

THE 2025 REPORT BY THE LAYHAM LOCAL HISTORY RECORDER

Looking back over the report of 2024, there has been very little change in village life. I will present my annual report in the same pattern as last year – identifying developments where they have taken place.

The same community organisations have thrived throughout 2025 with the addition of the Layham Art Group.

It is **St Andrew's church** that has seen the most change. On Saturday 28 June, Glenda Hall (a resident of the village), was ordained as a deacon of St. Edmundsbury Cathedral by Bishop Graeme Knowles.



Glenda is now serving as Assistant Curate for Hadleigh, Layham and Shelley as she continues her training for the curacy.

As the result of the Quinquennial inspection of the building, repairs to the roof, walls, windows and gutters were carried out. Replacement of the flagpole was funded by the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust.



A modest Open Gardens event was held in the summer organised by **The Friends of St. Andrew's**. It was augmented by a small exhibition in one of the gardens of work done by the Layham Art Group and an 'open gallery' of ceramic work by a resident of Upper Layham.



The usual program of church services is recorded in the Hadleigh Community News in addition to Remembrance Sunday and a festival of music and carols.

The Parish Council continues to chip away at small local issues including on-going improvements to the SID (Speed Indication Device) system; the annual spring and autumn village clear ups; maintenance of the five defibrillators; combatting water leaks on the road between Upper Layham and Hadleigh; repair to footpath No 4 and letting of two vacant allotments.

The Village Playing Field had two major expenditures during 2025. The annual play apparatus inspection revealed that the wooden slide frame needed replacing and this was done for £5000. Shortly after that it was found necessary to renew the ride-on mower, which cost a further £4,300.



After two years of paying contract rates for grass cutting, a volunteer has been recruited to do the job at no charge – a move that is taking some of the financial pressure from the committee.



The Village Hall has taken major steps forward in the sanding and polishing of the floor, replacement of several electric heaters and the removal of the billiard table. The work done makes the hall an increasingly attractive place to hire. The annual book fair raised £350 for funds.



The Layham Social Club continues to flourish with a loyal group of participants. The group meets from 10am to 12pm in the village hall. There is a small charge of £2 for refreshments, hall hire and expenses for speakers. Speakers through 2025 have included; Ukrainian Aid; bird photography; St. Elizabeth Hospice; Hearing Care Centre; Dark Sky Campaign; sea shanties; Nature Citizen Community Garden; community archaeology; Home Guard during WW2; a retired firefighter; Stour Valley walk; home-made fountain pens; Suffolk villages; birds of Africa; scams and frauds; Women in the church; 'Rosewood' folk music and finally, a shared Christmas lunch.



The Layham Events Group (LEG) organised two major events during the year. The 80th anniversary of VE Day provided an excuse for a rounders tournament on the playing field, won by a team from Lower Layham. The annual 'Festive Fair' was held in the village hall in December – it was well attended and £750 was raised for local good causes.



The Layham Local History Group took advantage of the celebration on VE Day to mount an exhibition of photographs of items found in the Parish by three detectorists: Kevin Chisnall, Amanda Linaker and Peter Cutts. The exhibition was advertised as 'Found in the Ground' and shown on the ground floor of the mill, creating considerable interest.



Later in the year, a presentation was made to the licensee of 'The Queen's Head'. Hanging on the dining room wall of the pub is a large picture frame containing fifty-one photographs of members of the community who served in uniformed services during World War 2. Five men lost their lives and they are remembered on Layham war memorial. Forty six other men and women survived the war. Every photograph has a small type-written label giving just a surname and the initial of one surname. There is no record of who organised and set out the collection.



It became a challenge for the Layham Local History Group to research the background stories of these people and record the findings in a display folder. Most of the research work and the layout was done by Jeff Ward – assisted by Michael Woods. It has always been the intention to lodge a copy of the folder in the pub when completed, in order that customers can browse the material. The original copy is lodged in the Parish Archive. The photograph shows Jeff Ward presenting the folder to Stephen Laing.

The **Layham Art Group** is fully subscribed and meets on Wednesday mornings in the village hall under the leadership of Cris Coe. Small exhibitions of the work of the group have already been seen – landscapes, Christmas designs and snowdrops, for example.



Michael Woods

Layham Local History Recorder

February 2026