

Silchester Village Hall Board of Managing Trustees

Chairmans Report, 2013 – 2014

This year has seen a number of changes take place. Apart from the very obvious one of the construction and commissioning of the extension, there have been other changes as well, notably to those who have been responsible for running the Hall this last year. Ashley Watson, our Secretary, and Kathryn McCrohan resigned shortly after the last Annual General Meeting due to pressure of work and other commitments, and Andrew Chandler resigned on health grounds in April. We thank all three for their help and support.

Those resignations left some gaps, and we were very pleased to welcome Maxta Thomas and Kirstie Jones to our ranks, both of whom have been co-opted but offer themselves for formal election later at this meeting. Maxta has taken on the role of Secretary, and her wealth of experience as Secretary to the Parish Council has been a huge asset to the Trustees. Kirstie is very much involved with the Guides, who as you all know meet here, and so is able to bring the users point of view to the Trustees discussions.

Earlier this year Geof Wilmott, our caretaker, resigned. Geoff had looked after the hall for a number of years, and we thank him very much for his past work. His replacement was by no means an easy matter, but we have appointed Michael Butler as caretaker, and Michael is settling in to his new role. We welcome him aboard!

Those are the changes to the team, but it would be very remiss of me not to comment on the enthusiasm and energy that ALL the team have shown during this year. Vivienne Hartshorn continues to manage the bookings with her usual efficiency, and deserves all our thanks for her continued efforts. We have had several events where the catering has been undertaken by the ladies amongst the Trustees, and scrumptious cakes and nibbles they gave us too! The team have organised a mixture of social and fund-raising events and more are to come, but in a moment we will hear more from the Treasurer as to our financial position.

My own interest, which given my background as a Chartered Surveyor is only natural I suppose, has been the fabric of the building. We have completed the extension, and I am sure all of you will have had a look around to see the new kitchen facilities which are at the core of it all. These new facilities, including the provision of disabled toilets and wheel chair access, enable us to cater for weddings, Guide pack holidays and private parties in a much more appropriate and convenient way, and indeed we have already seen the benefit of that in new bookings. We can now compete on a much better basis with other Halls in the area. The design allows both the Hall and the clubroom to be used independently, or indeed at the same time by different users.

We managed, through the co-operation of Cherry Trees in particular and of the Contractors, to keep the Hall functioning during the construction of the extension. We recognise that this caused some disruption to users, and thank them all for their patience and understanding. I am sure that they would agree that the new facilities were worth it.

We have made good the landscaping to the North side of the Hall (where the Vegetable Plots are), including the provision of a new post and rail fence. We will shortly be re-turfing the South side of the Hall, to further improve and enhance the appearance of the premises as a whole.

During the last year the Hall has continued to be well used though unfortunately we have had to put up the Hire charges this year. However, this is the first increase for several years, and we have tried to keep the Charges as low as possible, consistent with the need to cover the running costs of the Hall. Many Village Halls are locked up during most of the week. Ours is used every weekday during term time, most evenings and often over the weekends as well. We have a core of regular users, notably Cherry Trees Nursery, The Silchester Players, The Silchester Association, and Guides and Brownies. In addition there are Dance classes and other forms of physical torture such

as Zumba and Pilates classes, and of course the ever popular Village Market. I am confident that the improvements we have made this year will secure the Hall's future at the heart of our Village for many years to come.

However, this lovely building was built in the 1920's and requires continual maintenance and care. The next project that we have in our sights is to deal with the roof coverings, which have a habit of leaking when the wind is in a certain direction! There is no felt beneath the tiles, and so we want to remove the tiles, felt the roof in accordance with current building regulations, and then replace the existing tiles. This would also be an opportunity to fit photo-voltaic panels in order to generate electricity – and some much needed cash! We are currently exploring this possibility, and have had some initial discussions already. Although current feed-in tariffs are not as attractive as they used to be, there is still a saving to be made over the economic life of the panels, and of course it contributes to the objective of reducing greenhouse gases. Steve Spillane has devoted some considerable time and energy to this project already, and we are hopeful that we will be able to see it through to completion within the next twelve months.

I have just made mention of generating electricity, which brings me on to the electrical wiring in the Hall. It has been added to and altered over the years, and we would like to overhaul all the wiring and bring it all up to the latest standards. You can see that we have made a start by improving the lighting here in the main Hall, but there is much more to do, including overhauling and updating the Fire Alarm system. This might be incorporated into provision of PV cells on the roof, but that project is still in its infancy.

That in a nutshell is what we intend concentrating on over the next few months, but first we must vote on those who are going to be doing all this work! Our Constitution provides for one third or three trustees (whichever number is the greater), to resign and offer themselves for re-election. However, as we have 8 Trustees and 4 vacancies, that is not necessary and we would be very pleased to have nominations to fill these vacancies. Please – if anyone feels that they have something they can contribute don't hesitate to come forward.

We do however need to vote Kirstie Jones on as a Trustee, Maxta Thomas on as both a Trustee and as Secretary, Eamon McCardle as both a Trustee and as Treasurer and myself as Chairman of the Trustees. I have not been advised of any other nominations for those offices, but will deal with the elections shortly.

That, Ladies and Gentlemen, is a brief synopsis of what we have done, what we want to do and who we hope will be doing it! There are vacancies on the Board of Trustees – please come forward if you feel that you have something to contribute or would like to help out. Many hands make light work and all help will be very much appreciated!

Jonathan J. Murdock

Chairman

23rd October 2014