

## Chairman's Report Alderholt Village Hall AGM 24 October 2023

It is said that change is the only constant but looking at my opening paragraph from last year's report I could just as easily have written it this year: the challenges of geopolitics and socio-economic pressures, and with that little thing called Covid hovering in the wings.

Nonetheless we **have** seen change, a good deal of change, and producing this annual report provides a useful opportunity to look back at just how much. Last year I focussed on the role of the hall in the community and how your committee cemented that role by nurturing the body and the soul. This year I want to focus on the committee, the personnel, the conduit for achieving our goals and keeping the hall at the heart of our community.

Before I do that, permit me to guide you on a quick canter through the past year's achievements.

Whilst we were unable to progress the ladies' toilets refurbishment - full disclosure - we did deliver everything else on our plan, and more besides. At the start of the year we established an online booking calendar and in April we redrafted the booking terms & conditions and invoice formats and rebranded all our standard documents. We completed the planned partial redecoration of the hall interior, replaced defective guttering just before an unseasonably wet spring and installed a Hive thermostat to help manage the heating. We also transferred our mobile phone contract from Sky to EE. We made huge strides in developing our online document storage - including a new asset register - and have moved committee members onto new Gmail addresses. We have enhanced the amount and quality of information on our web site about regular activities and are working on further improvements. We have significantly streamlined the administration of the rebranded Monthly Village Market & Café and expanded the offer with new stalls and a record attendance in October.

We completed our *Live in 2022* programme with three events: a late October performance of the Oscar Wilde inspired *The Selfish Giant*, organised through Artsreach, which, after a very late surge in ticket sales attracted an audience of 78; the Chris Walker inspired Hark the Herald Angels Swing in collaboration with Verwood Voices which was much enjoyed by an enthusiastic attendance of 51; and the return of Bumblefly Theatre with their simply inspired *Brrr! It's the Snow Queen* which proved a near sell out, again after a very late flurry of ticket sales. The cast even featured live on Radio Solent when interviewed by a roving reporter while setting up at the hall. All events turned a small profit.

For 2023 we stepped back on the live events front but are concluding the year with a flourish, as our very own Chris Walker stars with his Pedigree Jazz Band this coming Saturday; we have a co-promotion of An Evening with Sally Barker on 11 November; and Bumblefly's offering of The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood is booked for 16 December.

This is a fantastic achievement which has been realised by a small group of dedicated, hard working volunteers, a group that itself has changed significantly over the past 12 months, with one departure and three recruits, and is about to change further this evening.

In the summer we said goodbye, with our thanks and best wishes, to bookings officer and market manager Selina Reidy. After a good deal of searching we were fortunate in July to recruit Kim Emberson who has already firmly established herself as our new bookings officer.

Naomi White stands down this evening and I thank her for five outstanding years as our secretary. I am delighted she will remain on the committee to continue managing our Facebook presence which she does so well. In May we welcomed Karen Dawe as Naomi's replacement and Wendy Hood as an additional member of the support team. Both are already battle hardened.

But it is not just about the comings and the goings. Thankfully Tina Huntley remains in post to keep us and the finances firmly in line as our effective and efficient treasurer. Faye Pottle continues to provide valuable support and fresh ideas and Chris maintains his drive to 'keep music live' with two more events already lined up for 2024 which should add to our bottom line as well as keep the troops entertained. And Lin Lyons, in addition to her support duties, has done an excellent job as the acting market manager. Our lengthy search for a new permanent market manager continues but I am reassured that everything will be in a fit state to hand over, and after a couple of false dawns we might just - just - have a glimmer of hope on that front too.

Outside the committee, Jason Routley stands down at this AGM as one of our three trustees, drawing a line under many years of selfless service to the village and the hall. Our president, Norman Jones, who has known him a lot longer than me, will have more to say later. I am pleased that current parish council chairman Adrian Hibberd has been persuaded to replace Jason. I am grateful to Norman for his support and ongoing work to maintain the hall grounds. And we will be sad to say adieu to Pat Jerrard and Sarah Freeman who have each provided years of splendid service running the market café for which we thank them.

An organisation of whatever size is only as good as the people who run it. I thank every one - on the committee or off the committee - who has individually and collectively contributed so much over the past 12 months. Looking ahead to the *next* twelve months I am confident that as now constituted this committee has the skill, drive and determination to build on what has gone before, to improve and enhance the hall for the villagers of Alderholt and to keep us at the heart of our community. I look forward to working with you all for another year.

Graeme Thorley  
Chairman Alderholt Village Hall  
24 October 2023