

Chairman's Report 2024

The traditional annual activities that we organise – the plant sale, fete, Christmas bingo and 50/50 draw - still prove reliable in providing both entertainment for the village and a regular income for the Hall. This year we have tested out a new event – a Twelfth Night BBQ party which attracted many young families but showed the need for some tweaking (is it possible to hold a BBQ in pouring rain in mid-winter and without some entertainment for the children?!). Besides housing the Village Archive and accommodating the Parish Council and elections, the Hall also has hosted private bookings from regular groups and individual families, including one wedding in August, and perhaps this aspect of Hall activities ought to be promoted more.

As I am retiring at the end of this meeting, I hope it will not be amiss to look back upon the eventful eleven years since I was first elected chairman in 2013. It has been repeatedly brought home to me that the essential ingredients for the successful running of a village hall are a good committee working to ensure a reliable income to maintain the Hall and serve village needs.

I became chair when the Hall's finances were at a low ebb and the question was even raised at the AGM as to the financial viability of continuing to run the village Hall. However, as the Minutes state, 'After much discussion it was generally agreed that the value and benefit to the village of having the village hall, far outweighed the effort put into fund raising to keep it going.' The committee then set out with gusto to turn things around – the defunct fete was relaunched, the village plant sale brought in house, and various well attended events and the energetic management of new 50/50 draw managers all put the Hall finances back to a more solid footing. Since then we have pursued many things to entertain the village and to raise revenue for the upkeep of the hall. Some have been successful for a while but then support dwindled away – barn dances, quiz nights, the horticultural show. The talks haven't recovered since covid and omicron but ought to be tried again. We received a large income from hosting two spectacularly successful musical entertainments – *Miss Varwell's Throwleigh* and *Colonel Heath's Hut* and we have been able to house the village Archive in a refurbished committee room.

All this enabled us to hold popular non-profit entertainments – the 'Meet the Village' summer party in 2021 and the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee party at the cross in 2022. It has also enabled us to maintain and improve the fabric and equipment of the Village Hall. The roof was re-waterproofed in 2020, the exterior walls were repainted by the committee, crumbling areas of the internal walls were repaired and also repainted. The hall wiring was rationalised and modernised to a single fuse box, the lighting and heating enhanced, the parquet floor cleaned and revarnished, the kitchen supplied with new electrical equipment, the Hall supplied with new tables and chairs and a new sound system, and a new store shed has been built to house the fete equipment.

None of this could have been done without the careful management of our finances by successive Treasurers, the assistance of an active and co-operative committee, and the support of the wider village community – for which I thank you all.