

Milton on Stour Huntingford &  
Colesbrook Milton on Stour  
Huntingford & Colesbrook  
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Colesbrook Milton on Stour



**MILTON ON STOUR  
VILLAGE PLAN  
2009**

Produced by local residents

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# **Milton on Stour, Huntingford and Colesbrook Village Plan**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Milton on Stour today**

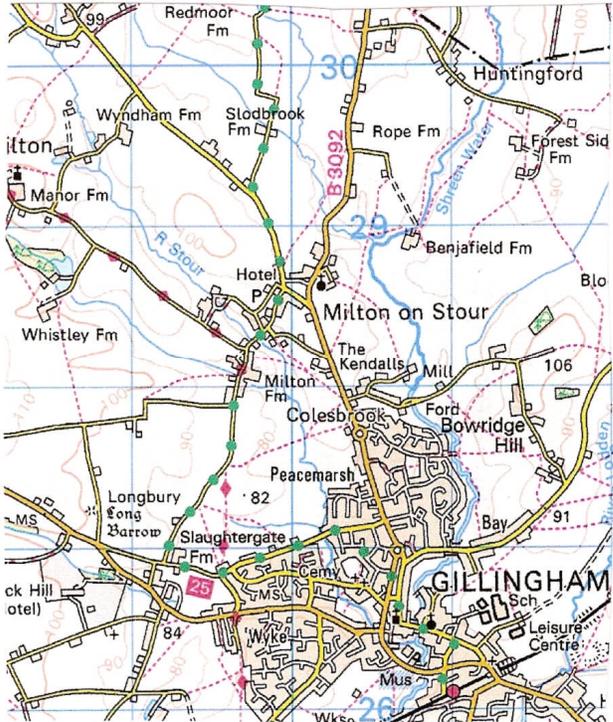
Milton is a quiet and peaceful village on the edge of the fast expanding town of Gillingham. It is a lovely place to be and the majority of us who live here are keenly aware of our good fortune as well as the pressures that exist and which threaten village life. In 1991, Milton on Stour along with its neighbouring hamlets of Huntingford and Colesbrook, carried out a village appraisal. Since that time much has changed and it was generally felt that the time was right to take a fresh look at the needs and aspirations of the village area and its residents.

Milton does not have an obvious centre, but villagers get together from time to time and enjoy a great sense of community whether it be through the school, the church or the shop, and rally round to undertake many tasks for the benefit of all. It was so with this project, thanks being due to all the people who drew up and distributed questionnaires, collected the returns and prepared the report. Thanks are also due to the villagers who took the time to complete the questionnaires and provide the data that is presented here. We hope that you will find something of interest and that the subsequent action plan will be of help for the future development of Milton, Colesbrook and Huntingford.



**The Village Located**

Milton on Stour and the hamlets are at the very north eastern tip of Dorset which intrudes into Somerset and Wiltshire. The map below shows the settlement boundaries. Today they form part of Gillingham’s administrative civil parish, but historically their identities have always been quite separate.



## The Village History

Milton history is important for the understanding of the village position today. In the Domesday Book Milton was referred to as *Miletone* and was taxed for four and a half cattle hides. While Huntingford and Colesbrook, on the edge of the Royal Forest of Gillingham were known as *Huntlesford* or *Hunters ford* and *Coates brook* or *Coates bridge*.

The early history of the whole area is tied up with that of Gillingham. It is very difficult therefore to untangle the various ownerships and references as much of it is interlinked.

However, in 1966 a local resident when erecting a fence, uncovered some stone foundations in his paddock. An exploratory dig was made and a brief survey carried out. One out of a possible four dwellings was uncovered, complete with hearth. Pottery shards from the 11th to 14th centuries were also found. This trial excavation indicated this to be the site of the "Lost" settlement of Milton.

Over the centuries, two families have played a major role in the development of Milton and its area. – The **Dirdoes, and the Matthews.**

The Dirdoe family was first mentioned in 1514 when Brothers Robert and William acquired a cottage and a lease of land called Greenhayes. Robert went on to purchase Milton Manor in 1554. His descendants lived in the house (Now known as *The Old House*) from 1554 until about 1739. They must have exercised considerable influence on village affairs as there is a large memorial to the family in Gillingham Church and a Charity which bears their name.



GILLINGHAM CHURCH. Monument (4) of Frances Dirdoe.

1733

The second family inextricably linked to the Milton area are the Matthews. From the late 1700's the Matthews family acquired much of the property formerly owned by the Dirdoes, and during the Victorian period to more

recent times, were involved in the milling and brewing industries. It is due in part to this family that we have our present Church and School, Milton Lodge, Purnes Mill, The Kendalls, The Croft and the Brewery building at Wyke.

Religious life may be traced back as far as 1319 when a chantry chapel was built in the Pierston area (then a separate hamlet) its rector being Thomas de Grindeham. That building fell out of use at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530's, but is mentioned in a Parliamentary Commission of 1650 as "A chapel now decayed and not used." The actual site is not known, but it is thought to be somewhere in the region of Pierston House. The present church was built between 1865 and 1867 on land given by Mr. Thomas Matthews of Milton Lodge, who at the same time gave additional land in order to establish our village school.

The church is built of Tisbury stone [oolitic limestone] in the style of the mid 13th century, and was dedicated, but not completed on December 17th 1867. Thomas Matthews the benefactor and head of the brewing firm, never lived to see it built, but his family, together with The Rev. Henry Deane vicar of Gillingham made sure that the project continued. Public subscriptions and donations from various benefactors over some 30 years ensured its future. The fixtures and fittings are in the style of Sir George Gilbert Scott, and also A W Pugin, both of whom worked in the area. The decorated roof vaulting is characteristic of their style. The church is unique in the area in as much as all the windows are of stained and painted glass, thus giving a myriad of colours on sunlit days.



Milton and Colesbrook have two claims to fame of international merit – The artist **John Constable** completed in total two paintings and a sketch of Purnes Mill between 1820 and 1824. He was so “taken by it” and was very sad to learn of the disastrous fire of 1825 which totally destroyed the original building he had depicted on canvas.



The other claim to fame concerns the 27th President of the United States of America from 1909 – 1912, **William Taft** who was descended from Rachel Perne of Colesbrook / Boweridge who married Edward Rawson of Milton in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a boom in the farming industry which of course was reflected throughout the related industries and consequently village life. Much of the farmyard buildings we see around us today, date from that “golden” period.

This was a time of relative prosperity, and numerous local businesses flourished with a blacksmith, haulier and wheelwright as well as an agricultural machinery business.

In common with other villages Milton was affected by the First World War, as the names on the War Memorial testify. Nevertheless at that time we could boast two village shops, a church, a chapel at Huntingford, a school, a pub, a men’s club, a library, various light industries, and at least 16 dairy farms!

## Huntingford Chapel



Original



Renovated



During the last War, Milton did not entirely escape action. There being at least two planes that came down, and in 1940 a stick of bombs was dropped in a line from Kendall Lane to Bourton Road, narrowly missing all buildings, but killing a horse in a paddock near Kendall Lane.

## THE PLAN PROCESS

The idea of a new Village Plan was raised in the village committee by the then chairman Su Hunt who knew of similar projects being undertaken within Dorset. The main question asked at the time the project was started was 'Why do a village plan?' The main purpose was to find out the true feelings and opinions of residents and assess current needs and aspirations with respect of future development. The results would enable us to make our views known to the Town, District and County Councils with confidence and to garner their support.

At an open meeting of the Village Committee in September, 2006, it was decided to form a steering group to move the project forward and to apply for any grants that might be available to help with the costs.

The first meeting of the Steering committee was held in October 2006, and with help at subsequent meetings from Susi Calder and Simon Thompson from Dorset Community Action, a plan of action was produced. It was considered vital that the whole community should be involved in the project. A budget was drawn up with a total expected cost of £1,940 funded largely by donations from Gillingham Town Council [£1,400] Milton on Stour Village Committee [£100] and by volunteers' time in kind.

The village boundaries were taken as those given by the ecclesiastical map which include the hamlets of Colesbrook and Huntingford, both of which play an active part in village activities.

Our first step was to hold an awareness day at the village school which was attended by some 100 residents. This event attempted to highlight areas that might be of concern to individual villagers and ask them to put their particular views forward. The information collected at this event enabled us to prepare a detailed questionnaire which was delivered by hand to every household in Milton on Stour, Huntingford and Colesbrook. The completed questionnaires were collected with an impressive response rate of over 80%.



The results are now contained in this document which is available as a point of reference for the community and for the various public bodies involved.



**SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

**Life in the Village**

People enjoy living in Milton on Stour, Huntingdonshire with its relative tranquillity and the country views. One respondent described the village as a beautiful place like the neighbourliness, friendly atmosphere and the general peacefulness is appreciated along with the School, Church, shop and Post Office.



**The Ford at Colesbrook**



The residents of Milton on Stour expressed considerable concern at the ever increasing traffic levels from Gillingham. Increasing traffic levels, speeding vehicles together with widespread litter and dog fouling were the main concerns.

Villagers want to preserve Milton as a village with some 45% saying no development is needed and the majority feeling that there is no need for additional local employment. The majority of residents are willing to take part in at least some of the village events and activities. A minority, about 37% of villagers prefer to opt out with the remainder expressing interest in a greater range of activities being organised. These include keep fit, films, cultural talks and concerts. The main drawback being a lack of suitable venues within the village.

There is a strong interest in Village History with half of all respondents prepared to help although they do not have local records or photos. Several would participate in village walks together with a talk from a local village historian.

More information on footpaths, bridleways and interesting local features is requested. However most respondents were content with the signage although some highlighted stiles and gates that need repair or have difficult access.



### **Village Facilities & Employment**

The main village facility is the Village Shop/Post Office/Garage and Petrol Station.

63% of the respondents visit the garage/petrol on a weekly basis, 60% the shop and 56% the Post Office.

The Garden Centre at Plant World is used by 90% of the village occasionally. Milton Lodge is occasionally used by 46% but only 9% of them weekly.

All these facilities are also used by people from Gillingham etc. who like the personal service you get in a village i.e. pump attendance for petrol.

90% of respondents felt it was important to have a Post Office in the village, however, subsequent to this survey the Post Office has been closed despite representations and protests from villagers and others. The Village Shop/Garage is to continue trading for the time being.



The Church is regularly used by 12% and occasionally by 50%, it has also been the venue for concerts, drama, coffee mornings and bazaars



The school is a thriving village amenity having 115 on the register including 16 rising 5s. Our survey showed that 9 children from the village attend the school.

The school hall is also the principal venue for most village activities.

The usage of village facilities is shown in the table below:

Serial	Facility	Weekly Usage
1.	Shop	60%
2.	Post Office	56%
3.	Garage/Petrol	63%
4.	Milton Lodge	46% occasionally
5.	Plant World	90% occasionally
6.	Church	50% occasionally
		12% regularly

### **Employment**

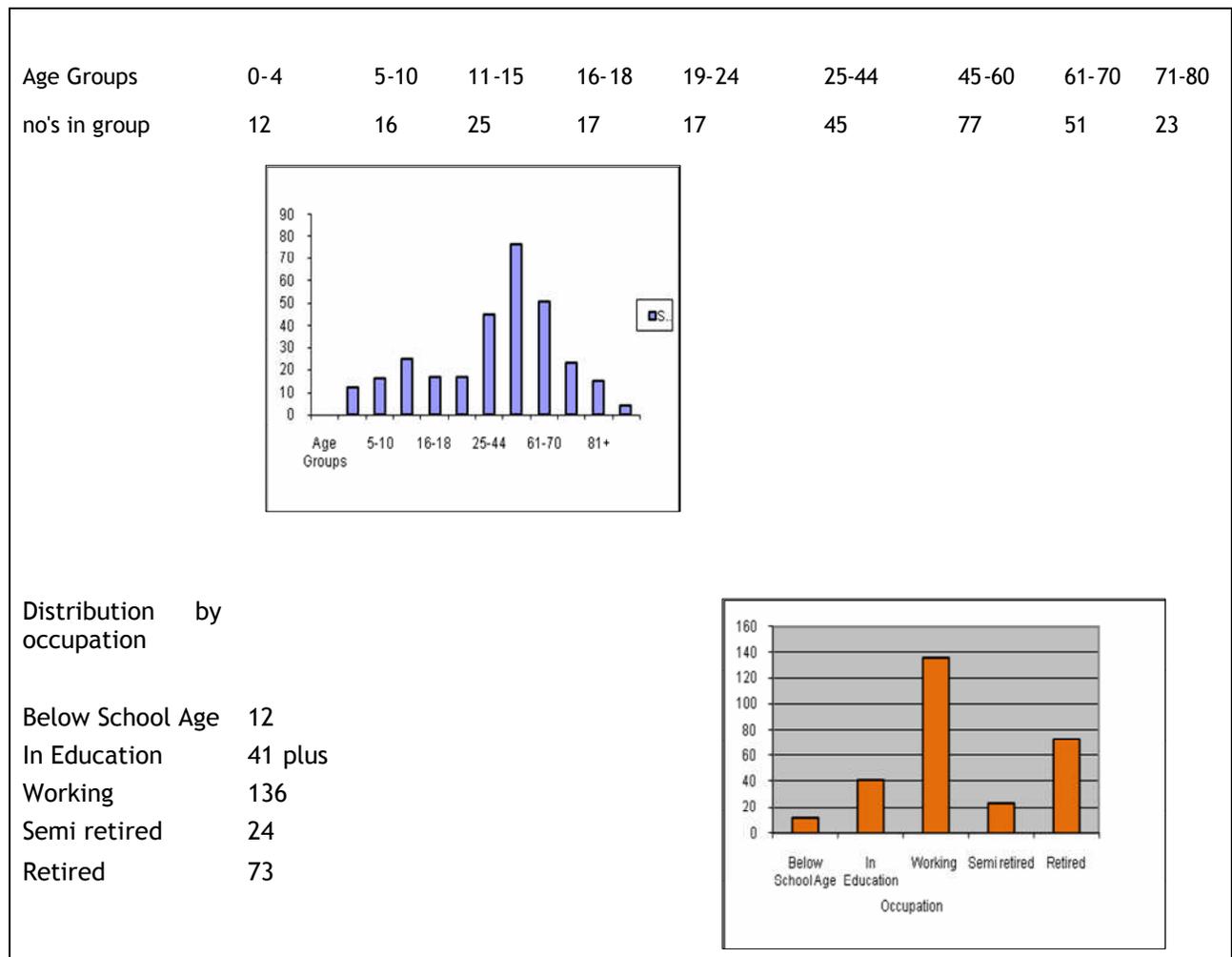
Most respondents felt that there was little need for additional local employment – showing that the village is perceived as being mainly residential. There are very few businesses in the village and only a small number of employees, and many residents felt that further development should be only on a small scale perhaps involving craft based industries.

## Population and Housing

The Village Plan Questionnaire was delivered to 140 separate households, and was completed and returned by 114. These households represented 290 people, and on this basis the actual population of the whole area was calculated to be approximately 350 people.

The size of each household was calculated to be 2.5 people and is marginally above the national average (2.3). 90% of the housing stock is owner occupied. The average length of occupancy in the village is in excess of 15 years.

## Age Demographics



Approximately half the occupants are working, about 10% semi retired and 30% fully retired. The remainder are in education or below school age.

## **Developments**

Approximately half the returned questionnaires were against any development in the village although about a third thought that some sort of affordable housing would be acceptable.

Nine out of ten favoured new housing being targeted at meeting the needs of local people, ideally on brown-field sites and sited within the village envelope.

At the time of publication the development proposals are included in North Dorset District Council's Local Development Framework: Core Strategy. This is a consultation document only.

In this document Milton on Stour appears in the 'Unlikely Development Policy C Settlements'. In practice this removes settlement boundaries from the smaller villages such as Milton on Stour and they would fall into the open countryside policy. Affordable housing for local people was thought by some to be a possible exception to this policy.

## **Services**

Mains drainage is not available in Milton or Huntingford, and residents were asked if they would like to have access to this. Despite the additional work and expense of providing their own sewage disposal, the majority, 60% answered 'No'. This response may have been influenced by the association between main drainage and the increased possibility of further development.

## **Problems**



There were several comments regarding the nuisance caused by surface effluent in the Back Lane area and there were 27 affirmative answers to the question 'Are you affected by surface water flooding or associated problems' although many of these may refer to the same areas of flooding.

36 Households reported bad or non-existent television reception and 21 commented on the lack of local news coverage.

## **Health, Welfare and Policing**

Somewhat surprisingly in view of the age profile of the village, health and welfare did not appear to be an area of major concern. 85 people responding on health issues indicated that they had a local dentist with a few travelling further a field through choice.

The majority of residents having to make regular hospital visits went to Salisbury with five making regular trips to Shaftesbury and three to Yeovil. Not surprisingly with the difficulty of finding public transport, 87% used private cars either their own or friends. Six respondents used the train and four went by taxi, five people used hospital transport. Perhaps the availability of hospital transport or transport for medical appointments needs further investigation.

On the question of whether more support was needed for elderly residents those having no opinion were the overwhelming majority with the balance indicating that they felt no improvements were necessary, seventeen people indicated that they felt some form of volunteer network would be useful, eight thought peripatetic hairdressing would be useful and thirteen felt the need for social activities or perhaps an afternoon club. The obvious problem here being the lack of a community hall.

Overall there was a high satisfaction level for medical services but four residents complained of poor access to physiotherapists, although facilities are offered 5 miles away in Shaftesbury.

The question on policing produced a rather negative feed back. 87% of those responding could not name the community police officer and in these circumstances it was unfortunate that our community police officer was unable to attend the village awareness day. 89 out of the 110 people replying did not know how to contact the community police officer and the majority were not aware if their household was part of a homewatch scheme. 71 out of 108 respondents thought the police presence in the village too low with 9 describing it as 'non existent'. However, a small number described the police presence as satisfactory. This area obviously needs more information and advice for residents bearing in mind that 2 households thought that the homewatch scheme had actually 'faded away'.

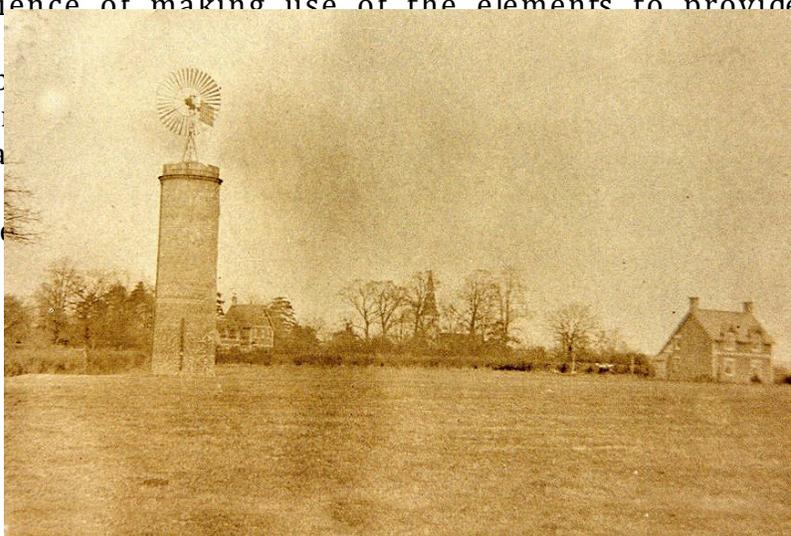
## **Renewable Energy**

Residents are clearly aware of their social responsibilities, and when asked approximately 2/3 said that they were in favour of some form of renewable energy with individual wind turbines being most favoured by 38 households, hydro-electric 30 households and wind farms 19 households.

Subsequent to the questionnaire and its analysis, the wind farm issue was raised through proposals for a large scale wind farm development on the edge of the village and on the borders of the adjoining village of Silton. Local reaction to the proposal has been very strong because of the scale of the project being far removed from residents' interpretation of local renewable energy production.

The Steering committee felt that because this was such an important issue, villagers should be asked how they felt about the proposals that had been put forward. Again 140 questionnaires were sent out which asked residents whether they were for or against this specific development. Each adult member of a household was asked to indicate their preference. 119 replies were received (85% of total) and showed 221 residents (91%) against and 22(9%) in favour. The vast majority of residents were clearly against the project.

Milton has previous experience of making use of the elements to provide benefits for the village in a wind powered water tower pump. The tower, on top of the tower, was built by the Kendalls, Milton Croft, and the introduction of mains water made it obsolete. Gillingham brick works were



## **Transport and Roads**

In common with many similar villages, Milton on Stour is served by an inadequate Public Transport system, which is infrequent and therefore little used. Whilst many walk or in the case of some of the more active residents, use cycles for the relatively short distances to Gillingham and the adjacent villages, these cannot cope for shopping trips etc. A car is the norm and villages have adjusted their way of life to this fact: most households have 2 or more cars with adequate off-road parking.

Approximately 14% work at home, whilst the majority use a car to travel to work, take children to schools outside the village, and for social purposes. Few if any residents use public transport from the village, and even if there were a marked improvement in services, it is unlikely that many would give up the convenience of their car or other modes of transport.



The main road is the B3092/B3095 from Gillingham which splits into the B3092 to Bourton and the B3095 to Mere, at the northern end. The speed limit is 40mph for the parts of the road within the village limits and 30 mph for the roads into the village proper. These are generally considered satisfactory although just over half of the respondents would wish the 40mph limit extended further towards Mere and towards Bourton, with 40% satisfied with the status quo. The big problem is lack of enforcement, leading to many considering the question of the official limit to be fairly hypothetical. There were many complaints [24] about broken or damaged signs. There was much support for a 20mph limit near the school- if it could be enforced.

The marked lack of good paths alongside roads is of concern to village people, with requests for existing paths to be extended past the church to the war memorial, and again from the road junction as far as the village shop. Many people expressed concern about overgrown hedges especially near the Milton Lodge Hotel, which makes it difficult to use the existing pavements.

Urban pavements are really not appropriate in this small village but safe walkways along fast and busy roads are essential. A good school path along the eastern side of the B3092/5 between Colesbrook and Milton School was installed in recent years and is well used. However it is not connected directly to the main part of the village; there was at one time a path running along the NE side of the B3095 between the junction and the village shop which residents would like to be reinstated. In addition villagers would like the existing school path extended to the footpath at the church and suggest a controlled pedestrian crossing near the school entrance.

## **ACTION PLAN**

### **Concerns**

The analysis of the questionnaire results produced a number of concerns that need further consideration and action. These are set out below, together with proposed solutions.

<b>Concern</b>	<b>Possible solution</b>	<b>Action group</b>
Lack of information on footpaths, bridleways, and local features of interest	Display a local map with paths etc clearly highlighted on a community notice board	Village Committee? Gillingham Council?
Questions about availability of Hospital car service & information on volunteer help network.	Investigate possibilities and display relevant information on village notice board and in local Doctors' surgeries. Setup a village volunteer network?	Village Committee
Community Police Officer Presence	Display name & contact number, again within local notice board.	DCC Village Committee Gillingham Town Council
Poor TV reception	Consider satellite dishes , Freeview receivers etc. Seek advice from broadcasting companies.	Each homeowner Village Committee
Lack of local News coverage	Improve contacts with local media	Village Committee Gillingham Council
Assess the need for local affordable housing	Circulate another housing needs questionnaire	Village Committee NDCC
Litter and dog fouling	Provide litter bins & Monitor their usage	Village Committee Gillingham Town Council NDCC
Speeding through the village	Install extra flashing warning signs	Gillingham Town Council DCC
Recreational seating, lack of	Inform people where they exist on notice board & look at further areas of placement	Gillingham Council

## **Timetable**

Several of the concerns noted in this table can be addressed fairly quickly, namely the provision of information on the notice board. Other areas of concern will be addressed by the Village Committee as soon as possible.

## **VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Residents of Milton, Huntingford and Colesbrook are anxious to preserve the quality of their environment and the village life, however it is a fragmented community with no obvious focus apart from the shop and garage. The loss of these amenities, and we have already lost the Post Office, is bound to have an effect on the community increasing the degree of fragmentation, and will make it more difficult to pass information or encourage village activities. The common link in many of the concerns raised is a lack of information and keeping information up to date. The notice board is one solution but it might also be worth investigating the possibility of establishing a village web site or obtaining space on Gillingham Town's web site.

## **Acknowledgements**

Grateful thanks are due to everyone who helped us in this project in particular:-

Susi Calder and Simon Thompson of Dorset Community Action Group

Liz Fricker for providing photographs for our awareness day, printing our questionnaire and this final plan.

Irene Greenwood and Glenda Naylor who did a sterling job providing tea and coffee on our Awareness Day and Villagers from the WI, The Church and Post Office who contributed displays on that day.

Gillingham Town Council and the Village Committee for their financial support.

The Village Committee again for supplying address lists and helping with delivery and collection of the questionnaire.

Finally the members of the Steering Committee:-

Brian Thomas (Chairman)

Su Hunt (Treasurer)

Shirley Richardson (Secretary)

Chris Braithwaite

Richard Cumming

Chris Greenwood

Leigh Mason

Colin Richardson

Greer Tilbrook

Sam Woodcock

## **VILLAGE CONTACTS**

### **Gillingham Town Council representatives:**

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Brian Millichamp  
4 Victoria Terrace  
Turners Lane  
Gillingham SP8 4BE

Roger Monksummers  
29 Cloverfields  
Gillingham SP8 4UP

### **North Dorset District Council representatives:**

Su Hunt

### **Dorset County Council representative:**

David Milsted  
'The Firs'  
Hardings lane  
Gillingham SP8 4HU

### **Member of Parliament for North Dorset:**

Robert Walter MP  
The Stables,  
White Cliff gardens  
Blandford Forum DT11 7BU

### **St Simon & St Jude Church**

Rector: Post vacant  
Assistant Curate: The Revd. Jane Hedges  
PCC Secretary: Christine Alexander

### **Milton on Stour WI**

Chairman: Mary Williams Tel. 823826  
Secretary: Christine Alexander Tel.824655

### **The Village Committee**

Chairman: Caroline Eastlake Tel. 826552  
Secretary: Steve Jackson Tel. 822017

### **Milton on Stour C of E Primary School**

Headmaster: James Stanford Tel. 822588