

Chairman's Report End May 2012

This has been a good humoured and very productive year for the committee. All members have put in a huge amount of hard work on such a variety of different fronts that are too long to itemise:

but I would particularly like to record thanks to Trevor for his endless patience and expertise in his non-stop maintenance role and to Sue Sulkin and Janet Shaw for all their initial Kitchen research and to Fran Parker who helped me hugely in the onward implementation of the Kitchen project. And last, but certainly not least to Sue Sulkin again, in her role as Treasurer and Hall Booking Clerk. She does not just keep us solvent but goes way beyond this keeping the day to day running of the hall functioning smoothly.

We finally saw the fruits of a great deal of thought and difficult decisions in early August with the completion of our new Kitchen.

This was followed in rapid succession by our annual clean up and repaint job on the whole hall, which included redecoration of the new kitchen with the Committee bolstered by innumerable willing hands.

And a reorganization of our storage space. Thanks to the mammoth efforts of the Philippa Perrett and Jane Thrift in sifting out the stockpile of Playgroup equipment no longer needed, and liaising with the newly formed Youth Club, we have been able to regain a sensible handle on our storage space, and ensure that all our user groups have an allocation that fits their needs.

The final cost of the Kitchen ended up at £5690 excluding VAT. And it was with real relief that we managed to meet this entire cost without dipping into the VH Reserve funds. In these very uncertain economic times it is good to keep this cushion as intact as possible. The funding came from a variety of sources: a donation from the 2010 Village Fete, 2 donations from the BN Charities, a grant from WDDC's Leisure Development Fund and all the fundraising efforts of individual user groups. In November the new kitchen was inspected by the local Council Environmental Health Officer and all our hard work was rewarded with it receiving a 5 star rating.

The August clean up threw up 2 major issues that needed to be dealt with.

The need for new hot water heaters for the Bar/Cloakroom and the Ladies Toilet.

This was the easier of the problems to resolve and both have now been installed with their £560 cost being generously covered by a donation from the 2011 Fete proceeds.

The more serious and difficult problem was the discovery that the source of the constantly damp area of tarmac to the north of the hall turning out to be a fairly strong flowing spring. The initial draining of it to our boundary eventually led to seepage into the adjoining garden in Stephens Walk. In January Martin Perrett came to our rescue and piped the spring into the main drain running through the gardens of Stephens Walk. 2 Fence panels were replaced as a thank you to our neighbour for allowing us to hook into his drain and once again the hall has benefited from the generosity of volunteers as Martin made no charge for his work.

This last exercise has itself thrown up an issue of one of our drains being choked with roots which we need to address.

The Hall is really fulfilling its community role now and our regular group bookings are rising.

Although we were sad to see the departure of the Playgroup to the school having hosted them for an unbelievable number of years, we have not lost, but gained youthful groups. The Goslings or Mothers and Toddlers are thriving and increasing in numbers and we also have a newly formed and immensely successful Youth Club drawing in 35 or so youngsters and teenagers.

All the effort we put into our maple sprung floor when we rebuilt the hall almost 11 years ago, is paying dividends too in attracting activity classes. We now have a new and very successful Pilates Class alongside Yoga, Keep Fit and Youth Moves. We also have a new Art Class joining our other regular users of the Garden Club, Lydden Ladies, Lunch Club and the increasingly popular Village Café.

On the Drama and music side the Hall has hosted a selection of really good Artsreach events thanks to the efforts of Fran Parker and Ian Scott, but nothing could compare to the highlight of our very own BAPS Cinderella Pantomime in March which involved such a huge swathe of the village in major, minor, backstage and ever other conceivable role including as audience and did a huge amount to dispel winter gloom.