

Our town had at the last count at least seventy active societies and groups with charitable or social purposes and we are a strong community.

I have included as many of them as possible in the official brochure with photographs and details of sporting activities, clubs and churches, so the space able to be devoted to each activity is limited.

A draft of our Festival 2004 Brochure as an overview of Highworth.

This Festival aims to encourage and help in the promotion of community activities that reflect the spirit of Highworth and the surrounding villages.

Introduction

The Millennium stained glass window, funded by our last Festival in year 2000, has the text in a central position " A city that stands on a hill cannot be hid ". This is an excellent description of Highworth because from whichever way you approach us you will see our town silhouetted on top of its hill with the tower of Saint Michael's church building rising out of the summit. After dark it is floodlit, thanks partly to a previous Festival 1996 which " Put Highworth on the map ".

Travelling North from Swindon or South from Lechlade it is possible to drive through the town on the main road A361 with only a passing glance. This gives the impression of a small village with strip development of shops and houses. It is not until after you drive off the main road into the High Street and Square that the attractions of Highworth can be seen to their best advantage.

At the centre is an open market square that has a raised podium with a mature lime tree at one end. It also has seats, floral displays in modern metal structures and a map of the town. The square is used for free car parking except each Saturday when there is a busy open market selling a variety of foodstuffs and other goods.

Local charities hold regular fund-raising events on the podium that attract their own supporters, townspeople and visitors to help a wide variety of causes.

Once each year a fair comes to town and access to the square is restricted. It is filled with very large hydraulic rides and loud music for limited hours during that week.

On special occasions the podium is used for open-air services by our local churches working together. At Christmas there is a decorated fir tree and a ceremony for switching on the lights, usually by our town mayor and another local celebrity. Hot chestnuts, mince pies and hot Bovril are dispensed to the crowds by the Lions Club.

The Round Table Santa visits in his sleigh. Carols are sung and a jolly time is had by all.

The square is surrounded by shops, offices and banks as well as the Post Office so there is rarely a time when it is not bustling. The size of this close-knit community means there are usually several groups of folk standing around talking. A few visitors can be seen at weekends, especially during the Saturday Market but the town is not on the itinerary of most tourists. Now that we have our very large Co-op supermarket and smart new library close to the Square, many more local shoppers enjoy the relaxed

sociable atmosphere in this busy town instead of joining the competitive trolley dash to super-stores on the outskirts of Swindon.

General

Following the success of previous Festivals, it has been agreed that in this brochure we will try to depict the full and wide range of social, sporting and charitable activities in which local people take part when not earning their living, and that this will be given free of charge to everyone, thanks to the generous support of our advertisers and of the Co-op. In our library and bookshop there are several books that have been written providing historical or geological or nostalgic views of Highworth. In the Council Offices there are still a few copies of our Festival 2000 guidebook. This gave a complete overview of the whole of Highworth in all its varying aspects in that Millennium year and there have since been surprisingly few changes.

Interesting Hobby Clubs

There are clubs for almost any interest group and details of people to contact can be found in the library or information centre. Many clubs publish details of meetings in the popular Link Magazine 'What's-On' Diary or in the Neighbourhood News Section each Monday in the Advertiser, written by Mair Huband. Tell her about it on 762984.

A Scrabble Club meets on the first, third and fourth Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the Silver Threads Hall with up to twenty members for sociable and competitive games in two in-club leagues. They also play successfully in the Western League. Grace Summers at 764219 welcomes new members and their first games are free.

A Bridge Club meets in the Silver Threads Hall at 7.30 pm each Friday and more members would be very much welcomed by Liz Berry at 721322. Duplicate bridge is the name of the game played and a host system is in operation.

Highworth Twinning Association joined with the delightful town of Pontorson in Normandy fourteen years ago and a plaque at the end of the podium commemorates this event. There are annual exchange visits by coach-loads of families. Many have become firm friends, leading to exchanges on a more individual basis. Schools and sports clubs also use contacts for reciprocal visits and competitions.

French language skills are not essential. A recent extension to their activities has been the inclusion of the German town of Wassenberg, already twinned with Pontorson, and four German members joined the trip to us from Pontorson last October for a hectic round of visits and pub meals. They were addressed before leaving by Geoff Eastwood in both languages. Elizabeth Drew is chairman of the local committee which holds a range of social and fund-raising events, open to all. Anyone wishing to join can contact Suzie Whittington as Secretary on 861259.

The Camera Club, which meets each month in the Council Community Room on the second Tuesday, has regular competitions and is more keen on practice and personal advice than listening to speakers. There are also competitions with other clubs and chairman, Paul Lidbury, at 824950 is always pleased to welcome anyone interested in

any aspect of photography, including digital images. There are exhibitions of members' work and one of these will be in the Council Room on Saturday 11th September all day.

The Wine and Beer Circle celebrates its twenty fifth anniversary in Year 2004 and remains such a sociable crowd that even those who don't make wine or beer come to meetings to hear speakers and have competitions. Commercial wines, as well as those from orchards, gardens and the hedgerows, are studied on the third Tuesday each month in the Council Room. An annual barn dance with the Hogshead folk band and the nearly Burns Night with kilted piper, Scottish dancers, haggis, neaps and tatties are must-not-miss events. Contact is with Mike Quick on 762063.

A good range of kits and other products for winemaking and brewing is stocked by Ken Thomas at Arkwrights and Ken Thomas shares his considerable knowledge of commercial wines with many at tasting and learning evenings on behalf of charities.

The Upper Thames and Ridgeway National Trust Association is a supportive club that has six meetings each year in the winter with speakers and also summer outings. It covers most of North Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire and there is a centre of the National Trust within sight of us at Coleshill where the whole village is owned by them. Contact is with chairman Alex Beardmore at 01285.654361.

The Historical Society has monthly meetings each fourth Monday at 7.30 pm in the Council Community Room, from September to March, always packed to the doors. Chairman Janet Boddy introduces speakers on a variety of topics of local interest and outings on other dates are always well organised and popular. There is now a showcase area in the new library and this is used for a regularly changing series of displays. Contact is with Jo. Holland at 763863

More Clubs but for Ladies only

The ladies of Highworth are spoilt for choice when needing escape from male company.

The Afternoon WI caters for ladies of all ages and meets monthly each first Wednesday at 2.15 pm in the Recreation Community Hall. The 33 members usually have a speaker and /or social gathering. They will be holding an exhibition of craftwork by members and husbands from Highworth and Stanton Fitzwarren during the weekend of 17-18th April in the Mayor's parlour with refreshments in the Council Rooms. New members are always welcome and contact is with Gill Walding at 766273.

Highworth Evening W.I, an all-age group, includes many working women and meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7.45 pm in the Methodist Hall, having outgrown the Silver Threads Hall. It has a lively programme of events and there is the chance to make new friends, learn new skills, listen to interesting speakers, visit places of interest, discuss topical issues while enjoying themselves. There is a very active drama group; "Votes for Women", written by a member, was performed in January at the start of the 2004 Festival. Do they make jam? Well, some do - the rest prefer to buy. Sorry! they don't do calendars! Contact Gillian Miller on 762599 to find out why more than fifty local members cannot be wrong.

St. Michael's Wives Fellowship will be 58 years old in October and meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month in the Church Room at 8 pm for a speaker or demonstration and activities. New members are welcome and contact can be made with Mavis Coker.

The Mothers' Union is active as a campaigning arm of the Church tackling social issues involving family values. It has twenty members in Highworth who meet on the second Wednesday each month at 10 am for Holy Communion in St. Michael's Church, followed by coffee and a speaker in the Church Room. There is a variety of speakers, mostly on Christian themes. With one million members worldwide there is an ongoing link between the Mothers' Union in Uganda and other African countries within the Bristol Diocese and the Highworth branch is chaired by Anne Rees.

The Methodist Sisterhood celebrated its fiftieth year in 1999 and is church based but non-denominational. It has 35 members of mature years but welcomes all ages for prayer, a speaker, and friendship over tea and coffee in our Methodist Church Room.

The Morning Craft Group meets each third Tuesday of the month at 11 am in the Methodist church hall for an undefined time but usually up to 2.30 pm. Some twelve or more ladies practice lace making, embroidery, quilting and similar crafts in a sociable group which is open to all and not only churchgoers. New members are always welcome and can contact Christine Tippett at 763623.

Mainly Charitable Organisations

Highworth rejoices in so many opportunities for serving our fellows that a lot of people are involved in all sorts of activities and it will be impossible to give them all the space they richly deserve.

Highworth Lions The most prominent hyperactive number of workers in this way are Highworth Lions Club, and hardly anything happens without their involvement. They buy and run the community minibus, operate the Charity shop in Newburgh Place with many volunteers and raise tens of thousands of pounds donated to worthy causes at home and abroad. They run Race-nights and other events for charities and distribute food parcels to the needy at Christmas. Youth awards, peace poster competitions and car boot sales are run locally. The minibus is used by members to collect people with severe learning difficulties from a wide area, so they can attend the Gateway Club in Swindon every week in term-time.

Redundant spectacles are collected at Haines and Smith for Lions International to African and Asian countries as part of a massive operation of Eye Camps where medically trained staff travel to isolated villages performing cataract operations. A long-standing challenge to all Lions Clubs is the remedial treatment of all who suffer from curable blindness, of whom there are many millions in the world.

Lions Clubs are always seeking new members willing to pitch in and work hard. Annual subs. pay all running costs of the club, so no expenses for these are taken from the money raised for charities. The current slogan is " Ordinary People doing amazing things ". Contact is with Ron Tanner at 763750.

Highworth and Cricklade Round Table has about ten members and meets on the first and third Monday each month. It is well known for its fund-raising on behalf of many worthwhile charities, while providing challenges for members and enjoyable events for the public. Contact can be made with Chris Donohoe at 702761.

The Forty One club is a supportive group of former members of Round Table who survived beyond the strict age limit, since raised to 45 years.

The Rotary Club of North Wiltshire is a service organisation of business and professional men working for high ethical standards and world understanding. Highworth is part of the Club which holds lunch meetings by invitation at the Blunsdon House Hotel each week. Many and varied good works are supported in Swindon and Internationally.

The Children's Society has worked here for many years and is best known for the Christingle Service, attracting a packed church each year of parents with young children. There are also a house-to-house collection, barbecues, podium sales and coffee mornings to raise funds. Their local contact is Heather Gunn at 765262.

The N.C.H children's charity is represented locally by Diana Merriman at 763209.

Christian Aid has a house collection every May and a combined church service at the URC. in Highworth More collectors are very much needed by John and Shirley Richer who are at 01367.253495 and other fund raising efforts are welcomed.

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The Thomas Freke and Lady Norton Charity is based in Hannington and its clerk is Barry Compton. This is a very active and generous charity set up in 1710 when land was bought from the gift of Thomas Freke, the income to be given to villagers.

Funds from this have been used for many building and refurbishing projects in Hannington, Highworth and surrounding villages. Very substantial grants were given in recent years including Warneford School library and computer room and to all other local schools for a variety of projects. The Silver band received grants for instruments and uniforms, the junior football club towards their pavilion and several village churches for restoration work.

Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes filled with suitable goodies are collected locally and no less than 1860 last year were filled, decorated and collected from Highworth and nearby villages at the Recreation Centre. They were transported with vast numbers from other areas from a warehouse in Melksham as part of Operation Christmas Child and this involved churches, schools and youth organisations. It is organised here by Phyllis Reid at 762616 who is constantly seeking knitters of woolly hats, soft toys and other suitable goods to top up the boxes that go in convoys of lorries to the poorer regions of Eastern Europe. The Lighthouse bookshop has a video that can be borrowed to show the operation or visit their website at w.w.w.samaritanspurse.uk.com

Arthritis Research Campaign is but one of many hard-working usually small groups raising money for many worthwhile causes including research into a wide variety of sometimes rarer illnesses together with those involved with children's and animal charities. They each have street or house collections and make other sales and fund-raising efforts locally. A.R.C is run locally by Pat Dibble who can be reached at 763048.

The Highworth Social Club Trust fund was set up with the money left over when the Rec. Social Club was wound up. It helps ex-club members and Newburgh House.

Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Co-op is one organisation that should not be overlooked in this context. It has a community dividend scheme giving at least one per cent of the Society's profits to local worthy projects. Sums are regularly granted to organisations that are sometimes too small to be noticed by other charities

The N.S.P.C.C. holds an annual dance each May and also tabletop sales and coffee mornings in aid of this national charity, which is in need of new helpers. It is represented locally by Linda Frost at 763085.

The R.N.L.I., although the furthest of any branch from the sea, is supported actively through social events and is clearly dear to the hearts of Highworth people. They emphasise that whether we use rivers, beach or sea, regularly or only on holidays, they save or assist 7,656 persons every year.

Getting Together with others of like mind

U3A is an organisation of retired persons for study and leisure and many local activities involve Highworth folk. One of these affiliated groups is the Highworth Petanque Club which plays Boules on a piste or pitch adjacent to St. Michael's Hall. This attracts many hardy folk from 9.45 am to noon each Thursday and Friday morning, even early this year in the snow ! Gordon Younghusband at 762554 and Norman Lambert welcome enquiries from those interested in taking part in this ancient French pastime.

They also have a small folk music group known as the Merrifolk which has a busy programme entertaining at retirement homes, friendship clubs, junior schools and at various social gatherings. The hand-bell ringers include some of the same folk and are also very regular entertainers in many and varied venues.

Each week at St. Michael's Hall on Mondays at 11 am there is Tai Chi when slow but strenuous exercise is enjoyed by a roomful of older people who tell us they feel much more supple afterwards.

Probus is open to men retired from business and meets at the Blunsdon House Hotel every other Wednesday morning for coffee and to listen to a speaker. There are also trips and holiday visits to places of interest, mainly to an older section of us and to our wives. There is a large regular contingent of Highworth men attending these meetings.

The British Legion is well represented here and in nine months each year meets at 7.30 pm on the third Monday each month at the Jesmond Hotel. Details from Martin Kender at 763425. There is also a Women's Section mainly devoted to fund-raising work.

The annual poppy collection is organised by David Wood.

The Western Front Association includes some of the same members and meets on the first Sunday each month at 2 pm in St. Michael's Church Room. This is devoted to the study of family and military history relating to the Great War.

The Thursday Club, run by Pam Dixon on 764795, caters for fifty old folk each week on Thursday afternoon at the Football Clubhouse. It provides companionship and regular Bingo and raffles and members save each week to pay for three holiday outings. This year Skegness and Llandudno are booked and a venue has yet to be found for the Turkey and Tinsel holiday later on. Highworth folk are not allowed to feel old, lonely or bored but evidently they need some stamina to keep up the pace. In March they plan to be in a Hammersmith studio audience for a recording of the Des and Mel Show.

The Silver Threads fellowship group caters for about thirty over-fifty-five-year-olds who meet every Wednesday from 2 until 4 pm in their own Hall. They get together socially and there are also outings and entertainment. Contact Margaret Cox at 763360.

The One Only Club is a social group providing an opportunity for about thirty people living alone and aged 55 or more to meet in the Church Room for coffee and to share friendship and companionship. Meetings are from 11 am to noon on the second Thursday each month and also for lunch at the Jesmond each third Thursday. There are some outings arranged within the group and contact is with Barbara Williams at 762137.

Highworth Older People's Group is a forum for discussion with speakers covering a wide range of issues. It was set up by the Health Care Trust but is now run by Meg Bennett 861177 who welcomes additions to the growing band of about forty men and ladies over sixty years old. They meet every second month from 1.30 to 4 pm on Wednesdays in the Methodist Church Hall. Speakers include Councillors and M.P.s and they do not escape penetrating questions about services.

Newburgh Day Care is run by Social Services and provides respite care for older and disabled folk. Each day a different six to ten people meet together from 10 am until 3.30 pm and have a hot lunch at a building attached to Newburgh House. Taxis are provided for transport

Highworth Daycare Club is another club for older people who gather each Tuesday in the Youth and Community building in Newburgh Place. They are collected in cars or the Lions minibus and after tea and talk they are served lunch about 12 noon. Weather and circumstances permitting there are outings or entertainment for the afternoon. Voluntary helpers enable the club to thrive and are organised by Mrs. Rose Jones at 762822 or Mrs. Frieda Cox at 763237.

Youth Organisations

Although the most obvious youths might seem to be a few sullen excluded ones hanging about the podium all day, for each of them there are hundreds of sensible, well-behaved youngsters, working hard and enjoying a variety of worthwhile pursuits,

in or out of uniforms. There is such a very wide variety of activity available to young people that there can be no excuse for boredom.

All our local youth activities are thriving to the extent that they need increased adult supervision. This partly results from demands for greater safety and the shortage of willing volunteers from among busy parents of the young persons involved. In all our clubs and activity groups, those adults working with children and young people are trained and subjected to checks for criminal records and also to continual scrutiny by their colleagues so that parents can have peace of mind.

Air Training Corps (ATC) thrives as 878 Squadron and meets from 7 to 9.15 pm every Monday and Wednesday. It caters for boys and girls aged from 13 to 18 years and does well in competitions of all sorts. They have their own meeting hut near to the Westrop School. The ATC is very much involved in community work and gives great help to Festival events and to many others. Radio communication, sports, camps, drill and adventure training for the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme are provided.

The many RAF stations in the area provide contact and opportunities to fly and to learn to glide as cadets. A regular procession of Hercules transport planes lumbers over us towards RAF Lyneham while Transport Command also operates a variety of other planes from Brize Norton. Most years cadets help in many ways at the famous International Air Tattoo at R.A.F. Fairford and at Kemble Air Day and get to meet the aircrews of many nationalities. Flt. Lt. James Stevens is C.O. and can be contacted at 766878.

St. John's Ambulance Youth training is an important part of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade locally. Several cadets from Highworth have won recognition and there is a very active unit providing, fun, teamwork and community service. Personal and social development are encouraged. Nowadays adult Brigade members are centrally based in a hall in Swindon.

Scouting The Festival theme of Highworth Alive perfectly describes the current state of Scouting. The First Highworth Scout Group has been here 90 years and was the first formed Troop in Wiltshire. They are going from strength to strength and cater for more than 120 youngsters aged from six to fourteen. With two Beaver Colonies, two Cub Packs and two Scout Troops they are an important part of the local youth scene with their own meeting hut in Eastrop. All age groups are helpful to this Festival and at other events, while there are many other useful efforts made by them in the community.

Beavers are six to seven years and meet Thursday & Friday for games, visits and challenges. Some lucky parents even get the opportunity to help when they camp, and afterwards they say they enjoyed themselves.

Cubs up to ten & a half years meet each Monday, when challenges get harder and programme more structured. Two weekends away each year without parents, still with games and visits but more adventurous, sometimes climbing, abseiling and archery.

Scouts are up to fifteen and a half and meet each Friday for even more exciting activities. In the last year these were grass sledging, camping, canoeing, rafting, hike camps and night hikes, survival skills, aerial runways, astronomy, weekend camps, wide games and lots more.

There are plans for an environmental challenge, maintaining woodland, including coppicing and hide building. Camps are planned for Easter and Summer and a family weekend camp.

International scouting has 28 million members in 211 countries. In February 2005 about forty of our scouts will meet some of them at Kandersteg in Switzerland to sleep in igloos and practice Alpine activities. For details of how to volunteer time for this valuable work motivating youngsters in an enthusiastic leader team contact Steve Mollart on 651524

The Archers Explorer Scout Unit for 14 to 18 years old girls and boys is named after Reg Archer, a pioneer scout in Highworth and meets each first and third Tuesday. Other venues and dates are arranged by E-mail. Jan Haylett at 762598 is leader and eight zones are the basis; outdoors, skills, community service, environmental values, physical recreation relationships and international. Explorers work towards awards and includes Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Explorers plan events with leaders and develop life skills like communication, decision making, leadership, teamwork, planning and organisation. Website via WiltshireScouts.org.uk then look under Explorer Sections!!- Archers. Or E-mail Jan at mail@jan-haylett.co.uk

Guiding provides girls with a framework that encourages each girl to realise her full potential and to progress through the movement, taking part in a variety of fun, interesting and challenging activities. Guides and Brownies have just introduced new and exciting programmes, which brings Guiding up-to-date with the current needs of our youngsters while keeping the tradition of Guiding intact.

We currently run two Rainbow Units (girls aged from 5-7 years), two Brownie Units (girls aged from 7-10 years), a Guide Unit (girls aged 10-15 years) and a Ranger Guide Unit (girls aged 14-26) in Highworth so there is something for everyone.

During summer months all sections make full use of the light and good weather and try to meet outside. Nature treks, walks, golfing, swimming, canoeing are just a few of the 'out of door' activities in which the Brownies take part.

Guides attend camps under canvas locally and further afield. This year we have three Ranger Guides attending International Camps in Canada and Europe for which they will have to fundraise for their flights and accommodation. This will consist of bag packing at local supermarkets and coffee mornings at St Michael's Church with yummy cakes!! Please remember that this fundraising is all for a good cause.

Rainbows used a cheaper form of transport as a magic carpet took them from Pole to Pole, visiting animals from different countries. For their summer outing they visited Roves Farm to meet more animals so it's not just older girls that get all the fun!

All units sponsored 'Send a Cow' in 2003, a registered charity, which gives direct, practical, help to impoverished farmers in Africa. Lots of hard work and fun but above all lots of money raised by enthusiastic youngsters for a great cause.

Guiding does not stop when the nights draw in. We just shut the doors, turn up the heating and have more fun!! Brownies and Guides get the chance to work for Badges and Awards. We encourage speakers to enable girls to learn about our local community. Rainbows ventured out early one morning and had breakfast with Father Christmas. Challenge nights are popular with Guides and enable the girls to develop teamwork. Crafts, singing and games also play a big part in all sections.

Brownies celebrate a 90th Birthday in 2004 so we will be holding a party on 22nd June with a barbeque, campfire and cake at Roves Farm for this special event.

It's not just the girls that benefit from Guiding as all the Leaders derive great enjoyment from their involvement in the different sections. Special thanks go to Guiders and helpers whose hard work and dedication makes Guiding in Highworth possible.

So if you have energy, enthusiasm, time, a big heart and an even bigger sense of humour then Guiding is for you. If you would like any more information regarding Guiding in Highworth please do not hesitate to call Ruth on 764667.

JaM Club Set up in 1992, JaM Club is a group for all carers of babies and pre-school age children – mums, dads, grandparents, childminders, foster-carers, anyone.

The group meets each Friday morning during term time, and into the summer holidays, between 9.30 and 11.15 am at Highworth Methodist Church. Each session consists of free play for the children while their watchful carers enjoy a chat with friends, a drink and biscuit (for children and carers too!), and finishes with a singing time. There is a separate room for little babies (toddlers can be a bit daunting!). We celebrate children's birthdays, the arrival of younger siblings of members, and of course Christmas and Easter too.

We usually visit Roves Farm, and often the Wyvern Theatre, during the year. And we like to help those not as fortunate as ourselves – each year we choose a charity for which we raise funds using our Christmas catalogue and other means such as raffles. In recent years we have sent Tommy's Campaign £100, Whizz Kidz £65, GWH Children's Ward £75; and our 2003/4 charity is SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society).

And we love to see new faces! JaM Club costs just £1 per session, for more information please contact Lesley Uzzell on 765050.

Young People at St Michael's have groups specifically geared to their age groups. Whether aged three months, three years or in early teens, there is a group to join at which to learn more about God's love through Jesus – and have loads of fun in the process!

Busy Bees at Church during 10 am services is a hive (sorry!) of activity in the Cullerne Room. This group for pre-school children, launched in November 2003, has proved a great success. The children are finding out about the love of God at a level they can cope with, and their parents are able to participate in services without worrying whether their little ones are disturbing others at worship. If you are nervous about going to church with very small children – don't be! We have *Busy Bees* as young as a few months – all ages are well catered for. A team of volunteers run the sessions, which are varied in content but often include a craft activity, a story, singing, acting, refreshments and simple prayers.

For more information please contact Fran Sowden, 765554.

The Discoverers Group is for Primary School aged children who want to discover more about Jesus, The Bible, and the Christian Faith.

During term time on Sunday mornings from 10 to 11.15 am in the Church Room, meeting up in church first for the start of the Service. We learn in a fun way with stories, songs, craft and drama. From time to time we attend special Family Services and it is the Discoverers who present the Nativity Play at the Christmas Eve Crib Service.

Their own Sunday Offertory is given to a variety of charities.

For more information please contact Hazel Langford, 764375.

Stepping Stones As they grow older, young people often want to develop their own personal faith. At St Michael's Stepping Stones, for those in school years 6-10, we have lots of fun - playing games, having parties - as well as finding out more about the love of God and how we can follow him. Earlier in 2004 we had a Youth Alpha course, much enjoyed by all who took part. We meet approximately fortnightly, on a Sunday evening between 6.30 and 8 pm in St Michael's Church Room. For information contact Rob Stewart at 766026.

Chips For those in school years 10 and up, CHIPS provides a place to share together with friends a good time while growing into a more mature personal faith.

We meet approximately fortnightly, on Friday from 8.0 pm in St Michael's Church Room, though we often have trips out too. For more information contact John Rees, 764026.

Highworth Youth Centre meets in a recently purpose-built Youth and Community Building in Newburgh Place and this is provided by the Swindon Borough Council with their youth workers Wendy and Alan. They are there every Monday and Wednesday from 7.30 to 10 pm and at the library on Thursday from 6 to 8 pm where young people are guided in the use of computers, of internet access and of the library.

Adventurers Youth club meets in the Methodist Church Hall most Friday evenings in term time for a variety of activities suiting a range of age groups. This is open to all comers and no church family background is demanded. Sandra Cox is at 766232.

Rock-solid is an open club for boys and girls from 11 to 14 who meet for famously messy games, videos and high tech activities each Sunday evening from 6.45 to 8.30 pm at St. Michael's Hall. Contact is with Mark Paddon at The Bridge 765060.

Alf Groups meet at the Bridge on several evenings from 6.30 pm to talk about issues relevant to young people in school years 7 and above in a safe environment.

Girls Only meet after school at the Bridge on Tuesdays until 5 pm to get together, have fun and do girly things. This is for school years 7 to 11.

The Experience is run at Warneford School every Friday for all the fun of Rock Solid but squeezed into lunch hour.

Breakfast Club at the Bridge is from 8 am for food, bible study and prayer.

R.S.2 on Sundays at the Rec at 11 am is for young people who want to get stuck into the bible age 11 to 14 years during the Highworth Community Church service.

The Zone is at the Bridge after school on Thursdays and is a drop-in for all young people to do homework or just chat.

The White Cross Club provides regular social meetings for people with learning and physical disabilities and usually meets in the Council Rooms off the Square from 7 to 9 pm each Wednesday evening during term time. Contact is with the office of Respite Opportunities at 618843 but Margaret Bissett and Maggie Mitchell are the organisers.

Sports and Recreational

The Recreation Centre adjoins the recreation ground and is a joint venture between Councils and Management Trustees. Full time and several part time staff as required are employed by Swindon Council, together with the Trustees who provided the original building and pool. There are facilities for public outdoor sports, including football pitches, cricket square and tennis courts.

Highworth Town Council provides the recreation ground and children's play facilities .

There are changing and shower rooms, a Technogym for serious training, crèche, sports massage clinic and the outdoor swimming pool. This has been waiting to be roofed for as long as anyone can remember. Recent efforts to take this project forward continue to be made under the chairmanship of Phil Baker. Large sums have been promised by Councils and charities, including a generous donation from the United Reformed Church. One day its lottery ticket might come up. In the meantime it is kept open (in every sense) from April to September and is heated to a comfortable 80oF.

Qualified lifeguards are always on duty and there is a wide sitting-out area around the pool which is a sun-trap. As the only open-air pool left, it attracts a small but hardy custom from further afield. There are aquarobics, swimming and diving lessons. The pool is 25 metres long with three metre high diving board and a one metre springboard.

Highworth Swimming club meets at 6 pm each Thursday evening at the pool in summer and welcomes any child over five years old from learners to advanced swimmers. This is a non-competitive club devoted to teaching. Contact Miriam Weisinger at 762723.

Rec. Centre Cruise Club is the camp for children during every school holiday, based on a theme that can often be topical. Activities are in a safe environment and include team games, trampolining, arts and crafts, safety talks and visits, videos, outdoor play, cookery, music and drama and much much more.

In Highworth there is special practical encouragement of up-and-coming sportspersons.

The John Trollope Sports Aid Fund helps to improve personal performances.

In recent years grants have been given increasingly to Highworth sports coaches so that their local clubs benefit more widely. Since our last Festival no less than 29 awards have been made to individuals and groups in ten different sports. There have been a dozen or more grants for coaching / officiating awards or qualifications. This Trust distributes funds granted by our Town Council to encourage local sports persons and coaches. Application forms can be found in the Council Offices and Recreation Centre.

Highworth Town Football Club has a prominent area across the Recreation Ground entrance closed off as a soccer pitch and fenced with floodlighting and its clubhouse. The club has 500 members but only 85 of them plus 70 children play football. The First team plays in the Premier division of the Hellenic league and the Second team plays in Division one of the Reserve league. Playing at home the first team can attract 200 supporters with another 200 cheering the others and is arguably more entertaining than Swindon Town Football Club and less expensive. Contact is with Fraser Haines.

Highworth Town girls' and boys' teams are under 6, under 7, two under 9s , under 10 and under 14 and they all play in the newly formed Wiltshire League. Contact Tim Pedder on 766303.

Highworth Junior Football Club has 200 members who play in the Swindon Minor league and Cirencester league. Games are played on the back fields on Sunday mornings. There are 7-a-side, and full 11 a-side teams graded by ages into under 7, then 7 to 10, under-11, under 12, under 13, under 14, under 15 and under-16 teams, with keen competition for places. They now have the luxury of newly built changing rooms with showers, toilets, coaching room, offices and kitchen. There is also a covered area for spectators. This is also available to other community groups and has resulted from long fund-raising efforts and a £478,000 Football Foundation grant award. Mr. F Higgs on 520761 and Bernard Berry have been running junior football here for more than thirty years.

Highworth Cricket Club is the oldest in the County with its own square at the Rec. It has fifty members and fields three teams each season. Two play in the Wiltshire league each Saturday (the first team in Division 3) and one team plays friendly matches on Sundays. Contact can be made with Geoff Halls, chairman, at 694189 or at website www.highworthcricketclub.co.uk
Also they have a junior section for all ages from 8 to 16 who receive formal coaching.

Supermarine Sports Club is only two miles out towards Swindon. Soccer to a very high league standard and Rugby Union football are played there well. The club has thriving women's teams and also trains youngsters. At the club are three rugby and three soccer pitches, a bowls green, two floodlit tennis courts and facilities for cricket and athletics training and archery.

At **Highworth Golf Centre** there is a nine hole golf course and this also has a practice ground with four holes in addition to the pitch and putt course. A professional's shop is open for business and bookings all day and every day, and provision is made for PGA tuition. They have their own club so that a recognised handicap can be earned and the club runs tournaments and matches on a regular basis. There is a thriving seniors section with events every week for members but the wide fairways with superb views are normally open to all comers.

Wrag Barn Golf and Country Club is mentioned under Wining and dining but there is a serious eighteen hole golf course at its heart with splendid views. It is used as a venue for many important competitions at county and regional level. Wrag Barn is

within easy walking distance of the town along Shrivenham Road which is still without a pavement.

The Vale of White Horse Gliding Club is at Sandhill Farm just out of Highworth on the Shrivenham Road and has been flying more than forty years. With some sixty members it owns four aircraft which fly each weekend all year and some weekdays and summer evenings when weather permits. Many members have their own gliders and launching is by aero-tow with a winch as back-up. Visitors are welcomed and Mike Leach at 725265 is keen to encourage visitors. Gift vouchers are on offer and £55 will buy a trial lesson with two months membership.

A website gives details of these and all activities on www.swindongliding.co.uk

The Tennis Club owns five hard-courts at the Rec and two of these are floodlit. Most can be booked for public use at the Rec. desk. There are 132 members including juniors who play all year round. The head coach is Michele Harding. Teams play competitively in Swindon & District Tennis league and the Winter league. Contact is with Philip and Ann Robson at 765354.

Two squash courts at the Rec. are used by fifteen players who have formed an internal set of three leagues run by Alan Haskins at 762504. There is no official squash club and other people can book at the Rec. to play socially with friends.

Highworth Badminton Club plays on Tuesday evenings at Warneford School and each Friday evening at the Rec Hall. There are up to twenty members in men's, ladies' and mixed teams and they compete in the Swindon and district league. There are also purely sociable games that are not very highly competitive. New members are more than welcome and should contact Louise Field at 824773 or the Rec. directly. There is no formal tuition and total beginners are advised to attend the Rec's own courses at 8 pm each Tuesday.

Highworth Netball Club trains every Monday evening at the Rec. hall. There are about eighty members from age eight to adults in four senior teams playing in the Swindon adult league on Saturdays and six junior teams playing in Swindon junior league on Sundays. There is also an over 35s team. Training is at the Rec. from 5 pm to 10 pm each Monday. The aim is to provide competitive netball for girls and to have fun. New members are always welcome and contact is with Ruth Barnfield at 764386

Highworth Rambling Club meets at the library car park on a Sunday morning each month and on alternate Wednesday mornings at the Rec. car park. These walks are advertised in the Advertiser and in Link beforehand or dates and details can be seen in our library diary. Members are very sociable and dogs are sometimes allowed, depending on the particular route that can vary greatly in length and location.

Highworth Running Club moves at a faster pace and meets each week on Wednesday evening and Sunday morning at the Vorda playgroup building. A growing, dedicated group of all shapes, sizes and ages runs in all weathers. Road runs are intermingled with interval training, hill sprints and a Grand Prix. They also organise an

annual five miles road race around town in April when many spectators line the route to cheer them on. As usual the Club will run a fun run in September for the Festival. For information contact Wendy at Tadpole toyshop or Peter O'Brien at 763353.

Highworth Roller hockey club plays the traditional game with wooden stick and hard ball. They have teams in senior, junior and veteran leagues and last year the veterans were crowned national champions. They meet at the Rec. Sports Hall each Sunday evening and hold regular tournaments at home and throughout the country. For information contact anyone at 763223 or Wendy at Tadpole toyshop.

Highworth Sk8ters are local skateboarders, and are without a home base in spite of long fund-raising efforts, grants and pledges that already raised £8,500.. A variety of wheeled activities can use ramps and other fixed equipment. These can be seen as smooth concrete low ramps and rails as near as Lechlade where the young persons using them seem responsible and polite. There is little noise from fixed concrete and something similar would surely fit unobtrusively into a central area on the public part of our recreation ground. It would be safer and less worrying than skating in roadways and car parks. Clare and Dave Titcombe on 765103 and Sandra Cox on 766232 speak for the group that is without a chairman at present.

Highworth Karate Club meets each Monday at St. Michael's Hall and is a non-competitive activity. The traditional form of Shotokan Karate is taught and this is a martial art of self-defence and fitness. The beginners' class is from 6 pm to 7 pm and from Red belt upwards from 6 pm to 8 pm. The first two lessons are free of charge. It is suitable for all from the age of nine to ninety and classes are instructed by Mark Laybourn who can be contacted at 762125.

The Bowls Club has extensive greens and clubhouse on Swindon Road opposite Simpson's Garage and has many members but not all play bowls. A welcome is extended to experienced bowlers, juniors and beginners alike. Trained instructors are readily available. The spacious clubhouse has a well stocked bar and a large number of social members who make good use of it. The outdoor season is from mid-April to September and members are able to play from the age of nine to beyond ninety. An open day this year on Bank Holiday Monday 3rd May from 10.30 am will be a chance to learn about and try out the game with equipment provided. Contact can be made with John Morgan at 763615 or Gordon Pearce at 763174.

The Highworth Canoe Club comprises about thirty enthusiasts who meet all year round. They use lakes, canals and rivers over a wide area and welcome beginners or experts. There are twenty club canoes in addition to those of members. Safety is taken very seriously and youth organisations or anyone interested are helped to become involved. A recent grant has opened the way for canoe polo played on (or in) a local lake. New members are welcome and contact is with Ian Tomkins at 765447

The Highworth Angling Club has some 210 members and a full list of competition matches. They are looking for coarse fish in rented stretches of the Rivers Cole and upper Thames near Castle Eaton and Buscot. The club owns a lake at Lechlade stocked with coarse fish and carp. Norman Reeves welcomes membership enquiries at 763549.

Public Halls for hire

Highworth is fortunate in having many halls that can be hired by the public.

The largest is the **Sports Hall at the Recreation Centre**. This is used for a wide variety of activities including badminton, five-a-side football, basketball, netball, trampolining, gymnastics, aerobics and roller hockey. There are also concerts, school ceremonies and the well supported annual Highworth Produce and Crafts Show. Run mainly by W.I. members, this is an event that fills the Sports Hall each September

The Community Hall of the Rec. has a stage, service lift, kitchen, a staffed bar, and caretakers. The polished woodblock floor is good for dancing and is used for ballroom, Latin and sequence dancing on the third Saturday of each month with music by Nell King from 8 to 11 pm with a licensed bar. It can be hired for special occasions on Friday or Saturday with a bar and steward. It has a more serious use each Sunday when there is morning worship of the Highworth Community Church.

St. Michael's Hall is cheap to hire. It is big enough to hold large family parties or dances and has its own car park. It is licensed for more than 100 guests and the stage has now been reduced in height to become a carpeted plinth. Refurbishment has provided central heating and other facilities. A good kitchen is included and your own bar can be stocked or hired in from a pub or caterer. Music, dancing and public performances are allowed, subject only to keeping the lid on noisy disc jockeys to avoid upsetting our neighbours. There is grass for games and a barbecue and it has an area of full-sized boules pitches. The hall is well used by youth organisations including brownies and guides and many other regular weekly activities. Booking is with Sylvia at 763745.

The Council Community Room is smaller but well appointed. It can be hired at the Town Clerk's office in the same building. It has a full stock of crockery and cutlery but very limited cooking facilities. The position gives good access off The Square with parking.

Silver Threads Hall, close to the Rec., is smaller but licensed for seventy and is centrally heated. It has good facilities in a recently improved kitchen. It is used every day by a variety of organisations for meetings, dance practice, rehearsals and for private parties. Contact is with Margaret Cox at 763360.

The Methodist Church building on Vicarage Lane incorporates a hall that can be hired by clubs and is used for playgroups, youth groups and similar bodies.

It is regularly used for Music with Mum, Craft Groups, Women's Institutes, French language study, (without wine), Brownies and a host of others.

St Michael's church has a two storey former stable block looking onto Vicarage Lane but with its entrance through the churchyard. It is licensed for fifty people in the main room and is used for church activities but can be hired for meetings and parties

The scouts have their own hall in Eastrop where they hold the popular Scouts' quiz, This hall has been very substantially updated in recent years and has its own car parking.

The schools also hire out their halls for some purposes, mainly to the P.T.A.s, and for stage shows, line dancing, keep-fit and sporting activities. Warneford School is readily available and the Wine Circle popular annual barn dance is held there.

Dining and Wining in Highworth

There is a long tradition of good and ample food and hospitality with well known restaurants like **Rafus**, specialising in great Indian meals in the Tandoori tradition with eighteen tables on two floors. There are two take-away Indian kitchens at **Kebria Tandoori and Highworth Kebab**, also a take-away Chinese at **Sammy's**. The best local Chinese restaurant is the **Bamboo Garden** on Swindon Street. We have traditional Chip shops, in the High Street and on Swindon Street. A teashop, near the Square, has snacks with waitress service and sells cakes and bread.

In the High Street the **Saracens Head** has twelve rooms all en suite and has been providing food drink and accommodation for hundreds of years. Now owned by Ian Vockins and expanded with a menu for the discerning palate. The **King & Queen** is also of ancient origin and expanded into several buildings to provide a wide frontage. **The Globe** in Sheep Street serves beer with traditional character. **The Jesmond Hotel** is also full of character and happy well-fed customers.

Further along Swindon Street Mike and Jacqui at **the Fishes** have three double en suite rooms and are busy with a regular programme of local bands. On the corner with Brewery Street, Mary at **the Fox** has a menu of bar food and the old Forge restaurant, which room is used by The White Horse Folk Group for their regular meetings and is available for business meetings and other functions. The other pub nearby in The Green, close to the Rec Building, is **the Rose & Crown**, which is now run in a friendly way by Martin. He offers five real ales, good home cooking, boules and other events in his large garden as well as regular live music.

On the road towards Shrivenham is **Wrag Barn Golf and Country Club**, a very popular venue for meals and drinks, especially Sunday lunchtimes, and has a fine reputation for wedding receptions and other functions in a dining room with big balcony and unrivalled views over the golf course.

The Wine Cellar, run in a relaxed atmosphere by Chris, is a real ale and food restaurant offering a regularly changing set menu of inspired dishes in the Square and has regular live music.

At the roadside towards Lechlade are **the Plough** and **the White Horse** while the **Goldfinger** offers food and drink with special deals for pensioners in Newburgh Place.

Publications

Link is a polished magazine produced ten times each year by a team that includes Geoff Heaford as Editor, Ray Jackson as Treasurer and Clive Angood as Advertising Manager. It is well printed by Mike at Highworth Press which will soon be moving back to our Industrial Estate. Link is an A5 size glossy covered booklet, free to the reader and is distributed by a dedicated band to every house in Highworth and most surrounding villages, including Blunsdon, Shrivenham, Watchfield. It represents basically the views and news of Christian churches in the town and villages but there is room for others such as the several youth organisations, charities, Lions, twinned and other clubs who tell us of their activities and for short stories and articles. Some 7,200 copies are printed and distributed in ten months of each year and businesses and tradesmen from within and outside the town are keen to advertise. They tell us that even those residents who do not read every article usually choose services from advertisers in Link, which can be seen lying within reach in almost every house they visit.

Government of us by us.

Every month there are listed in our Link Magazine the names and addresses of the fifteen brave townsfolk who serve us as elected members of Highworth Town Council and these include the Town Mayor and Chairman of the Council and his Deputy. They all serve without hope of thanks or reward, being unpaid. Their telephone numbers are also published, which ensures they remain in very close contact with those of us who have any complaints or suggestions !

Councillors serve for four years and there is then an election for all seats at once. Additionally three members are directly elected to Swindon Borough Council and the election for one of them is held in rotation each year. They are usually also Town Councillors.

Full meetings of our Council are open to public view and take place nine times each year upstairs in the main Council Meeting room above the community room.

There are three main committees of councillors which meet there regularly and these are the General Purposes and Finance committee, Leisure committee and a Planning Sub-committee which has to be consulted by Swindon Borough Council but has no real powers except to make recommendations and some fine tuning of schemes. All fifteen councillors are members of all three committees.

The Council Office, off the Square, is open from 9 am to 1 pm every week on Mondays to Fridays and also on Monday and Thursday afternoons from 2 pm to 4 pm. We are lucky to have a Town Clerk and a receptionist who have much experience and can steer callers in the right direction.

Information not readily found elsewhere is at The Lighthouse Bookshop where Val and Malcolm at the shop No 40, High Street or on 763337 are an official Information Centre.

The Town Council owns the Square and regulates the use of the podium. Also it is responsible for the weekly Saturday market. The market varies in size depending on competition from other markets but is generally useful and well patronised. A new manager took over recently and has increased support greatly. He is Keith Alexander, a familiar face whose hardware stall has been trading here ever since the market was revived in 1981, the charter being 700 years old.

The library is not run by the Town Council but by Swindon Borough and is new, with lift and stairs to large upper rooms over the new Co-op store. Enthusiastic staff offer a welcoming smile and cheerful greeting. As well as books there are videos, DVDs, CDs, and play station games to be hired for a week at a time. There are stories on tape and on CD and even jigsaw puzzles with access to stock in other libraries. You can use one of nineteen computers with free broadband internet access up to two hours each day. Free computer taster sessions are available with evening classes by Swindon College. Other services include photocopying, a fax machine, laminating, newspapers, a coffee machine, book tokens, census vouchers, postage stamps and garden waste sacks.

On some days there are coffee mornings with readings of poetry, children's story telling with competitions and homework help, access to legal advisers and many other activities from time to time. Contact the library on 463500 during 43 open hours on mornings of Monday, Wednesday and Saturday and full days on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Our Historical Society has a display area for interesting items, changed every two months. There are also display cabinets and wall space for other Highworth societies to promote their own activities.

Any local organisation can list dates of events or meetings in a diary kept on open display in the library so clashes of dates should not happen.

A very useful list of recently acquired books appears each month in Link magazine.

The Police station has a desk that is open during restricted hours. The building, near Westrop School and the health centre, is usually manned, with Sergeant Adrian Davis, seven constables and two inquiry officers who have become familiar faces in the town and surrounding villages. They are keen to take part in 'meet and greet forums' to raise their local profile with us all.

Telephones are now routed through Devizes call centre for all emergency services.

From time to time we see the County Police helicopter over our town, either looking for villains or in its paramedical role after accidents. This is a very modern craft and is supported partly by voluntary fund-raising which is continual in Highworth although it lives in a hanger near Devizes police headquarters.

Highworth and District Neighbourhood Watch Association has Pat Willis at 763967 as Chairman. There are 58 schemes covering most of the area, taking in Sevenhampton, spreading through South Marston and working towards Inglesham with an eventual target of 100 schemes. They meet at 7.30 pm on the first Tuesday of every even-numbered month at the Youth and Community Centre in Newburgh Place. These meetings are open to all residents for discussion with the Police about local crime levels. Free refreshments are served and there are also social events. This is a very active group which raised £600 to give personal attack alarms / torches to all years 7 and 8 girls at Warneford school. Anyone interested in this work is made welcome.

We should not forget the unstinting work of political party members, campaigning and fund-raising for their chosen causes. When calling on voters at election times they are as welcome to most folk as snow in summer, but they are the unsung heroes of the democratic system, which we neglect at our peril. Conservatives can be found at Gordon Jefferies' shop in the High Street while Labour is represented by Phil Beaumont at 762517. The local Liberals are represented by Jenny Shorten.

Environmental activists do not fit easily into any slot but some do useful work.

An example is award winning Roves Farm run by Rupert and Joanna Burr. There is an extensive farm visitor centre with guided walks, mazes and rides and chance to feed and stroke the animals. Agenda 21 has an event planned there and grants have been given for bio-power generation from willow growing.

We will soon see Watchfield wind farm on the horizon while the Community Forest spreads its branches in numerous fields around us and into our own Countryside Park where numerous local organisations have planted trees under expert guidance. It is hoped this and other efforts will eventually restore much of the tree cover lost in this area to development and to Dutch elm disease.

Travel and Transport

Car parking in Highworth is free and easy. There is limited waiting at the roadside or in the Square and also free unrestricted parking in two car parks at Brewery Street and in Priory Green. Both are within 200 metres of the shops. There is free parking near Newburgh Place for shops and the Medical centre and at the new Co-op Supermarket and library building.

Highworth Lions Club own a smart 17 seat minibus which lives behind their shop in Newburgh Place and is in constant use for ferrying people for charitable purposes. The money to run the bus is raised by shop sales and fund raising events.

Our Town Council also owns two minibuses and these can be hired cheaply by local groups who can book at the Council Offices.

A quarter hourly bus service to Swindon is provided by **Stagecoach and Thamesdown** Transport with modern fleets of easy-access single deck buses. These are boosted to a ten minutes interval at peak periods and usually punctual thanks to increasing numbers of bus lanes. There is also an hourly service directly to and from the new Great Western Hospital but calling at Sainsburys for shoppers. It is number 27 from Brewery Street around the town in an anti-clockwise direction on weekdays starting at 9.05 am. and the last bus leaves here at 3.05 pm. The library and Council Offices have timetables. We also have access to Dial-a-ride for those suffering disabilities.

At present bus services end about 10.40 pm out of Swindon but we have in Highworth the control office of Link taxis serving Highworth and further afield. With many drivers and a variety of vehicles, some multi-seated, they provide an economical service to airports at Heathrow, Gatwick, Bristol and Cardiff. Long distance coaches also run from Swindon to Heathrow and Gatwick Airports and to other places. Inter city rail services by First Western through Swindon use 125 diesel trains, and promise many improvements in the next few years. Trains run every 20 minutes during most of the day to Paddington, London taking about 50 minutes, also to Cardiff and Cheltenham.

Highworth churches

Details of how and where to contact all the clergy and officials of our churches are set out in a panel in Link Magazine each month and this can be found in most places including the library, dry cleaners, bookshop and estate agents. Each church is the sum total of its leaders and congregation rather than the building in which it meets.

In Highworth we are additionally blessed, with the active participation of all churches in the ICC. or Inter-Church Committee. This plans joint services including worshipping together in the annual Civic Service and Remembrance Services and also on the podium at Easter and Pentecost. We organise celebrations with carols when the town lights are switched on before Christmas.

Other aspects of combined Christian life in the town, include Lent lunches, bible study with discussion groups and youth work. ICC Alpha courses are organised and there is an annual Summer Holiday Club involving large numbers of local youngsters with guidance from members of all our churches.

The most prominent structure at the heart and centre of Highworth is the 15th Century church building that is the latest of many on the same site since long before the Normans came. It has been modernised by each generation so most interior fittings are less than 150 years old. It is the only Grade I listed building in the Borough and maintaining it is a huge commitment for the congregation. It is helped by the Rev. Clinton's Gift to the church, originally of a rough field when rental income was restricted to maintenance of the church building. The field was sold as redundant for grazing but the money, in a trust fund, can only be used for the specific purpose chosen by the original donor. The Charity Commissioners say this gift cannot help with running costs of the church or be given away.

Within this building meet two of our churches.

The Church of England has a large and rapidly growing congregation, challenging media clichés with many young families and regular services, three on Sundays and some on weekdays. These are mainly for modern communion and worship, although a rotation of traditional or very informal praises meet differing needs. Many activities for children are at 10 am services. The vicar, the Rev. Geoff Sowden is young and enthusiastic and is supported by lay readers and retired clergy. Here and attached to our parish at Hannington and Sevenhampton are regular weekly services. Inglesham has a congregation for occasional services in a medieval building with historical connections to William Morris.

In Highworth the church building is open to visitors every day and a Church Office in the building behind the main one is the centre of much activity. A stream of volunteers welcome visitors, clean the interior, print and distribute information, change notices and banners, maintain furnishings and arrange flowers as well as assisting in the services. There is a strong musical tradition and choir. The pipe organ is very old and requires much skill but the piano is a very good one and a modern music group regularly leads family morning worship.

In the prominent tower the oldest bell is dated 1659 and a guild of bell ringers has rung here ever since. There are now ten and more are needed. A band of them ring the peal of eight bells twice each Sunday. Practice is on each Thursday evening and there are often parties of visiting ringers. The tenor bell weighs 18 cwt (907 kg. in new money). As part of Bristol Diocese, the Church is twinned with St. Steven's church in Kisugu, Uganda and has exchange visits. Missionary support is also provided to the Ashmore family, working in a school in the Ivory Coast. and to Lindy Hope working in Manila. Support is also given to Seekers Light Trust , running the Lighthouse Bookshop. Fund-raising and special services take place for many causes at home and overseas. House groups for fellowship and study, Mum and toddler groups, youth services, which evolve as quickly as tastes change, are held, while there are services by members from time to time seeking new ways to faith.

The Catholic Church in Highworth is part of the parish of St. Mary's, Swindon, but each Sunday at 12.15 pm Father Liam Slattery or Fr. Kevin Hennessey hold a well attended Mass here in St. Michael's. This arrangement has been in place for some thirty years and members take a full part in looking after the building and in fellowship with other congregations, I.C.C. Lent lunches and in joint worship on the podium

The Methodist Church is a very active community of faith led by Rev Adrian Smith, but he plans to retire in July this year and a new Minister, Rev John Wiltshire will take over as superintendent of the Upper Thames Circuit in September. There is a church office and some well used meeting rooms on the premises. The principal Sunday services, where a warm welcome awaits all, are at 10.30 am and 6 pm. Love and care are not just talked about, but are practised in the many fellowship and prayer meetings, held by members of the congregation each week. Many talented musicians are active both within the church and in schools and in the wider community. For the very young there is JaM (Jesus and Me) while a Youth Club and Sisterhood serve varying needs within the Congregation. The Church actively pursues initiatives to take Jesus out to a wider audience, supporting many Town activities. Membership of the Inter-Church Committee and involvement in many other projects are an important part of that mission.

Highworth United Reformed Church in the High Street has a small but friendly congregation and regular services at 10.45 am each Sunday. Fellowship groups meet during evenings and there are Prospect charity coffee mornings and social evenings. Our Minister is Rev. Jill Thornton and members are involved in Inter Church activities including Songs of Praise Services for all.

Highworth Community Church channels all its efforts into worship, fellowship and evangelism. The Sunday morning services at 10.15 am in the Upper Community Room at the Recreation Centre are lively and crowded with modern music of good quality. Also there is a Family Service each month. There is a Sunday School, crèche, house groups and the Bridge office in Sheep Street that reaches out into the community with Fairtrade goods and products from Gloucester House. Support is given to World Mission and a church member, Keith Holder founded an educational charity which is working in Costa Rica. A full time Youth worker is employed in Highworth and is responsible for the Rock

Solid Club of eleven to twelve year olds that meets each Sunday night in St. Michael's Hall during term time. This also provides for a Christian input into schools.

The Salvation Army has owned and run for some forty years in our Town Square the elegant building of Gloucester House, whose Centre Manager is Rev. David Day. It has professional staff but uniformed officers lead worship while other clergy visit regularly. The work of helping those during the final stages towards rehabilitation after recovery from addiction is tremendously challenging but must be very rewarding. Their League of Friends helps raise funds for welfare. They are enthusiastically supported by our community, which recognises the value and success of their work, although by its very difficult nature there must always be occasional setbacks. There, but for God's grace and the love and support of our friends would be many more of us.

Maranatha Christian Church meets each Sunday at 10.30 am for Communion and Bible ministry and Wednesdays at 7.30 pm for prayer and Bible study at Queenslaines Farm, Severnhampton. Contact is at 861463 with Neville Downes.

Music, Theatre and the Arts

There are so many Societies and Clubs under this heading please excuse any omissions.

Highworth Choral Society meets each week on Monday evening at Warneford School during term time. New singers are always welcome without audition. A variety of music is performed under the baton of Veronica Philipson who sets high standards and challenging programmes. For previous festivals they sang Mozart's Requiem and Handel's Messiah. More recently the first performance of Misa Cubana was a daunting task and a splendid occasion and a magical evening. The Christmas Concerts are also always packed. This year on 27th March for our Festival they will sing Gioachino Rossini's Petite Messe Solennelle at the Rec. Hall. Contact is with Simon Apps at 763175 or website www.highworthchoral.org.uk

Highworth Silver Band has existed for over 120 years and has its own substantial Band hall on Lechlade Road. Mark Cooper, Musical Director is always seeking new members, male or female and of any age, who can be trained in a suitable instrument of their choice. Band members include some very skilled and experienced players and also some who learned later in life. They rehearse each Thursday evening from 7.30 pm and Sunday mornings from 10.30 am. The band gives concerts on the podium and plays at the annual Remembrance Service in St. Michael's Church. There are carols at Christmas, village fetes, summer shows and concerts in Swindon Town Gardens, as well as private functions. The repertoire is varied with traditional marches, classical, popular tunes, film themes and big band arrangements. Anyone interested can contact Mark Cooper or simply turn up at a rehearsal to meet other players.

Warneford School big band of swing era retro type is very popular and good, also a choir and a small orchestra that performs mainly for parents but sometimes in public.

The White Horse Folk Club is thirty years old and meets twice monthly each first and third Wednesday from 8.15 to 11 pm in the Forge Room at The Fox pub. There are often guest performers, some quite famous names having appeared, and local talent is encouraged. It is a jolly club and audience participation is welcomed but never demanded. New members and visitors are warmly welcomed by chairman Peter Wright and his colleagues.

Swindon Scottish Dance Association SSDA., is partly based in Wyrld Hill in the kilted and affable person of Mike Doyle. They hold regular dancing classes at Lawns Community Centre at 8 pm each Thursday and a dress rehearsal for nearly Burns' night is held in our Council Community Rooms each January when the best Haggis, neaps and tatties ever tasted are served by the Wine Circle. Mike is contacted at 762874.

Two line dance groups are supported in Highworth. On Mondays from 8 pm Lewis Watson leads the Midnight Cowboys group in the Rec. Community Hall, while those wanting to hone their dancing skills further meet with Martin Lee at the Warneford School Hall each Wednesday from 7 pm. To 10 pm. This group is known as Doc. Martin's dancers. Lewis at 764732 and Martin on 710356 hope to cater for many and varied tastes in Country and Western dancing at all skill levels.

Lewis also provides tuition for beginners and improvers at his own home in Lismore Road. from 6.30 pm each Monday leading into the session at the Rec. but this is by appointment only.

Upper Thames branch of the Decorative and Fine Arts Society also meets at the Rec. Hall and has 200 members. With a long waiting list it is not recruiting. Members are invited to hear speakers on artistic subjects such as paintings or porcelain each fourth Thursday. One of its projects has been to record the history and artefacts within local church buildings and to date Hannington and Coleshill have been presented with bound copies recording their work. Copies of the books will be provided to the Victoria and Albert Museum and other suitable places. Nationally some 800 parish churches have been recorded in this worthwhile way by the Society. Contact name is Joy Deacon.

Highworth and District Floral Art Society has 140 members and celebrates 40 years in 2004. Members meet on the first Thursday of every month for quality demonstrations, competitions and talks on a variety of themes. It is one of the largest societies in the South West area of N.A.F.A.S. and next year will provide their Area President in the person of Fay Loveday. Visitors and new members are welcome. Contact can be made with chairperson Joan Craigie at 762622. Flowers are arranged for weddings and other functions and they fill St. Michael's church building with exhibits on a chosen theme during the main Festival weekend.

Highworth Artists Society is open to all artists in the area but has sixty members. This is as many as can be accommodated at their meetings, so there are some on a waiting list. Every Tuesday afternoon during the winter and on some weekends, Bill Bartrop welcomes artists for practical workshops in the Community Room. Self- help and advice are freely exchanged but there are no teaching facilities for beginners. During the Summer there are outdoor painting sessions. Public exhibitions in the Community room are held regularly each Spring and Autumn.

Highworth Amateur Drama (HADS) has been revitalised and aims to perform three plays each year in Warneford School. Rehearsals are for eight weeks beforehand on Mondays and Thursdays at the Silver Threads Hall. Play-readings and other events extend activities throughout the year.

Highworth Community Drama brings together local actors to entertain and encourage theatre. They compete in One Act festivals with much success and also perform walk-about theatre and themed evenings for charitable purposes. They are not a Drama Group but have a wider canvas. John Williams at 764431, a well known local actor, states their objectives as developing good preparation, memory skills, interpretation of character and a professional approach to the work.

A Poetry Reading Circle meets in the homes of members by arrangement and details can be obtained from Rosemary Quick at 762063.

Making music is a strong local tradition and there are varied and ever evolving rock bands playing in our pubs on a regular basis. These include Will Peape with Hangfire and Adrian Young with the Sad Dads.

Hogshead Folk dance band and its offspring Trotters are run from Lechlade since Jack Bothwell moved there to live, but are still very well loved locally. They are used for the best Barn dances including the ones arranged each November by our Wine circle in the Warneford School Hall.

Another band is called Wrde named after the Anglo-Saxon origin of Highworth and performs Celtic and International folk music.