for protein. Unlike honeybees, they only store a few days food at a time, so they need continuous flowers through the entire flight season (February to October). Spring is a critical time as new queens must build up reserves lost over winter, and establish their colony.

A mosaic of pockets of bumblebee nesting and foraging habitats across the park is particularly beneficial.

Gardening for Bumblebees!

Gardens can be real havens for bumblebees, with some bee species now being found in greater numbers in gardens than in the countryside. You don't have to be an experienced gardener or even have a garden to help the bees! A window-box, balcony or hanging basket will do.

Kent is one of the best counties for bumbles, home to five out of the seven rare and scarce species! The Hoo peninsular is a particularly good hotspot along the Kent coastline so you never know, one of our rare bees may visit your garden.

Spring: is a critical time as new queens must build up reserves lost over winter, and establish their nest:

Lungwort / Flowering currant / Crocus / Comfrey species.

Early summer: Colony growth continues in spring and summer:

Foxglove / Lavender / 'Pea-family' plants – e.g everlasting pea / Alliums.

Mid-late summer: Fledging of new queens and males – this requires a lot of food:

Lavender / Honeysuckle / Clovers / Scabious.

Winter: Now of ever-growing importance especially for the Buff tailed bumblebee as they now undertake a winter cycle:

Mahonia / Winter honeysuckle / Wintering heather.

There are hundreds of amazing plants for bumblebees so if you want to know more then please visit the Bumblebee conservation Trust's new 'BeeKind' tool on our website:

<https://beekind.bumblebeeconservation.org>

Kate Fidczuk-Sterry

Conservation Officer

Making a Buzz for the Coast

AGE CONCERN

Despite my plea in last year's report for help at our Luncheon Club I am very sorry to say that from 3 April we are having to close. I feel it is a shame this has to happen but we cannot run the Club without cooks and also our band of very loyal volunteers is getting smaller and, as our members are getting older, we do need an adequate number to care for them. It was with real regret that our organising committee was forced to the conclusion that the Club was no longer viable.

Over nearly 40 years the Club has benefitted from a considerable number of volunteers and supporters, far too many to name individually. However, we would like to thank particularly the small group of cooks, drivers, hostesses and Jennifer and Pat who have loyally kept us afloat over the last couple of difficult years.

Barbara West, Co-ordinator

HIGHAM WOMEN'S INSTITUTE (WI)

It is with great sadness that we have to report that the Higham branch of the Women's Institute (WI) has started proceedings to close (February 2020).

The WI has been a thriving part of Higham community since 1947 contributing to village life and supporting women of the village.

Once a group is suspended, it has three years to reform and the Federation will hold the group's assets and any outstanding funds for this period of time and would support any persons willing to reform the group.

All the members of Higham WI are extremely sad at seeing the end of such a long held loved part of village life and would be delighted to see it reformed at some point in the future. We all feel sure the friendships formed will continue to blossom and thrive.

Stephanie Griffiths, President

CONTACTING YOUR VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS

Beavers	01474 822192
Brownies	01474 823500 01474 823538
Choral Group – Sian Miller	01634 366050 07973 441433
Claire Buckley School of Dancing	01634 220766 07813 050493
Community Warden (Paul Hassell)	07811 271256
Congregational Church	01474 322195
Cub Scouts	01474 822192
Dance Fitness Class for the Over 50's	07968 482762
Dickens Country Protection Society	01322 275389
Eagles Football Clubs	01474 822607
Explorer Scouts – Stuart Halls	07854 385552
Friends of St Mary's Church	07762 054688
HiARA	01474 822686 01474 742576
Higham Bowlers	07519 941098
Higham CP School PTA	01474 823438
Higham Library	03000 413131
Higham Village Club	01474 822456
Higham Village History Group	01634 718285
Higham Village Sports Association	01474 824265
Higham Writers	01474 822881
Higham Youth Club – Stacey Manley	01474 320123 9.30am to 5pm 07856 474595 6 to 9pm
Kent Police	101 (non-emergency) 999 (emergency)
Memorial Hall (Bookings only)	01474 822007
Parish Clerk	01474 822642
PCSO – Joanne Hartley	
Power cuts	105
Saint John's Church – Fr. James Southward	01634 717360
Scouts	01474 823806
Tai Chi	07999 346050
Thames and Medway Canal Association	01474 743334
Village Correspondent, Liz Jeffery	01474 747090
Yoga Club	07565 392320

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