

The Badlesmere Lees and Hall

Committee



Badlesmere....on the way to Ashford 1927

Welcome and Chairman's Report at the Badlesmere Lees and Hall Committee's AGM, held at 7.30pm, 1st November 2016, in Badlesmere Lees Village Hall.

A warm welcome to everyone at this the 110th AGM of Badlesmere Village Hall. Actually I have no evidence that this is the 110th AGM, only that there is a document in the archives that refers to the Lees Court Estate agreeing, on the 10th of October 1906, to let a piece of land for the purpose of erecting thereon a parish room. (Incidentally the rent was one shilling a year.) We in Badlesmere Lees should be proud that there is still a parish room and it's still in use. It has had some changes over the years but is essentially the original one. No complete rebuilds here. It is nice to note that the village halls adviser from 'Action with Communities in Rural Kent' regards us as one of the most friendly and successful halls she has visited, and holds us up as an example to others. Small can be beautiful.

I should before I give my chairman's report introduce you to the committee: I'm Ian Earl, chairman, Jane Austin is secretary, Rick Blackman treasurer, and there's Ben Pullen, Charlie Kirby, and Katie Bennett. Fred and Jane Gregory, Adrian Atkins, Tom Sisley, Madelene Wilkinson send their apologies. Dave Wilkinson should get a mention as he's probably the most important of us – as Hall Manager - although he no longer wishes to suffer committee meetings. The adviser actually thinks we have too big a committee, but my take, at least, is that if you get involved in maintaining the hall and lees you should be rewarded by being allowed to have a say in the decision-making. The more the merrier!

The adviser *does* have concerns over the way we run things, which brings me immediately to the topic of governance. We still fall short of best practice but we are working towards the ideal. The management trustees, i.e. those on the committee, are required to sign a declaration of eligibility, committee meetings are held regularly with minutes recorded and summaries published. I need to thank Jane for her much appreciated support, and Dave Austin for maintaining a website on which we can post such items. The accounts are kept in good order, all due credit to Rick, and independently checked – thanks to

Yoshi Euridge. Sue Earl accompanied me to the Kent Village Halls Convention in April and I attended a Trustee Training workshop in May.

However we do not have custodian trustees and we are seeking a solution that minimises the cost of satisfying this requirement. There is also concern that the village hall, by virtue of its reason d'être, is a charity whereas the lees, albeit Open Access Land (a more correct term than Common Land), is owned by the Lees Court Estate and so is private land. Should we be raising funds as a charity and then spending them on a private concern? Of course, it's not so black and white. Cutting the grass, for example and our main expense in maintaining the lees, is for the benefit of we who live around the lees and visitors alike, which is therefore a charitable act, but maintaining the tracks is more dubious. Because, at some stage, we will seek funds that are available only to charities, and, with our income below £5000 pa we are not registered with the charities commission, so we will need to present our accounts in order to qualify. We have therefore decided to separate the hall and lees accounts. Ipso facto, there will be separate hall and lees committees, although in practice they will consist of the same people and meet at the same time. Allocating expenses to each will be relatively simple, but fund-raising may require us to declare for each event for which we are nominally raising funds.

Arguably more important than the pernicky details of governance, is whether we are carrying out our prime function of maintaining the hall and the lees. The lees has been cut regularly – thanks to Adrian, and the tracks maintained – overseen by Ben. There was a deviation from the norm this year, in that type 1 roadstone was acquired and a good deal of machine work carried instead of planings and solely manual labour for the northern track. The result is a much better surface that will last more years. It cost more but, hopefully, will be no more expensive in the long run. The Lees Court Estate is continuing the necessary spraying of the Japanese Knotweed, and will replace the diseased oak near the A251. (Another oak will be planted in the gap left by the tree that fell in a recent Winter storm – courtesy of Bill Harbour.)

The village hall is more of a cause for concern. Important tasks have been carried out within and around the building (or are still on-going), such as completing the refurbishment of the kitchen, refurbishment and re-plumbing of the ladies and gents toilets, replacement of parts of the roof in the store, repair of the guttering, removal of the concrete plinths that once bore the gas heaters, removal of the gas meter, and adding castors to the drawers under the stage. Storage shelves have been rebuilt in order to house the equipment of the model train enthusiasts that now use the hall regularly. Note this was by the group themselves, for which we are grateful. However, the redecoration of the interior of the hall has not taken place, which we had hoped might be started on this year.

More pressing are the deterioration of the main structure of the building and the state of the paintwork on the roof and outside walls. A structural engineer has been engaged to advise on remedial work before replacing becomes a cheaper option than repair. We are of the opinion that we should retain our old building if at all possible – it certainly has heritage value.

Of course, much of the above could not have happened without funds. To this end many thanks must be given to Jane Gregory for running the Hundred Club so efficiently, to Fred and Jane Gregory for their efforts in running the Christmas Wine and Wisdom event, a perennial and popular feature in the Badlesmere Lees calendar, and to Jane and Dave Austin who ran a similar, but different, event called The Summer Quiz. Above all, much praise and appreciation should be showered on Jane Austin for her taking on the mammoth role of being the organiser-in-chief of the Badlesmere Lees Mediaeval Fayre, which was resurrected this year. A one day event now, but still held in May (two days, as the original fayres were, were felt to be too exhausting), it proved both enjoyable and profitable. It cost just under £2000 to stage and profits made were just over £800. Some of the expenses were for items that could be used again, and decisions were often made with our doing it all again in mind. Perhaps the most important aspect of the Fayre was how the village came together to create the occasion or simply to join in. It was good to see, as a result of Jane's encouragement, many a mediaeval-attired peasant, or dignitary, that wasn't a paid re-enactor or performer. At a post-event meeting we agreed it went well but could be bigger and better. Let's hope it will be so in 2017.

A non-fund-raising event (actually it cost about £150) that took place this year was the lighting of the beacon and the associated party commemorating Her Majesty's 90th birthday. It was a very well-attended event, bringing together many from the village and from as far away as Selling. Many thanks must go to Sue Earl and Dave Austin, in particular.

Letting of the hall is up from previous years, and most noticeably by long term hirers. These are most welcome for they cause less wear and tear on the building and its facilities, and need less looking after, while bringing in a steady income for the hall. There has been a meditation group, a table tennis club, and, beginning this year, the Kent O Gauge Railway Group has become a permanent feature. It's worth my pointing out that their arrival would not have happened had we not subscribed to 'Action with Communities in Rural Kent'.

Last autumn the village received by way of the parish council an AED (automated external defibrillator). As I understand it, the plan was to fit it to the outside wall of the Red Lion. This changed to the inside of the village hall, so a key-safe was purchased. However, because of the out-of-the-way location of the village hall I approached Tom Treasure and he kindly allowed it to be installed in his telephone box, which used to be the BT one at the end of the road but is now at the entrance to Falcon Farm. He also paid for the original cabinet to be built. Since then the cabinet has been modified, electricity installed, and the defibrillator placed therein (ten days ago). The committee has also taken on responsibility for the defibrillator, as the only village organisation really able to look after it. I understand that although South East Coast Ambulance have been informed, they will not go 'live' with its existence until we can match strict criteria concerning its installation, maintenance and checking. I am in contact with a charity called Community Heart Beat that will help us fulfil the requirements, and act as an external holder of information. Until then the ambulance service will not take responsibility for dispatching a rescuer to collect it. As soon as it is accepted by them, we will organise training sessions, although it must be noted that you do not need training to use the actual defibrillator – it talks to you and will not shock when not necessary. It might be of interest to you that

That concludes my report and brings me to the accounts. I will hand over to Rick at this point, but only after I have explained one, perhaps dubious, aspect of them. The accounts are for the year ending December 2015. We settled on the accounting period January-December because it makes year on year comparisons so much easier – there's a natural break in the cycle of income and expenditure in January. But since there is such a long gap between the year end and the AGM, we do always minute the exact state of the accounts at every committee meeting, and these are published soon afterwards.

Ian Earl, Chairman, Badlesmere Lees and Hall Committee