

The Badlesmere Lees and Hall Committee



Badlesmere....on the way to Ashford 1927

Chairman's Report for the AGM of The Badlesmere Lees and Hall Committee, 15 May 2023.

Welcome to the AGM of Badlesmere Parish Hall and the Badlesmere Lees Preservation Committee. The committee is strictly two committees that sits as one, the members of each being the same. There is no requirement for this but it just makes sense to have the same members and same office holders on each. The finances are kept separate, and up to 2005 and again from 2021 the two committees have had separate bank accounts.

The following Chairman's report covers the period since the last AGM, in May 2022. It includes matters pertaining to both the village hall and to the lees. It will also be posted on the village's website *badlesmerelees.com*, as will a summary of the accounts. Please note that the Treasurer's report and the summary of the accounts covers the financial year to 31st Dec 2022.

The following people make up the current committee: myself (Ian Earl), Sue Earl (secretary), Rick Blackman (treasurer), and ordinary members: Dave Austin (also sitting as the Parish Council representative), Steve Burt, Gareth Fulton, Fred Gregory, Charlie Kirby, Chris Moore, Ben Pullen and Tom Sisley. Chris joined the committee last year in May and Katie Potter has only recently resigned citing other commitments. During the year Steve took on the role of Hall Manager, Chris became i/c Projects and grant-seeking, while I continued to handle the bookings. Ben continued to co-ordinate repairs to the North Track, though Gareth is about to take this on, and Charlie maintained the South Track. Tom kindly mows the grass in front of the hall, and puts out the bins when required. Fred took it upon himself to push forward the erection of a village sign (more on this later). In addition, although not on the committee, there is Lorraine Blackman who runs the 100 Club.

It has been a year of events and non-events, by that I mean things that should have happened didn't while unexpected things did happen. The year started with a considerable surplus (relative to our normal levels) in the accounts mainly due to the Covid grants received during the pandemic. We therefore drew up a list of improvements for the hall, and begun to set them in motion. Quotes were received for such actions as refurbishing the hall floor and designs, with approximate costings, were drawn for extending the toilets (which also included ambulant toilets) and creating better storage space. However, more immediate repairs, such as repairs to the external doorway of the store, and the replacement of the

ridge along the main hall roof and of the skylights in the main store, became necessary denting our once very healthy funds. This necessitated the first rethink of our spending plans. Then, on inviting Andrew Wilcock to visit and quote for various jobs in and around the hall, he noticed subsidence affecting the southwest wall had possibly occurred. A claim was lodged with the insurers. The report of the loss adjuster, recently received, confirmed that subsidence had happened, possibly due to the combined effects of a dry summer and roots from neighbouring trees, but also stated that we were underinsured. The latter will affect what the insurers will pay towards the repairs. Until the full cost of the repairs and the insurer's contribution are known, we have had to put a hold on most of the other jobs. Easing our pain is the recent notification of a successful application for a community grant from Optivo. The resurfacing of the entrance path together with a ramp to the front door may well be able to go ahead soon.

Over the last twelve months we have carried out the usual maintenance that the hall demands. The hall has been subject to an Electrical Installation Inspection, with the most urgent work highlighted in the subsequent report being carried out. All portable electrical equipment has been PAT tested. The annual inspection of the fire safety equipment resulted in a new powder cylinder in the kitchen. A jug kettle was purchased to replace a faulty large kettle. The Conditions of Hire and the Booking Form have been updated, prompted by the installation of a dish washer. Fitting the dish washer in required the relocation of a cupboard and the water heater, which in turn allowed, or caused, the kitchen plumbing to be redesigned, including the waste pipes. One cupboard was also narrowed, and the shelves in all the kitchen storage cupboards were given extra supports. A second blue bin for recyclable waste has been acquired.

We have continued to maintain the tracks, although the almost immediate re-emergence of potholes in the North Track is a continual headache, and have looked after the leas. The latter included regular mowing of the grass and the annual clear-up and bonfire. It is well-used by locals and visitors alike, with ramblers, runners, horse riders and dog walkers a regular sight. The oak that fell in a winter storm some years ago has at last been replaced – with a red oak, selected and planted by Sue, that should, in time, match the shape and size of the other trees in the avenue (originally planted to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in 1977) and give a bit of colour in future autumns.

Nearby is where Badlesmere Leas now has a village sign. Thanks to Fred for being the driving force behind the project this year, and master of its design. It had been the intention of the committee to have a village sign for some time – at least since I took on the Chairmanship – but a lack of funds made the progress slow. Profit from the last 10k Run, plus Chris's success at grant-seeking, not to mention the donation of time and/or materials by Chris, Steve and, newcomer to the village, Andrew Wilcock, made the project a reality. Over the years the design went through numerous changes and tweaks; the final version includes symbols of the village: a horse, a tree, a track, the beacon, a buzzard, and four pheasants, above two Soudes lions, there in recognition of the current ownership of the leas (Leas Court Estate). The post was erected in November and the sign itself added on 14 December. Certainly I, and probably others, have received numerous positive comments from people who have passed it while driving by on the A251. We are celebrating the arrival of the sign on Saturday, 20 May, at the sign and in the Red Lion afterwards. All villagers are most welcome to join us.

Other events this year have included the celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee, which gave us another excuse to light the beacon (under the command of the Royal Pageantmaster), and the now-annual 10k Run, which was again a success.

The hall is in regular use, despite our being a small village, with the occasional party and private hire by local church groups (a quiz night and a harvest supper) and two parish councils. The regular hirers were the East Kent O Gauge Group, and the Seven Champions Molly Dancers and their compatriots the Seven Sisters, and a Blue Grass music group, who gave us a very welcome steady income.

On the governance front, we are still seeking two custodian trustees. However, with an active and committed committee of eleven we are one of the more successful village halls in the area in having a large team of management trustees. We are only a few years away from having to renew our lease, and on the horizon is always the acquisition of the Freehold of the lees and the land on which the hall stands. Meanwhile our formal registering of the lees as a village green is underway.

It will no doubt be a challenging year ahead for us but with determination and an unfailing community spirit the hall and lees will continue to be wonderfully characterful amenities for the residents of Badlesmere and Leaveland, and those from further afield.

I now hand over the baton to Rick to give you a summary of the accounts for 2022.

Ian Earl
Chairman, Badlesmere Lees and Hall Committee
15 May 2023