

## Annual Parish Meeting: HIGH HAM LADIES 2024/2025

Jane Brown

I joined High Ham Ladies in February 2023, having moved to Henley a year earlier. I was an ordinary member until November of last year when I was asked to join the Team running the group. After many years, Margaret Cox and Cynthia Curtis decided to step down from leading the group and the Team now consists of myself, Amanda Chuter, Mary Madgewick and Margaret Cox. We now have 33 members, despite the membership fee going up to £20 this year, and guests are always welcome for a small fee! Caroline Murray-Gourlay has organised the members into teams of three so that every meeting begins with delicious refreshments and lots of chat.

We have had another varied and interesting programme over the last twelve months.

Tony Bown came in May to tell us about the work of the RNLI and the very varied "shouts" they were called to.

In June, Somerset and Avon Police sent us an extremely passionate lady to warn us about the increasing risk of fraud. She made us all aware of how to avoid being caught out by scams particularly through the use of our mobile phones or land lines and our computers.

Anne Murch came to intrigue us all in July with the most amazing collection of items from bygone days. We were divided into teams and were given about ten minutes at each of about seven tables to try to work out what the items were used for!! Very challenging and a lot of discussion amongst the teams.

In August the ladies came to my garden, lovingly worked on and in by my husband, to be greeted by a glass of Pimm's as it was our 48th wedding anniversary!! Everyone enjoyed a lazy afternoon of wandering around the garden, lots of chatting and delicious refreshments made and served by a small group of members. We also raised £147 for the Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance.

In September, Anthia Murphy came to talk to us about energy efficiency in the home. Lots of useful advice was given and Anthia also told us about her charity which helps people in their homes when they are struggling with high energy bills due to a lack of insulation, radiator valves or whatever.

Boo Cottage Botanicals came over from Exmoor to see us in October to talk "soap"! We heard how they got started and the different types of "fancy" soap. Then we had a wonderful demonstration of how they actually made the soap, through a very clever camera operation, so that everyone could see what was going on. Afterwards, members were able to inspect the finished soap and then to purchase items from the splendid display of "the ones they made earlier".

November saw us all sitting around one long table for a show and tell session. Members talked about the item they had brought and then passed it around for all to see. We learnt a lot about each other and about what members had done in earlier parts of their lives. At this meeting, I was introduced as having joined the Team and members were asked to vote on the proposed increase to the membership fee which was carried unanimously.

One of our dear, members, Gwen Chubb, passed away in autumn. Gwen, Margaret P. and Caroline MG were going to entertain us at our December meeting, but, of course, this was unable

to go ahead. Instead, Margaret Cox managed to find a eukele troupe to entertain us with some community singing. They certainly played their hearts out.

In January 2025 we had another delicious "Christmas " lunch at Hurds Hill. Welcoming drinks were served in the two-grand-piano drawing room in front of the blazing fire and with lots of chat. Lunch was served in the in the intimate dining room and enjoyed by all. Margaret Cox was presented with a rose after her long service as head of the Team.

In February, Kay Townsend came to tell us about her time on the fairground. This was a vey thorough presentation with lots of pictures showing us how fairs started, how they developed and her experiences of "life on the road".

Mike Kennet came back to see us in March with a presentation of the year 1971. His film included the music, fashions, politics, adverts, TV programmes, films and notable events including decimalisation and the emergence of Donald Trump onto the world stage !!

April brought Mark Bell over to talk to us about his work at Wessex Water and the company's involvement in our local area. He showed us lots of maps of High Ham's pipe and sewage systems and talked knowledgeably about Wessex Water's aims with regard to community, conservation and waste.

Jane Brown  
High Ham Ladies