

OFFHAM PARISH ANNUAL REVIEW 2012-2013

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

THIS HAS PROVED QUITE A BUSY YEAR FOR YOUR COUNCIL, FOR OFFHAM AND THE WHOLE COUNTRY. BOTH THE OLYMPICS AND THE JUBILEE WERE CELEBRATED IN OFFHAM IN VARIOUS WAYS AND WE WERE PLEASED TO INVITE SEVERAL GUESTS CONNECTED WITH THESE EVENTS TO VILLAGE ACTIVITIES. THE ELECTED COUNCIL, REINVIGORATED BY SOME NEW MEMBERS HAS BEGUN A NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE LOOK OF THIS ALREADY ATTRACTIVE VILLAGE AND HAS ALSO BEEN ACTIVE IN ATTEMPTING TO RESOLVE A NUMBER OF LONG STANDING PROBLEMS IN THE AREA. THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING TO BE HELD ON MARCH 21ST, IN THE VILLAGE HALL, WILL BE FOCUSED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TWO OTHER VILLAGES THAT HAVE REALLY TAKEN THE "BULL BY THE HORNS" BY DIRECTLY INVOLVING THEMSELVES WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF PROPERTY LOCATED IN KEY AREAS. WE WILL ALSO BE LEARNING MORE OF THE GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE RECENTLY SET UP UNDER THE BANNER OF "THE COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID". PLEASE DO COME ALONG TO THIS MEETING AS YOUR SUPPORT WILL BE ESSENTIAL IF OFFHAM IS GOING TO GET INVOLVED IN THIS EXCITING NEW DEVELOPMENT.

YOU MAY ALREADY BE AWARE THAT THE COUNCIL HAS ATTEMPTED TO BUILD UP ITS ABILITY TO USE E-CORRESPONDENCE FOR ITS COMMUNICATION WITH PARISHIONERS. FOR THIS REASON, OPC HAS RESOLVED TO ISSUE THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL REVIEW IN THIS FORMAT, BUT WILL ALSO OFFER BASIC PAPER COPIES FOR THOSE WHO REQUEST THEM. IT WAS ALSO DECIDED TO LIMIT THE GLOSSIER FORMAT OF LAST YEAR TO ONE EVERY FOUR YEARS, WHICH WOULD THEN BE DESIGNED TO REFLECT THE LIFE OF A PARTICULAR PERIOD OF OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL. I HOPE THAT YOU ARE ALSO AWARE OF THE OPC WEBSITE www.offhampc.kentparishes.gov.uk WHICH IS NOW PROPERLY UP AND RUNNING. LYNNE MACKIE, OUR CLERK, KEEPS THIS UP TO DATE AND IT SHOULD CONTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT OUR MEETINGS AND OTHER ON-GOING DEVELOPMENTS. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET MATERIAL ADDED THAT RELATES TO A VILLAGE EVENT, THEN PLEASE FORWARD IT TO HER BY EMAIL.

FINANCE

THE PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES HAVE COME UNDER INCREASED PRESSURE THIS YEAR WITH THE SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE ANNUAL ALLOWANCE GIVEN TO US BY TONBRIDGE AND MALLING FOR THE GENERAL MAINTENANCE OF "GREEN SPACES". ONE OF THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THIS HAS BEEN THE MONIES ALLOWED TO US FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE CHURCHYARD, WHICH IS NOW VERY SHORT OF THE ACTUAL COSTS OF DOING THIS WORK. TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, THE "BEST VALUE" CONTRACTOR AT THE TIME THE BUDGET WAS SET WAS SOMEHOW COMPROMISED BY THE VERY WET START TO THE SEASON AND HIS CONTRACT WAS TERMINATED BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT. THE BETTS FAMILY KINDLY TOOK OVER THE WORK PRO TEM AND EVENTUALLY A MORE RELIABLE, BUT MORE EXPENSIVE CONTRACTOR TOOK OVER. AS THE NEW CONTRACTOR PREFERRED TO OPERATE A GRASS CUT AS NECESSARY ROUTINE, THIS MADE IT DIFFICULT TO BUDGET, SO THE COUNCIL HAVE HANDED OVER CONTROL OF THE CONTRACTOR TO THE CHURCH. THE COUNCIL THEREFORE NOW DIRECTLY HANDS OVER THE ALLOWANCE FROM TONBRIDGE AND MALLING TOGETHER WITH A "TOP-UP" AMOUNT APPROACHING £250 PER ANNUM. WHEREAS THIS TOTAL AMOUNT MAY NOT QUITE MATCH THE DESIRED SPEND, IT DOES ALLOW THE CHURCH TO PRIORITISE THE WORK AND ALLOWS THEM TO HANDLE DIRECTLY ANY COMPLAINTS OR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS. IT IS PROBABLY WORTH NOTING THAT, NO DOUBT FOR HISTORICAL REASONS, CHURCHYARD MAINTENANCE WAS

HANDLED THROUGH THE PARISH COUNCIL IN OFFHAM, BUT THIS ARRANGEMENT IS NOT THAT COMMON IN OTHER VILLAGES THROUGHOUT KENT.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE FOR THE COMING YEAR, THE LOCAL RATE HAS BEEN REBASED, EFFECTIVELY REMOVING A NUMBER OF PROPERTIES AT WHICH OCCUPANTS RECEIVE HOUSING BENEFITS FROM THE NUMBER COUNTED FOR TAXATION PURPOSES. IN OFFHAM'S CASE THIS WOULD MEAN A LOSS OF PRECEPT MONIES OF ALMOST ONE THOUSAND POUNDS PER ANNUM, ALTHOUGH A SHORT TERM GRANT HAS BEEN AWARDED TO MAKE UP FOR MUCH OF THIS IN THE CURRENT YEAR. HOWEVER, THE COUNCIL HAS RELUCTANTLY HAD TO BUDGET FOR A 2% INCREASE IN THE "PENNY RATE" TO HELP MAKE UP THE SHORTFALL.

OUTSTANDING PROJECT WORK SHOULD HOPEFULLY MOVE CLOSER TO A CONCLUSION THIS YEAR. THERE IS NOW A STRONG EXPECTATION THAT THE PLANS TO INSTALL SPEED INDICATORS AT THE VILLAGE GATEWAYS WILL BE FUNDED AFTER THE COUNTY ELECTIONS IN MAY.

THE COUNCIL HAS RESOLVED TO BEGIN THE RESTORATION OF THE VILLAGE POND IN COMP LANE. THE COUNCIL WILL WORK WITH THE SURROUNDING LAND OWNERS TO CLEAR TREES AND WILL FORMALLY REGISTER OWNERSHIP OF THE POND. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE PROMISE OF HELP FROM A NUMBER OF RESIDENTS IN THE VILLAGE IN ACHIEVING THIS. IT IS HOWEVER QUITE A SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL UNDERTAKING, SO ANY FURTHER OFFERS OF HELP FROM INDIVIDUALS OR INSTITUTIONS WOULD BE VERY WELCOME. WE HAVE ALSO ALREADY ASKED HIGHWAYS ABOUT THE PROJECT AND HAVE DISCOVERED THAT SOME SIGNIFICANT UNDERPINNING OF THE ROAD IS NECESSARY. LET US HOPE THAT KHS ARE ABLE TO UNDERTAKE THIS WORK SOON, AS IT MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE ANYTHING MAJOR CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH THE POND ITSELF.

HAVING RECEIVED SOME RATHER RIDICULOUS QUOTES [AROUND £15000!] FOR BEAUTIFICATION OF THE VILLAGE GATEWAYS, WE ARE NOW LOOKING AT A DIFFERENT APPROACH, HAVING JUST IDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE PREPARED TO WORK FOR US AT SENSIBLE RATES AND OFFERS OF DONATIONS OF KEY MATERIALS. CLLR WENDY WILLIAMS DESERVES MENTION FOR HER INDUSTRY ON THE RECREATION GROUND AND ELSEWHERE IN PUSHING HARD TO GET THIS WORK STARTED.

WORK TO COMPLETE THE RESURFACING OF THE TENNIS COURTS IS NOW WELL UNDER WAY AND SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE TIME THE NEW SEASON STARTS. LET US HOPE FOR A BETTER SUMMER THAN LAST YEAR!

THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRUST FUND TO GAIN OWNERSHIP OF PARCELS OF LAND IN KEY AREAS OF THE VILLAGE WILL BE ONE POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING. IF THIS IS THE CHOSEN ROUTE, IT WILL INEVITABLY INVOLVE SOME FUND-RAISING BUT, AS OUR SPEAKERS WILL TELL US, THERE ARE CLEARLY RELATIVELY PAIN FREE METHODS OF DOING THIS. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE ONE PLAN TO RAISE FUNDS IN ORDER TO KICK START THE PROCESS.

PLANNING:

WITH ONE EXCEPTION, THINGS HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY QUIET ON THE PLANNING FRONT THIS YEAR. THE EXCEPTION, OF COURSE, HAS BEEN THE PROPOSED AD PLANT AT BLAISE FARM. THE OPPOSITION TO THIS PLAN WAS MADE CLEAR AT THE SPECIAL VILLAGE PUBLIC MEETING CALLED AT THE END OF AUGUST. THIS MATTER WAS FINALLY BROUGHT TO A CONCLUSION AT THE KCC MEETING WHERE THE COUNCIL'S PLANNING COMMITTEE WERE EFFECTIVELY TOLD BY THE PLANNING OFFICERS THAT IT COULD NOT REFUSE THE APPLICATION AS THE REGULATORY AUTHORITY FOR OPERATIONS AT BLAISE FARM WAS THE

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY, WHICH HAD NOT RAISED ANY SPECIFIC OBJECTIONS AND, INDEED, HAD NEGLECTED EVEN TO MENTION THE ODOUR ISSUES IN ITS SUBMISSION. ALTHOUGH THE COUNTY COUNCILLORS EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLY SYMPATHY FOR THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE VILLAGE ISARAH HOHLER, MATTHEW BALFOUR, CLARE INNES AND MYSELF, KCC THEREFORE APPROVED THE PLAN WITH TWO MINOR CONCESSIONS IN TERMS OF MATERIALS HANDLING AND PLANT OPERATION. THE AUTOMATIC REFERRAL TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE WENT AHEAD AND WAS DULY WAIVED THROUGH AS OUR FOLLOW UP OBJECTION TO HIM WAS RULED OUT ON A TECHNICALITY, DESPITE ADDITIONAL LOBBYING FROM SIR JOHN STANLEY. PERHAPS THE ONLY REAL ACHIEVEMENT IN ALL THIS WAS TO DELIVER A HARSH "WAKE UP CALL" TO THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY, WHICH WAS AT LEAST PROPERLY REPRESENTED AT A SUBSEQUENT LIAISON MEETING AT WHICH IT INFORMED US THAT THE ODOUR ISSUE WAS NOW RECEIVING "A HIGHER PRIORITY!" WATCH THIS SPACE!

PERIODIC ODOUR PROBLEMS ARE STILL EXPERIENCED BY RESIDENTS AT THE EASTERN END OF THE VILLAGE AND ALSO IN PARTS OF KING'S HILL AND WEST MALLING. IT WAS EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTING THAT THE PLANNING GROUPS FROM THESE TWO COMMUNITIES FAILED TO STEP UP TO THE PLATE IN SETTING OUT STRONG OBJECTIONS TO THE APPLICATION. I BELIEVE THAT WE MADE OUR FEELINGS KNOWN ON THIS AND NOTED THAT WEST MALLING'S CHAIR, TRUDY DEAN DID SPEAK AT THE KCC MEETING AS A COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND LATER SET UP INTERVIEWS WITH RADIO KENT, WHICH INCLUDED OFFHAM RESIDENTS MOST AFFECTED BY THE PROBLEM.

ON A MORE POSITIVE NOTE IT IS PERHAPS WORTH ADDING THAT ALL MEETINGS HAVE BEEN ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF NES WHO CONTINUE TO BE PRO-ACTIVE IN SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO THE CURRENT PROBLEMS. IT IS TO EVERYONE'S CREDIT THAT ALL PARTIES ARE PREPARED TO WORK TOGETHER IN SPITE OF THE STRONG OPPOSITION THAT WE HAVE PUT UP AGAINST THE NEW PLANS. IT IS HOPED THAT THE AD PLANT MAY ACTUALLY GO SOME WAY TO ALLEVIATE THE CURRENT PROBLEMS. IT MAY WELL ACHIEVE THAT, AS LONG AS APPROPRIATE INVESTMENT IS ALSO UNDERTAKEN TO IMPROVE THE ORIGINAL PLANT ON SITE.

OFFHAM LANDFILL SITE:

THE LIAISON MEETINGS WITH WRG AND INFINIS NOW TAKE PLACE ON A SIX MONTHLY BASIS. ALTHOUGH MANY ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH SITE NOW SEEM UNDER CONTROL, OPC ARE AWARE THAT THE ANNUAL BUDGET FOR SITE MAINTENANCE IS PERHAPS NOT AS ROBUST AS IT NEEDS TO BE TO PROPERLY LIMIT WEED GROWTH. WE HAVE CERTAINLY CAMPAIGNED FOR REGULAR WEEDKILLING AND MOWING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOPE THAT OUR REQUESTS WILL BE HEEDED IN 2013/4. OUR NEXT LIAISON MEETING SHOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE NEXT YEAR'S WRG BUDGET FOR THE SITE IS FINALLY AGREED.

JOINT PARISH COUNCIL TRANSPORT CONSULTATION GROUP

THIS GROUP HAS EXPANDED SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THE PAST YEAR AND NOW INCLUDES FOURTEEN LOCAL COUNCILS AS MEMBERS. THE GROUP HAS TAKEN ON A SECRETARY TO HELP ARRANGE AND MINUTE ITS QUARTERLY MEETINGS AND TO DEAL WITH PRESS RELEASES. INVITED PROMINENT SPEAKERS ADDRESS THE GROUP ON KEY TRANSPORT ISSUES IN THE AREA. GIVEN ITS EXPANSION, THE GROUP IS ABLE TO EXERT MORE PRESSURE AS A LOBBYIST AND OUR AIM IS TO IMPROVE LOCAL TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT. PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE POLICE HAVE HELPED BRING ABOUT THE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SPEEDWATCH SCHEME AS REPORTED BELOW.

SPEEDWATCH

ALTHOUGH THIS HAS NOT BEEN ACTIVE OF LATE IN OFFHAM, MAINLY THROUGH DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE LACK OF BACK UP FROM THE POLICE, I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT, FOLLOWING REORGANIZATION, THE APPOINTMENT OF A FULL TIME CIVILIAN WORKING FOR THE POLICE, GUY ROLLINSON, TO OVERSEA SPEEDWATCH OPERATIONS IN KENT HAS LEAD TO A MUCH IMPROVED SERVICE. BETTER USE OF TECHNOLOGY, NOW ALLOWS THE LINKING OF REPORTS FROM VILLAGE OPERATIONS, ENABLING MULTIPLE OFFENDERS TO BE IDENTIFIED AND APPROPRIATE ACTION TAKEN. GUY ALSO GETS PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH SITE APPROVAL AND THE TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS. RESULTS FROM OTHER LOCAL VILLAGES INDICATE A MUCH MORE POSITIVE RESPONSE TO SPEEDING PROBLEMS AND FAR GREATER SUCCESS IN APPREHENDING OFFENDERS. WITH THIS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, WOULD IT BE A GOOD TIME TO RESTART SPEEDWATCH ACTIVITIES IN OFFHAM? ANY VOLUNTEERS?

BROADBAND

I HOPE THAT A NUMBER OF YOU HAVE FOLLOWED UP THE PREVIOUS ENCOURAGEMENT TO REGISTER YOUR VIEWS ON THE SLOW BROADBAND SPEEDS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN OFFHAM. THE MORE LOBBYING WE CAN DO ON THIS ISSUE THE BETTER. REPLACING THE COPPER CABLE LINKS FROM KING HILL WITH FIBRE OPTICS WOULD IMPROVE THE SPEED AVAILABILITY IN OFFHAM TENFOLD AND WOULD BE VERY WORTHWHILE. WE ARE TOLD THAT, AT PRESENT, THE ONLY VIABLE METHOD OF GAINING ACCESS TO FASTER SPEEDS IS TO USE SATELLITE RECEPTION, WHICH IS AVAILABLE HERE BUT AT HIGHER COST THAN NORMAL LANDLINE SERVICES.

VILLAGE EVENTS 2012/13

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING:

THIS WENT MARGINALLY OFF-PISTE IN 2012 AND FOCUSED ON HEALTH AND FITNESS IN THE COMMUNITY. THIS GAVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR VARIOUS GROUPS TO DISPLAY THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE FOR BOTH YOUNG AND OLD TO EXERCISE THEIR WAY TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE. DEMONSTRATIONS BY A LOCAL MARTIAL ARTS GROUP, GOLF PROFESSIONALS AND A ZUMBA CLASS LEADER. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION WAS ENCOURAGED IN THE LATTER TWO AS I DOUBT WHETHER ANYONE FELT CAPABLE OF STANDING UP TO THE KARATE EXPERTS. WE ALL HOWEVER LEARNED SOMETHING ABOUT SELF DEFENCE, ALTHOUGH THE MAIN MESSAGE SEEMED TO BE "GET IN FIRST"!

THE PANEL SESSION THAT FOLLOWED GAVE THE AUDIENCE THE CHANCE TO QUESTION SOME LEADING PROVIDERS AND PARTICIPANTS OF/IN RELATED ACTIVITIES. HOCKEY, CRICKET, GOLF AND BOWLS WERE ABLY REPRESENTED AND WE ALSO GAINED SOME VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO THE OLYMPIC HERITAGE OPTIONS FROM DUNCAN INNES, WHO LEADS THE OLYMPIC HERITAGE COMMITTEE.

THE OFFHAM SOCIETY:

THE OLYMPIC THEME WAS ALSO TAKEN UP BY THE APRIL MEETING WHICH LET US IN BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE OLYMPIC VENUES. VILLAGERS ALSO ENJOYED ANOTHER EXCELLENT EVENING OF WINE TASTING - [ALWAYS WELL ATTENDED!] HOSTED BY ERICA MARTIN AND A TALK ON SERIOUS CRIME BY A FORMER DCS DENNIS MCGOOKIN. THE TRIVIAL PURSUITS EVENING, HOSTED BY ROBIN TAYLOR, ABLY ASSISTED BY SUSIE AND SUE, WAS A HUGE SUCCESS AND SOLD OUT AGAIN. THE PROGRAMME FOR 2013 IS PRINTED BELOW:

THURSDAY, 9TH MAY. AGM FOLLOWED BY AN ILLUSTRATED TALK: "THE MAGIC OF THE MATTERHORN" BY GEORGE BIRD.

TUESDAY, 23RD JULY. TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR SHAKESPEARE'S "RICHARD THE THIRD", PERFORMED BY THE CHANGELING OPEN AIR THEATRE COMPANY AT GREAT COMP GARDENS.

SUNDAY 1ST SEPTEMBER. A LOCAL FOOTPATH WALK. MEET ON THE GREEN AT 2.15.

THURSDAY 3RD OCTOBER. [N.B. NOT WEDNESDAY AS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED]. TALK: "THE THAMES AND MEDWAY CANAL FROM ITS OPENING IN 1824 TO THE PRESENT DAY" BY BRIAN MACKNISH.

SATURDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER. TRIVIAL PURSUITS EVENING [7.45 FOR 8.00 PM]

MAY DAY:

THIS WAS AGAIN A MAJOR SUCCESS, DESPITE NOT BEING THE WARMEST OF SPRING DAYS! WITH ITS OLYMPIC THEME, OFFHAM'S DASH DOWN TOWN HILL WAS AN APPROPRIATE EVENT IN 2012, ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE YOUNGSTERS SEEMED TO ENJOY THE MINI MOTORCYCLES AVAILABLE ON THE QUINTAIN SECTION OF THE GREEN AS AN ALTERNATIVE PASTIME. THE EVENT PROVIDES A WELCOME CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL ACTIVITIES AND CHARITIES. CONGRATULATIONS TO IAN BARWICK AND HIS TEAM FOR ORGANIZING SUCH A SPLENDID DAY IN 2012.

THE DATE FOR MAY DAY, 2013 IS SATURDAY, MAY 4TH. ANNE TURNER AND CLARE INNES ARE MASTERMINDING THINGS THIS YEAR. I NOTE THEY ARE SEEKING HELP WITH PARTICULAR ROLES ON THE COMMITTEE - IN PARTICULAR A RAFFLE ORGANIZER. PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM IF YOU ARE ABLE TO HELP.

OFFHAM JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS:

THIS WAS A TREMENDOUS SUCCESS, WITH TICKET SALES FAR EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS. THE GREEN MUST HAVE BEEN CROWDED AS NEVER BEFORE! EVERYONE REALLY ENJOYED THEMSELVES, IN SPITE OF THE INTERMITTENT DRIZZLE THAT COULD HAVE SO EASILY SPOILED THE PARTY. SEATS IN THE MARQUEES WERE CERTAINLY AT A PREMIUM AT LUNCH TIME, WHILST EVERYONE TUCKED INTO THEIR BANGERS AND BURGERS. THE MASSES OF FINE STRAWBERRIES PROVIDED A FITTING DESSERT AS WELL. THOSE THAT APPEARED IN APPROPRIATE FANCY DRESS ENTERED INTO THE SPIRIT OF THINGS - I AM SURE THAT I SAW AT LEAST ONE JOHN BULL IN THE CROWD - WILL WE SEE A JINGOISTIC CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT ROUND OF ELECTIONS?!

THE JAZZ BAND PLAYED VERY WELL IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, EVEN IF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM HAD SOUNDED RATHER MORE UPLIFTING ON OTHER OCCASIONS! IT WAS GOOD TO SEE THE AUDIENCE STILL DANCING ON THE SODDEN TURF LATER ON IN THE PROCEEDINGS. THE MAGICIAN ENTERTAINED THE YOUNGSTERS WELL AND BAFFLED OLDER CHILDREN LIKE ME WITH HIS DEXTEROUS HANDLING OF THE PLAYING CARDS.

ALL IN ALL IT WAS AN EXCELLENT UNDERTAKING AND RUTH JEFFRIES AND HER TEAM ARE TO BE CONGRATULATED ON WHAT WAS A MASSIVE UNDERTAKING. DO I HEAR A RUMOUR THAT THE CORONATION JUBILEE COMES NEXT?

STEAM RALLY:

THE THREAT OF A MASS INVASION, GIVEN THE UNWANTED SIGN POSTS THAT WERE ERECTED AROUND THE VILLAGE FOR THIS TRADITIONAL EVENT RATHER PETERED OUT AS A RESULT OF SOME VERY INCLEMENT WEATHER. IN FACT IT WAS QUITE AMAZING HOW MANY VEHICLES DID ARRIVE FOR DISPLAY AND REMAINED UNTIL QUITE LATE IN THE AFTERNOON. I AM SURE THAT TRADE FOR LOCAL BUSINESS WAS STILL VERY BRISK, BUT PERHAPS WAS NOT QUITE AS GOOD AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN HOPED. THE SAME PROBABLY COULD HAVE BEEN SAID FOR THE UNINVITED AND UNWELCOME HOT DOG VAN THAT APPEARED EARLY ON THE GREEN AND REFUSED TO BE MOVED ON BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN "FAR TOO DANGEROUS" IN VIEW OF THE HOT FAT AWASH IN THE BACK OF THE VAN. THIS INCIDENT HAS LEAD TO OPC REVIEWING THE BYELAWS IN FORCE ON THE GREEN. WE ARE CURRENTLY DRAFTING A NEW SET, WHICH SHOULD "CATER" FOR SUCH EVENTS [EXCUSE THE PUN!]. THESE HAVE TO GO THROUGH A FAIRLY COMPLEX PROCESS FOR

APPROVAL BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, BUT WE HOPE TO HAVE THEM IN PLACE BEFORE THE END OF OCTOBER.

HEDGEHOG PRODUCTIONS:

FOLLOWING THEIR SUCCESSFUL PERFORMANCES EARLY IN THE YEAR OF A MUSICAL PLAY BASED AT AN OLD TIME MUSIC HALL AND RIVAL NEW FANGLED CINEMA, HEDGEHOGS WERE INVITED TO PERFORM A MURDER MYSTERY DRAMA, WHICH HAD BEEN COMMISSIONED BY THE VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE. AS IT HAPPENED, I WAS THE VICTIM HERE – NOT OF THE MURDER ITSELF, BUT OF MY OWN PAST QUIP ABOUT A PARTICULAR PARISH COUNCIL MEETING WHICH WOULD HAVE MADE A GOOD SCENARIO FOR A PLAY OF THIS ILK. CONSEQUENTLY, I HASTILY HAD TO PUT PEN TO PAPER! FORTUNATELY, UNDER THE MASTERFUL GUIDANCE OF THE HALLIDAY-SADLERS, THE PERFORMANCES RECEIVED SOME EXCELLENT REVIEWS, GAVE MOST OF THE AUDIENCE A GOOD LAUGH, AS WELL AS EXERCISING “THOSE LITTLE GREY CELLS”. CAROLINE DYER AND PHILOMENA WRIGHT WORKED SOME MAGIC IN THE KITCHEN TO PRODUCE EXCELLENT HOT FOOD AT EACH OF THE TWO PERFORMANCES IN OFFHAM AND MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO VILLAGE HALL FUNDS IN THE PROCESS.

CAROLS ON THE GREEN:

AGAIN THIS CONTINUES TO BE A POPULAR EVENT AND WAS WELL SUPPORTED. THE COLD WAS PARTIALLY KEPT AT BAY BY THE MINCE PIES AND MULLED WINE PROVIDED BY THE KING’S ARMS, WHICH HAS DONE MUCH TO SUPPORT THE VARIOUS VILLAGE EVENTS THIS YEAR AND CONTINUES TO ADD SOME NEW IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO THE PROCEEDINGS. OF COURSE THERE HAD TO BE ONE DRAMA, THANKFULLY BEFORE THE EVENT, CAUSED BY A SHORT CIRCUIT TO THE ELECTRIC CABLE SUPPLYING POWER TO THE LIGHTS ON THE TREE. THIS NOT ONLY CAUSED A BLACKOUT OF THE LIGHTS BUT ALSO TO THE HOME OF THE GENEROUS PROVIDER OF THE SUPPLY. TALK ABOUT BITING THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU!

THE VILLAGE HALL:

WORK ON THE VILLAGE HALL HAS CONTINUED TO IMPROVE THE FACILITIES THERE. THE CAR PARK HAS RECEIVED MUCH ATTENTION AND THE OFTEN PUDDLED AREA NEAR THE ENTRANCE HAS FINALLY BEEN LEVELED SO THAT USERS OF THE HALL CAN NOW DO SO WITH DRY FEET! MORE REDECORATION HAS BEEN COMPLETED INTERNALLY SO THAT THE WHOLE ENTRANCE LOOKS BRIGHTER AND MORE WELCOMING. CONGRATULATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE WHO HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY TO IMPROVE THE SIGNIFICANT UPGRADES TO THE NOW WELL-USED FACILITY.

SPADEWORK

HAS BROUGHT MORE COLOUR TO THE VILLAGE WITH ITS SERIES OF SATURDAY FARMERS MARKETS, WHICH SEEM TO HAVE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL. LET US HOPE THAT THESE CONTINUE TO GENERATE THE SAME LEVEL OF INTEREST OR BETTER. THE LIONS WERE DOING A GREAT JOB IN THE CAR PARK AT THE PRE-CHRISTMAS EVENT, SNOW CHAINS AND AN EXTRA PUSH MAY HAVE COME IN VERY HANDY ON OCCASION!

PCSO LAURA BULLEN

HAS SETTLED WELL INTO HER ROLE IN THE VILLAGE. HOPEFULLY THE RELATIVELY LOW CRIME RATE HAS BEEN INFLUENCED BY POLICE PRESENCE, INCLUDING THE EXERCISE TO APPREHEND DRIVERS MISUSING NORTH MEADOW. SEVERAL WERE CAUTIONED FOR DRIVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION IN THE ONE WAY SYSTEM, INCLUDING ONE WHO WAS DOING SO WHEN USING A MOBILE PHONE! THE POLICE HAVE MADE DISCRETE APPEARANCES AT THE EVENTS HELD ON THE VILLAGE GREEN AND LAURA HAS ALSO ESTABLISHED A REGULAR “SURGERY”, BASED AT SPADEWORK, WHERE INDIVIDUALS CAN SIMPLY DROP-IN TO VOICE THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT APPROPRIATE ISSUES.

“OUR VILLAGE” PHOTO COMPETITION: A REMINDER.

WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR ENTRIES FOR THIS COMPETITION. PLEASE JOIN IN AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO SO. HOPEFULLY WE MAY BE ABLE TO DISPLAY THOSE RECEIVED BY MARCH 21ST IN THE FORM OF A SLIDE SHOW AT THE APM.

HAVE YOU TAKEN PICTURES AROUND THE VILLAGE, WHICH CAPTURE THE OFFHAM COMMUNITY OR WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU TO BE PART OF THIS VILLAGE?

THEN WHY NOT ENTER YOUR PICTURE INTO THE PARISH COUNCIL'S COMPETITION "OUR VILLAGE"?

THE WINNERS, AS JUDGED BEST BY THE PARISH COUNCIL AND INVITED OTHERS, WILL BE ANNOUNCED AND DISPLAYED AT MAY DAY 2013. TWELVE PHOTO ENTRIES WILL ALSO BE SELECTED FOR A 2014 OFFHAM CALENDAR.

THE JUNIOR WINNER WILL ALSO BE AWARDED A PRIZE FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL.

THE COMPETITION IS OPEN TO ANYONE WHO LIVES WITHIN THE VILLAGE, OR ANY PUPIL OF OFFHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL. THIS IS NOT A COMMERCIAL VENTURE AND ANY PROFITS WILL BE USED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE VILLAGE. THE PARISH COUNCIL RETAINS THE RIGHT TO USE ANY PHOTOS SUBMITTED.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF THE PHOTOS IS 28TH MARCH 2013. PLEASE SUBMIT ALL ENTRIES WITH YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, EMAIL OR PHONE NUMBER AND WHETHER YOUR ENTRY IS FOR THE JUNIOR OR ADULT SECTION, TO THE PARISH CLERK, LYNNE MACKIE AT OFFHAM.PC@HOTMAIL.CO.UK.

N. B. FOR CONTACT DETAILS OF ANY OF THE ORGANIZATIONS MENTIONED IN THIS REPORT, PLEASE LOOK AT OUR WEBSITE OR CONTACT LYNNE BY EMAIL [ABOVE] OR BY TELEPHONE ON 01732 521303

D.P.STRETTON 10/03/2013

OBITUARIES: THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN A SAD ONE. I WAS SHOCKED TO LEARN THAT NO FEWER THAN EIGHT DEATHS HAD BEEN RECORDED FOR RESIDENTS OF TESTON ROAD ALONE SINCE THE LAST REVIEW. INCLUDED IN THESE WERE SOME LEADING LIGHTS IN OFFHAM'S FIRMAMENT AS MENTIONED BELOW. I APOLOGISE FOR NOT MENTIONING EVERYONE IN THIS LIST, BUT NONE THE LESS SEND SINCERE CONDOLENCES TO FAMILIES AFFECTED BY THEIR LOSS.

MARGARET BETTS HAD BEEN A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN TO US ALL. HER EARLY WORKING LIFE INVOLVED TEACHING SCIENCE AT MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AND HER INVOLVEMENT WITH EDUCATION CONTINUED WITH A GOVERNORSHIP AT OFFHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND HER PATRONAGE OF BANUNULE SCHOOL IN UGANDA. WITH HER HUSBAND STUART, SHE RAN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AT ST. MICHAELS FOR MANY YEARS. MARGARET WAS ALSO INSTRUMENTAL IN SETTING UP A YOUNG WIVES GROUP IN OFFHAM, WHICH HAS NOW MATURED INTO OFFHAM OPEN HOUSE. SHE SERVED FOR TWO PERIODS AS A PARISH COUNCILLOR AND ALWAYS PROVED A REAL VOICE OF REASON. THE LADIES KNITTING GROUP AND RAGSTONES WILL CERTAINLY MISS HER UNSTINTING SUPPORT. THE

RESPECT THAT THE VILLAGE FELT FOR MARGARET WAS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED BY THE SERVICE HELD AT ST. MARY'S WHICH WAS PACKED TO THE RAFTERS WITH MOURNERS. OUR SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCES GO TO STUART AND FAMILY.

LYNDA BOTTLE WAS NO DOUBT LESS WELL KNOWN THAN MARGARET BUT WAS ONE OF THE VERY FEW MEMBERS OF OFFHAM'S COMMUNITY WHO HAD LIVED IN THE VILLAGE HER ENTIRE LIFE. LYNDA GAVE GREAT SERVICE TO MANY FAMILIES IN THE VILLAGE BY HELPING LOOK AFTER YOUNGSTERS AT THEIR HOMES AND ALSO BY HER INVOLVEMENT WITH THE KINDERGARTEN WHEN IT FIRST MOVED TO THE METHODIST HALL. I UNDERSTAND THAT HER FIRST ROLE IN THIS RESPECT, AGED FIFTEEN, WAS AS A LIVE-IN HELPER TO A FAMILY OF TEN! LATER ON SHE HELPED CARE FOR MORE ELDERLY RESIDENTS IN THE VILLAGE AND HER WORK WAS MUCH APPRECIATED BY ALL WHOSE LIVES SHE TOUCHED. VERY MUCH AN UNSUNG HEROINE, BUT THERE WILL BE MANY WHO MOURN HER PASSING. OUR SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCES GO TO HER HUSBAND, ALAN AND FAMILY.

FRANCES CAPPUCINI, ALTHOUGH NOT AN OFFHAM RESIDENT, WAS A MUCH LOVED AND DEDICATED TEACHER AT OFFHAM SCHOOL, WHICH SHE JOINED AS A NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHER AND AT WHICH SHE HAD REMAINED, TEACHING RECEPTION AND EARLY YEAR CLASSES. "FRANKIE" SUFFERED A TRAGIC DEATH AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO HER SECOND CHILD, CAUSING NATIONAL PRESS INTEREST IN HER DEMISE. HER COLLEAGUES, PUPILS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WERE NATURALLY DEEPLY SHOCKED BY WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND UNDOUBTEDLY MISS HER FRIENDLY, VIBRANT AND FUN-LOVING DISPOSITION. OUR SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCES GO TO HER HUSBAND, TOM AND FAMILY.

JOHN HANCOX WAS WELL KNOWN TO ALL AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OFFHAM SOCIETY. HE PROVED A STRONG CHAMPION OF MANY CAUSES AND LENT HIS EXPERTISE IN CONFRONTING LOCAL BUSINESS ACTIVITY WHEN IT THREATENED THE WELL BEING OF THE VILLAGE. MOST RECENTLY, EVEN WHEN SERIOUSLY ILL, HE WAS INVOLVED WITH OUR ATTEMPTS TO ELIMINATE THE NUISANCES CAUSED BY THE BLAISE FARM SITE. JOHN ALSO APPLIED HIS EXTENSIVE MANAGEMENT SKILL TO THE NHS WHEN HE OCCUPIED THE POSITION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE LOCAL NHS TRUST. HE AND DEBBIE WERE GENEROUS TO THE VILLAGE WHEN THE ANNUAL OPEN GARDEN EVENTS WERE IN OPERATION. THE WALLED GARDEN OF OFFHAM MANOR ALWAYS PROVED A FITTING FINAL STOP ON THE WALK AND ALSO SUPPLIED SOME MUCH NEEDED REFRESHMENT TO THE WEARY PARTICIPANTS! HIS PRESENCE WILL BE MUCH MISSED. OUR SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCES GO TO DEBBIE AND FAMILY.

JOHN MARSHALL WAS AN ACTIVE AND TALENTED SPORTSMAN IN HIS EARLIER YEARS. I CAN REMEMBER FIRST ENCOUNTERING JOHN AT A TENNIS CLUB GARDEN PARTY AT WHICH ALL ATTENDEES TOOK PART IN A "MULTI SPORT" ACTIVITY. SKILL REQUIREMENTS RANGED FROM THE BIZARRE, LIKE WALKING ON STILTS TO THE MORE REFINED, LIKE CROQUET. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT JOHN BREEZED THROUGH THIS COMPETITION, WINNING BY A SIGNIFICANT MARGIN AND PUTTING MANY YOUNGER PARTICIPANTS TO SHAME! HAVING SAID THIS, PERHAPS JOHN WILL BE BETTER REMEMBERED FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH ST. MICHAEL'S WHICH BENEFITTED FROM HIS CONTINUED SUPPORT OVER MANY YEARS. OUR SYMPATHY AND CONDOLENCES GO TO JEAN AND FAMILY.



OFFHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

THURSDAY MARCH 21ST 2013

OFFHAM VILLAGE HALL

7.30PM

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT MEETING, IN WHICH ALL RESIDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE, TAKING AS ITS MAIN THEME:

THE COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID SCHEME: SHOULD OFFHAM ESTABLISH A VILLAGE TRUST TO FUND LAND ACQUISITION WITHIN THE VILLAGE?

AGENDA

- CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME.
- THE "COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID" SCHEME: **MARK RAYMOND**, TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
- QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR
- OTHER VILLAGE EXPERIENCES:
 PETER COULLING, CHAIR, TESTON PARISH COUNCIL
 BJORN RAMELL, CHAIR, EYNSFORD MILLFIELD TRUST
- QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

BREAK FOR REFRESHMENTS

- THE NEXT STEPS - PROPOSALS. DISCUSSION.
- TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT IN THE VILLAGE. [FOR INFORMATION ONLY]
- GENERAL QUESTIONS [RELATING TO ANY VILLAGE ISSUES OR MATTERS ARISING FROM THE VILLAGE ANNUAL REVIEW].

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A VILLAGE MEETING AND NOT A PARISH COUNCIL AGM.

Hunter's Moon , Aldon Lane, Offham, Kent, ME19 5PH

To whom it may concern:

This is to certify that Laura Kidd has, together with two others, accepted the tenancy of No.315 Croxted Road London SE24 as from 01/09/2008.

Laura's contribution to the monthly rental of the property will be £450 per calendar month for one year commencing at the date above. This amount is exclusive of her one third share of Council Tax, gas, electricity, water and contents insurance relating to the property.

Yours truly,

D.P.Stretton

Landlord

01/08/2008

Hunter's Moon , Aldon Lane, Offham, Kent, ME19 5PH

To whom it may concern:

This is to certify that Bassey Usuyak has, together with two others, accepted the tenancy of No.315 Croxted Road London SE24 as from 01/09/2008.

Bassey's contribution to the monthly rental of the property will be £350 per calendar month for one year commencing at the date above. This amount is exclusive of his one third share of Council Tax, gas, electricity, water and contents insurance relating to the property.

Yours truly,

D.P.Stretton

Landlord

01/08/2008