

EAST FARLEIGH PARISH
Annual Parish Meeting 2014

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 6 May 2014 at the Old School Hall, Lower Road, East Farleigh at 7.30pm

Present: Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr Clive English; Borough Cllr Brian Mortimer; Cllrs G Charlton (Chairman), P Beasley, J Wilson, A White and Darren Riches (East Farleigh Parish Council); Sarah O’Callaghan (Parish Clerk); approx 17 representatives of village institutions and the general public.

1. **OPENING ADDRESS**

The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Glyn Charlton, at 7.30 pm, who made a short opening address, welcoming everyone to the meeting. The Mayor then made a short address, noting that his parents were married in East Farleigh Church. He emphasised the importance of Parish Councils, in that they represent democracy at grass roots level. He praised Parish Councillors for the work they do voluntarily to make their parishes better places to live.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Paulina Stockell, Borough Cllr Dennis Collins, PCSO Alan Hunter, Parish Cllrs Steve Shearman and David Hussein, Dennis Fowle (Priory Close Residents’ Association, Duncan and Kathy Spencer (Local History Society), the Pre-School, the Montessori School, Barbara Bartlett (PCC) and the Medway Valley Community Rail Project (MVCRP).

3. **REPORT FROM POLICE REPRESENTATIVE**

PCSO Alan Hunter was not present, but he sent a report (copy attached) which the Clerk read out.

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 7 May 2013 were approved and signed as a true and correct record of the meeting.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

There were none.

6. **COUNTY COUNCILLOR’S REPORT**

This was received after the meeting and a copy is attached.

7. **BOROUGH COUNCILLORS’ REPORTS**

Cllr Mortimer commented that the Councillors in East Farleigh do a good job and make his task much easier and that East Farleigh is a very pleasant parish. Cllr John Wilson said that the siting of new housing is still the big issue in the Borough.

8. **REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF EAST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL**

As Cllr Glyn Charlton had already circulated an annual newsletter to the village, he didn’t feel it necessary to read it out (copy attached)

9. REPORTS FROM VILLAGE ORGANISATIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES
The major points to emerge from verbal or written reports from village institutions were as follows:-
- 9.1 East Farleigh Pre-School
No-one was able to attend, so the Clerk read out the attached report.
- 9.2 Sir John Franklyn Almshouses Trust
Richard Yaxley, in his capacity as Chairman of the Trustees of the Sir John Franklyn Almshouses Trust read his report (copy attached).
- 9.3 John Bunyan Leaver Charity
Peter Beasley, trustee of the Charity, reported that the allotments continue to thrive and all 35 plots are in use and there is a waiting list. Conifers which were shading the area have now been removed and the season is well under way. National Allotment Week is 4-10 Aug 2014.
- 9.4 The Farleighs History Society
No-one was able to attend, but Duncan Spencer had sent a report (attached) which the Clerk read out.
- 9.5 East Farleigh Brownies
Jan Passmore has taken over the Brownies from Beth Shelford and she reported that she is hoping to increase the group. Brownies are 100 years old this year so many activities are planned.
- 9.6 Church/East Farleigh Parochial Church Council
Peter Callway attended and a copy of his report is attached.
- 9.7 West Farleigh Youth Football Club
Paul Beck reported on the club, which is now eleven years old. It is a friendly club, where everyone gets to play. There are now four competitive teams. He commented on how well the Recreation Ground is maintained and thanked the Parish Council for levelling it out.
- 9.8 East Farleigh Primary School
Paul Sapwell and Ron Highman attended and a copy of their report is attached.
- 9.9 Farleighs WI
Margaret Perkins reported on another successful year (report attached).
- 9.10 Farmers Markets
A copy of Sue Morris' report is attached.
- 9.11 Gardening Club
Sue Morris reported again (copy of report attached).
- 9.12 Old School Hall
Gary and Mandy had sent a report, which Gary read out (copy attached).

9.13 Speedwatch

Cllr Peter Beasley explained that Speedwatch now operates on a county-wide basis, so that culprits can be logged anywhere in Kent, rather than just in East Farleigh. This makes it much more effective: at a recent one in Dean St, 19 warning letters were sent for second detections and 17 for excessive speeding. He said that Speedwatch is very worthwhile as speeds do go up if it is not done. The top of Dean St is a speeding hotspot, particularly after 9am and 6pm and on Sundays.

10. PUBLIC FORUM

No one wished to speak.

Cllr Glyn Charlton, Chairman of the Parish Council, presented a gift to the Mayor.

11. NEXT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

The next Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tuesday 28th April 2015, commencing at 7.30 pm in the Old School Hall, Lower Road, East Farleigh.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed by the Chairman at 8.50 pm.

POLICE REPORT

Period from 1st September to today 6th May 2014.

11 reports of Burglary
13 reports of Theft Misc
7 reports of Theft from Vehicle
2 reports of Making off without Payment
1 report of Theft of Vehicle.

Obviously over that period we have had reports for domestic's and harassment. Also, the above reports are those that are deemed crime reports by Incident Management Unit and Kent Police.

Regards

Alan Hunter

EAST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2013-14

Another whole year has passed and I can't believe how time flies. Your Council continues to strive to improve our Parish.

Finding volunteers who have time to attend meetings and have the commitment to follow through decisions made, continues to be difficult and we run Council still with two vacancies. Nonetheless, those who are your councillors contribute greatly to what goes on and I thank them for that on your behalf.

So, what have we been doing this year? We continue with the mundane stuff of reporting potholes, mowing the recreation field, looking after footpaths, making sure hedges are cut back etc etc.

In the last twelve months, we have seen the car park by the recreation field come into operation and we will be seeing - over the next month or so - the top surface being added, to meet the planning conditions. It is disappointing to note some cars building up on Forge Lane in the afternoon, but we do appreciate that, without marked parking bays, it is difficult for some people to park in an orderly fashion and this reduces space available. However, this will be sorted in the next few weeks and then closer monitoring will enable us to decide if the parish will have to instigate plan B and spend the money on yellow lines. Overall, the establishment of the car park has been a huge success.

Any of you who go down towards the bridge will have seen our smart new interpretation sign on the Horsewash. An exact replica appears in the School and is in their safe-keeping, in case the main one gets damaged. Cllr David Hussein has done all the work on commissioning this masterpiece and several of us built the path that leads to it. County Councillor, Paulina Stockell, who helped fund the project, came along just before Christmas to unveil it. This was all designed around enabling people to see the sign if they were out walking over Christmas. Little did we know, that we were about to have some awful flooding and the sign would be submerged. It reappeared in all its glory a few days later. We should not make light of the flood. Many people along our river banks had an awful Christmas and this seems to have gone on while the rest of us were oblivious to their plight. Hopefully, things are looking like they will be back to normal soon, but it does highlight the

need for some emergency plans. Council is currently trying to put something together for the future.

Much discussion has gone on about traffic speeds, traffic calming and village centre schemes and Paulina Stockell has funded some white lines along Lower Road and is currently funding the plans for a traffic calming scheme. These have just hit the parish Council for consideration. The white lining at the end of Forge Lane as it joins Dean Street has been moved out. Unfortunately, the contractor carrying out the work only moved them half a metre rather than a metre and we await for this to be corrected. At the same time, Cllr Darren Riches has been working hard on the Bridge Safety Scheme which, as always, is very slow moving. We are about to authorise an independent traffic survey to look at what could be done. This is still waiting for final approval. This was one of the suggestions in the Village Plan. At the same time, we have been informed that the level crossing will become automated in the next eighteen months, which the Railway authorities think will speed the flow of traffic as the gates will open quicker after the train has passed by. We will no doubt observe in the future if they are right or not.

Speed watch continues to be an agenda item and Cllrs Peter Beasley and Alan White are trying to give this more time. Getting the list of volunteers to commit to the actual time when dates are revealed still remains difficult.

I have mentioned councillors by name but that does not detract from the work others do. Cllrs John Wilson, Alan White and Peter Beasley continue to monitor footpaths, while Alan looks after our playgrounds. We all get involved in commenting on Planning Applications, while Cllr Steve Shearman is our main Fete representative. At this point, I must mention the total support that Peter Beasley gives me as my Vice-Chair.

The Garden Competition took place again during June, supported and judged by Hadlow College. Even if you are not lucky enough to be a voucher winner, a visit to their garden centre and to Broadview gardens is always worthwhile. More recently, they have become owners of the Bettshanger Country Park, an old colliery project in East Kent, and, if you are down that way, it is well worth a visit. Hadlow College have agreed to fund the competition again this year and judging will take place on 6th June.

Soon after this competition last year, we held our Annual Fete. It was well supported and lots of people helped. It is so important to keep these community occasions vibrant and for those that did help last year and will help this year, a huge thank you to you all. Help is needed if this event is to continue.

We are lucky that we are still able to hold our meetings in the Old School Hall. This has been so much improved as a venue since Gary and Mandy moved there and they bring many activities for us all to enjoy that were missing prior to their arrival. They have recently been granted permission to convert the upstairs into living accommodation.

Borough Councillors Brian Mortimer, John Wilson and Dennis Collins continue to support us as a parish, despite their own busy schedules as Borough Councillors.

A group of councillors set off last September to a village in France and had an enjoyable day visiting the local mayor and hearing how their administration works. It always seems their villages are cleaner and more well-kept, but they do employ people full time. The finances there are under pressure from central government, with the proposal that villages join forces and there are fewer Mayors. When it comes to an election, the prospective Mayor puts together his council and they stand en bloque for a five year term - slightly different to us.

As I have said before, changes happen and it is difficult for us to prevent that, as it is beyond our control. We need to try to reduce the effects this has on our daily lives. East Farleigh has been lucky in the recent Maidstone wide plan, in as much as no land has been allocated for housing within the village at this stage. Other parishes perhaps feel this is not totally fair, as there is the opinion that all villages should take their share. What is less clear is the effect

that all the development in Coxheath and Tovil will have on our village as the traffic increases. Perhaps we need to be mindful of that when we start considering what is on offer as a traffic calming scheme.

Many of you may have seen that the horsetrough on the "triangle" at the top of Station Hill was damaged recently following a car accident. Council would like to thank Gordon at the Stone Shop on Station Hill who kindly restored it to its former glory free of charge: it looks wonderful now.

Before I sign off, I must again thank my colleagues for all their support through the year and especially our Clerk, Sarah, who does a wonderful job for us all.

Wishing you all a pleasant summer.

Glyn Charlton

East Farleigh Pre-school Report 2014

As usual, our number of attendees is very low between September and December as our older children move on to primary school, increasing slightly in January and again after Easter. This year we are losing 19 children to 10 different primary schools so are busy arranging the transitions with the schools. We arrange for the Reception teachers to come to see the children in our environment and either our manager or the individual child's key-carer visits the school with the child or children to help them settle into the next stage of their educational journey. Photographs are taken whilst we are there so that we can create a photo book for each child of their new school to help familiarise themselves with it over the summer holidays.

The past year has been challenging, but rewarding, with two children with Special Educational Needs requiring one-to-one assistance. With these different developmental issues, it has helped us as a team to learn about and understand these needs. We have worked hard with the parents of one child to obtain a diagnosis and statutory statement, securing a place at a specialist school. We have watched the children progress beyond our expectations and we shall miss them as they move on to the primary school, but will keep in touch with the families to keep updated on their progress.

REPORT TO EAST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
THE SIR JOHN FRANKLYN CHARITY FOR ALMSHOUSES
CHARITY NO. 210899

ANNUAL REPORT – 2013 – 2014

Committee

The committee members:-

Richard Yaxley	-	Chairman
Judith Cannacott		
Debbie McCay		
Hilary Moon	-	Honorary Secretary
Joyce Swait		

Introduction

This year, once again has been a year of changes. Last year I reported that our long standing Secretary, Joyce Swait had resigned. Well Joyce could not stay away for too long and she has now rejoined as a committee member, taking over from Keith Perkins who served the charity well over many years, looking after cottage, garden and maintenance issues.

The charity is indebted to Keith for all the time and effort he has given in sorting out all the problems associated with maintaining the cottages which are well over 400 years old. We all wish him well.

In this busy and insular world that we live in it is becoming more and more difficult for us to recruit members to run this charity, so we are very fortunate to have Joyce Swait back in the fold, her experience in this charity is invaluable and we wish her well.

Our new Treasurer Debbie McCay is settling in well refining and updating procedures and sorting out the water and electricity services that test one's patience.

Likewise our new Secretary, Hilary Moon has settled in well, issuing agendas and minutes that reflect what was said and not all the gossip spoken on the night! Judith Cannacott our long standing Trustee responsible for the residents has, over the past year, been keeping up with the gossip and reporting back to the Committee. Obviously, as with elderly people, there have been a number of health issues to report but all residents continue to look after themselves and continue to have good neighbourly relationships. Keith at Number 1 retired this year and we wish him well in his retirement.

Joyce Swait has been busy organising fencing and gates, the replacement of the storage radiators and the replacement of the front doors that have just been fitted and look superb! Looking ahead we are intending to decorate a room of choice in each cottage this year. All this comes at a price however; we continue to balance the charity's books.

Finally, along with the residents I would like to thank all the Trustees and Secretary for their continued support of the charity.

Chairman
Almshouses
R.F. YAXLEY

FARLEIGHS HISTORY SOCIETY

2013 was another full year of events and meetings.

Talks and Presentations

On 2nd May we held an Open Evening with Simon Elliot giving an update on his archaeological activities in the Medway Valley and The Teston Roman Villa dig and Terry Bird and Chris Davies gave a presentation on the Tutsham Oil Mill whose remains are still just about visible on the south bank of The Medway at Teston lock. We were also able to show new pictures that had been acquired by the TFHS archive.

June saw Paul Oldham giving a fascinating talk on Elizabethan Maidstone but unfortunately our next speaker scheduled to present on the Battle of Farleigh Bridge in September had to cancel at short notice. However, one of our members Sandy Sharp stepped in and we were treated to a history of British Calendar Customs from Wassailing to Soul-Caking interspersed with Sandy's own performances on her accordion.

In October Duncan Spencer gave a talk on William of Cassingham, a hero from the Weald of Kent, who led a guerrilla army of peasants that terrorised the invading French army in 1216. The Christmas talk in December was on Aviation on The River Medway by historian James Preston.

Visit

In July, this year's visit was to Saltwood Castle, the home of the late Alan Clark MP and his wife Jane, who showed us around Lord Clark's Great Library, the castle and gardens and Alan Clark's motor car collection. The castle was the former home of Lord Clark, the famous historian and broadcaster who was the author, presenter and producer of the 1969 BBC series "Civilization". A fascinating day all round and the weather was beautiful, which always helps.

Our next meeting is this Thursday and as usual will be held at The Bull at 7.30pm. This will be another Open Evening with Simon Elliott once again providing an update on the Teston Roman Villa dig, followed by a presentation on the East Farleigh War Memorial with a brief history of those commemorated there and an update on the Dean Street Valley – natural or man-made?

Duncan Spencer
Chairman, The Farleighs' History Society

Report for the East Farleigh Parish Council AGM from East Farleigh Parish Church

May I start by offering grateful thanks for the support of the parish council and the financial assistance with the running costs of lighting the clock and publishing the Grapevine newsletter. We are having some trouble with the present lighting system and we are looking into having a new system for lighting the outside of the church, including the clock. The number of advertisers in Grapevine has been falling and we are looking to encourage more. For information, we are required to repair the wall between the car park and the graveyard and so people will have to walk round and through the Lytch gate when the pre-school are present.

As you know, the church in East Farleigh has been at the centre of the life of worship in the community for over a thousand years, and as the new Rector my desire is to build a thriving church open to the community. We are committed to maintain the fabric to ensure access for future generations. We are looking to do more with the schools – East Farleigh and Pre School. We have already repaired the roof and replaced our heating system to make the church more comfortable, and will continue to hold the annual community Christingle which sees the church full to overflowing and all are welcome at any or all of our regular services.

Revd. Peter Callway

East Farleigh Primary School
Parish Council Report May 2014



The school very much appreciates all contact with the local community, through visitors, the Church, local organisations and businesses, but we are especially grateful for the continued support and help which we receive from the Parish Council.

In particular this year we would like to express our thanks to the Parish Council for the work they have undertaken in providing a village car park. This has gone a long way to resolving the longstanding traffic issues in and around Vicarage Lane. We appreciate that there may still be changes and improvements that can be made and look forward to working alongside the Parish Council where we can.

We have tried to support in as many ways as we can and are looking forward to the village fete in June.

The school itself has continued to prosper this year. We have a full roll with the majority of the children coming from the immediate area.

With the support of the “Friends of the school” we have been able convert 2 old stock rooms into a brand new library and learning area for the children. We continue to be very proud of our school grounds. We would like to thank the Friends of the school for their support.

Having had a loyal and long serving staff for many years a number of teachers and support workers have reached retirement age and have moved on over the last few months. We would like to publicly thank them for their dedication and hard work. Despite these changes it is

very heartening that we are now developing a new team of teachers ready to carry the school forward.

East Farleigh remains a popular school both for prospective parents and pupils. We frequently receive very positive comments about the village and local environment. In the current challenging educational environment we have little difficulty recruiting staff.

We continue to undertake various events over the course of the year and in particular this year I would like to thank the many members of the village who supported Class 6 during their "Evacuation day". – For those of you who don't know, class 6 were evacuated through East Farleigh Railway station to a number of key points throughout the village. Particular thanks go to Sarah O Callaghan, The Bull Inn, Barbara and Michael Bartlett at Gallants Farm and Sheila at the church for their involvement. We concluded the project with a VE Day tea party held in the school hall earlier this spring.

Various classes have undertaken trips around the village. These include walks down to the river and lock, regular visits to church and local nature studies.

To conclude we would like to inform you of one of our future plans. As a school project we will be working, this summer, to raise funds for the purchase of a defibrillator for the school building. We will hopefully have this installed in readiness for the new academic year. We would just like it to be known that in the event of an emergency this defibrillator will be available to the rest of the village whilst the school is open.

Thank You

P Sapwell

REPORT THE FARLEIGHS W I 2013-2014

We have had another busy year.

2013 May Swop – all plants that we had left we donated to Smith's Hall for Dandelion Time
A 70s night was enjoyed in May – This was a celebration of a few members who celebrated their birthdays

June a Safari Supper – lovely food and company. A great way of meet people

A trip to Broadstairs – this is being repeated this June

We played Petanque @ the White House – again we will be playing on the 10th July

20/21st July we had a Wedding Dress /Flower display at West Farleigh Church. Beautiful selection of wedding dresses spanning 100 years together with fantastic flower arrangements.

We supported the East Farleigh Fete with our Tea Tent on a very hot Saturday afternoon

We had a Table Top Sale in October and sold Craft items that we had made at our Craft mornings.

Our Old Tyme Variety Show was very successful with many of the members taking part in dance, drama and choir. We also held a party night for our members on the 4th December when we played games. A great deal of fun was had by everyone.

Our Craft, Art, Monthly Lunch Club and Choir continues.

WISH Meeting – We welcome anyone @ £3 and this includes refreshments – We had Sir Jeremy Elwes from the St John Ambulance, Smuggling Stories, A Whist Night,

We had many extremely good speakers including our own Louise Ferns who spoke on the Charity – Great Ormond Street and at a days notice – Being a Magistrate

We won our Medway Valley league darts matches and lost to the eventual winner of the Kent West Kent tournament.

Our Choir was successful in winning the Kent West Kent Heat –Choir of the Century – When the winner was announced at Mascalls School the choir supporters brought the house down.

The overall winner will sing at the 100 year anniversary of the WI @ The Royal Albert Hall June 2015. The next stage is to sing at Dorking in September. We wish them luck.

At the Craft classes we learnt to make a Christmas Wreath, A living card for Easter, Japanese quilting, Cards for Christmas, Red Embroidery. Dry and also Wet Felting. We are extremely lucky to have such talented members who can demonstrate these crafts

You can look at our Programmes on the website.

New members are always welcome – Be Assured you will be Inspired!!!

WI report 2014

EAST FARLEIGH FARMERS' MARKET REPORT 2013

After our relocation to the Old School Hall in March last year we were concerned that we might not have enough space, but with Mandy and Gary's flexible approach each month we have so far managed to accommodate all stallholders – even for the Christmas market!

Having indoor space has made it far better for stalls selling such things as bread, cakes and crafts which can be vulnerable to bad weather, whilst the hardened market traders brave the cold and wet outside.

It has also meant that Mandy and her family can serve hot drinks and home-made cakes from the kitchen, which has proved very popular.

We have continued making regular charity donations from the stall fees, after paying for the use of the premises, expenses and insurance. In 2013 donations of £539 were shared between local charities Porchlight, Help a Maidstone child, Loose Valley Conservation Society, The Blackthorn Trust, Maidstone Day Centre, The Kenward Trust and the Peggy Wood Foundation. A further £230 was donated from the November and December markets to the Disasters Emergency Committee at the time of the Philippines appeal.

Attendance at the markets can be quite variable and I would like to urge more villagers to support their market regularly, as without the security of regular customers, stallholders can soon be discouraged and the market runs the risk of losing them. Please visit us yourselves and suggest that your relatives, friends and neighbours come along too.

EAST FARLEIGH GARDENING CLUB REPORT 2013/14

The snowy weather early in 2013 unfortunately led to the cancellation of our visit to Hadlow College to see the hellebore collection at the end of February, which was a disappointment.

In June some members joined Barming Horticultural Society for a coach trip to Hyde Hall, a 360 acre Royal Horticultural Society garden near Chelmsford.

Our main event of the year was held on 11th July and was entitled 'Bubbly, Bitter and Bumblebees'

A large group of members and friends visited Peter Hall's family farm in Marden for a most enjoyable and memorable evening.

We walked around the farm whilst Peter explained how modern technology is harnessed to grow organic apples for Sainsbury's and grapes to make the sparkling wine sold in the House of Commons' restaurant! The farm has the only remaining traditional organic hop-garden in the country supplying the Wychwood Brewery in Oxfordshire. Crops are also grown by conventional methods, yet Peter remains committed to farming in a way that enhances the environment, making special provision for the bumblebees and birds which abound in the fields and hedgerows.

After touring the farm we saw the working oast where the farm's hops have been dried and processed for more than a century, and finished with a tasty ploughman's supper, salads, raspberries and strawberries plus a glass of wine in the 130-year-old barn.

At the end of October I had arranged a walk in the Loose Valley led by Bryn Cornwell the Chairman of the Conservation Society, but it did not go ahead due to lack of support. Bryn then came along to the Old School Hall in early March this year and gave a very interesting illustrated talk on the history and work of the Society, which we hope will be followed in June by the previously planned walk.

Several members are also looking forward to full day visit to Wisley RHS gardens next month, again as a joint venture with Barming.

OLD SCHOOL HALL – REPORT FOR PARISH AGM 2014

Well, we've still here, still working to keep Old School Hall on the map as a community and commercial venue – and though we sometimes take a step backwards, sometimes almost fall over, the overwhelming trend is in a positive direction.

We have an increasing number of party bookings and other one-off events such as charity fundraisers, christenings and wedding receptions. Some weekends are very busy indeed, with organisational and muscular challenges as we move in or hide away big chairs and tables, small chairs and tables, and various items of furniture and equipment as appropriate for each event. We've had a *mendi*, the acceptable face of a hen party, when a muslim bride is prepared by her female friends and family for the wedding next day. This includes being painted with henna and though they offered to paint Mandy too, sadly they couldn't allow me in to be decorated. Though I did ask. What man wouldn't?

We also had an animal ultrasound training course last year, which was certainly different and involved bringing pregnant dogs into the hall. So if you find you have been sitting on an unexpectedly hairy chair tonight, *that's* the one we overlooked in the deep clean afterwards. We are very grateful to our regular bookers, who are fundamentally the reason why the hall is able to function. This includes the East Farleigh Brownie pack, the Parish Council, Vicki Bernard's Pilates, Meg Milne's keep fit classes, Tracey Baker's new Dance Starz classes for children, Kettle Bridge Concertinas and the Farmers' Market – now in its second year here. The church holds its coffee mornings here, and we are relieved that they are still our friends when we have taken considerable liberties with the shared car park. And it even salvaged our reputation once by allowing a fitness class in the church when we had carelessly double-booked the hall.

Our biggest thanks, as ever, go to the East Farleigh Preschool. Since we took over running the hall it has accommodated with astounding good grace increased rental charges, less storage space, having to relocate much of its equipment most Fridays, lending us its tables and chairs for children's parties – and some fairly random things such as large sofas moving in and then refusing to leave again. Thank you Steve, Marie and the team for your patience. In the last year Mandy and I have also put on our own events in the hall. Our fifth Antique and Vintage Market was last month and we have another five in 2014. We had a combined Craft Fair and Antique and Vintage Market just before Christmas and a dedicated Craft Fair this February. Our first two Swing Dances, in November and February, completely sold out and the third one, on the 24th of this month, is the hall's next big function. We've had two quiz nights since the last Parish AGM; we struggled a bit to get enough teams for the second one but several came forward in the last couple of days so it turned out fine in the end. We had a Christmas Films night in December, and four consecutive Film Nights in March. We would have liked more takers for these, but everyone who came said they really enjoyed the films and the atmosphere – and it was very, very pleasant for the two of us to do something we never usually do – just sit back and watch a DVD together. It was a real shame so few came on 27 September to the Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning fundraiser. Maybe many people were already completely caked-out on the day, but we did have a few through the door other than our own family members – who it seems can never have too much cake. If we do it again this year we'll aim to have it a few days before or after the actual national day itself.

We started a samba drumming group at the end of last year. The band is due to perform at the village fete and if there's enough interest after that we intend to make this a proper club with a dedicated rehearsal day and time, which we're sure will be a relief to households nearby who, while they now know *what's* hit them, are never at the moment quite sure *when* it's

going to hit them. We're very pleased that this particular group has a large proportion of East Farleigh residents as well as others who come from outside the village.

The East Farleigh social club has been very helpful by allowing us to use its car park during the Farmers' Market and when we run our own events. So many thanks to them too.

We are sorry that the section of wall knocked over a couple of months ago still hasn't been mended. Biffa accepted responsibility straight away but we haven't been able to agree between us how and by whom it is to be repaired. Biffa wants to send its own builder to put it back up again but we want a specialist local mason so we can be sure it is done properly. It is now in the hands of the insurance companies, and hopefully ours will win the battle.

We haven't said much about the building itself this year. So.... do visit the new toilets!! But apart from that, we are really, really pleased that we recently obtained planning permission to convert the floor above this into our home, which seems the best, if not the only, way to make sure the *entire* building thrives and survives for a further 180-plus years.

Finally, to the bewildered person who stood at the car park gate in the small hours of one Monday morning watching what must have looked like a madman vacuuming the car park. It was me, but I was vacuuming the hall mats *in* the car park, not the car park itself.