

The Rickinghalls

Minutes of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Held Thursday 7 May 2009 – Rickinghall Village Hall

Present:

Parish Councillors:
P Jenner
J Stacey

Mrs E Draper (Chairman)
B Johnson

Mrs M Carrington-Brown
C Last

Parish Clerk: Leeann Jackson-Eve

25 members of the public.

District Councillor Sara Michell

County Councillor Charles Michell

Mrs L Greenhough reporting for the RBR Parish Magazine.

Dr Bill Cordeaux

7.30pm The Chairman, Cllr Elizabeth Draper, welcomed those present and introduced Dr William Cordeaux who gave an excellent talk called 'My Earlier Years of General Practice'.

8.20 pm The Chairman thanked Dr Cordeaux on behalf of those present. The Chairman then formally opened the Annual Parish Meeting.

1. **Apologies:** Noted from Parish Cllrs Michael Bryant, Mrs Gillian Crossley-Holland and Stephen Pattenden.
2. **Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 7 May 2008.**
Circulated prior to the meeting and accepted by those present as a true record of the meeting, the minutes were signed.
3. **Annual Report from the Parish Council:** The Chairman, Cllr Elizabeth Draper, presented the Annual Report, speaking briefly about a number of schemes and projects which the Council had focussed on in the previous year. This included the proposed parking restrictions at the Co-op / St. George's Drive area, the land behind the new houses in Hinderclay Road ownership of which had been recently transferred to the PC, the upcoming allotments proposals and the registration of all Council-owned land. The Chairman also mentioned the Local Government Review consultation and the provision of a new dog little bin at Water Lane. She thanked the Neighbourhood Watch for their part in keeping local crime rates low. Finally, she gave a special thanks to Jeffrey Rose, retiring from the position of street sweeper to the parish for 15 years, and welcomed the new street sweeper, Tim Gaddis. The full report is appended to these minutes (Appendix 1).
4. **Financial Report from the Parish Council:** Mrs Leeann Jackson-Eve, Clerk/RFO presented the Council's financial report for the year ending 31 March 2009. There were no questions or comments from the floor in respect of the report. The full report is appended to these minutes (Appendix 2).
5. **Reports from Parochial Charities:** The Chairman reported on the activities of the Rickinghall Relief in Need Trust Fund, who met twice a year to discuss Fund activities. The Fund currently had a balance of £820, having donated £200 in the previous year to help two Rickinghall children attend a field study trip with St Botolph's School. Regular notices were inserted in the parish magazine to draw attention to the availability of support from the Fund.
6. **County Councillor's Report:** Cllr Charles Michell presented his report speaking briefly about his 12 years with the County Council representing 20 parishes. The County Council had been focussed on the Local Government Review and its support

of a single unitary authority, and the upcoming elections on 4 June. Cllr Michell reported that the council tax rise was the lowest in SCC's history at 2.45% and the Audit Commission had recently awarded SCC a 4 star rating. Finally, his Locality Budget had supported 30 applicants in the previous year. The full report is appended to these minutes (Appendix 3).

7. **District Councillor's Report:** Cllr Sara Michell presented her report, which highlighted Mid-Suffolk being named as having the best quality of life in rural Britain. Cllr Michell reported that MSDC had concentrated on the disposal and collection of waste and currently recycled 40% of the waste in the district, one of the highest rates in the country. She also reported that the garden waste scheme was at capacity with 3800 subscribers and would soon be accepting more. Finally, MSDC had won a Clean Britain award as one of the top 7 cleanest districts in the country. The full report is appended to these minutes (Appendix 4).
8. **Community Police Officer's Report:** The report was tabled and is appended to these minutes (Appendix 5).
9. **Presentations from Local Organisations:** Reports from the Botesdale and Rickinghall Community Woodlands group, the Friends of the Botesdale Health Centre, the Neighbourhood Watch, the Rickinghall PCC, the Rickinghall Village Hall Management Committee, the Rickinghall Women's Institute, the Redgrave, Botesdale & Rickinghall Twinning Association and the St Botolph's School were tabled and are appended to these minutes (Appendices 6 - 13).
10. **Local Issues:**
 - a. Rickinghall Inferior: None.
 - b. Rickinghall Superior: It was noted that the street light in front of Walnut Tree Place was waiting for the electricity to be hooked up by EDF.
11. **Allotments:** Councillor Joe Stacey presented a proposed plan of the Allotments that the Parish Council hoped to provide on the site between the new houses at Hinderclay Road and the cultivated field on Mill Lane. To date the PC had agreed a price of £13,500 for the 2.7 acres of land and was looking into financial support for the project, which would provide at least 28 half size allotments (50yd²) and a community woodland. The Parish Council would own the land but it was anticipated that the allotments would be run by an association and the woodland would be managed by a community group like BARWOODS. The PC currently held a list of 24 prospective allotment holders from Rickinghall and Botesdale parishes and a further four from neighbouring parishes. The next step would be to establish the costs of the project and secure funding. The meeting felt this was an excellent project and would be a valuable asset to the community. It was noted that the community woodland would in time conceal the allotments from view. The Parish Council working party would meet soon to move this project forward and those on the list would be kept informed.
12. **Any other Business:** No matters of concern relating to the Parish were raised by those present.

9.15 pm The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

Cllr Mrs Elizabeth Draper

Looking back to last year's report, the first item I mentioned was the proposed parking restrictions in the Co-op / St George's Drive area. Suffolk County Council has recently approved the scheme and the lines will soon be a reality which we hope will give better visibility for those exiting the Co-op car park. The Parish Council are concerned that the proposals for the development of the Maypole Meadow site may well cause some additional street parking problems so we will look at this issue again if this happens.

All the new houses in the Hinderclay Road Scheme were quickly taken up and the residents are very pleased with their new homes. The Parish Council has taken over the ownership of the triangular piece of land and the strip running behind these houses which has been planted with shrubs and small trees by the Housing Association. The Housing Association has also provided a fund which should be sufficient to maintain the area for five years by which time we hope all the new plantings will be established.

The next exciting project is the progress on the remainder of the land between the houses and the adjacent field. We have agreed a price with Suffolk County Council and now we are busy working out the costings of the two proposals for the use of this land. We shall also be seeking grant funding to finance the project. The setting up of allotments and of a Community Woodland will be a wonderful asset to our parishes. On behalf of the Council, I thank Councillor Joe Stacey very much for the extra work he is putting in researching these projects for the Council.

Leeann, our clerk, has been trying to complete the Registration of Parish-owned land throughout the year and Low Meadow has been registered successfully. The ROC Post site is proving more difficult though.

We have all spent quite a lot of time deciding to support the One Suffolk option in the Review of Local Government in Suffolk only to find that the Consultation had to be repeated so your Council agreed to reiterate its earlier decision for Suffolk CC and MSDC to become one council.

During the year we have agreed to provide a further dog litter bin in Water Lane and the Council is pleased that all of the original bins are well used. There have been very few complaints about dog fouling this year so we thank all dog owners for clearing up after their dogs.

During the year the crime rate for our parishes has been quite low and I would like to record the Council's appreciation to Bob Clark and his team of Neighbourhood Watch volunteers for the part they play in helping to keep local crime rates low.

Jeffrey Rose, our stalwart street sweeper of the last fifteen years has decided to retire. We are most grateful to Jeffrey for the efficient and good natured way he has carried out his work keeping our pavements clean and tidy. We say a special last "Thank you" to Jeffrey. The new street sweeper is Tim Gaddis of Hinderclay and we are sure he will carry on the high standard of work.

Thank you also to Charles and Sara Michell, our County and District Councillors who attend most of our meetings and inform us of all that goes on with their councils. Finally, I thank my fellow councillors for their help and participation in the work that the Council does throughout the year.

The Parish Council's budget for the year ending 31st March 2009 was set at £13,515 against which the District Council was asked to collect a Parish Precept of £11,400. This represented a rise of 4.5% on the 2007/08 budget. Earmarked funds totalling £4,700 were carried forward from 2007/08. Payments for the year totalled only £10,190 as plans for the new allotments at Hinderclay Road were delayed.

During the year the Council continued to support local good causes, giving £700 to assist with the maintenance of the churchyards at both parish churches and £300 to the Rickinghall Day Centre. The East Anglia Air Ambulance, Suffolk Accident Rescue, Diss Citizens Advice Bureau, Eye Volunteer Centre, Pyramids Playbus, R&B Neighbourhood Watch, and the annual Father Christmas event all benefitted from financial grants totalling £672.

The Council undertakes to provide:

Street Lights: There are 25 Parish owned street lights, which cost £1,110 to maintain during 2008/09.

Street Sweeping: Although arranged by the Parish Council, the cost is met by a grant from the District Council. A claim to cover all related costs is made to the District Council every quarter.

Public Rights of Way: The Parish Council carries out some grass cutting over and above that undertaken by the County Council and the cost of the works undertaken by the Parish Council has been covered by a grant from the County Council in recent years. Because the County-run scheme is decided on a year-to-year basis, the Parish Council continues to budget for the work to ensure that funds are available to keep up the work should this grant no longer be available.

The Council carried forward earmarked funds including £200 for IT equipment and £1300 to ensure that it could meet the cost of one parish election being called outside of the four-year cycle. A further £1000 was earmarked for a fund for replacement street lights. Whilst we are insured for accidental damage, normal wear and tear is not covered and our lighting is now made up of mostly aging stock. Finally, £2,000 was set aside for the proposed allotments at Hinderclay Road but that project was on hold for much of 2008 waiting for SCC to put a value on the property. Finally, the Council continued to maintain a reserve of just under a third of its budget to ensure that it can fulfil its obligations at all times.

2009/10: The total Budget set for 2009/10 is £28,195, which includes earmarked funds of £10,500 carried over from 2008/09. This included £1,500 promised to the Rickinghall Village Hall for replacement of the aging playground equipment, making a total of £3,500 pledged to this project (with the additional £2,000 in this year's budget). The £2,000 set aside for the allotments has been carried forward yet again and added to with a further £1,500 in the budget. The Council has every hope that this project will come to fruition this year as the Council have agreed to purchase the proposed site from SCC and grants for purchase of the property are being sought. This year the District Council has been asked to collect a Parish precept (Parish element of the Council Tax) of £12,000, representing a rise of just over 5% on the previous year.

My report this year is the last in the 4 year term of this County Council. County Council elections take place on 4th June along with the European elections.

It has been a year of decision-making, hard work, achievement and change: and thus the busiest period on the County Council in my 12 years as your Councillor.

Local Government Review At the end of it we also find ourselves in the Government's hands as to the future governance of the county. The Boundary Committee is still examining the best way to establish unitary authorities in Suffolk, how best to create, in place of County Council and District Councils, a unitary system to run the services we provide under one roof. I hope personally they will end up by recommending to the Sec. of State the creation of a single Council to run all our services in Suffolk: the "One Suffolk" solution. I believe in a united Suffolk, not a divided Suffolk. A single voice for Suffolk will give us more clout with Government to fund our projects and services: will keep our resources (residential homes, road networks, schools and transport) together for efficiency purposes: and will cut costs and taxes by reducing duplication. It will make it simpler for the public, too.

Opportunity remains for pressing the Boundary Committee to adopt the above solution – the consultation period ends on 14th May and I urge parish councils yet again to state their opinion. One last push.

Achievements The administration has brought in the lowest Council tax rise -2.45% - since the County Council was created in 1974. This is the result of a policy which concentrates on efficiency and good internal management and on reducing wastage. Reserves have increased making the Council better able to help the vulnerable members of our society during the recession and to support small businesses.

The Audit Commission has awarded Suffolk County Council a 4-star rating, the only 4 star rating in the region, in recognition of the quality of services provided at the best value for money. This rating is certified as "Excellent". The next county nearest to Suffolk which has been awarded such a high ranking is Gloucestershire!!

Endeavour House in Ipswich has been the HQ of the County Council for the past 4 years. The administration has a conscious policy to use it as a public building which plays host to art exhibitions, displays, trade fares, celebrations and awards ceremonies – anything relevant to Suffolk. As Chairman of the Council I regularly welcome school councils, and groups as diverse as the East Suffolk WI (celebrating their 90th anniversary this year) and Headteachers from China.

My role as your councillor has been to inform my 20 parishes through their parish councils, to help and advise where I can, and to use the locality budget in assisting the vital local projects which keep rural Suffolk alive. Thank you, as always, for your valued interest and support, which keeps me alive too!

Charles Michell, County Councillor, Hartismere Division, SCC

I shall start with the good news. A Quality of Life Survey by the Halifax has proclaimed Mid Suffolk as the Best District to live in the whole of Britain. Though the Council cannot take all the credit for this great accolade, not even for the extra hours of sunshine, we do believe that our management of the environment and housing and our emphasis on health have contributed to the wellbeing of our residents. As Portfolio Holder for Housing I am pleased with this report. Long may it continue. I hope we shall not be overrun by too many people flooding into Mid Suffolk in order to feel better and live longer! Everything in moderation.

One of the ingredients of a pleasant place to live is the degree of cleanliness and fresh air. We have concentrated carefully on disposal and collection of waste. The residents of Mid Suffolk have become very skilled at separating their household waste so that we are maintaining our 40% recycling rate which is among the highest in the country. The subscription garden waste service now has 3800 subscribers. The Waste and Environmental Service department will now offer the scheme to a waiting list of approximately 300 households followed by promotion across the District.

Mid Suffolk has also won a Clean Britain Award and has been placed in the top 7 cleanest Districts in Britain. We were given a Five star gold grading, the highest grading possible.

Affordable housing is one of our top priorities. In conjunction with our Housing Association partners we have achieved some excellent housing developments incorporating the best features of design and environmentally friendly building materials. These are the buildings of the future, economical to maintain and easy to live in, providing a happy atmosphere. The Minister of State, Baroness Andrews, came down to open one of these and complimented everyone involved on this revolutionary, state of the art, development.

The Mid Suffolk Council Tax rise for 09/10 is lower yet again at 3.5%, a rise of £4.99 per year (10p per week) for Band D residents. We have made a special effort to keep it low in these difficult economic times. With Government funding insufficient to keep our services running at the level we expect we have insuperable problems to cope with. It is already a daunting task. That is why I would like to see in Suffolk a Unitary Authority – a Single Unitary Council if possible – which can maintain all our services efficiently. We cannot achieve this on the level of Government funding we receive at present.

I shall continue to play an active part on Mid Suffolk District Council and strive for its continued success. Once again thank you for your support and understanding. It is a pleasure to attend parish councils and hear local issues, and a privilege to be able to help residents with their problems.

Sara Michell, District Councillor, Rickinghall/Walsham Ward, MSDC

I have now been with the constabulary for just over 2 years and have enjoyed my time so far. A lot of change has happened in this relatively short period of time however I have had continual support from members of the community within Rickinghall and Botesdale. I would like to thank you all personally for your help as without it my role would be much more difficult.

As many of you will be aware the SNT shift pattern has recently changed once again to allow more officers to be on duty at once and therefore cover more events at a time. The NRT (neighbourhood response team) has also had a shift change to allow 24hr emergency cover in the rural areas. This means that you would no longer have to wait for a unit to attend from Stowmarket Between 11pm and 7am as there are now officers on duty at Eye and Debenham.

The villages have had their ups and downs during the past year as you can see from the crime figures bellow. Between April 1st 2008 and April 1st 2009 there were 76 crimes recorded between the two villages of Rickinghall and Botesdale.

During the same period from April 1st 2007 – April 1st 2008 there were 59 crimes recorded. This increase is partly due to the fact that we have been actively encouraging people to report crimes and several offences during the past year would not have previously been reported were it not for the hard work of our local NHW coordinators who have stressed how important it is that the Police are made aware of all crime no matter how small or irrelevant it may seem to the victim.

The types of crime are as follows:

Theft offences 20

Criminal damage offences 16 (mainly motor vehicle)

Burglary offences 15 (6 of which no entry was gained)

Drugs offences 7

Malicious communications offences 4

Driving offences 4

Assault offences 4

Harassment offences 2

Accosting offences 1

Wound without intent 1

Interference with a vehicle 1

Violence to secure an entry 1

Public order offences 1

Other 1

Several of the offences this year also have occurred to outbuildings and we have tried to combat this by setting up a garden security advice day which took place on 14th March 2009 at Rickinghall village hall. The idea behind this was to promote security to sheds and outbuildings. Over 100 leaflets were given out.

We also promoted cycle security earlier in the year and had a good day with many children bringing their bikes along to be postcode marked and collect free safety equipment and padlocks.

There have been recent reports of underage drinking in the village on Friday evenings. We are working closely with the youth club to provide somewhere for the teenagers of the village to go on a Friday. There are guidelines in place at the youth club and no alcohol is allowed in the premises or anyone under the influence. With the warmer weather on the way we will be conducting patrols with a view to confiscating any alcohol found on young persons and to identify where the alcohol is being purchased.

PCSO 3127 Kegge

Last year we told you about Miller's Wood, the small wood on the south side of Mill Road in Botesdale and now we have to confess that we have already changed the name to Miller's Orchard. There is a good reason for this as we were fortunate enough to have the area inspected by Paul Read of Thrandeston, an expert in traditional orchards, who visited the site two or three times. The wood is better described as an orchard as it contains a large variety of fruit trees some of which could date from the Victorian era. Traditional orchards are apparently hotspots for biodiversity in the countryside, support a wide range of wildlife and have recently been identified as well worthy of preservation. The exact identification of all the varieties of fruit trees is not complete as some trees did not bear much fruit in 2008 due to spring frosts but it seems as though there are a few apple trees, three or four varieties of plum and about twenty examples of *Prunus cerasifera* which is a cherry plum or Myrobalan. Within the cherry plums there are three or even four varieties which fruit at different times to give a continuous supply; planted at a time when domestic gardens and orchards were an important source of food and maybe income. There are also a number of coppiced *Corylus Maxima* which produces cob or hazel nuts, the exact variety being unknown. All this plus some young walnut trees and varieties of blackberry make it an interesting site but it will need careful management once all the trees have been identified. So far, apart from some general attendance, the only big job we have had done is to pollard a very large willow which was leaning over and deemed to be dangerous. Earlier in the year there was a display of snowdrops and now, at the end of March, the fruit trees are in flower.

At Low Meadow, at the far end of Rickinghall village, the trees and bushes we planted the previous year are doing well and we have continued with regular grass cutting and raking in the summer, with the long term aim of reducing the fertility of the soil. Already we have been rewarded with an increased showing of wild flowers and it will be interesting to see how this develops. The Rickinghall Women's Institute very kindly gave us a small oak tree and that has been planted fairly close to one of the seats so that in about twenty years time one will be able to sit in the shade.

Barwoods are always looking for new sites that can be purchased with the aid of grants, or otherwise acquired, and then be converted to woodland or wild spaces but they are not easy to find. We are currently writing to one landowner about a small area of land in Botesdale and, if Rickinghall Parish Council do succeed in acquiring the two and a half acre site to the rear of the affordable housing we will be very interested in working with them to develop the site for allotments and woodland.

We would be very pleased to hear from people who are interested in our aims of providing woodland and wild spaces for the benefit of wildlife and the use of the community and households can join as Ordinary Members for £3 per annum or for £10 per annum per household you can become Friends of Barwoods.

The purchase and installation of the Ultra Sound and X-ray machines were the highlight of this year. Both are now in use and proving to be of immense benefit to patients, doctors and Health Centre staff.

Other purchases during the year included the annual supply of liquid nitrogen for the Cryojet and an annual subscription to a wide range of magazines for the waiting area; nine label printers to speed the administration process; a new Blood Pressure monitor, diabetic booklets and an examination couch for the Ultra-sonographers. A Urology clinic has been established as well as a MacMillan Nurses clinic and two chairs were bought for the patient and companion.

A touch screen has been provided in the Health Centre Reception for checking in for appointments rather than going to the desk, thus alleviating the pressure on the receptionists.

The donations received over the past year included many generous contributions from local families in memory of their loved ones who were patients of the Health Centre. The money will be put to very good use and it is hoped that the help provided to current patients will be of comfort to those who have lost friends and relatives.

However, it is not only financially that the Friends support the Health Centre, but in several other ways. During the 'Flu days' volunteers assist the Health Centre staff, as they do when the patient surveys take place and Mrs Pam Cornell is a great help during Baby Clinic on Friday mornings from 10-12.

During the year the generosity of individuals and charitable organisations has enabled us to continue our activities and expenditure, and we hope that will continue to be the case. The hard work and commitment of our supporters extends beyond 'The Friends' and the Committee would like to express its appreciation and thanks to all those involved, in particular Doug Segal, who gave his services free and enabled us to raise just over £1000 through an 'Evening of Mind Magic'.

Sadly, Mrs Doris Balmer, who had been a Committee member for 15 years, and Treasurer from 1993 to 2002, lost her battle with cancer and died on 31st December 2008. She was a hard working and generous supporter of the Friends, and will be greatly missed by us.

There are changes taking place in the layout of the Health Centre with the installation of the new Pharmacy which it is hoped will be completed by mid-Summer.

Dr Susan Drake is taking early retirement this Spring after 20 years of dedicated service at Botesdale. We wish her a long and happy retirement.

If anyone would like to join the Friends, there are membership forms at the Health Centre or you can contact the Secretary, Mrs Carole Fitt, 39 Ryders Way, Rickinghall, IP22 1ER (Tel: 01379 890878/email: carolefitt@talktalk.net)

The past year has been a relatively quiet one for Neighbourhood Watch in the two villages.

The team of 16 Coordinators in Rickingham, and 11 in Botesdale, have continued to be the eyes and ears of their respective areas, acting in support of our local Safer Neighbourhood Team, and in particular our Community Support Officer Nic Kegge.

While clearly we cannot be complacent, we have had a number of months during the year with no recorded crimes at all, and we remain very much a low crime area.

The most significant crimes have been at commercial premises, although three thefts of heating oil from houses and the 'keying' of two cars have also been of particular concern. Incidents of criminal damage and anti-social behaviour, while annoying and sometimes distressing for those affected, have declined over the year.

I believe that one reason for this decline has been that residents do now tend to report more incidents, which may in the short term distort figures but does result in an increased Police presence in the villages. More residents not only notice the unusual, but report it either to Neighbourhood Watch or direct to the Police. There's a lot of truth in the slogan '**Crime Cannot Flourish in a Community that Cares**'.

Neighbourhood Watch and Police contact numbers are published every month in the Parish Magazine.

Bob Clark

Last year was dominated by the fiasco of the Bottle Banks, and by discovery of the need to replace much equipment in the Play Area.

The Bottle Bank situation has now been resolved, albeit not very satisfactorily, and with inconvenience to users and financial loss to the Hall accounts.

As for the Play Area, we are continuing to raise money towards our £35,000 target, with particularly generous support from some people in and around the village. We hope to have the new equipment in place by late summer, and are looking forward to once again having good facilities here for our youngsters.

Meanwhile we are smartening up the Hall too. The outside is to be painted for us by a Community Payback team, while the inside is to be repainted by committee members. No more orange walls!

The Hall continues to be heavily used, with nearly 400 bookings last year, and the Games Area has been used even more than before since its resurfacing, with many extra bookings for tennis as well as for netball and for soccer.

We are fortunate with our Hall and its facilities, and continue to strive to provide an even better asset for the village.

Bob Clark, Chairman

Aims and Background

Rickinghall PCC together with the Rector, the Reverend Chris Norburn, has the responsibility of caring for all the people of the parishes and the buildings of St Mary's Church and churchyard, Rickinghall Interior, and the graveyard of St Mary's Rickinghall Superior. These parishes are united with Redgrave-cum-Botesdale to form one benefice.

Parochial Church Council (PCC) Membership

Members of the PCC are either ex-officio or elected by the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) in accordance with the Church Representation Rules.

This year has seen the Rector's phased return to work from Mothering Sunday with valuable support from lay readers and lay elders, the dedication of two new churchwardens, and many prayers. During the first part of the year and on occasions when the Rector was ill we have continued to have support from Revd. Graham House, Canon Norburn and Canon Sally Fogden; also support from the readers and lay elders, for all of which we are very grateful.

The PCC met 3 times as an individual PCC and 3 times as a joint PCC with Redgrave-cum-Botesdale during the past year.

Ecumenical Events

As well as the five united services held on the 5th Sunday of the month, there was a joint open-air service on Good Friday. We had a united Pentecost Service at the Upper Church, which was preceded by a walk from St Mary's Inferior. This was very well attended and the talk was given by Bishop Nigel. It was followed by a picnic in the church.

In February two lent courses were well attended, one in the benefice on 'holiness' and one run by the deanery on 'healing'.

The Church

Jean Sheehan, churchwarden, put in an enormous amount of work during Open Churches Week. Inside the church there were displays from Suffolk Wildlife and other local wildlife groups and there was a talk and slide-show in the evening. No further repairs have been carried out on the church this year.

The Churchyard

This year we received a grant from National Lottery Breathing Places to encourage wildlife in the churchyard. This has changed the way the grass is cut, so that large areas of the churchyard have been uncut during the spring and summer months. Suffolk Wildlife identified the types of wild trees and flowers and it was found that the churchyard contains 76 different species of wild flowers. Bat boxes were also installed on trees.

The Parish Magazine

This continues to be published throughout the year and goes to every household in the three villages of the Benefice. Our thanks to Charles and Lesley Greenhough and Dr. Bill Cordeaux for all their hard work.

The Life of the Church

Services held at St. Mary's continue with Holy Communion, Family Services and Evening Prayer. Glee Club meets every 2 weeks, either at Botesdale village hall or Rickinghall village hall.

Three **house groups** continue to meet throughout the year, one on Monday evenings, and two on Tuesday mornings. They meet for Bible teaching and fellowship. This year, a meeting called '**What Now God?**' has met approximately once a month in Rickinghall church to pray for God's guidance in the direction of the churches in the benefice.

Glee Club (God loves everyone, everywhere)

Glee Club (the Parish churches children's group) continues under the leadership of Barbara Norburn, Janie Whitehead and Patrick Miles with occasional help from parents. Glee Club meets on the 2nd Sunday in Rickinghall Village Hall and joins the congregation for the last part of the communion service, and also on the 4th Sunday in Botesdale Village Hall. In July the event Adults Come to Glee Club took place in Rickinghall Village Hall.

Child Protection

Due to recent changes and forthcoming changes in legislation The Rector, Patrick Miles, Barbara Norburn, Jill Porter, and Janie Whitehead completed in the autumn a seminar on safeguarding children and vulnerable young people organized jointly by the Diocese and Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board and presented by Mr. Gavin Stone a member of the Diocesan staff. Jill Porter continues as Child Protection officer for the benefice, and also has responsibility for the protection of vulnerable adults.

The Ministry of Christian Healing

This is co-ordinated by Lay Elder Mrs. Ruth Powell, continues after the 10.30am services and as requested at other times. Ruth gave a presentation of this ministry to a Joint PCC meeting in September. She described how the team worked and shared some of the very positive feedback that they have received from those who have sought this ministry. Many have truly benefited from this ministry through healing and the assurance that God has guided them and that Jesus has met them at their point of need.

Deanery Confirmation Service

As is the norm the Deanery had an annual confirmation service. This year it was the turn of the South Hartismere Benefice to host the service. Many were confirmed including 5 young people and 1 adult from this Benefice who after suitable preparation braved the severe winter conditions to attend the service conducted by the Diocesan Bishop the Right Revd Nigel Stock on Sunday 23rd November. (It snowed throughout the service!)

Communion Before Confirmation

Father Andrew from the Eye benefice came to talk to us at a joint PCC meeting in November about children aged 8 and older, taking Communion before being confirmed. This would only happen after suitable preparation for those who wish to do this. Those present seemed to be in favour of adopting such a policy. It is hoped that this will become a Deanery-wide policy. This is going to be discussed at future meetings to decide if we wish to proceed with this idea.

Future Events in 2009

- May 31st Pentecost walk, service and picnic starting off at 10.30am at St Mary's Church, Redgrave, going on to All Saints, Redgrave for service and picnic.
- July 4th Church Outing to Knettishall Heath from 12noon for picnic lunch.
- Sept 20th Harvest Services at 3pm in St Mary's Church, Redgrave.
Harvest Lunch – 12.00 for 12.30pm at All Saints, Redgrave. Soup and bread free – other food bring and share.
- Oct 4th Harvest Services at 3pm in Rickinghall Church.
- Nov 22nd Confirmation Service at Botesdale Chapel of Ease in the evening.

Full Reports are available on request.

On behalf of Rickinghall St Mary's PCC
Sue White

This year Rickingham WI celebrates its 65th Anniversary – a very pleasing achievement – and we will be holding a party at our birthday meeting in April, with a meal, a cake and a guest speaker.

The WI continues to thrive in Rickingham, as it does across Suffolk and nationally. We offer women friendship and fun, and the chance to meet other women of all ages, in a pleasant environment. We enjoy our monthly meetings and there is always a lot of laughter to be heard. We have continued to open some of our meetings to all in the community – male and female – and we have a good and appreciative attendance on those occasions.

Our membership in 2008 was 27 and this year it is 29. We have an average attendance of 23 members and usually several visitors at our meetings, and all are warmly welcomed.

We fulfil the WI aims by giving a wide variation of speakers and topics each month, and in addition we offer the opportunity for members to attend social events and courses provided by our County Federation on subjects ranging from crafts – art, embroidery, card making, pewter ware etc – to sports such as darts, tennis, bowls, petanque, swimming, archery and last year even gliding and scuba diving. At Rickingham we also have an annual Bursary for one member to attend our own WI College, Denman at Abingdon, on a two day course of her choice.

We concern ourselves in events of importance nationally and internationally and this year this has included violence against women, the difficulties in the fishing industry, climate change, the conditions of mentally ill offenders in prisons, and the latest is the health of the bee population.

Our charity rules encourage us to support local causes and we have donated during the past year to the Friends of the Health Centre Scanner Appeal and the East Anglian Children's Hospice at Quidenham.

Like most organisations and charities, we need to hold regular fund raising events. We are grateful for the support of local people in the village and surrounding areas for the wonderful turnout we get at our twice yearly jumble sales; we seem to have acquired a reputation for good value as there are always queues outside before we open! We also provide afternoon teas for visiting groups and organisations, and one particular group now comes every year, calling at Rickingham for their tea on the way home from their outings.

We look forward to welcoming more visitors, or new members, to our meetings in the future.

Gwen Smith

I was elected as Chairman of the Twinning Association last year and would like to start by expressing my appreciation of the good work done by all of the Committee. It has been a good year in terms of our events, which have all been successful.

The Quiz Night went well as did the Spring Ramble. The garden party was a great success in all senses. Less successful in terms of numbers attending and revenue received was the Christmas Barn Dance but for those who came it was great fun.

The highlight of the year was our visit from our French friends in Tinteniac in October. The weekend was short but very enjoyable thanks to the warm welcome from our hosting families, the French determination to have a good time and mutual friendship and respect. It is always good to renew contacts and make new friends. We were indebted to the kindness of three families who were not members who hosted and I suspect surprised themselves by what a good time they had. Highlights were the Saturday evening dance and hog roast when we presented them with a locally produced wooden well to take back to France, which they have used for charitable fundraising. The younger people enjoyed their trip to Pleasurewood Hills. We are planning on a return visit this October.

We very much need new members if we are to be able to host and visit in such numbers to make the most of the good will which exists. Please contact me on 890582 or peterstanway@lineone.net.

Peter Stanway, Chairman

St Botolph's Primary School - Report 2009**Appendix 13**

This has been another busy year for St Botolphs Primary School with many exciting events. The most significant achievement has been that OFSTED has taken the school off their 'Notice to Improve' (April 2008) and has recognised some of the school's strengths.

"Pupils respond well to the school's strong ethos of care and respect for others, feel welcomed and want to learn. They enjoy school and show good attitudes to learning and to each other."

The school appreciates how Mrs Linda Foxtan (the previous Headteacher) drove the school forward with her strong leadership, thus restoring its former good reputation. It has been a privilege to take over such a dynamic school community. Many of you will know that I have worked in the school before (1994-1999) whilst my children were here. It was a very happy and fulfilling period in my teaching career. Mr Nigel Rhodes (Headteacher from 1994 until 2007) encouraged me to take on a leadership role so I spent two years as a Deputy and another 7 years as Headteacher of a village school in Norfolk. These were very happy years. After this I was ready for a new challenge and so that is how I came to return to Botesdale.

The academic year, since September 2008, has been hard work but rewarding. The Christmas term was especially hectic, culminating in a concert in Parkview Chapel, a stunning 'Shepherd's Delight' production by the younger children and a fantastic Christmas Fayre organised by the Friends. The school was visited by the celebrated local artist Ned Pamphilon. He spent a week in school, transforming the children's ideas into a huge mural in the atrium, set against a colourful rainbow background. Art displays are a special feature of the school; children queue up to join the lunch time and after-school art clubs. As you walk through the school you can see the children's enthusiasm and the dedication of the staff reflected in many interesting and colourful displays.

Last term the school hosted the French (RBRTA) visitors' arrival. A group of children entertained them and showed them round the school. They were brilliant ambassadors for the school and their villages. I hope this will encourage new families to join the

twinning association especially since all our children will be learning French from the age of 8.

This term we welcomed back Mrs Welby after her maternity leave. She has now been offered a post in another school nearer home, so after six years teaching the younger children, she will be missed. Mrs Rush our chief dinner lady left last term to spend more time with her grandchild. She had worked here since the school opened and has looked after over 500 children over the years. Mrs Butcher is now in charge at lunchtime and she is currently training up the Yr 6 children as Play Leaders, thus giving them some responsibility!

We are thrilled with our new computers in the activity areas and some of the children have been discovering the new Learning Platform. This means they can access a wealth of resources and discussion forums from home. ICT opportunities in education have increased at a rapid rate and we are keen to help our children take advantage the most recent improvements.

The Friends of the school have been busy organising the 'Easter Eggstravaganza' and next term they are holding another Children's Fashion Show. Last term the Friends organised a spectacular 'St Botolph's Got Talent' night. The hall was overflowing with proud parents and friends. We were very impressed with the range of talents demonstrated by the children and their eagerness to perform. We now have a brand new gazebo in the playground funded by our parents, a place to relax after walking or cycling to school, as well as an area for outdoor learning. We are very keen to attract new members to the committee as it is a small group of dedicated parents and staff who do most of the organising. We are looking for new members, from the local community, people who may have skills they are willing to share with the school and we particularly need some men!

Since September the school has enjoyed some themed weeks, such as the Europe week when all classes learned about the food, music, art and geography of other countries. Many parents and grandparents took part in the SHARE session on Italy with the Yr 2 children. We have also been deluged with extra visitors at lunchtime on special occasions, such as Mothers' Day (when we had over 50 extra for lunch). Parents are also regularly invited in for open assemblies. This is the children's opportunity to demonstrate their skills and accomplishments such as with performance poetry, music, singing and dance. On these occasions we award achievement certificates for swimming and other sports as well as for progress in work and for good behaviour.

Our families have been very generous in their support of many charities, both local and overseas. Last term, for Harvest Assembly, we raised money for UNICEF to support victims of the hurricanes in Haiti. We have also raised money for Children in Need and for the East Anglia Children's Hospice. Most recently we collected over £400 for Comic Relief. Since September, children have designed and paraded hats and wacky hair-dos as well as dressing in period costume for the Tudor Day and the Victorian Christmas at Gressenhall. Their parents produced brilliant outfits for these occasions which I'm sure, will be embedded in the children's memories.

There have been numerous visits to farms, woods, art galleries (London) as well as the annual visit to Aylmerton for all the Year 6s. These have all been very enjoyable occasions and the children have learnt a great deal from them. This week's trip to Thornham (Year 2s) was no exception despite the hail, thunder and lashing rain.

Our latest production, An African Story, was performed by the Year 3 and 4 classes. They made some impressive animal masks and colourful scenery. Everyone worked hard to bring this production together. It is an example of the excellent teamwork here at St Botolphs which has been a source of inspiration. I am looking forward to building on the school's successes and continuing to nurture strong links with our wider community.

Mrs Georgina Livingstone, Headteacher