

Chairman's Report to the AGM July 2023

I reported last year that as part of our plan to aid recovery from the Covid pandemic, the Institute's Management Committee had started to look at what improvements might be made to make the Hall more attractive – to make the experience better for existing hirers and encourage new ones to come on board. Unfortunately, our plans are being disrupted somewhat as we lurch from the tail end of the Covid crisis into another period of challenge and uncertainty brought about by the rising cost of living. The Hall is not immune and has seen its energy bills and maintenance costs escalate substantially. This may not be so apparent from the accounts for 2021-22 which we will be receiving this evening but already our 2022-23 accounts look to be telling quite a different story.

Many of our plans are now on hold. For example, we had been thinking of buying a projector or LED display to work with the wifi, and CCTV, and we had started to explore insulation for the roof, but these are expenses we simply cannot contemplate at this time without additional grant funding.

We have though made progress with some of our plans. We now have a supply of new chairs – and my thanks to Karen Hargreaves for helping to order these (a bit of a challenge as they can only be ordered in batches of 10!) My thanks also to the Parish Council which assisted with the purchase of new chair trolleys.

We will soon be disposing of an equivalent number of the heavy green chairs which will then mean we should be able to move on to tidying up the Committee Room by moving some of the cabinets etc into the Store. At the same time we will dispose of any other scrap metal including the old teapots and the iron gate. I'm sorry these haven't gone already – we've had the best of intentions but have been struggling with time!

The tables have already been relocated and are now stored under the stage. There is a long metal bar which attaches to the trolleys so that they can be wheeled out but following a recent suggestion we will look at whether some sort of tracking could be fixed to the floor under the stage to aid the trolleys being pushed back in.

We are a step closer to the car park being re-lined by the Parish Council but the ramp and rail we had hoped to install into the car park on the eastern path (at the kitchen end) may have to wait.

We intend to arrange a volunteer day in the very near future when we can paint the stage doors, attempt to fix the curtains, and do other odd jobs about the place. I will email out to all Committee Members when we have settled on a date. Please invite others within your groups to come along as well. Many hands will make light work.

Having investigated some concerns recently regarding cleaning, I'm pleased to say these have been worked through. It became clear to me that the cleaner simply does not have enough hours to do some of the deeper cleaning that hirers would expect. At a recent meeting the Committee agreed to offer the cleaner an additional 2 hours per month which will be used for deep cleans. The cleaner has accepted the extra hours and has already set to work. We are also setting up a better record system so that I can see when cleaning has taken place and what issues have been found. For example, during the last week a stain has appeared around the sink in the ladies and try as she might the cleaner cannot get this off. Some may see that stain and think that it has not been cleaned – but I know this isn't the case.

We do rely on our hirers to leave the Hall in a reasonable condition for the next hirer, bearing in mind that if a group is using the Hall during the day there may not be any cleaning between that group's hire and the next hirer. The cleaner will be letting me know promptly about any issues, and I do urge hirers to do the same please. We ask that hirers leave the Hall as they would wish to find it. If you come into the Hall and find it is not to an acceptable standard please let me know as quickly as possible. It is much easier to deal with problems as they occur than with historic ones.

Occasionally, you might still spot a roof leak! During the last year we have had the valley gutters cleaned but it looks as though they may need doing again. We are blessed with a beautiful park next door with some magnificent trees but the leaves do cause problems for us. We may approach the Parish Council for some help.

Roger Roud continues to do a lot of the general maintenance for the Hall. Most recently he built double doors into the store so as to accommodate the new chair trolleys. We greatly appreciate Roger's help, and I'm sure he enjoys tinkering and fixing, but we do need to think about how we would manage when Roger is no longer either able or willing to do what he currently does. We have thought about whether we could engage a property management service but this would not be cheap.

I know there are others who use the Hall who also help to keep it in order and, if you are willing, then I think we must learn to make even better use of you and your skills. If you would like to play a more active and more practical role in looking after the Hall please do let me know.

And with the pressure on finances we do need to think about how we raise money to keep the Hall in good shape and to fund ongoing improvements and necessary maintenance and general repairs. We raised our hire charges earlier in the year and will need to do so again, possibly as early as the autumn but I propose we see where we are first with this year's accounts which will close on 30th September. Meanwhile, the Committee is starting to look at what we could do in terms of community fundraising and Hall promotion – that could be coffee mornings, book swaps, table top sales, community events..... There are lots of possibilities but we will need a group of volunteers to take this on and to help us jump through the hoops to make them

happen. I am thinking that we may hold a separate fundraising meeting to discuss options. Again, if you would like to be involved, or have any ideas at all, please let me know.

In closing my report, I would like to say some thank you's. To our Treasurer, who has the important job of looking after the accounts for us – I'm really grateful to Vanessa Johnson for the work she does, and to Chris Hubbard who has kindly carried out the audit for us again. To Roger Roud who when he isn't fixing things is kept busy as the Booking Secretary – again, a time consuming task; to the WI and their helpers who do a lovely job of keeping the gardens tidy; and others help us in a variety of ways – Glenis Bryant, Colin Powell, and Lewis Ireland and The Heath Players, who all help out. And to Jennie our cleaner, and anyone else I might have missed.

And last, but by no means least - to you, our hirers. Thank you for choosing the Institute Hall for your groups and events. Your continued support is very much appreciated.

Michelle Tatton, Chair – 2nd July 2023