

## **A Year in the Village Hall**

My last report of this kind was in May 2025. It seems longer ago to me than this. A sign of me getting older or the topsy turvy times we seem to be living in nowadays? Anyway, here I am again ...

I can see that last time I told you about improvement projects that were at the 'discussion stage'. If you have come to the hall recently you will have seen the finished results of these 'ideas on paper'.

First up, although a bit boring perhaps, the new carpet in the committee room was laid (by Harts Carpets) – a vast improvement that should last many years.

Next, I mentioned that the stage curtains were looking a bit 'tired'. So they should be after many many years of worthy service. Bar-Clay Music Makers has recently passed it's 50th anniversary so they were the most keen to freshen up the 'fabric'. And so it came to pass. The company chosen from three contenders came along and spent the whole day rigging up the new 'tabs', including upgrading some of the supporting bars to the latest safety standards. We thank the Parish Council for footing that bill. And just in time for the annual pantomime in January. This year it was 'Hansel and Gretel'. Brilliant as always and yet another year in which our 'Little Hall on the High Street' turns into a magical theatre. And this time we had numbered seats that could be bought online. Up to date or what?

The PC also helped us hall by funding the resin treatment of the alleyway from the back kitchen door to the stage door. And the repointing of the 'heritage' wall dividing us from the bakers next door. We have to say that the PC has been exceedingly generous in helping us to keep the hall in good shape and looking great.

And while we are on maintenance projects allow me to tell you about the 'damp wall saga' - a sequence of works that kept me awake on many a springtime night. It started before the turn of the year when it was noticed that the inside walls at the front of the building felt constantly damp. So I asked Chris the builder (who repointed the wall out the back) if he knew any damp experts. He put me in the touch with Adrian Coe, a damp expert par excellence and the start of a series of other 'tradespeople' who filled up my contacts file under their discipline rather than their surnames. So 'Adrian Damp' came in and chiselled away at the 'wrong sort' of plaster and then some of the exposed brickwork. Yes, damp was rising up from the ground, especially in the room near the kitchen, so he injected a damp proof course along the wall at ground level. We had already bought two dehumidifiers and were running them 24/7.

Next Adrian recommended his plasterer, 'Dean Plasterer'. He came in and applied the right sort of plaster. Looking better. Once that was dry the walls needed painting. Dean recommended his dad - 'Malcolm Painter'. He did a cracking job. Looking much better now. Anson, 'our plumber', had already removed the radiator in the big room. So the next stage was redoing the skirting boards and other bits of carpentry. Adam and his partner of 'Orwell Carpentry' did that job. Then I thought that maybe water was getting in through the windows at the front so I asked 'Windiman' to reseal the edges to be sure they weren't leaking. And finally we decided that the front walls needed a bit of attention. So Malcom came back and painted the black zone along the base of the outside walls and filled any cracks he found. The front door also received a new coat of black paint. Job done. Phew! The PC paid for a good proportion of the costs involved so, again, we thank them for their financial help.

While this was going on Stuart on our committee was having discussions with Port One about fixing solar panels on the roof. And they were duly fitted - with a minimum of fuss I have to say. So now we have some 'sunshine energy' that must reduce our electricity bill to some extent. By exactly what amount I can't say because I am waiting to be instructed as to how I can record this on my phone. Clearly, having batteries to store the energy would help but these are expensive.

Oh I nearly forgot, we could do with getting the main hall floor sanded and oiled this year. We pencilled it into the Easter holiday but there was too much going on and not a two-day gap in the diary to have it done. So perhaps in the summer holiday period?

Have you had enough 'infrastructure' news? Good, so lets have a quick whizz through the bookings agenda.

We seem to have survived the 'painting with prosecco' episode with only a sticky table or two. And we have declined a request for a 'dog-related' session. Can't remember exactly what they wanted to bring dogs into the hall for but we have always steered away from animals being brought into a hall that hosts young children and floor-related classes such as Yoga. Looking across the booking plan for May I can see all the usual regulars, such as Gipping School of Dance, Brownies, Yoga, Young Families, Slimming World, Community Cuppa, Health and Safety training classes. And there's a new kid on the block that started this week - Pilates on a Wednesday evening (to be arranged for another evening when BMM start their usual Wednesday evening meetings for the new pantomime). And look there is an election next week on 7 May. That's good business for the hall. And it enforces why I think this hall is so great. It has one outstanding asset - its on the High Street, not

tucked way round the back or in the middle of a field where you have to drive to reach it. People coming to vote can just walk in at street level. That counts for a lot, especially for local residents.

And another thing counts in our favour - the committee that look after the hall day in day out. They are the best bunch of caring a hard-working people I know (including me). So well done all of you. Long may it continue.

Looking back at what I have written, it all seems a bit long-winded. But you asked for a report and this is what you get.

Cheers

Geoff Rogers

Chair, Village Hall Management Team

Mobile: 07968 079689

30 April 2026