

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, 14th May 2024.

Welcome to the crucial AGM of Badlesmere Parish Hall and the Badlesmere Lees Preservation Committee. This event marks a significant point in our committee's operations. The committee is strictly two committees that sit as one, with the same members. There is no requirement for this, but having the same members and officeholders on each makes sense.

We maintain a high level of transparency in our financial management. 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 2023. It includes matters about both the village hall and the lees. It will also be posted on the village's website, badlesmerelees.com, as well as a summary of the accounts. Please note that the Treasurer's report and the summary of the accounts cover the financial year to 31st December 2023.

The current committee, as elected in 2023, consists of myself, Chris Moore (Chair), Ian Earl (Vice-Chair and Bookings Manager), Sue Earl (Secretary), Rick Blackman (Treasurer), Steve Burt (Hall Manager), and ordinary members Dave Austin (also sitting as the Parish Council representative), Gareth Fulton, Fred Gregory, Charlie Kirby, Ben Pullen, and Tom Sisley.

In addition to these roles, Ben and Gareth have continued to coordinate repairs to the North Track, and Charlie, along with Ian from Godfrey Cottages, have maintained the South Track, including mowing the verges at Leavemere. Tom kindly mows the grass in front of the hall and puts out the bins when required. Sue has been attending a number of community events including the A251 Safety Group Meetings. In addition, although not on the committee, Lorraine Blackman has been diligently running our 100 Club, and Yoshi has been undertaking her usual role of appraising our annual accounts. This collective effort with each person contributing their unique skills and time, reflects a true community effort by all involved, for which we are all very grateful. During 2023, the committee also reflected on the passing of long-residing villagers Mary Moore and Richard Godfrey-Faussett, who were also great supporters of the committee.

After the last AGM, our first event was swiftly organised, which involved unveiling the new Badlesmere Lees' village sign. Long in design gestation, villagers gathered on 20th May for the long-awaited sign unveiling. Ian and Fred delivered stirring speeches praising community unity. Fred had been the driving force behind the design, which was finally installed by Steve and village newcomer Andrew Wilcock. The celebration continued at the Red Lion pub, where toasts were raised to the sign and village community spirit. A few days after, another community event was organised to visit Kent Archaeology Group's dig on Fisher Street. And our annual Village 10K run was again successfully delivered in October. Chiefly organised by Steve with committee and village support, the race saw over 100 entrants venture into our gorgeous AONB of the North Downs. Despite the high temperatures and challenging course, the event was incredibly well-received and expertly coordinated by all. Other proposed events for 2024, such as the Medieval Fair and the Village 10K, were decided not to proceed with owing to existing commitments to the hall's revitalisation.

On the subject of the hall works, a decision was made not to continue with the longstanding insurance claim for subsidence, as exploratory work carried out by Steve and his work colleagues found that the hall was not sinking but, in fact, was suffering from structural failure due to dilapidation. All of which was confirmed by Fred and me. Steve diligently led repairs and renovations at the village hall from January to April. He tackled numerous tasks, including repairing the floor, reinsulating walls, and installing a new ramp for accessibility. Grant applications were also pursued to support these endeavours—meanwhile, discussions on stage modifications stirred debate over preserving historic fabric versus practicality. Outside, vegetation clearance and drainage improvements commenced. Renovations progressed steadily, with the south wall receiving attention, including insulation and replacement of corroded materials. The ongoing commitment to enhancing the village hall reflects our community's dedication to its upkeep and accessibility. Upon completion of the DDA-compliant ramp, further work is hoped to be undertaken to make the hall as accessible to all users as possible.

The Lees and abutting tracks were carefully maintained throughout the year. Recent repairs on the north track were successfully completed. The Spring Clean-up of the Lees saw a great many fallen branches and debris cleared away following a number of storms. Measures for speed calming were discussed, and electricity rerouting near Ivy Cottage was undertaken. The Estate also provided some maintenance to a selection of trees at the east end of the Lees.

Despite being a small village and having had a lot of repair work undertaken, the hall has continued to be in regular use, with the occasional party and private hire by villagers, local church groups, and two parish councils. The regular hirers were the East Kent 0 Gauge Group, the Seven Champions Molly Dancers and their compatriots, the Seven Sisters, and a Blue Grass music group, giving us a very welcome steady income.

For the year ahead, we will be meeting next month to honour and remember the dedication of our forefathers on the 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings where we will be lighting our beacon at the direction of HM King's Pageant Master. We will continue progressing our urgent hall renovation works and look to source more grant income. Hopefully, we will have registered incorporated charity status by the next AGM. This will assist us in not just applying for more grants but also help us when we renegotiate our lease in the coming years. It is also hoped that the hall and lees continue to be used and appreciated by all and that more community events can be held, including arranging the 10K run for 2025.

It will undoubtedly be another challenging year ahead for us all, but with determination and our 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 2023.

Christopher Moore

Chairman, Badlesmere Lees and Hall Committee

14th May 2024.