

## HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OPEN GARDENS SAFARI 2009

A record sum of over £6,000 was raised on Sunday, May 31st, 2009, when members of Halstead & District Horticultural Society invited the public to visit eight of their wonderful gardens. This is the fourth time since 2003 that a number of village groups have joined forces under the umbrella of the Horticultural Society to raise funds for charity. Those benefiting from this year's event are St. Margaret's Parish Church and the Bromley and West Kent branches of the Alzheimer's Society.



Over 800 tickets were sold for the event. Money is still being counted from the various fundraising activities that took place around the village so the final total could be even higher ! Undoubtedly the fine weather brought people out and helped create a brilliant atmosphere throughout the village.

The gardens on display ranged from that of the relatively small and tranquil rectory garden, to the large busy family plot that focussed on self-sufficiency, the environment and wildlife. There was truly something for all tastes.

As well as the gardens, there were floral displays in the church depicting various "Celebrations of 2009", including the 150th birthday on Sunday of Big Ben ! Children from Halstead Community School also joined in the fun with a display of art depicting their favourite gardens. The Parish Rooms played host to an Art Exhibition and Sale, and the Rectory provided a Plant Sale and Plant Crèche. Homemade teas were served in the Village Hall and even the two pubs joined in, contributing to the charitable pot from their sales of Sunday lunches.

Representatives of the Alzheimer's groups were also on hand to talk to visitors about their work. Peter Todd, manager of the Bromley Branch, said, *"It was a great to have the support from Halstead and also have the opportunity to speak to so may people about the work of the Society. The day was a huge success for everyone.*

Ward Homes, who are developing the former Halstead Place School site, were also on hand in the North Room of the Church with a model of the new development, as well as information about the project. Ward Homes very generously gave £500 towards the cost of the event and also helped out with the printing of Publicity material. Tim Nabbs, Sales Director for Ward Homes, said, *"We were delighted to support this event as well as having the opportunity to showcase our scheme which is due to launch in September 2009"* . The development will include 33 homes, both new and refurbished, 13 of which are affordable houses and their sizes range from 2-6 bedrooms.



Janet Simpson, chair of the group organising the event, said, *"Everyone involved in the event worked so hard for the day and we are delighted with the result. The gardeners spent hours weeding, mowing, and tending their plants in all weathers. Local Rotarians directed traffic, volunteers gave out information, baked cakes and served teas. The Church ladies produced magnificent floral portraits, and so many, many more gave time and skills to make it the resounding success it was ! It has been a tremendous success once again, and we are so grateful to everyone who got involved. Special thanks too go to our sponsors, Ward Homes, and also to everyone who worked so hard"*.