

Earl Stonham Village Hall Annual Report – 2022-23

In June last year we celebrated the Platinum Jubilee in style with a weekend of events. It seems a long time ago now with all that has happened since. The hall's own Jubilee contribution was the creation of the Jubilee Garden at the back of the hall, transforming a neglected area into an oasis of calm for everyone in the village to use and enjoy. This also now has a metal 'tree' sculpture providing year-round interest which was paid for by the Parish Council as a thank you to everyone that helped with the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

We took up a scheme operated by MSDC in April last year to have an EV charger installed in the hall car park. This has received little use to date but it is there for those who need it. The scheme as currently operated is far from ideal from a hall perspective as the charge point is costing the hall around £200 per year but changes are supposed to be in the pipeline that will reduce this and also allow us more direct management of the service.

With the huge increase in electricity charges, we had no choice but to increase rental charges during the year but decided these would only apply to bookings for those outside the village – mostly commercial organisations. We also took part in the Warm Space initiative with the Parish Council securing a grant from MSDC to help pay for this. In practice, these were not well attended (some days we just had volunteers!) so they were stopped at Christmas. We then tried re-starting Library Lunches instead but again these did not prove popular so these were also abandoned.

In September we again held a Picnic on the Green – this time with entertainment provided by Tony Haley and John Perkins. The weather was kind and this proved to be a very pleasant afternoon.

One of the major events in the hall calendar is the Stonham Theatre Guild Pantomime – this year it was Dick Wittington. Unfortunately just before the first performance, three of the lead players became ill so there was no choice but to postpone it to January. I hope if you attended the shows, you will agree with me that this was one of the best and it again demonstrates what a wealth of talent we have in the village and surrounding area.

Supper nights and the Village Quiz continue to be well attended – the quiz in particular has benefitted by a number of teams from Debenham regularly attending. The attendance proceeds for the quiz are donated directly to charity with bar profits offsetting the hall rental.

The most recent events were of course these for the Coronation celebrations. A dinner for 70 was held on the Friday before the Coronation with desserts provided by the WI and entertainment by the Theatre Guild. On Sunday we held a 'Bring and Share' lunch and right up to the last minute were unsure if we could hold this outside due to the unsettled weather. In the end the weather gods were on our side and we had lovely weather and well over 100 people attending who provided a fine lunch spread.

You have probably noticed the work taking place in the old bowls club area. We are still working on the final lease for the premises from the ES Trust but work has progressed with the opening in the hedge providing around 24 overflow parking spaces together with the seeding of what we hope will be a wildflower meadow. The work to remove the hedge was far harder than originally anticipated and was greatly helped by the loan of a mini digger by Brian Rice and lots of other manpower help. Services have also been reconnected to the Bowls Club buildings to increase security and in readiness for their future use by the hall.

Tony Turner
Chairman - Earl Stonham Village Hall Management Committee