

# **SHRIVENHAM PARISH ASSEMBLY 2021**

## **Report of Chairman of Viscountess Barrington Trust**

- What a year it has been! A year ago we barely knew what had hit us and since then our Memorial Hall has had to cope with a roller coaster ride of lockdown then restricted opening followed by further lockdown. In all of this our staff have coped admirably, dealing with the exigencies of Covid-19 restrictions, new procedures, endless risk assessments and home working.
- Yet the hall has emerged spruced up and revitalised ready to face the challenges of serving our expanding community. We have used the months of the restrictions to expand and improve our facilities.
- In the office Julia, the Clerk, and Lyn, the finance officer, have had the task of dealing with the precarious state of the finances as a result of the closure of the hall. Julia and Lyn have explored every possible source of Covid funding and were successful in obtaining all the grants available to the hall which has enabled us to stay afloat throughout.
- But with the hall income greatly reduced they had to watch every penny of expenditure and it is only as a result of their herculean efforts we have emerged on an even keel.
- The pandemic required us to revise our operations in line with the government restrictions which has meant devising procedures to cope with the “rule of six” and social distancing and, of course, every time preparing the appropriate risk assessments.
- Hall manager Lewie with his able assistant Phoebe have together met all the challenges of cleaning, sanitizing and fogging all the rooms and equipment before and after use.
- At the same time, Lewie together with Phoebe has taken the opportunity provided by the pandemic to carry out much needed maintenance and restoration to the fabric and the interior of the hall which, after all, celebrated its ninety-fifth birthday last year.
- Here is a list of what they have achieved, they have:
  - Sanded, sealed and restored the exterior of all the low level windows with a magic wood treatment called Osmo.
  - Painted and treated all the outside railings, cigarette boxes and the letter box in a shiny black paint.
  - Treated all the loggia windows and the high level fascia on the rear of the building with Cuprinol.
  - Painted all the fire doors and woodwork in gloss white paint.
  - Polished and restored all the brass fittings in the building.

- Removed all the redundant cupboards and reorganised the space in the loggia.
  - Stripped all the blow heaters in the main and Vic Day halls then deep cleaned and pressure washed the exterior grilles.
  - Re-painted the rusty radiators in the toilets
  - And, pressure washed the bin store together with all the main outside bins.
- Early last year we had a flood in the kitchen in the flat which brought down the ceiling in the chair store below. The chair store has long been a dark and messy place and we took the decision, as part of the insurance claim, to not only restore it but to turn it into another meeting room available for hire.
  - The restoration work took several weeks - the re-decoration was ably carried out by Jim Carter and now we have a splendid new venue complete with atmospheric lighting for your intimate meetings and parties.
  - At the Parish Council Chairman's suggestion we have named the room after Harold Claridge who was the first caretaker of the hall. Harold lost an arm at the Battle of Paschendale in 1917 where he won the MM. He was the much loved grandpa to three girls, Jean, Pat and Pam, the Brittain girls who still live in the village. His picture hangs above the fire place and we plan to have a formal opening when the restrictions are fully lifted.
  - In addition to all this, what used to be a storage dump in what we call the princess tower has been cleared and redecorated to make it into a useful separate office or breakout space.
  - We have also been undertaking an on-going project to upgrade and replace the original wiring and electrics. This has involved installing three phase supply and new circuits for different parts of the hall. As part of this process we have replaced all the high level 12v lighting with 240v LED's.
  - Lewie and Julia also completed a much needed asset audit of the equipment in the hall.
  - These are difficult times for any venue that relies on bookings to stay viable and it has been particularly so for the Memorial Hall.
  - In these circumstances Julie who oversees the bookings has been driven demented trying to accommodate the range of requirements from our various users given the difficulties imposed by the Covid-19 rules.
  - Happily these restrictions are now easing and thanks to Julie's efforts the bookings have already started to pick up.

- One highlight of the year has been that we have at last jumped through all the hoops and successfully secured the Section 106 funding for the new sports pavilion in the Rec. Our architects Rob and Damon of Architects A'Bear & Ball secured planning permission in February last year and we finally appointed PJE Building Contractors Ltd in December to start in the spring of this year.
- The delay was because it took over six months to get approval from the Vale of our application for S106 funding despite the fact that they had already received money for the project from the developers.
- We are particularly mindful that the project was only made possible as a result of a large and generous donation by an ex-member of the cricket club and the whole village owes him a great debt of gratitude.
- The application was finally approved by the full Council meeting in February but our difficulties are still not over as we have had to wait a further two months for the Vale legal department to draw up a funding agreement to allow them to release the money. Nevertheless we start construction on Monday.
- It will take all summer but all things being equal we should have a brand new sports pavilion by the end of the year which will enable us to ease the pressure on the hall by providing a much needed additional venue.
- Unfortunately the construction will involve some disruption to parking for the hall as we will have to close the carpark. So from the 26<sup>th</sup> April to early December we would ask all hall users to park in the Martens Road carpark.
- But in the New Year you will have a new and expanded hall carpark alongside the new sports pavilion.
- Sadly the lockdown has seen an increasing incidence of vandalism in the Rec. One of our newly planted trees along the avenue was deliberately broken off and other trees have had their branches broken. After the weekend it is commonplace to find bottles, cans and rubbish strewn around the shelter.
- It is difficult to know how to stop this wanton behaviour and we would urge anyone who sees any such incidents to report it to the police.
- On a more positive note we are close to securing S106 funding to allow us to expand and enhance our existing multi-use games area or MUGA. You will have also noticed that, thanks to Chris Hand's

efforts, the Tennis Club obtained the S106 money which enabled them to re-surface and upgrade the tennis courts.

- You will, I'm sure, be pleased to know that in the next month or so we will be taking delivery of an outdoor table tennis table which we will be installing in the Rec. This will be facilitated by a grant from the Table Tennis Association and the Vale. It will be installed with the assistance of the over 60's Table Tennis group.
- It has been a difficult year but thanks to our brilliant staff we are emerging from the pandemic with a hall in a much improved state and will soon have a fine new sports pavilion. I can only thank them sincerely for all their efforts and look forward to the coming year full of confidence that the hall and the Rec will remain the beating heart of our community.
- Thank you!