**Woldingham Village Hall (Charity no. 304994)**

**Chair’s Report for 2020**

The Corona Virus made 2020 a very very unusual year. Our AGM was as usual scheduled for April but had to be abandoned. Both the Panto and the Woldingham Players cancelled their bookings. As for so many others, lockdown made its first impact at the end of March and so the Hall was forced to close. When we were allowed to re-open some of our regular hirers tentatively returned, albeit with reduced numbers for social distancing. That situation didn’t last long because the Hall was soon after required to close again.

Amazingly even though the 2020 income from hirers totalled only about half the previous year’s figure, we still managed to end the year with a cash surplus. For that, we must be grateful for the Covid support grants from Tandridge District Council (~£11k).

Much of the year seemed to be taken up interpreting the ever-changing Government regulations. On the plus side, the empty rooms did allow us time to carry out a considerable amount of internal repainting. Outside work also continued keeping the grounds neat and tidy even though the Hall was not in use.

The major project was an upgrade to the Hall’s CCTV. Partly in response to an increasing number of unwanted late night visitors to the hall and partly because of the last-legs nature of the existing equipment, we changed our service provider, acquired a new router, and purchased an additional 5 external cameras to give better picture quality especially at night.

You may recall that in 2019 we applied to Tandridge District Council for approval to fell the ash tree, which had succumbed to disease, but the application was refused. We tried again with a second application in 2020 and fortunately this time it was accepted, although we were not made aware of the decision until the beginning of 2021. When you wander by the hall you will notice that the tree has been totally removed and the ground is being left to settle before a replacement tree will be planted. It will likely take a few years for the new tree to grow to the height of the old.

With most shops closed, internet shopping and home delivery volumes increased dramatically, and the Hall was approached to site collection boxes for an additional courier to Royal Mail. The boxes offered the benefit of being accessible for delivery and collection 24/7. Siting the boxes would have been to no economic benefit for the hall, the question for the trustees was whether it would benefit the village to have the service made available. The question proved an emotive one with a number of villagers raising strong concerns that the facility could operate to the detriment of the village shop. The Hall trustees held absolutely matching regard for the value of the shop but were less convinced of the argument that the lockers would in reality have a detrimental impact on trade. Nevertheless, the courier's request was declined.

In September, Sue Lowndes retired as a Trustee after 9 years of dedicated service, she never missed a meeting. Sue represented both the Woldingham Players and the Horticultural Society. We thank her for her great commitment to the interests of the hall and for her active participation in trustee discussions. We were pleased to welcome Ernie McGirr from the Players as her replacement.

As 2020 came to an end, the Nursery School was the only one of our hirers able to operate. We look forward to opening the doors in 2021 to all our regular users as soon as possible.

I would like to thank Jen, our booking secretary, and her partner Matt for his active work maintaining the hall, and also Knights Garden Centre for donating a Christmas tree which was much enjoyed by the children.

As ever, I must extend the biggest thank you to the hall trustees, and particularly our Secretary (Nicki Fraser) and our Treasurer (Peter Farrar) for their great commitment to looking after the best interest of the hall and the village.

Martin Lewis

Chair