

**THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**HELD AT HIGH HAM VILLAGE HALL**  
**TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024 AT 7.00pm**

Present: David Vigar (Chairman), approx. 12 Parishioners,

Apologies: Chris and Sue Palmer, Rob Rice, Margaret Cox, Mike Stanton  
Opened 7.05pm

1. **2023 Minutes** Had been displayed on the website. No actions were outstanding and they were signed as a true record.

2. **Chairman's Report** - Presented by Dave Vigar

Welcome to my Chairman's report for 2024. I have re-read my 2023 report and if I left out my comments about the death of our Queen Elizabeth II I could have copied and pasted last year's report as not much seems to have changed.

Somerset Council were a month into becoming a Unitary Council and despite having had 12 months in a transition period not a lot seems to have changed during Somerset Council first full year in place. In their defence they do have to provide funding for Social Care, etc for the population of Somerset, which has a higher average age than other counties. In my opinion this is a cost that should be paid by National Government.

Somerset Council declared a "Financial Emergency" and by using its reserves and cutting discretionary services it managed to stay in charge this year and not have to be run by external agencies. This has been achieved by a reduction of 1,000, 25% of its staff by voluntary and enforced redundancies. However, from what I can see the costs of this will not be until the next 25/26 financial year.

Town and Parish Councils were encouraged to raise their precepts which HHPC has done. Hopefully this will enable HHPC to rectify problems in the parish, if we are allowed to, that we have been highlighting to SCC for many years. Please watch out for these.

Planning - HHPC has been consulted or notified of 28 planning applications in the past 12 months. Some of our local knowledge and comments have been acted on and others over-ruled.

I attended a Planning Committee meeting in December for an application for 100 dwellings at Picts Hill adjacent to HHP boundary. At this meeting I read out a statement about the amount of traffic on the B3153, which would be used as access to this site. I included data collected from the SID when located at Picts Hill. However, this application was approved by the Planning Committee, subject to conditions.

The Parish Clerk and myself have concerns about the Planning Dept especially about responses to enforcement issues that we have reported to the Planning Dept.

A recent retrospective planning application which was approved highlighted policy issues that the Parish Council thought should be investigated. This resulted in sending a letter to our sitting MP which has been replied to. The letter from the MP will be discussed at the AGM of the Parish Council following this meeting.

This year has seen more meetings to attend than in the past, including having a presence on the Moors and Levels Local community Network and 2 sub Committees of this LCN.

Due to encroachment and damage by cars to the village greens we have installed extra safety bollards on both greens.

Repair work has been undertaken on the cemetery and the pound walls.

The Playing Field Committee has been eagerly working to keep our Playing Field in good condition. The new signs are now in place and easy to spot. The PF committee are working towards organising a Parish Fete to be held on 13th July.,

The public opening of the Toposcope in the pound was well attended.

Cemetery - After 100 years it was felt necessary to establish written rules for the management of the cemetery, also a vegetation management agreement through the year. Both have been published on the Parish website.

Carols around the tree - The annual tradition of the PC organising carols around the Christmas tree outside the church was very well attended this year. Donations of £271 was collected and passed on the Somerset Blood Bikes Charity.

Stembridge Mill Cottage has new tenants after the recent refurbishment work by the National Trust. Hopefully Stembridge Mill will be reopened to visitors in the near future.

Parish Noticeboards - Henley noticeboard has been refurbished and a new noticeboard has been installed on the Green. The 3 defibrillators in the Parish are still available for use; 2 have been taken out, but have not needed to be used.

Footpaths - Footpaths have been maintained and kept in good order by our volunteer strimmers, Nick Fear and Harry Plant. Indeed I see on social media today that a difficult stile on the footpath behind the Village Hall has been replaced by a gate supplied by the County ROW Dept. Thanks to our volunteers for installation.

The monthly Parish Lunches are well attended and very often have a waiting list for attendees.

Millenium wood is evolving and it is interesting to observe the changing nature through the seasons of the year.

The Parish Council owns or manages the Playing Field, Millenium Wood, the Pound, Village Greens, Churchyard, Footpaths and the 3 old phone boxes in the Parish.

Following this Chairman's report there will be many more from various organisations in this parish.

The AGM of the Parish Council follows this meeting.

I thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their help in running the affairs of this parish and in particular thanks to our parish clerk, Vicky Young, who with her knowledge and expertise keeps us on track.

Finally, on behalf of the Parish Council I wish to thank all volunteers and helpers who keep this parish ticking over especially Roger who winds up the church clock twice a week.

David Vigar (Chairman) 28.5.2024

### 3. **Unitary Councillors Report** – Presented by Richard Wilkins

The monthly reports had been published online. It was noted that voters must bring acceptable forms of ID to polling stations to vote at the general elections on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024. On the whole, it was felt that the transition to 'unitary' had gone well. Adult social care was mentioned as there are things that are very visible that are seen in the Parish that the unitary council are paying for and then those which are not as obvious. It was estimated on an elector head average that £600,000 was spent on adult/children social care in High Ham. High Ham Parish Council was thanked for being an active parish council and helping the community thrive.

Richard Wilkins and Mike Stantion were thanked for their assistance as unitary councillors over the year on matters that had related to High Ham.

### 4. **To receive the following reports**

#### 4a. **School Governors report** – Presented by Dave Vigar on behalf of Chris Palmer

Dear Parish Council Members and Parishioners,

As Chair of Governors of High Ham C of E Primary School, I am pleased to provide the following report on behalf of my fellow governors and Headteacher, Ann Edwards:

Since my last report, I am delighted to confirm that following a lengthy period as our Acting Headteacher, Ann Edwards was officially appointed permanently following a robust appointments procedure. Ann's appointment was thoroughly deserved and she has settled into her substantive role wonderfully well and is leading the school with confidence and professionalism. Her strategic vision will ensure the future of our school remains in a very strong position.

Additionally, following the Headteacher's appointment, a priority for the governing board was to undertake a review of the senior leadership structure to ensure this was fit for purpose and providing the best support to our children and staff. As a result of this review, Tom Briggs was appointed as a Temporary Assistant Headteacher in April this year and we now have a leadership structure that is more clearly defined and provides greater clarity of purpose.

It has, as always, been a very busy year since my last report and I would take this opportunity to provide an update on one area I covered last year relating to the 'Standard Assessment Test's' (SATs) which are designed to see if children are on track to meet expected standards in English and Maths as set out by the government.

I'm sure you will recall, there was a lot of news coverage at the time related to how difficult some of the papers were, particularly the reading paper which was very 'text heavy', resulting in some pupils not being able to finish the paper. Many concerns were subsequently raised by some Headteachers and Teaching Unions across the country.

I am pleased to confirm that our Year 6 pupils did exceptionally well in these tests last year and believe it is important to provide an example of actual outcomes with the following results:

Reading - 80% reaching Age Related Expectations (ARE) or above;  
Writing - 80% reaching Age Related Expectations (ARE) or above;  
Mathematics - 80% reaching Age Related Expectations (ARE) or above;  
Spelling and Grammar (SPaG) 76% reaching Age Related Expectations (ARE) or above.

These results are testament to the quality of the teaching staff we have in school and the resilience of the children to face each paper with a calm and focussed attitude. They all performed brilliantly particularly as the paper last year was definitely back to pre-Covid standards. I am confident that our current Year 6 children will do equally as well this year!

As I feel sure you will be aware, Somerset Council has been under intense financial pressure of late and will not be surprised that all council portfolio leads are seeing their budgets being 'cut to the bone' as a consequence. This means that school budgets continue to shrink which presents obvious additional challenges for school leaders and governing boards alike. Whilst our school budget for the next financial year is tight, we are in a much stronger position than many other comparable schools who have had to set deficit budgets. However, this position has not happened by accident and is as a result of many years of careful and diligent budgetary management which has allowed the school to deliver a stimulating curriculum that inspires our children to learn in a safe, secure and happy environment.

I am really proud of our school, as all parishioners should be, and strongly believe that High Ham C of E Primary School remains in a very strong position despite the many challenges faced over the last year and those on the horizon. All our staff have done an amazing job, no matter what their role in school, and I would take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to them for the support they have given to the children under their care.

On a personal note, after 24-years of service as a school governor, both in Bristol and High Ham, I am standing down at the end of this academic year. These 24-years have been an absolute pleasure and a privilege for me and the last 15-years involved with High Ham Primary a very special experience indeed. I hope that others will step forward and give their time and energy to schools like ours. With the world as it is at this moment in time, it has never been more important for people to step forward and take on roles which support our children's futures as they will face greater challenges ahead than the more recent generations before them.

Kind Regards,  
Chris Palmer - (Chair of Governors) 27 May 2024

**4b. Village Hall report** – Presented by Nancy Green

A small number of dedicated members of the village hall committee are to be congratulated on what they have achieved this year. In fundraising terms, excellent results were realized with full financial details contained within the Treasurers Report. Events have been organised for the benefit of the community as well as to support the hall itself. These have included a Coronation Party, vegetable show, wreath making day, Big Breakfast, supper night and monthly coffee mornings. Following the earlier resignation of the Chair and Sue Palmer's resignation as Secretary in November the committee has been without a permanent Chair and Secretary and has had difficulty in appointing officers for these positions. The committee relies on the commitment of local residents and would welcome involvement from new residents, and this is an area which needs to be worked on.

Nicky has done a fantastic job of coordinating the diary for the hall and has managed to take bookings for new ventures – some of which have been successful (Firehouse Pizza) and others less so (exercise class). Hannah organised the replacement of several heaters which has enabled us to continue hiring out the hall during the winter months. We have a new cleaner who ensures the hall is clean and well looked after on a weekly basis. We need to ensure that our prices remain competitive with other local halls but also that they cover the running costs of the hall – including heating and insurance.

We are aware we need to maintain and improve the fabric of the building and with this in mind we need to plan a programme of works based on the detailed building survey that was carried out in 2022. We will continue to investigate available grants to assist with this work.

Sarah Lawton and Jo Russell

**4c. High Ham Parish Community Land Trust** – Bill Bishop (Chair) presented a short verbal report.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board and Board Support Group for continuing to give their time to run the CLT and progress with the project to build six affordable homes for rent in our parish. As always, it has been a pleasure to work alongside our volunteers.

This year we have held 1 Board and 5 Board and Support Group meetings.

We held our AGM on the 5 September 2023, held as an in person meeting with the option for postal votes for those unable to attend for any reason.

Our membership is now 105, if you haven't already joined, why not, for just one pound you can become a member today.

The main activity of the CLT this year has been dealing with planning which is still ongoing with further discussions with the Local Authority.

Hastoe Housing Association has committed funds to support us through the process of revising the planning application.

If you have family or friends who would be interested in becoming a resident of these properties please ask them to register at Somerset Homefinder first and state they are interested in living in High Ham were they have family or work.

**4d – The Hext Almshouse Trust** – Jane Vigar presented the following report.

Sir Edward Hext Almshouses

The seven properties within the almshouses are all occupied at the moment. No new vacancies have arisen during the year.

The bollard outside No 1 was knocked down several years ago. A replacement bollard has now been purchased and installed.

Loft insulation grants have been submitted by the residents and we are awaiting installation dates.

Jane Vigar (High Ham representative on the board of trustees) – May 2024

**4e. Footpath Users' Group/Somerset Strimmer Project** - Presented by Nick Fear

It has been another busy year on the Parish footpaths. Myself and Harry Plant have spent around 20 hours combined cutting back vegetation from the footpaths, stiles and pedestrian gates around our Parish.

A number of defects have been reported to the Somerset Council Rights of Way Warden. Historically they have been rectified quite quickly. However, with Somerset Council feeling the pinch at present, some materials have been offered if the Parish Council can arrange the fitting.

Most recently I have replaced a dangerous stile with a new metal pedestrian gate at the rear of the Village Hall leading across fields to Turnhill Road. This is a great improvement to a very well used Right of Way.

As we continue the growing season, myself and Harry will continue to maintain as much as we possibly can as time allows.

**4f. The Parish Tree Warden** – Paul Brunsdon, the parish tree warden had raised no concerns. The Millennium Wood was thriving with regular work from the lengthsman as and when time allowed.

**4g. Parish Lengthsman – Lengthsman Team Craig and Rachael Howe** – Presented by Amanda Chuter

Cemetery

We began extending the area we mow towards the back of the cemetery as new plots were needed at the beginning of the grass cutting year. We also continued to make sure there was a walk way around the perimeter of the grass within the site. There was some discussion between different parties this year and some differences of opinion about the amount and spread of wildflower within the cemetery. Previously, as the site is recognised for its diversity of wildflower and fauna by Somerset Wildlife, we have managed the cemetery for its wildflowers to encourage the fritillaries and pollinators. This has understandably caused some of the visitors to the site to express concern that the purpose of the site as a place of rest and respect has been diluted. There were also some safety concerns highlighted about the site being more difficult to navigate. After some discussions, a new contract was drawn up to ensure that extra dedicated time will be spent in the cemetery to ensure that the site is maintained in a dignified, yet ecologically beneficial manner. This has worked fantastically so far as we have been able to spend more time managing the grass on the newest plots, and allowing wildflower to flourish on the other plots. We were also able to ensure that the Garden of Remembrance was thoroughly weeded, and that the whole cemetery was looking its best in the run up to the Easter weekend. We have also made a start on surveying the trees around the perimeter of the site to ensure that any dangerous trees or limbs are dealt with effectively to ensure the safety of all the visitors to the site. Overall, the feedback from visitors so far has been very positive.

Other Tasks

Grass Cutting

We have recently been cutting back the visibility splays at junctions and bends within the parish, as well as around signage and along verges and footpaths, to ensure the roads stay safe.

Over winter and early spring, large amounts of rainfall have meant that some areas of Millennium Wood mowing was not possible. That aside, we have regularly been able to mow throughout our usual areas and the grass is again growing well coming into the start of the new mowing season. Grass now seems to grow well into the late autumn and starts a lot earlier in the spring!

Drainage

We carried out extensive drainage works for months on end across the parish, clearing some grids and grips repeatedly on almost a fortnightly basis. We made sure that all the grips and grids were cleared back regularly ensuring blockages were cleared as best as possible to allow the swift clearance of surface water into the drains. Some grids and grips had completely disappeared with the volume of silt and water around so this was a time consuming but very worthwhile task. We responded to an urgent request from the Low Ham area that drainage needed dealing with and were able to clear quite a few grids in that area, although some are blocked below the road surface so will need to be reported and dealt with by Somerset Highways. We really appreciate the feedback and reports we get from local residents in highlighting areas of drainage that are needed, as well as the local residents who volunteer their time to help clear drains for their neighbours when we are not around.

### Village Green

Three bollards on The Green were replaced last year with new ones from Yandles. Following a site meeting spring '23, extra bollards with reflectors were ordered and installed in the summer to minimise the damage caused by school-related parking issues. We also discussed re-pollarding the lime trees over winter and this was carried out in stages throughout the winter months following a successful planning application. National Grid was contacted and their contractor HiLine agreed to pollard the remaining trees that were too close to power lines. This was again carried out in stages and has now been completed. Over the warmer months, weed killing was carried out on the pavements around The Green, and signage/bollards on The Green.

### **4h. Playing Fields Report** – Presented by Rob Webb

The playing field review of 2023

A new sign was erected in the hedge on the corner of the Playing field, along with two small signs either side of the gateway entrance.

New wheels to allow the small football net frames to be moved were made and installed.

The hedge along Windmill Road was partially cleared of brambles, identifying a need for additional hedging plants to fill gaps, these have been sourced for free from The Woodland Trust and will be delivered and planted in November 2024.

A letter was sent to residents of Windmill Road requesting they refrain from cutting the Playing Field hedge as it is the responsibility of the parish Council.

Thanks to Luke Hassel for voluntarily cutting the hedges again this year we really appreciate his help and contribution to our community asset.

Following the comprehensive yearly health and safety check of equipment at the playing field we were advised to replace the wooden picnic benches. A new alternative has been sourced that will also accommodate wheelchair users and will be paid for with our CIL funds.

The large fixed goalposts were sanded and re-painted, with new nets installed.

Fundraising on boxing day football match over £250 was raised for click sergeant.

Playground inspection training has been completed by Derek Dayton and subsequently we have decided to digitise our health and safety checks, as these now need to be completed weekly and kept for 20 years.

We have requested quotes from local builders for the planned pavilion and are awaiting responses.

The playing field committee have decided to host a Summer fete on the 13th July to get the community together and hopefully raise some additional funds towards the pavilion construction.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteer committee members and everyone that has helped keep the playing field safe and looking great.

Our AGM is Monday 3rd of June at 7pm, in the side room of the Kings Head. All are welcome.

Thank you

Rob Webb (Chair Playing Field Committee)

### **4i – Millennium Wood** report from lengthsmen (Craig and Rachel) – presented by Amanda Chuter

Early in the 2023 season, we replaced the wooden the Lost Words discs and replaced some of the broken stepping stumps at the Woodhenge playing area, and reset the broken sign for the Outdoor Classroom.

The weather over the winter months, whilst warmer than average, produced an unprecedented amount of rainfall. This made the late autumn '23 cuts and early spring cuts in the wood difficult as the mower could not access waterlogged areas. Once we were able to, we strimmed the worst affected areas of the rides so that the ground is slowly able to dry out.

The regular grass cutting programme has continued ensuring as much of the wildflower is left as possible at key times of the year. It is lovely to see that the increase in the number of bluebells in the woods. In the 2024 the regular programme of cutting and thinning the undergrowth of brambles and hogweed is working well.

We have continued with our programme of thinning diseased ash trees within the woodland. This has left plenty of space and material for the den-making area, which is looking amazing.

\*In the coming months the wooden signs need some attention as they have not fared well through the all the rain and will need redoing. We will need to research further into methods to weather proof them again. We will also continue with the grass cutting and vegetation management.

#### **4j. Cemetery Report** - Presented by Nancy Green

Over the past year our cemetery has seen burials, internment of ashes and new memorials and plaques. After the council's decision last year to make the cemetery plastic free and to bring us in line with other local cemeteries a working group consisting of the Chair, Clerk and two councillors worked on creating regulations for the cemetery which were adopted in July.

A similar group but with Craig, the Parish Lengthsman replacing the Clerk produced a vegetation management plan adopted in October after complaints were received following excessive growth in the cemetery due to wet conditions early in the summer. This involves extra work spent in the cemetery by Craig and Rachael during the growing season to keep it tidy and attractive for visitors, whilst allowing wildlife to thrive amongst the older graves and in the unused area. Flexibility has been built into the plan to allow for any specific weather conditions that may occur.

Maintenance of the cemetery structure continued with Mike Cox being contracted to repair the wall to the left of the entrance, this was accomplished to his usual high standards in the autumn. We are very lucky to have the services of several volunteers; Roger Powell who has finished the renovation of the Lynch Gate's guttering and Nick Fear who repaired its roof, yet again for us. We are grateful to the pair of them for their continued hard work.

Over the past year we have received several requests from non and ex-parishioners regarding their relatives graves, it is always interesting and enjoyable to be able to meet and help people with their research.

Our cemetery is an important parish asset which we endeavor to keep well maintained and judging by the compliments we have recently received regarding its appearance we are hopefully managing to do so. Finally, I would like to thank David and Vicky for their continued help, advice and practical support throughout the year, for which I'm most grateful.

Nancy Green      May 2024

#### **4k. Community Project Report** – High Ham Parish History Group Report May 2024 – Presented by Amanda Chuter

We are a group of five women who, over the past 20 years, have gathered archive material relating to the parish, put on exhibitions, and published the book 'A Somerset Parish 1895-1965: Memories of village life in High Ham, Low Ham and Henley. We are talking about putting on an exhibition in the coming year - if anyone would like to help we would love to hear from them. As a group we have been very quiet this last year, but we still have a presence on our Parish History website <https://hhparishbooks.wixsite.com/highhamparishhistory> This website generates a few enquiries each year and the occasional book sale. We still have a few copies left.

One interesting enquiry recently came from someone who was trying to trace their great grandfather, Theopholis Groves. It turns out his grave is in the cemetery. He died in 1922. We were able to contribute information about where he lived in High Ham and that apparently he always had a jug of cider outside his house for passers by.

In April we were contacted by Debbie Melmoth who shared with us her research on her husband's great grandfather, William Melmoth, who served as a police constable in High Ham from about 1877 to 1883. He lived in a cottage adjacent to The King's Head. His colourful encounters with locals were featured in many local newspaper reports - pub brawls, stabbings, drunkenness on a Sunday, allowing animals to stray on the highway, theft, poaching, and much more.

The archive received a donation from Margaret Porter of her collection of old newspapers, local and national, relating to previous monarch's Jubilees, deaths and coronations, much of it used in last year's archive displays marking the Queen's death, and the King's coronation.

We continue to maintain the archive of photos and documents. These are mainly copies and we have one set in the village, curated by Amanda Chuter at her home, and another set we have deposited with the Somerset Heritage Centre in Taunton, which can be viewed on request.

#### **4l. History Hut Report** – Presented by Karen Cook

As well as the open weekends at the Hut, with guests in period dress, bringing their displays, last year had several group visits. Children from Croscombe and Stoke St. Michael brought classes for the day. Many subjects are worked on, History, Art, Science, the Environment, and a walk down to the Church for some Architectural, and Humanity study. It was wonderful to have the Langport Levels Scout Group visit in November. They learned about the local men who died in the Great War. This was to understand why they attended the Memorial Services on Remembrance Day. I have visited some schools to talk about the Romans, or the Wars. My visits to Nursing Homes are about memories and the area where they are. I take a few books and artefacts, start the conversation, then everyone joins in, and the room seems to light up. I don't charge a fee for any visits, or entry to the Hut, so donations are appreciated - but not always given, and I don't get any outside help.

New books and artefacts are added through the year. I would really like to get the History Hut more widely advertised, to reach the older generation, who might not look at facebook/or online, so I hope that the people who visit, spread the word for me.

#### **4m. Christmas Crew** – Presented by Karen Cook

Although the Christmas Crew have cut back on the Santa Tours night out, the actual donations are still very generous. Last December, £2,819 was sent to the Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance . This brings the total raised so far, since we started in 1988 - £42, 712. Of this, a variety of Charities received £17,979, and our main Charity, the Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance has received £24,733.

We have fund raising events, like skittles and mouse racing to raise funds to cover our expenses for running the trailer. All of our committee, and helpers give so much of their time, so I would like to thank them. Without their hard work, we couldn't continue. We also appreciate the welcome we get when driving around the Parish, and the donations in the buckets.

**4n. High Ham Church** St Andrew's Church, High Ham – Presented by John Vigar

Mr Chairman, Our benefice (our group of partnership churches) has been re-organised and enlarged and from the end of next year we will be grouped with Huish Episcopi and Langport and Aller, as now; but also Curry Rivel, Fivehead, Drayton and Swell Churches to make a seven parish benefice under a priest yet to be appointed. The present vicar of Curry Rivel, Fivehead and Swell, Rev, Scott Peterson, has been appointed as the post-time priest to help in the new expanded benefice and so he will be our designated priest in charge for the next 18 months or so and we look forward to seeing him in High Ham in the coming months. His first service here will be on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August at 9am, so please give him a warm welcome. He is also conducting a wedding here in July.

Although our clergy may be changing roles our church officers remain the same. Margaret Porter and I are still your church wardens and Mike Tottle is still running the Church Council. The problem we have at church is a common problem everywhere, that of falling congregations. Everyone seems busy on a Sunday catching up on the weeks work, taking advantage of other Sunday recreation or just relaxing at home. How do we encourage more people to come to our Church?

Our Church stands in the very centre of our parish as a beacon of hope for everyone, accessible to all with the door always open. You don't have to be a religious fanatic or possess a cast iron belief in God to come in. The truth is our church needs a degree of financial support to function which we are finding very difficult to achieve.

Our main fundraisers at Harvest and before Christmas are falling short of our target so if you have any ideas or indeed feel inclined to give to our church please see any of the church council and we will endeavour to keep the church well and truly open.

I must thank the ladies who decorate the church each week with stunning flower arrangements, the keyholders, the church cleaners, Jacqui Tottle our main organist, Roger Powell who winds the church clock and countless others who like me want to see our church not just survive but flourish.

Our next service is on Sunday at 9am when Rev Mike Cummings will take his last service with us before moving away.

**4o. Low Ham Church** - Presented by Carla Pilkington

Low Ham church in the Field Charitable Association continues to raise the profile of this CCT church, over the last year we had a very successful Christmas Service with the proceeds donated to High Ham Church for their much needed funds.

Recently we celebrated St George's day with a service and we continue to hold events such as the ever popular Christmas Fair and on Somerset Day a Somerset Folk Music event, which was very successful with about 60 people in the audience. Following the restoration of the chancel screen we have had the Royal Coat of Arms removed and this is almost finished being restored, I understand the restorers have some interesting detail to share with us.

We are putting on a display of Sir Edward Hext who built the church as a private chapel for his Manor House., John Head has done a very detailed research into Sir Edward Hext and we hope to be able to publish this as a small book, the display has been put together by David Reid and Patricia Richards using some of Johns research along with other facts from that timeline.

Once again the Committee has been put forward for a Team award with the CCT for all the work they do to support this church and raise funds as well as an Achieving impact award. The clock restoration was paid for by the committee some years ago and we continue to pay for an annual service, unfortunately the clock winding mechanism has failed and we are working with the restorer to ensure we get the clock chiming again.

A corner of the church has been devoted to a small library to encourage people to visit and either borrow or donate books to our reading corner. Of course we cannot do any of this without the continued support of the parish.

**4p Low Ham Chapel** - Presented by Barry Bryer to include also Henley Chapel

God has been good to us and blessed us over the past year. We have been greatly encouraged. We continue with our usual activities 2 services on Sundays at 11am and 6.30pm We also have weekly Bible Studies and Prayer Meetings on Thursdays at 8pm. We have monthly meetings on Wednesdays towards the end of each month from 2pm – 4pm for 'Fellowship with friends' when folks are welcome to come in and play games, do puzzles, chat and have a cup of teas with a short epilogue.

We also hold a day a month for those who home educate their children and like to meet together. Other than that we go to the Low Ham Steam Fair and hold a short service on the Sunday morning. We also have a Harvest Supper to which all are welcome on the Friday night before our Harvest Services the following Sunday. We have also restarted Sunday School roughly once a month. Jeff Cracknell has also been to local schools doing 'Walk through the Bible' - a quick introduction to the Bible over 5 – 6 weeks.

We also support a number of missionaries working various places including Albania, Burkina Faso, Czech Republic, Senegal, Sierra Leone and folks in the UK.

Numbers on a Sunday usually vary between 20 and 50.

All are welcome to share in our worship and learn about the Christian faith.

#### **4q. Henley Chapel** - as above

**4r. Bellringers** – Presented by John Vigar  
Mr Chairman, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen;

We have six bells in St. Andrews Church. The Tenor Bel being just under 18 cwts or 900 kgs. On a good day we can muster 10 to 12 ringers who can competently ring for Sunday Services and Festivals with a Surfeit of ringing leading up to Christmas.

The next time we ring will be on Thursday June 16<sup>th</sup> to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the allied invasion of the Normandy beaches.

We share practice nights with St Mary's Church, Huish Episcopi where there are eight bells. We ring most Wednesday evenings. The High Ham practice is usually on the first Wednesday of the month (except next week when we are ringing on the Thursday for D-Day).

We always welcome visiting ringers either individually or as a ringing team. Last Saturday a team from North Curry came to ring. Another team is coming in July.

You can always see the ringers on the High Ham web page, better still of course you can always come up the tower and join us, just to watch or if you're brave, have a go and learn to ring.

John Vigar (Tower Captain, St Andrew's High Ham)

#### **4s - High Ham Ladies Group** – Presented by Amanda Chuter on behalf of Margaret Cox

The Ladies Group meet on the first Wednesday of the month, 10.30 in High Ham Village Hall. The group was formed after the closure of the Women's Institute. The membership at the time felt it would be good to continue meeting, but without the WI formalities - so, no more singing Jerusalem! There are currently 33 members.

Suggestions for speakers, visits or other activities are welcomed from members, and this ensures every year's programme is varied. This is certainly the case for the last 12 meetings.

Since May '23, we ladies have been informed and entertained: we were transported to Venice thanks to Sally Roy's evocative telling of its history, and the daily life of its residents today. We learned how to care for our feet, and the work of the Hawk and Owl Trust and the keepers of Abbotsbury Swannery. A 'Blood Biker' in full leathers told us of the volunteer motorcyclists who deliver blood and much more to hospitals in the west, and we discovered the amazing work of Somerset and Dorset Air Ambulance and BIBIC. We sang along with local group Take Note, and joined Nick Fear in planting a tree in Millennium Wood to mark the Coronation of King Charles. We celebrated the coming of summer with another visit to Hurds Hill house where we explored with owners David and Clifford, all its glorious rooms, particularly the many bedrooms, each room filled with an eclectic mix of furniture, books, paintings and more, and everything with a story to tell, some of which were told. We returned again to enjoy fire-side conversation and drinks, followed by a delicious lunch.

What an excellent year, with still more to follow... New members are always welcome - if you are interested in joining us, please phone Margaret Cox 01458 250861 for further information. You don't have to be a 'lady' to join, and all are welcome to attend a meeting as a 'Visitor'. Copies of this year's programme are available in St Andrew's Church.

#### **4t. High Ham Knitting for Charity Group** - presented by Amanda Chuter

The High Ham Knitting Group is now in its seventh year and continues to produce beautifully made items for many causes. We meet at Tutnell House, Henley on the 3rd Thursday of the month, 2-4pm . If you would like to join us, an experienced knitter or not, you will be made very welcome. If you you have wool, needles, buttons, ribbons etc, you no longer want, please contact Margaret Cox 01458 250861 or 07766 576356

We are keen to support locally where we can and this year have donated a number of matinee jackets and booties to the premature baby unit at Musgrove Park Hospital and several cot blankets too. Also some very colourful "fiddle mitts" have been knitted for dementia sufferers in our area.

In November 2023 three of us had the privilege of helping for an afternoon at the shoe box co-ordination centre in South Petherton. Hundreds of boxes were filled, checked and sent on in lorries to the people of Ukraine - each containing vital essentials and some of them with something warm and woolly from us! It was the most humbling experience.

Already we have a good stock to put towards this year's appeal, hats, mitts, gloves, scarves, pencil cases, girls handbags, finger puppets together with many blankets. Our items will help fill a much anticipated and appreciated shoe box at Christmas for both adults and children.

A huge thank you to those who have donated their unwanted knitting wool to the group. We are most grateful.

You are most welcome to join our group and enjoy a monthly meeting of knit and knitter. You can knit whatever takes your fancy, it doesn't have to be for charity. Details are on the High Ham Parish website.

Jackie Tottle

**4u. High Ham School and Educational Trust** – presented by Dave Vigar on behalf of Sally Roy

The trust was established specifically to provide funding to younger residents of the parish to enable them to pursue educational and development possibilities that would otherwise be unaffordable. Anyone under the age of 25 can apply, and a small Board of Trustees, including a representative from the Diocese of Bath and Wells, discuss each case individually. The application form needs to state the reason for the request, what it would fund and how the grant might further the applicant's development. The Trustees, at their discretion, can grant up to £300. An annual grant is made to High Ham C of E Primary School to cover the cost of the Bibles the school presents to every child and coach hire to the Cathedral in Wells for school events there.

On an individual level, the Trustees frequently give financial help towards university and college degrees and apprenticeships, and have also funded requests as diverse as help with football refereeing qualifications and musical instruments. We welcome applications at anytime during the year, and meet every six months to discuss these and award the grants. If you are interested, or know someone that might be, please download the application form from the parish website and send the form or deliver a hard copy to Sally Roy at [sallyroy@btinternet.com](mailto:sallyroy@btinternet.com) or The Old Schoolhouse, The Green, High Ham.

**4v. Luncheon Club/Group** - presented by Mike Tottle

The Community Luncheon Group met once per month. It was a thriving group of 50 people each month and a waiting list. The volunteers who made the luncheon group work to perfection were all thanked.

**4w. Any other** - Richard Wilkins raised 2 very short verbal reports one was that the '54' bus route was for the time being remaining and the digital slinky bus was also explained. A phone number would be advertised for this in addition to online bookings. It was additionally mentioned the number of colleagues in local government who had passed away in the last year. A minutes silence was held.

END OF REPORTS

5. **To receive the annual account of any Village Charity.** There were none.

6. **To Consider any Matter or Motion.** There were none.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm