

Beech Village Hall Annual Report 2016/2017

The Hall as a Hub for Beech

As I write this we are coming into the busy season for the Village Hall – and it's a fine tradition that the Village Hall works even harder for the village community in the darker days of winter when there are fewer opportunities for outdoor activities.

Throughout the year the Village Hall provides an annual rhythm for villagers; a sort of metronome of the seasons. As has been repeated in many other villages in England for many years. So, not surprisingly I can report that the year 2016 to 2017 broadly followed the same pattern.

Summer 2016 saw the **Queen's Birthday** lunch and tea, when we were graced by a visit from 'Her Majesty' (royal impersonation is fortunately no longer a hanging offence, else we would be short of a Hirings' Manager). It was heart-warming to have villagers from all the generations there – most senior (90s) to most junior (still in arms).



In the autumn of 2016 the Beech Gardeners ran that most traditional of shows, the **Garden Show** (as fans of the Archers will be all too aware) with Beech villagers gently competing for prizes with their fruits, flowers, photographs and handiwork; so appropriately an autumn event. As is the immensely popular **Beech Quiz**. Run annually by Beech's Bembridge family, it is always well organised, well attended, and accompanied by fish and chips!



The popular **Bonfire and Fireworks** event follows in early November, with the atmospheric torch-lit procession along Wellhouse Road. Last year we sold some 310 tickets! It has a reputation for being the local fireworks event where families come and have some participation (in a safe way, I must hastily add). This is more fun for all than many firework events, where only distant viewing is allowed. This event was run with a cast of 29 villagers in the organisation.



Just before Bonfire Night, the unattractively titled '**Annual General Meeting**' attracted last year, as now, many in the village together to talk about how the Village Hall Charity is serving them, and what can be done better. This works as a sort of Client-Feedback session. It is followed by the regular monthly social – the get-together every month (always the last Friday except December) which in effect is an informal and inexpensive supper party for up to 60 villagers.

Winter arrives, and Christmas immediately appears on the agenda. Decorating the Hall was followed by all the organisation for the **Christmas parties**, for adults and children.

The winter ended in 2017 with a **Murder Mystery evening**; much hilarity trying to guess the perpetrator, with impromptu acting from audience members purloined for the cast, in costumes provided for the parts.



Spring 2017 saw our other **Quiz Night**, run by Peter Cox. Again, this was very popular with the hall packed to bursting.

While this seasonal pattern of events continues, all the while, during the week, regular hirers of the Hall come to use it. They provide a variety of clubs and activities for Beech residents and the surrounding area, and the Hall is also the setting of many week-end parties and weddings. We are a busy and flourishing Village Hall community.

Looking after the Hall

Following the refurbishment of the toilets in 2016, no other major improvements have happened at the Hall during this year. We are working up to a big refurbishment to the old Annexe, and this will take some time to plan, and then raise sufficient funds. However, the ongoing cleaning, maintenance and mowing in summer has kept a few of us busy – and that in itself is a valuable communal activity.

Thanks ...

As I have said in the past, all these activities and village entertainments are only possible because of the kind spirit of the people in the community who help. As I say, I counted 29 villagers involved in the staging of the Bonfire event last year. I shall not try to list all who help on the few committees, or by taking charge of various aspects of the maintenance, or staffing social events. They know who they are, and I thank them for their time and effort. I hope it is very much appreciated by the village, toward a thriving community in Beech, and its warm heart.



However, I will take this opportunity to thank one person particularly who has been carrying one of the more serious, but less glamorous and visible roles on the Village Hall Management Committee. Anne Whitaker has been the Treasurer for the Village Hall since 2013. When she took on this role, as well as agreeing to become a Trustee of the Charity, she was still in full time work. She has had personal commitments which have been demanding in the period. It is a sign of her kind and patient personality that she has always found time to provide good advice, and looked after the financial aspects of the Charity so well. She has now handed the Treasurer role over to Nigel Sillick as of 30th June, but (happily for us) stays on the Committee and as a Trustee. I wish to express our deep thanks and have the village recognise the time and effort she has put in for their

benefit, during her period of office in that role for this Charity.



We thank Nigel Sillick and Jane Short for kindly agreeing to seek election as Trustees for the coming year. The Management Committee meetings will also be attended by Peter Cox, our Hirings Manager and Elaine King.



Nick Charman

Chair, Management Committee and Trustee

Beech Village Hall and Recreation Ground, October 2017