

## **East Malling Institute Hall**

**Charity No. 253531**

### **Chairman's Report 2018**

I am very pleased to present this report to you on behalf of the Committee which has worked hard this year and achieved a great deal. All members of the Committee are volunteers, giving up their time freely to support the Institute which is managed as a registered charity. Without these volunteers the Hall simply could not function.

East Malling is a busy community with enough demand to accommodate 3 halls and The East Malling Institute is certainly a popular choice. We have a long list of regular hirers including the East Malling Conservation Group, East Malling Singers, LARA Arts & Crafts, LARA Singers, the Heath Players, the Kumon Centre, Music Mayhem, the Wateringbury Flower Club, the WI, 2 Yoga classes, and a Zumba class. We thank them for their loyalty and continued support. The Hall is also hired for occasional family parties and celebrations, workshops, exhibitions and so on - and many of these hirers make repeat bookings which is always a good sign.

Our website was launched last year and early this summer we 'went live' on Facebook, giving us, and our community groups, an additional opportunity to let people know we are here. I encourage our users to send information through to me if they wish to have this added to the website or the Facebook page.

Our Committee is made up largely of community group members and this is important as they are the ones who know what is going on in the Hall and are able to feed back upon issues to be resolved and opportunities for improvement.

At the turn of the year we arranged a deep clean of the hard floor surfaces and this made a great difference both to the look of the floors and the ease with which they could be cleaned. I expect that we will be repeating that deep clean early in 2019. We also have it on our list to give the store cupboard a good clean - once we have been able to clear out and dispose of the unwanted items which include several broken chairs and even a gate!

I commented last year that the Hall was looking a little tired. I am pleased to report that redecoration is now underway with the help of the Community Payback Team. Prior to this work starting, we took the opportunity to do some preliminary work - and so you may notice that the 'doors that were not doors' have now disappeared, and the hatch has been lowered to make it easier when serving food and drink directly from the kitchen.

We have also had the Hall lights replaced with more efficient lighting. These lights are also much brighter and a request has been received for the Committee to consider installing dimmer switches and this will be raised at a future Committee Meeting. We will also be look at having similar lights installed in the corridor as the lights there can be quite slow to come on.

We have had some issues with the exterior lights at the rear of the Hall - in particular over the Committee Room door - but these problems are now resolved. However, we are conscious that the car park is very dark and the sensor lights do

not remain lit for long. If we can secure some funding we would like to make some changes to these lights and/or we would like to see a lighting column in the car park. We are in touch with the Parish Council about this. We have also highlighted to the Parish Council that our chairs are looking somewhat worse for wear. Incidentally, the chairs are rather heavy to move and to help with this we have purchased a new chair trolley. Ultimately we would like to replace the chairs. If we could get hold of enough, decent, second-hand chairs this would be acceptable and would, obviously, keep the cost down. We are waiting to hear from the Parish Council as to whether it may be able to assist with funding within its 2019/20 budget. I have also sowed the seed that soon our floor is going to be in need of some major work. We will almost certainly need some financial assistance when it comes to getting that work done.

Meanwhile, we have acquired some new notice boards, thanks to Lewis Ireland from the Heath Players, and these will go up once the redecoration is complete. We hope that each regular group will be able to have their own board, and it will also give us extra room for the official notices that we must display. In due course we will also replace the outside notice board at the front of the hall as it is somewhat difficult to read the notices inside it.

The East Malling Conservation Group has offered to purchase a space-saving clearing station for the kitchen and we are sure this will be appreciated by many. EMCG also gave us a donation that we intended to put towards the cost of broadband. We thought we had this in the bag, having negotiated with a broadband provider, only to find that the cost of installing the necessary apparatus was going to run into 4 figures. I'm afraid that as a result our ambition to install broadband is on hold for now, but it is something that remains on our wish list.

We have had two donations during the year from the Wateringbury Flower Club. Thank you very much to them. We have been asked to use one of these donations for the purchase of a carpet sweeper for the Committee Room and we are looking into that.

To improve security we have fitted exit stoppers to some of the doors and these appear to have done the trick. It does mean that the exterior door near the serving hatch cannot be opened routinely while the Hall is in use and, as the Hall gets very warm during the summer, we have purchased two large fans to help keep it cool.

The new radiators that were installed last year are helping in the colder weather, and we have now obtained some trunking to cover the exposed pipework.

The hearing loop is working again, and in the Committee Room the area around the sink has been re-tiled. Thank you to the Heath Players for helping with this work and other bits and pieces about the place, including the boarding up of one of the Committee Room windows which we think was damaged with a pellet gun or something similar. Repair of that window is on our to-do list.

There are always jobs that need to be done in a Hall like this, and we do need to make sure our income is adequate to meet our needs. I said in last year's report that we were likely to revisit the hire charges during this year, and we have now done so. The Committee agreed that our occasional hire charges should be increased but we have been careful to ensure our rates remain competitive.

Some work this year has been purely administrative. In May the catchily-named General Data Protection Regulations came into force and this was something we could not ignore. The Committee has done all that I believe it needs to do, and you will find our Policy on our website – I'm sure you have all enjoyed reading it!

We have also revised our Booking Form this year to streamline the paperwork. Thank you very much to Roger Roud for organising that.

We end our financial year in reasonable shape though we must continue to be careful and choose our priorities wisely. Vanessa took on the role of Treasurer last year after Clive Spinks stepped down, and has done an excellent job keeping me and Committee Members fully informed through frequent reporting so that we always know where we are financially. Thank you Vanessa. Yet again, we faced the challenge of updating our signatories and were so frustrated that we began to seriously consider changing banks. As a last resort we threatened to go to the Ombudsman and it was only then that the Bank was prepared to accept that the documents we were providing were perfectly adequate. For the second time in as many years we were given a compensatory payment for our trouble.

Clive stayed on with us as a Committee Member until recently when he decided to step back altogether. We are most grateful to Clive for his commitment to the Institute over many years and we will miss having him join us for our meetings.

There are others whom I must thank - firstly the Trustees and Committee Members for their help and support. We need a Committee to be able to function so just coming to the meetings is much appreciated! Some take on a more practical role as well - I have already mentioned the Heath Players who often lend a helping hand, but I must also give a special mention to Colin Powell and Roger Roud who put a lot of time and effort handling maintenance tasks, meeting with contractors and arranging quotes, and so on. Roger does all this while managing the bookings as well! And Glenis who is often doing odd jobs - fixing curtains and rails etc; Anne Marsland and all the ladies from the WI who have continued to keep the outside space looking so nice, ensuring a good first impression for visitors; and Pam Roud, our Secretary, who continues to take the Minutes for us. Thank you very much to each of them. And apologies to anyone whom I may have missed.

And my thanks to you all for coming to our AGM this evening. As a Committee we are most grateful for your continued interest, your encouragement and your support.

Michelle Tatton, Chair - 14th November 2018