

Sutton Village Hall Annual General Meeting 13/10/2022

Chairman's Report

Well, it has been a mixture of successes and disappointments since the last AGM in November 2021, as we continue to battle with the effects of Covid.

Events 2021-2022

We started off with having to cancel our Christmas Coffee Morning and our New Year's Eve Ball. On the other hand, our Village Advent Calendar, with 24 windows lit in the month of December, was a great success. Thanks to Lorna who posted all the advent windows on the website, and to Jason who distributed a thank you letter to all participants. We hope to make this an annual event.

In March, we had arranged for Beds Police to give us a talk on cyber protection, and to have a fish and chip supper. Unfortunately, at the last moment, the police cancelled, saying that they had been in contact with Covid. However, we went ahead with our fish and chips. Thank you to Julia who collected them and got us a good deal. Thank you to Sam and Malc who provided some quiz questions to keep us entertained, so we managed to rescue the evening.

The Duck Race took place in May this year to coincide with Jo's plant sale. It was a beautiful day and we sold all of the tickets, making the day a great success. Thanks to John who coordinated the event, John, Jay and Sam who filled sandbags, Nigel who cleared the ford, Jenny who chased the ducks, John and Jay who caught the winning ducks, Stefan who controlled traffic, Sharn who sold tickets on the day, and everyone for selling tickets beforehand. With everyone playing a part, it ran smoothly and all the visitors had a good time... and we made over £400.

On 4th June, we had our special lunch, with a fifties theme, to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Our thanks to the Parish Council, who contributed £100 towards it. It was a joint effort, with members of the Village Hall, Friends of Sutton Church and the Parochial Church Council all working together. We erected two marquees and decorated lavishly. We started off with a fizz reception while Trevor played fifties music on the piano, then we had our two-course meal of Coronation Chicken and a selection of delicious puddings, while Gabi's arrangement of fifties music played in the background. Next, Rector Alex presented the cups for:

Artist of the Year (adult and junior) to winners Annie Gilpin and Hadyn Stuart

Poet of the Year (adult and junior) winners Phil Lane and Seren Stuart

Jubilee planter to winner the Pins and Needles Group.

This was followed by Jubilee cake, with the initial cut by Bill Inver who had just had his 90th birthday. John Ream gave a toast to the Queen and our local band, Drunk and Disorderly, entertained us with fifties music. It was an enjoyable and successful day, with about 100 participants. Our thanks to all who made it so. A small profit was made and it was used to buy champagne flutes for the use of all groups in the village.

Also in June, we had the Birmingham Conservatoire Folk Ensemble. This was again a great success, with all tickets sold out. Thanks to Sharn who organised the catering, to Stefan for organising the ticket booking, and to all who manned the bar on the evening.

At the beginning of July, the dramatic group, Hotbuckle, gave us "Great Expectations". This had been postponed from our usual November date. Although this was an excellent performance, it was poorly attended. Several factors contributed to this, and we made an overall loss of over £400. In future, we will revert to our booking in November when, in the past, we have had a greater audience.

At the end of August, we had our pizza and barbecue evening, with Drunk and Disorderly providing the music. Our thanks to Stefan and John for making it such a success. However, we realise that we need to make more effort to advertise our events in the future.

On 8th October, the wildlife group held their first meeting, with a talk on badgers. Many thanks to Jenny for organising this.

Throughout the year, our Saturday morning coffee mornings, every other month, have continued to be a great success and well attended. The FOSC continue to carry out their 100+ Club draw during the morning. During the April coffee morning, Potton Fire Service provided training on how to use the defibrillator that's installed on the front of the village hall. This was very well received. A big thank you to all the committee for consistently providing delicious cakes and for making everyone welcome.

Our walking group has also met on Saturday mornings every other month, with walks led by different members of the committee. So far, despite notification on the website, the walkers have consisted mainly of committee members and their partners. We may wish to encourage more villagers to join us.

We have plans for further events during 2022/23, including a New Year's Eve ball, One Man Theatre, The Birmingham Conservatoire, pizza and petanque events, a jazz evening, Hotbuckle theatre group, and a pizza Master Chef tutorial, while of course we continue to have our regular coffee mornings and walks.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety have, as always, been of utmost importance. Sharn and John have reviewed the Health and Safety and Child Protection Policies, and John has kept on top of all the new guidance with regard to Coronavirus. Sharn completed the insurance risk management assessment form and John regularly completes the check list. The question of installing a smoke alarm was dealt with by Stefan, who liaised with the fire service. The conclusion was that we did not need one in our hall. The first aid kit is regularly checked. Two minor incidents have been recorded in the incident book. Mike Kingdon has agreed to undertake future PAT testing.

Maintenance

Throughout the year, we have had several maintenance mornings to carry out many jobs such as creosoting the outside of the hall, cleaning gutters, cleaning the windows, painting the interior walls, gardening, etc. Thank you all for giving up time to do this, but especially to Jay for all his work, including renovation of the table and benches that we acquired from Wimpole.

Problems continue to crop up, but these have usually been dealt with by John and Jay. These have included fixing an electric circuit that kept tripping, replacing a heater, replacing strip lights, changing the switch on the emergency exit, replacing the ladies' loo seat. Three windows misted up and these were replaced by Potton Windows. The

Leylandii hedge at the back of the hall has become overgrown, and we are in the process of getting quotes to have it trimmed.

Grants and Purchases

We have made several grant applications throughout the year, some successful, some not. We took advantage of a free consultation from the council regarding a new floor and lighting system. Many thanks to John who liaised with the members of the department. They provided written reports with recommendations, but we decided not to go ahead.

Three applications were made for a grant for a projector, for general use by groups in the village, but particularly for the wildlife group. Mike Kingdon kindly advised on the specifications. The first two grants were unsuccessful, but the third (a ward councillor grant) struck lucky, and we received £549.00 towards the cost. We have now purchased the projector.

An application for a grant at the time of the jubilee, again a ward councillor grant, was successful, and we received £393.99. This was used to purchase two sets of boules, a jubilee cup and a plaque for the jubilee tree.

Our thanks to Ward Councillor Tracey Wye, who supported these two grant applications.

A previous grant for £1000 provided roughly one quarter of the cost of new staging for the hall. Thanks to Sharn who did the research and purchased it. This will relieve storage problems, and Stefan found someone willing to remove the old wooden platforms.

A further application was made to Beds County Council for a grant to compensate for the effects of Covid, and was successful, bringing in over £2,000.

Following a request by FOSC to store items at the village hall, we agreed to do what we could to store and share equipment. This led to a community assets grant application to Central Beds Council to finance mains drainage and a new shed. Unfortunately the grant was unsuccessful. However, we have decided to go ahead with the work to get on mains drainage and to purchase a shed. FOSC have agreed to pay half the expense for the shed.

Other purchases have included a new kettle and a sum-up machine. Sharn and Malc very kindly donated and installed a composter, so we can make compost not only for our own use but also for those in the village. We are contemplating a new dishwasher and hedge trimmer.

So you can see it has been a busy year and I cannot thank the committee members enough for all their hard work and friendship throughout the year – and their partners who have helped out in many ways. In particular, Lorna, who does a brilliant job keeping the website vibrant and up-to-date.

This year, I felt moved to compose you a song to the tune of Willikins and his Dinah.

In the village of Sutton, a group you will find
The Village Hall Committee, the best of its kind
They meet on a Thursday and have a great chat
Assigning the actions to do this and that.

There's John, he's a Scot, but there's no harm in that
And Stefan is German, he knows about VAT
Pat and Barbara are Irish, a whacky old pair
The rest are just English, but what do we care.

There's Sharn and there's Jenny. There's Ellie and Jay
They're all so hard working, good looking and gay
We would like another to join in the fun
So come along in and we'll give you a bun!

Barbara McCormick, Chairman, Sutton Village Hall Committee