

## **VH Report for Barham Parish Council**

Managing Claydon and Barham Village Hall is a bit like owning a stately home. There are two main things to worry about: 1 Preventing the building falling down around our ears and 2 Getting enough paying customers through the doors to keep the lights on. Of course we are not alone. We receive excellent support, both financial and advisory, from our parish councils (including Barham Parish Council, 'thank you') and further up the food chain of local governance at District and County levels. But there are times, if only fleetingly, when our hard-working committee do feel 'personally responsible'.

Right, that's the opening paragraph done. So what have we been up to during the last year or so? Well looking back at our meeting notes, these are the items being discussed:

### **Meeting held on 1 March 2023**

The minutes reflect the business under discussion at our previous meeting held on 22 November 2022, so they seem ancient history now. Echoes of Covid were still reverberating during that period, with news that the BMM panto had been delayed until late March 2022. Also reflected in the minutes was our search for a new treasurer and bookings secretary. The treasurer role was taken up again by Ruth Arthur (after a brief stand-in period by John Tuppen) and Bob Fletcher joined the committee to handle the hall bookings. Bob was to prove a great addition to our team and he and John Tuppen worked hard together to get the computer-based Hallmaster booking system up and running.

Gordon Musson gave the maintenance report at the meeting and the main item was the major work to be undertaken on the front roof - the pointy area between the castle walls and the clock tower. Also discussed were the upcoming 5-yearly EICR testing of all the electrical systems in the hall plus the annual PAT testing checks. Possible strategies for improving the ventilation in the committee room were explored. The new BT contract for our broadband service at the hall also got started at this time.

### **Meeting held on 28 June 2023**

Now the work on the front roof was scheduled to go ahead between 31 July and the 11 August 2023. At the same time a major upgrade of the toilets was to be undertaken. Both these major works were completed on schedule. The roofing work cost of £5000 plus was funded by the District Council. Much appreciated. The major electrical inspection was

completed by Windrush Electrical (who we consider to be our 'go-to' electrical contractor.) They raised a number of points to be addressed, all of which were sorted. Around this time we received our first reminder that our annual return to the Charity Commission was due on 31 August. More on this later.

### **Meeting held on 19 September 2023**

Gordon Musson reported that during the work on the front roof the plan was to put a cowling on the chimney leading to the fireplace in the committee room to improve the ventilation in that room. It turned out there was no chimney and the area was capped off so Gordon donated one of his own chimney pots and the airflow route was established. Gordon's maintenance report also mentioned a leak in the flat roof on the toilet block that allowed rain to get into the new light fitting in the ladies toilet. The roof was patched successfully and discussions began about the need to replace the flat roof entirely at some point in the future.

More reminder emails from the Charity Commission came in. Michelle Smith and I tried to complete the annual return but ran into password problems. We eventually discovered that the Charity Commission website was undergoing a 'refresh' and it wasn't our fault that we lapsed. In the end Michelle successfully posted our annual return (albeit late) and we were no longer 'persona non gratas' in the eye of the charity world. Phew!

### **Meeting held on 13 November 2023 AGM**

#### **And the follow-up meeting the same evening ( with tea inbetween)**

By now certain things had happened. Gordon Musson, our maintenance officer, left the committee and we thank him for his hard work over the years. Bob Fletcher also stood down for personal reasons. His work getting the Hallmaster booking system working so well has been a real boon to how the hall now functions. Thanks Bob. Linda Pullen, our secretary, has now taken up the role and a great job she is making of it. You will have noticed a key safe near the front door and this has been a good way for casual hirers to pick up and return hall keys. The regular hirers have keys of their own.

Also by now we had had two attempted 'hijacks' of our broadband service. This took the form of me (the account holder on behalf of the hall) receiving emails from BT saying 'We are sorry you are leaving us, etc'. It seems 'mischievous persons' out there seek to take over your service. I can't quite remember how that works but basically it's not a good thing. BT sent me some extra bits of kit and we hope to ward off any future 'hijackers'.

The whole telephone landline system seems set to go 'digital', but don't press me for details. At any rate, touch wood, the system is working OK at the moment.

### **Meeting held on 27 Feb 2024**

Not a huge amount of news to report here. We arranged for the hall floor to be oiled at the beginning of April. This is done every two years. We have also put up new magnetic noticeboards in the foyer. We have been discussing replacing the carpet in the committee room: we need to get three quotes in for consideration. And the boiler has just been serviced for another year.

Over the horizon there seems to be talk of money becoming available for local organisations. Perhaps that comes from the mysterious number '106'. At any rate we would be grateful recipients of any new funding. We will put our thinking caps on.

If you are still awake at this point, thanks for staying the course.

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14 May 2024  
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