

Old Village Hall Annual General Meeting

2010

As Chairperson, I once again welcome you all to Old Village Hall AGM and have pleasure in presenting my report. The past year has proved to be one of great activity for both the old and the new village halls - and of course that means the Village Hall Trustees too.

The sale of the old hall site was a very protracted affair, due to the recession particularly affecting the housing market. We were hugely helped and encouraged by Adam Farnsworth of Berry Bros who worked hard to find prospective buyers. Two or three came and went, but eventually a firm offer of £240,000 was made by Shelley Homes in the late summer. Concurrently with this, the lease agreement between ourselves and Old Parish Charities progressed slowly as our lawyers ironed out all the outstanding items. We were fortunate that Shelley Homes were patient, as no contract could be signed with them until the lease on the new site was ready for signature. Eventually both came together in the New Year and both documents were duly signed.

In the meantime, we were fortunate to secure further funding, notably a Biffaward for £40,000, a grant from West Northants Development Fund for £7,750 towards a cinema screen, projection equipment and retractable staged seating, and £15,000 from COMMA towards the extension car park. Other smaller amounts added to the total, which gradually rose to £600,000 for the new hall. Last summer, we appointed a Project Manager, Tim Acott. He oversaw the all important tender process, based on a Bill of Quantities. This time we were helped by the building recession, as the prospective construction companies competed keenly for the work and the tenders came in much lower than anticipated. The lowest tender, came from a local company Steele & Bray, and they were contracted to build the new hall. Their start date in late February, coincided with completing the sale of the old hall site and the signing of the lease with Old parish Trustees.

Inevitably, the start was slow because of the extended winter. It was marked by an official First Sod Turning Ceremony attended by Old Parish Council, Old Parish Charity Trustees, the Chair of the County Council, our District Councillor, our village Hall Advisor from ACRE and others. However, the extension car park is now completed, although we are still waiting anxiously and impatiently for the grass to grow before the first cricket match. The steel frame was erected last week and the new hall at last seems a reality. The finish date is scheduled for October and we will keep you all informed of progress - and the all important opening celebrations.

We are all very aware that building a new hall is not an end in itself. It is there to be used, and it is you, the villagers of Old, who will make it live and enable it to take its place at the heart of the village.

We continued to run events in the old hall during the last days of its life, with a summer dance and wine tasting & supper party in the autumn. We were also very pleased to organize the bonfire & fireworks in November. After the closure of the hall, we turned to Walgrave for a children's play 'Peach Boy' from Northants Touring Arts in January, and 'Those Magnificent Men' from New Perspectives Theatre in March.

We have a spring dance on 15th May in Walgrave, welcoming back the excellent Latin American group 'Lament' by popular request. Tickets are now available and we hope to see as many of you as possible there. This will be our last event before the new hall opens in the autumn.

I have many thank yous this year to many who have supported our efforts - firstly to Jalil Asif as Chairman of Old Parish Charity Trustees, who, with the support of the Clerk, Judith Willis, oversaw the final stages of the lease agreement to ensure it was completed in time.

Also, our most sincere thanks to David Parton, who gave his time and expertise unstintingly in acting for us with regard to the sale of the old site.

To Will Beers and Mark Knight who helped in clearing the old site and to Will for his help in storing all the hall contents.

To Frank Keightley and the Cricket Club for their support and practical help, particularly from Tim Keeber who oversaw much earth moving on the new site before they made the new boundary fence - and also for their patience in the coming season as they manage without proper changing facilities. We hope this will be more than made up for next year.

I also want to thank local residents for their patients during the period of construction - both on the new and old sites. It cannot be easy with the noise of construction all about, but hope that the inconvenience will be short lived. Access to the playing field has been unavoidably limited in the last few weeks, but we are reassured that normal access will be available again in the near future - indeed as soon as the grass begins to grow. The new car park will be available before the cricket season gets underway and we are doing all we can to ensure that vehicles are not parking in Charles Close so as not to inconvenience local villagers.

Lastly, my enormous thanks to my fellow trustees - to Katie Summers who has supported me throughout, and given her legal expertise to many matters arising throughout the year. Anne-Marie Cooke, who has managed a complicated year with funding coming in - and no going out. To Neville Mackman who has provided help and advice regarding the new build. But above all, to all of you who have delivered leaflets and flyers, helped with decorating the hall for events, cooked, set up, cleared away and lent support, which has been so much appreciated.

We look ahead to the coming year with great anticipation and excitement and a new landmark achievement for all the village.

Katie Lindenbaum

Chairperson Old Village Hall Charity Trustees