

THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT HIGH HAM VILLAGE HALL
TUESDAY 23rd May 2023 AT 7.00pm

Present: David Vigar (Chairman), approx. 19 Parishioners,

Apologies: None

1. **2022 Minutes** Had been displayed on the noticeboards no action outstanding and were signed as a true record.

2. **Chairman's Report** Having welcomed everyone to the meeting the chairman thanked all the councillors and volunteers for parish groups.

Another year has flown by in this post COVID era and it is time for me to write my Annual Chairman's Report.

We celebrated Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee in June with various parish events, followed unexpectedly by the announcement of the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September – a lady who worked and did her duty until hours before her death. I admired her devotion to this country and wish many of our political “masters” could follow her example and not be attempting to score points off each other in these difficult financial times. We need to work together more to solve these problems. I would like to repeat a statement I made on 27th September 2022:

I am proud of the High Ham parish community when the announcement of the passing of Queen Elizabeth II was made after 6.00 pm on Thursday 8th September. By 8.00 am on Friday 9th the Union flag was flying at half mast on the church, by 10.30 a book of condolence was open for all who wished to sign in the church, and at 12.00 noon High Ham bell ringers were ringing half muffled bells. Captain of the bell ringers, John Vigar, and his team also rang for King Charles III after a church service on the following Thursday, also at 9.00 am on the morning of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral.

Amanda Chuter publicised the National Minute's Silence at 8.00 pm on Sunday 18th September in the church yard. Billy Young contacted Amanda to ask if he could help in any way. We asked him to organise a fitting tribute to Queen Elizabeth II and if you were one of approximately 60 parishioners to attend I think that you would agree with me that this was a very emotive and moving ceremony.

I would like to thank, on behalf of the Parish Council, the custodians of the church for the use of the church, John Vigar and his team of bell ringers (some of whom helped out in the belfrys of neighbouring churches), Sir Billy Young for organising the minute's silence, and particularly Amanda Chuter for publicising and organising the various parish events during the National Period of Mourning for Queen Elizabeth II.

I welcome King Charles III to finally take on the reigns of his mother after such a long apprenticeship. Several parish events were arranged and took place to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. Once the bell ringing team were heard at High Ham and helped out at nearby churches.

The Parish Council are commemorating the Coronation by installing a toposcope in the parish pound, opposite this village hall. It was intended to be in place by the Coronation date but circumstances beyond our control prevented this happening. Thanks to James Lynch, local Artist, for the design, also David Bean, stonemason for the installation of the stone that the toposcope to which it will be attached. I also thank Robert Webb, one of our new Parish Councillors for overseeing this project.

From May of last year Somerset County Council and the 4 District Councils have been transiting from the old system of Local Government to the new Unitary system that came into place on 1st April (April Fool's Day) this year.

I would like to thank Gerard Tucker, our outgoing District Councillor, for his considerable help to High Ham parish. Welcome to Mike Stanton and Richard Wilkins, Somerset Councillors. I hope that we can work together as successfully now and in the future. A new system of grass roots organising, through Local Community Networks will be coming into place. High Ham parish will be one of 33 parish and town councils in the Levels and Moors LCN. Exciting times in this new Local Government world in Somerset.

Planning – due to the continuing phosphate issues very few, if any, new planning consents have been given. It seems that any planning applications that in the past would warrant further investigation are being refused, so that, in my opinion, these applications are cleared from the planning department's 'in tray'. I had a parishioner inform me recently that his application was validated 34 months ago and yet to be resolved. I understand that at the moment there are 18,000 dwellings awaiting a decision. High Ham Community Land Trust have applied for planning permission for 6 dwellings for rent, only for local people. This application is awaiting a decision.

High Ham Parish Council now own 3 defibrillators – one at High Ham school, (which has recently had its battery and pads renewed), one in the Henley phone box and one on the external wall of Low Ham chapel. Although the various defibrillators have been collected, as yet they have not needed to be used.

The Playing Field Committee have replaced its main play equipment that had come to the end of its lifecycle with new equipment paid by funding from the Playing Field Committee, SSDC and the Parish Council, also a new fence around the car park and signage. The Playing Field Committee, with new members on it, will be continuing fund raising for changing rooms and toilets at the site.

Somerton Football Club under 8's team have requested the use of the Playing Field football pitch for the next couple of months. Hopefully this collaboration will be fruitful in the future. A building firm has been using the car park and they have been approached for a donation to cover this. I am awaiting hopefully for a generous contribution.

I would like to thank Paul Brunsdon and Nancy Green for their commitment and work over many years on the Playing Field committee. They have both decided to stand down recently.

School – High Ham C of E School have tragically lost their Head Teacher, Jane Rosser, following a period of ill health. On behalf of HHPC I give our condolences to her family and to the extended family of the staff and patrons of the school. There will be a memorial service for Jane Rosser at St Andrews church on Wednesday, 14th June at 2.00 pm.

St Andrews Church are still awaiting news of a replacement for Jess Pitmen our last vicar. I understand from a close contact that the PCC is very busy with its various projects. The bell ringing team have been extremely busy since the relaxation of COVID rules, both at High Ham and other nearby churches.

Highways – The problems with potholes seem to be increasing, however when reported most are quickly repaired. Picts Hill problems regarding overhanging hedges encroaching onto the road are yet to be resolved permanently. Thank you to Richard Wilkins for helping the Parish Council promptly with highway issues over the last year.

Footpaths – High Ham parish have 2 volunteers, Nick Fear and Harry Plant who have strimming equipment and training has been supplied by Somerset Council. They have kept the footpaths clear and some of their recent work can be seen on the High Ham Facebook page and in real life for those who venture out on our footpaths. Thank you to Nick and Harry for giving up your spare time to enhance our parish.

Millennium Wood – One of the parish assets is gradually, as is the way of nature, evolving and is well worth a visit. Thanks to the MW working parties and to our Lengths man's firm for the continuing planning for the future of the Millennium Wood. The Cemetery has been in place for over 100 years. Many thanks to John Vigar who has stood down as official stewardship of the cemetery. I am sure his knowledge will be used by his successor Nancy Green, and Vicky Young, Parish Clerk, who keeps us up to date with forthcoming internments. Thank you to Roger Powell and Nick Fear for repair work to the lynch gate and other buildings at the cemetery. Recently Amanda Chuter and myself were attempting some temporary repair work on the fence when a parishioner stopped and asked if the occupants were getting out.

The Parish Lunches have now resumed successfully, and I would like to thank all the volunteers, many unseen or known about, for giving up their time and money to help out other parishioners and enhance the local community.

Parish Council – Last May we held elections and the new PC councillors took office. One of our councillors, Paul Brunsdon, has since resigned and Rob Rice has been co-opted onto the PC. Many thanks to Paul for his contribution over the time that he was a councillor. High Ham parish was one of only a few parishes locally that needed to hold elections as most other parishes did not have enough people put their name forward to form a council.

The PC owns or manages the Playing Field, Millennium Wood, The Pound, Village Greens and the Church Yard, also footpaths in the parish.

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

After this Annual Parish meeting the AGM of the PC will take place.

I thank my fellow Parish Councillors for their help in conducting what I think is a successful and approachable PC, in particular thanks to our Parish clerk Vicky Young who keeps me and the PC on the correct path.

David Vigar
Chairman, High Ham Parish Council
23.5.2023

3. **Parish Volunteers** The Parish Council thanked all the Parish volunteers who had been active in helping out in the period since the last Parish Meeting.

We are fortunate in our parish to have residents who are ready to volunteer their time to help with a wide variety of tasks: trim the footpaths; paint BT kiosks and fingerposts; clear litter; dig out ditches and stand thigh-high in pond water in Millennium Wood; repair playground equipment; help maintain the cemetery buildings.

Then there are those who give their time throughout the year to the running of the Village Hall, the Playing Field, the Parochial Church Council, the High Ham Community Land Trust; the Parochial Church Council; the Low Ham Church Trust; the St Andrew's Churchwardens, the organist, church flower arrangers and cleaners; the school governors; the Community History Group; the 7 Parish Councillors.

A big thank you to all our volunteers, and thanks to the noisiest of the volunteers, the St Andrew's bellringers!

Much of the work of these volunteers is recorded in the relevant areas of the High Ham Parish Community website, and posted on HH News and Events Facebook

4. **To receive the following reports**

4a. **School Governors report** – The report below was presented by Chris Palmer.

High Ham Primary School

Dear Parish Council Members and Parishioners,

As Chair of Governors, I am pleased to provide the following report on behalf of our school:

Firstly, and very sadly, it is prudent that I refer to the loss of our long-standing Headteacher, Jane Rosser, who passed away in March having been absent from school for almost a year due to poor health. Jane was an amazing, well-organised, consummate professional who deserves tremendous credit for the success our school has enjoyed during her tenure as Headteacher. She will be greatly missed by our whole school community and her professional colleagues across the County. A memorial service is being held on 14 June at 2.00 pm in St Andrew's Church to remember her and celebrate her life.

Our Acting Headteacher, Ann Edwards, has done a remarkable job to ensure High Ham Primary School continues to thrive, despite the challenges faced. Ann led the school through its OFSTED Inspection last September and the following is a short summary of the Inspector's report:

- *“High Ham Church of England Primary School continues to be a ‘good’ school”.*
- *“Pupils are proud to attend High Ham Primary School, they thrive and feel safe in the caring and nurturing atmosphere”;*
- *‘Pupils are eager to learn and feel safe and well looked after’;*
- *“Leaders have high aspirations for pupils. They have designed an ambitious curriculum that helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well”;*
- *“Leaders provide pupils with many experiences to support their personal development”;*
- *“The arrangements for Safeguarding are effective”;*
- *“Governors understand their roles and responsibilities. They support and challenge leaders well”.*

This was a fantastic outcome for our school, particularly as the OFSTED framework has changed greatly since our last inspection in 2017 which means that to be classed as ‘a good school’ now is even more of an achievement in reality.

I feel sure you will be aware that there was great concern expressed, nationally, over the level of difficulty of the recently held Year 6 Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs). This was related to the reading paper with some parents, teachers and teaching unions voicing their concerns to the Department for Education (DfE). When I asked Ann Edwards how our children reacted to this element of the SATs, she confirmed ‘there was no drama, our children are resilient and just got on with it’. I think this aptly sums up the kind of school we have and why there is so much to celebrate.

An immediate priority for me as Chair is to get the The Headship vacancy filled on a substantive basis and I can confirm the recruitment process has already been initiated with interviews taking place on Wednesday 24 May 2023.

High Ham Church of England Primary School remains in a very strong position despite the many challenges faced over the last year. 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.

I am really proud of our school and will ensure I do all I can in my role as Chair, along with my governor colleagues, to ensure its continued success.

Chris Palmer
Chair of Governors

4b. Village Hall report –

High Ham Village Memorial Hall is at the heart of our community. Through a committee of local dedicated volunteers, this charity provides and maintains a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of High Ham. This is achieved by raising money through hiring the hall out and fundraising events. Despite the committee now being a small team, several community events have been organised this year including: Summer Jubilee Party, Produce Show, Wreath Making, Big Breakfast and Coffee Mornings as well as supporting other community events last year including the Jubilee and Coronation afternoon teas.

Regular use of the hall is maintained by a number of local hirers with the hire rates kept at a competitive rate to encourage community use. These includes Karate classes, Pilates, Ladies Group and the return of a monthly Community Lunch.

Last year we spent more than we received with an overall loss of £2300 with overheads increasing by 60%. Hire income increased by more than 35% but fundraising income dropped slightly.

As most parishioners will be aware, over many years, the condition of the building has been deteriorating and the committee has spent money investing in the hall’s future. New chairs were purchased and full electrical condition checks undertaken. Some committee members attended a recent presentation on alternative heating systems. In December, it was agreed to commission a condition survey of the building and it will be no surprise that the report highlighted a number of significant issues.

The hall committee are now embarking on a major project of renovation and refurbishment of the hall, to secure its use for the future. In order to achieve this, we will be looking to source grants, fundraise locally and of course, ask the community for their help. We, therefore, need more people to help and engage with the fundraising efforts.

We would take this opportunity to thank those members of the community who have supported us in the past. We need more volunteers to come on board; to join the committee or to volunteer your time to help secure the future of this valuable community asset. Any help that can be provided will be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in helping please contact any member of the committee, email at hvhall@gmail.com or contact us through Facebook.

4c. High Ham Parish Community Land Trust – Bill Bishop (Chair) presented a short verbal report. Planning Application submitted and acknowledged 23/6/2022 PP-11313938

Currently the CLT were dealing with queries and submitting reports regarding planning

Phosphate problem with no guidelines from government and council on how we will be expected to resolve this issue was problematic.

Richard Wilkins and Mike Stanton were asked for assistance with planning and phosphate issues.

4 meetings of the board along with support group and project team had taken place.

Our membership has risen to 99 tantalizing close to 100.

Support for our scheme from our residence PLEASE via the planning web site

It was acknowledged the importance of those interested in a home being registered on Somerset Homefinder.

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

The Hext Almshouses are situated in Somerton and provide accommodation for people aged over 55 of limited means who live in or have strong connections with the parishes of Somerton, High Ham or Langport. A board of voluntary trustees oversees the running of the almshouses with representatives from each of the three parishes.

There are seven homes within the almshouses. A vacancy has recently arisen and this has been well advertised on noticeboards, in local papers and on facebook.

Interviews have taken place and the vacant property has been offered to one of the applicants.

Jane Vigar
May 2023

4e. Footpath Users' Group/Somerset Strimmer Project Another busy year with the Parish footpaths, around 27 hours of footpath, stile and gate clearance completed.

There has been one big change this year, Harry Plant has volunteered to join me as an extra footpath Strimmer for the Parish. Harry has a wealth of experience and has completed all of the necessary training needed to become a volunteer footpath Strimmer. We have now split the footpaths in the Parish so that Harry looks after half and I look after half.

This means that we can cut the paths more often to keep them clear for everyone to enjoy.

There have been a good number of defects reported to the Rights of way officer at the Somerset Council in the past 12 months, with most being repaired fairly promptly with the exception of a contentious step in Low Ham next to the old stone stile!

Nick was reminded that fuel receipts for the strimmer could be re-imbursed.

4f. The Parish Tree Warden – Paul Brunson tree warden report was presented to the Parish.

In brief

Some Donated trees were planted in the playing field to reinforce existing plantings. These required a good deal of water during the increasingly common hot spells in the summer months. Survival rates were pleasingly high.

Many people have commented on the hard work carried out in the millennium wood and the great enjoyment it brings them.

Otherwise has been a quiet year and no tree issues were reported by the public.

4g. Parish Lengthsman –

Lengthsman Team Craig and Rachael Howe

Millennium Wood During the early summer months, when the warmer weather arrived, the grass was not growing so rapidly so we had the time to carry out some additional works including hedge trimming and clearing around the signage. As autumn arrived, we arranged a site meeting where we discussed the works that needed to be carried out over the winter months. We selected and felled several diseased ash trees as part of a thinning programme in readiness for replanting. We also felled some other trees adjacent to walkways that had been damaged and compromised by squirrels to ensure the safety of woodland users. We also cleared a large section of bramble adjacent to the pond that was beginning to encroach on the rides and spoiling the views through

the trees. These were ongoing projects that went on throughout the winter. In November we carried out a pond clearance, removing bullrushes that had taken over a lot of the surface area and removing invasive parrot feather weed. All the removed vegetation was left on the bank to allow wildlife to return to the water. Thank you to the volunteers who offer themselves willingly for such a demanding task. Early in 2023, a start was made on replacing the wooden discs with the Lost Words in readiness for the nicer weather. This is a time consuming task so took some time but the discs were installed in April. We also replaced some of the broken stepping stumps at the Woodhenge playing area and reset the broken sign for the outdoor classroom. The regular grass cutting programme has started again now, ensuring we leave as much of the wildflower as possible.

Cemetery The nicer weather at the start of the year allowed us to carry out some weed killing around the entrance of the cemetery, as well as continue with the regular grass cutting. Some ragwort was pulled to ensure it doesn't spread to surrounding fields and we began extending the area we mow towards the back of the cemetery as new plots were needed. Going into the winter months, we began the task of removing dead trees and clearing back vegetation from the walkways around the graves. We also removed vegetation and ivy from the walls at the entranceway, as well as the fence along Mildmays Road, in readiness for further restoration works to be carried out. The grass cutting programme began again in March and we have noticed a large number of wildflowers again in the cemetery, especially Ox Eye Daisy. We continue to leave as many wildflowers as possible as this contributes to the lovely atmosphere at the cemetery. A new path has been mown from the vehicle entrance, skirting round the unmown section to allow visitors ever better sight of the wild flowers.

Grass Cutting The hot summer we had meant that the grass cutting season slowed right down over the end of July and into August in our regular mowing areas. Over winter and early spring however, large amounts of rainfall have meant that some areas of the wood especially have not yet dried out fully. That aside, we have regularly been able to mow throughout our usual areas and the grass is growing nicely. We have recently been cutting back the visibility splays at junctions and bends within the parish as well as around signage to ensure the roads stay safe.

Other Tasks Play Area -Over the summer we repaired the old fence again, cleared the signs and cut back the hedge and gateways. We also sprayed the car park area and adjacent roads with weed killer. We also sprayed moss killer on some of the play area surfaces as well as carried out some minor repairs to some of the play equipment.

Drainage - Over the winter we carried out extensive drainage works across the parish. This included clearing all the grips and grids, 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. Village Green Three bollards have been replaced on the green with new ones from Yandles. As per the meeting we had in the spring, extra bollards will be ordered and installed soon to minimise the parking issues. We also discussed repollarding the trees over winter as well which will be planned in due course. Weed killing was also carried out on the pavements around the green over the warmer months.

Other- Speed limit and highways signs around the parish have been cleared of overhanging vegetation and trees throughout the course of the year. We also cleared vegetation along the bridge, pavement and entrance to the footpath on Picts Hill. Over winter we had several days of wintery weather so we ensured that the parish grit bins were topped up and easily accessible.

4h. Playing Fields Report

In accordance with the directive to all council reporters I have kept the report streamlined this year.

The new playing field climbing installation has been a huge success and a great draw for families with younger children. Well done to all who got this off the ground.

The original carpark fence eventually wore out and it was decided to replace the original with a post and rail fence plus access gate. Again, many thanks to those who got this project realised.

The annual football match on the 27th December played for Clic Sargent charity between Pitney and High Ham.. A junior match was also held on the higher 7 aside pitch with 2 full teams. Over £250 was raised.

The pavilion project has unfortunately stalled. Our expert fund raiser Andrew Rainsford reports that post covid the major strands of grant aid are being offered to groups with charitable status. He suggest that the parish rewrite the constitution in order to reform the management committee as a charity or to pal up with a group that has already got charitable status for mutually beneficial ends. He suggested the Memorial Hall committee as an example.

Several episodes of antisocial behaviour were observed, and one more serious episode was reported to the local police [online]. The episode included tyre 'burnout' and subsequent verbal abuse was given by a group of lads. Despite having a photo and a vehicle registration no action was taken. A letter was written to chase the case up but owing to a spate of antisocial behaviour in Langport the police did not have time to deal with this.

The grass was cut regularly, and an area of long grass was left above the BMX track and given a conservation cut in July to allow spring flowers to set seed [inc 2 varieties of orchid].

It is with regret that this will be my final report and would like to thank everyone I have worked with during my time on the committee. I will be pleased to be involved with any green issues arising in the future and hope that the new committee will carry

on the improvement of the wildlife potential of the site.

Paul Brundon Chair.

4i. Millennium Wood –

Purchased by High Ham PC in 2015 from Somerset CC, the woodland has been transformed into a well-managed woodland where the trees are thriving and visitors can enjoy walking the pathways to the pond-side shelter, use the picnic tables and benches, make dens and use the MW Challenge cards to discover the wildlife.

Since 2015, our Parish Lengthsman, with the occasional help of volunteers, has managed the woodland.

The copses within the wood have now reached a stage in their life where the trees need attention. The trees were densely planted in 2000 to encourage them to grow quickly out of the grass, with some quicker growing species, known as ‘nurse trees’, to encourage the slower growing to get on with it! The result, 23 years on, is that all the trees have grown tall and thin competing for light and space.

To remedy this, over the last 2 winters, selected trees have been coppiced or felled by our Parish Lengthsman Team of Craig and Rachael Howe. This will slow down the upward growth and allow neighbouring trees to become sturdier and more stable. The felled timber and brash have been left in situ to become habitat for wildlife, and some to supply building material for den building.

Early spring Luke Timewell volunteered his time and digger to clear the blocked northern boundary ditch, and Olly Howley did the annual boundary hedge cut.

Only 1 session of clearing invasive Parrett Feather Weed from the pond was necessary last year, thanks to many clearings in the previous 3 years, but Blanket Weed is now covering much of the water and may need clearing.

Rachael Howe installed her newly-made 20 Lost Words plaques last month - the ‘Lost’ words are as a response by writer Robert Manfarlane to the removal of everyday nature words, among them acorn, bluebell, kingfisher and wren, conker, from a widely used children’s dictionary, because those words were not being used enough by children to merit inclusion.p! One of the MW Challenge cards asks visitors to find all 20.

Unfortunately, the 3 Bug Hotels were vandalised in the last year, the remains removed in the hope they can be salvaged.

To mark the Coronation of Charles 111, members of High Ham Ladies donated a 4’ Horse Chestnut tree to the woodland. On the 3rd May, Parish Councillor Nick Fear did the official planting.

There are regular updates on MW activity on the parish website, Instagram, and HH Facebook.

4j. Cemetery Report

Following last year’s AGM the role of administering High Ham cemetery fell to me after being in the capable hands of John Vigar for the previous 25 years.

During the last year our cemetery has seen several burials and internment of ashes along with erection of gravestones & monuments. Regular grass cutting and maintenance is ably carried out by Parish Lengthsman Craig and his wife Rachael, our thanks to them. It was following their observations that the council made the decision earlier in the year to prohibit the use of artificial and plastic flowers and wreaths, which if left to deteriorate on graves were breaking up and being strimmed around the cemetery. At the same time owing to hitting a hard seam of rock in the centre of the cemetery it was also decided to stop the reservation of burial plots from the beginning of April. Those which have been reserved and paid for will be honoured, but going forward plots will be allocated in rotation.

It has been a learning curve for me this year getting to grips with all the regulations associated with cemetery matters, also liaising with funeral directors, the church (when necessary), stone masons and our Clerk. I am grateful for the help and advice I’ve received from everyone, especially John and Vicky.

Our cemetery is a lovely, peaceful place for parishioners and others to visit the graves of their loved ones and I would like to thank all volunteers who have helped keep it looking tidy and welcoming over the year. Especially Roger Powell for his work renovating the shed and the guttering on the Lynch Gate, Nick Fear for the tiling of the Lynch Gate, David Vigar for the temporary repairs of the railings and Amanda Chuter for assisting him, also for helping me tidy graves and the Garden of Rest by removing old wreaths and floral tributes in the spring. It all helps to keep this important parish asset well maintained and attractive.

Nancy Green May 2023

4k. Community Project Report –

This informal group has been running for several years and we have collected an extensive treasure of photographs and other material from parishioners. These have mainly been borrowed from individuals and families, scanned and returned. The digital

archive of photographs (well over 1000) has been deposited in the Somerset Heritage Service Archive in Taunton where it is available to the public by appointment. We also have the digital archive in the village and paper copies of most material. We have put on several exhibitions in the Village Hall. We are very grateful to everyone who has shared their family history so generously.

We published the book 'A Somerset Parish 1895 – 1965 : Memories from village life in High Ham, Low Ham and Henley' which includes photographs going back to the 1890s and extracts from interviews with residents who describe life in the Parish during the first half of the twentieth century – it covers the two World Wars, the coming of water and electricity, farming, shops, school and social life.

We also coordinated the 2012 Scrapbook Project in which residents celebrated the year in words and pictures. The original volume is archived at the Somerset Heritage Centre and copies were reproduced which many residents own. We also reprinted the High Ham Women's Institute 1965 scrapbook which inspired the project.

We have 16 copies remaining of the book 'A Somerset Parish 1895 - 1965' and 20 copies of the Women's Institute 1965 Scrapbook. These are for sale and can be obtained from members of the group. See below.

Recently we decided to give the balance in our bank account (£188.46) to Parish Council towards the High Ham Pound project to create a topograph and commemorative historical plaque. We have now closed our bank account. But we have a small amount of cash remaining (£65) which is held by our Treasurer, Caroline Dickens and this will be used for any future exhibitions. So although we are not very active we have not closed down altogether.

In terms of future projects. A small display of Low Ham photos is planned for Low Ham Church and perhaps another exhibition in High Ham Village Hall over the coming year. Meanwhile, if anyone is interested in contributing materials for the archive we can photograph it and add it to the collection at the South West Heritage Services Archive. It can be viewed by appointment. We also hold copies of the material so please ask members of the group for information. We have a website with information about our archive www.communityhistory.btck.co.uk and messages can also be sent to our group via the website.

Contact details:

Caroline Dickens 01458 259364

Viv Hall 01458 251972

Kate Lynch 01458 250367.....

Amanda Chuter 01458 250130

Sara Ellis 01458 251714

4l. History Hut Report –

The History Hut has been open for open weekends, themed events, schools groups and clubs.

Over the last year, 4 schools have visited, some studying WW2, some learning about the Romans, and I discuss with the teachers what books or artefacts they would like prepared. There is also time for outdoor learning, and usually a walk down to the Church, enjoying the countryside.

A small group of Home- schooled children with their parents, and another group of older children with learning difficulties enjoyed a morning at the Hut, where the privacy and peace help them relax.

A Brownie pack are coming to work for their 'History Badge'.

Adult groups have included, Service Veterans, Pensioners, U3A, WIs, and Probus.

I have been invited to give talks to schools, Pensioner clubs, a Stroke Group, and I go to the Dementia Alliance group in Langport each month. My talks are a short summary of the 5 years of the Hut, I take some books and artefacts, which leads on to everyone telling their stories and memories.

Some open days, I am lucky to be joined by other people who enjoy history, Simon Buckell wears his original WW1 uniform and brings an impressive collection of memorabilia. Andy Briggs has the uniform and equipment of the Observer Corps, and Colin and Annette Murray have a WW2 Staff car, and an array of artefacts. They are all so knowledgeable and something different for visitors.

Entry is always free, but any donations are welcomed. Although I am saving for a wheelchair Ramp, someone kindly gave me some boxes of Somerset books from their late father, so as a thank you I sent £150 to 'Scotties Little Soldiers' charity.

Through visitors, facebook pages, and radio the word is spreading and I look forward to a busy year.

My aim is to reach the older generation, who have such interesting stories, and might have difficulty finding a small, friendly venue for a peaceful hour or two. – Karen Cook

4m. Christmas Crew –

The Christmas Crew held a Skittles Weekend at Bere Cider Farm, in April 2022. The money raised from this helps to pay for the Insurance, and maintenance costs of the trailer meaning that all money donated goes to the chosen charities. This year so far, we have raised funds by a Mouse - Racing evening, and another Skittle Weekend at Bere. We are fortunate that these events are well attended, and are grateful to Jimmy and Mary Lockyer for their support. Since starting in the 1980's the Crew have raised £30,914, of which £19,331 has gone to The Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance. Over the years, members have changed, and aged, but all work so hard, and give much of their time. The committee have decided that this coming year we will be cutting down the nights out, keeping to our own local villages. – Karen Cook

4n. High Ham Church St Andrew's Church, High Ham

Our parish church of St Andrew commands a spectacular position on the

edge of the Village Green in the centre of the parish and stands as a beacon of faith and hope for everyone in our community.

The church is always open during the day and is accessible to all for a quiet personal time or a chat with friends. Our services follow a monthly pattern: please see the Parish website or church noticeboard for details.

Unfortunately we lost our vicar last summer when she retired and we await the outcome of our benefice reorganisation before any new vicar will be appointed. In the meantime we are reliant on local retired clergy to lead our services aided by our local lay readers.

Any enquiries or questions please contact:

Mike Tottle, Chair of PCC 01458 252237
Kay Vigar, Secretary 01458 250836
Margaret Porter, Churchwarden 01458 251490
John Vigar, Churchwarden 01458 250536

John Vigar May 2023

4o. Low Ham Church

It has been a busy and successful year for the Low Ham Church in the Field Charitable Association. Low Ham Church is vested with the Churches Conservation Trust as a Church of historical importance. In May 22, we had the trustees of the CCT visit the church. The church and the work we do was greatly admired.

We had a fundraising flower festival in Aug 22 and the ever popular Christmas fair in mid Nov 22. Last Aug/Sep we employed a company to conserve the chancel screen, it had suffered over the years with many layers of Victorian dark varnish, hiding the original colours. The company is renowned for such work and were working at Westminster Abbey just prior to the Queen's funeral. Once they had peeled back the layers of dark varnish, they found all the original pigmentation and revealed that the grapes were in fact red and white and the background to the inscription was a pale blue. This is not a restoration but a sympathetic clean and reveal. It took 7 weeks to complete and the conservators gave a talk at the end. We intend to have a display in the Church 27 to 30 of July with historic photos of local families and farms, also a section displaying photos of the restoration with a bound report on the conservation of the screen for people to view, which will remain in the church.

The church received an historic buildings renovation award in 2021 and our committee were nominated for a national award at the annual Churches Conservation Trust award ceremony in early 23. This is an award whereby volunteers and committees are recognised for their work with those churches vested with the CCT. Whilst we didn't win, it is a measure of how successful the committee is in supporting Low Ham Church.

There has been some confusion on what can and can't be done in a CCT church, but Low Ham Church is still very much consecrated under church law and Rev Jess Pitman was in receipt of a document that mirrors our vesting book clearly outlining that up to 6 services can be held along with funerals, christenings and weddings by special licence please look at the CCT website for details or view our vesting book located in the church. There is also a church synod document which states - church buildings in the care of the Trust remain consecrated; many are used for occasional worship by parishes as well as for community use. They remain a potential resource for the Church's mission and can be returned to parish use if needed.

We continue to fundraise to restore the monuments in the church and our next project is the carved and painted coat of arms. At some stage it has been overpainted with the unicorn now a dull grey, earning the nickname of the low ham donkey by the conservationists! The same company that painstakingly cleaned the chancel screen is undertaking the work on the coat of arms but this will be removed and worked on in their workshops. To support our fundraising we will have the historical display in July culminating in an Evensong, an antiques roadshow style event in Sep where Lawrence's auctioneers will evaluate your treasures, refreshments will be available giving people an opportunity to take in the beautiful church. In mid Nov we will have our Xmas fair and next year around Somerset day we intend to hold a Somerset folk music night. As always please visit our Facebook page - Low Ham Church in the Field - if you shop online then please sign up to easy fundraising, this means everytime you shop a donation is made to our registered charity.

We continue with enthusiasm to improve our church, setting up a quiet reading area with a variety of books available. We welcome all to visit at any time and the church can be hired via the CCT for any type of event. In this age of dwindling church attendances we welcome people to visit to look around the church or to sit and quietly reflect. In partnership with the History Hut run by Karen Cook when local schools visit the hut they also take in a visit to the church and this is something we actively encourage.

4p Low Ham Chapel - A short verbal report was given in the democratic half hour of the June Parish Council meeting.

4q. Henley Chapel

Following the second lockdown because of Covid 19 the Chapel was closed for 6months. During that time a Balcony and Staircase was constructed, and the music control desk installed there. The Projector was fastened to the balcony and a TV screen provided for the words to be seen by the musicians

This fulfilled a vision given to some of the people here, many years ago. In November 2021 there was a meeting here with a London City Mission Member Who told us about the problems and challenge of London.

In 2022 two Worship and Praise events were held here on Friday evenings. Also the Music Group took part in two services at Meare Chapel, the latter Good Friday this year.

Recent activities at the Chapel have been put on Facebook and e-mail, meetings now.

On Sunday will be DV at 4.30 pm to which everybody is welcome to come

We continue to meet at the revised time for Worship, Praise, and Ministry and freedom to speak as the Lord prompts people to speak and at the end of the meeting, share tea and fellowship in the School Room.

Our hope here is to provide a haven of peace so people find the reality of Jesus and his love for them and be freed by him through repentance from the guilt, power, stress and consequence caused by sin and have that new life with him brought by his death and resurrection leading to joy in eternity.

4r. High Ham Ladies Group

Margaret Cox's report was presented. The High Ham Ladies Group meet on the first Wednesday of the month in the Village Hall. Membership has steadily increased over the last year with currently 33 members. At most meetings husbands and friends have joined us. The group has attracted members from Drayton, Langport, Aller, Upton and Pitney. It has been great to welcome newcomers to the parish who have joined. A varied and interesting programme has been enjoyed throughout the year. This has included the following: A second group visit to Hinkley Point C; a talk from Kate Lynch on Traditional Somerset Crafts; a visit to Horse World at Kingsdon; wine tasting and talk by Sue Appleby from Polden Vineyard; Steve Davis telling the history and work of the River Thames Police; a visit to the gardens of Hurds Hill House, Langport; Mel Horsefield on the role of Somerset Village Agents; Luke Simon, founder of the Charity "School in a Bag" sharing his experience as a survivor of the Boxing Day sunami and the charity created in memory of his brother Piers; the practical support that Somerset Sight can provide to those sight-impaired; festive entertainment by the Langport group "Take Note"; an excellent meal at Lockyers at Beer; Pets for Therapy by Jenny Whitfield; SCC Road Safety Officer Martin Surrey with advice on how to stay safe on the road; Blood Biker John Taylor, on the work of the dedicated volunteers working within Somerset to transport blood, breast milk, and much more. We had a record attendance in May to hear Chris Sperring MBE, who gave an excellent presentation on the work of the Hawk and Owl Trust. (Already booked for next year). Following the meeting, many members enjoyed a picnic in Millennium Wood following the planting of a Horse Chestnut tree, donated by the group to commemorate the Coronation. Next year's programme is being planned, and it is hoped our membership will continue to grow. We welcome visitors to all meetings.

4s. Any Other report - none

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 8.10pm

D Vigar

Chairman High Ham Parish Council

