

Drinkstone War Memorial Institute
Report to the Annual Parish Meeting June 2023

This year saw a very welcome consolidation of our recovery from Covid. Almost all pre-covid regular bookings and events, have resumed and are thankfully being well supported, though in some cases the numbers have dropped slightly. One-off bookings too, for events, parties and weddings, are almost back to the pre-Covid levels. Sadly, the Youth Club has not yet resumed, but we continue to hope that a new organiser will step forward. This year, in order to help Drinkstone residents to re-start, or perhaps set up new activities, we have established a bookings 'bursary' - a grant for small groups towards hall booking fees from Village Hall funds. This has been very much appreciated by the groups which have taken up the offer so far.

The Local History Archiving group, historically part of the DWMI, have made great progress in carrying out the task of sorting and cataloguing the vast amount of local history items which have been housed at the Hall for many years. An exhibition was held in May to celebrate the Centenary of the Drinkstone War Memorial Institute (Village Hall) and a range of our own archive material provided the focus for this event.

Pub nights have continued to thrive. They have become a regular feature of the Village calendar, with Colin Field's Drinkstone-brewed beer, proving to be a great attraction. The 2022 summer event, held in the garden of the Village Hall on a very hot summer night in August, was attended by well over a hundred people and was a great success. The November Race Night was a sell-out - the Fish & Chip supper from Peyton Plaice was as popular as ever and we were grateful to Chris Emery for offering a tasty vegetarian alternative. Other regular annual Village Hall events, such as the Over-60s lunch, the Xmas Mince Pie & Hamper Draw morning, and the Sale Trail, were once again very well supported. Our very special 10th Birthday Pub Night on Saturday featured a free buffet, the introduction of a new Pale ale from Colin's Drinkstone Ales Brewery, and live music from the 'Larks'. Thanks to the hard work of Nick and Robin for organising, Christine for providing the buffet, Colin the beer, all the volunteer bar staff and to the wonderful music provided by the 'Larks', it was a great success and definitely a night to remember.

The official route for the Torch Relay included the Gedding Road and we were pleased to be able to open the Hall to give the bearer party some brief respite from the pouring rain! They were cheered on by a large contingent of village residents waving Union Jacks and in good voice, who braved the elements to show their support. Yet another opportunity for taking photos to add to the Village Archives.

There have been three major events held at the Village Hall this year which have been jointly organised in collaboration with the Church and the Parish Council - the Jubilee 'Posh Picnic', the Coronation get together and the 'Café Hub' which aimed to offer advice about a range of methods for coping with the cost-of-living crisis. In addition to this one-day event, a 'Free for All' cabinet, for donations of food items, was housed on the Village Hall site for a trial period of several months.

The Management Committee have become increasingly aware of the increasing costs, in the present climate, of maintaining our public building to the standard that the village deserves. The costs of cleaning, caretaking, decorating, heating, updating and replacing equipment, and the general all-round maintenance tasks essential for the every-day

smooth running of a substantial public building, are spiralling. Since the onset of the cost-of-living crisis, the costs of all the specialist services that we are required to employ in order to satisfy the Health and Safety requirements of a public building, such as specific Village Hall insurance, electrical checks and maintenance, twice yearly fire alarm servicing, fire safety checks and PAT testing, have all significantly increased.

As a result, at our annual review of the Hall hire fees in January, the decision was made to increase the fees charged for non-residents, while at the same time freezing the fees for residents, which, for the time being at least, will continue to remain at the rate set when we opened ten years ago. We have also undertaken an extensive study of, & discussed at length, the possible expenses which might be incurred in future years, especially important as the building is likely to need increased maintenance as it gets older. For example, technical systems such as the under-floor heating, the ground source heat pump, or the re-surfacing of the car park, could prove to be enormously costly should they ever need to be replaced. As Trustees we all aware that we are duty bound not only to manage the Hall for the present day, but to plan carefully for the future, to ensure that it will continue to serve generations of Drinkstone residents for many years to come.

I would like to thank my fellow Trustees for all their selfless hard work during what has been a difficult year for the DWMI. I'm sure that everybody in Drinkstone will echo our heartfelt special thanks to Edna Gunnett, who is standing down from the Committee after many years of dedicated service as a Village Hall Trustee. She has she run the twice-monthly Bingo sessions and the Village Draw for over 25 years - together these have contributed well in excess of £25k to the Village Hall fund. In the days when we were scrimping and saving to build the New Hall, this provided us with a very welcome and significant addition to our income, and continues to do so into the present-day. She has been a fair-minded, caring and supportive friend & colleague, respected by all. She has always been open to all points of view and is always ready to do anything for anybody. We are all desperately sad to be losing her from the Committee - she will be very much missed. We all wish her every happiness in her new home as she moves into Bury to be nearer to her family, and are delighted to hear that she intends to continue to drop in to see us.

And finally, no report about this year could be complete without paying tribute to our caretaker and great friend, Robert Irving. He became our caretaker when we opened the New Hall in 2013, and very quickly took on all the tasks necessary to keep it in tip-top condition. He was multi-skilled and, as he was always prepared to take on any task, the building and grounds thrived under his careful watch. He took great pride in keeping it looking good. This wasn't just a job to Robert. He loved every minute of the time he spent here and very much enjoyed getting to know so many more people than he had known previously. He especially enjoyed a pint and a game of darts at the Pub nights and, more recently, the trips down memory lane with the archiving group, sorting through old documents and photos and sharing stories of his life growing up in Drinkstone.

He was a vital member of our management team and made a huge contribution to the success of the New Hall. A month or so before he passed away, he remained optimistic, telling me that he 'would be back', and that he was really looking forward to it.

Very sadly, it wasn't to be, and we were devastated to learn of his passing. He was a Suffolk man through and through and a well-loved character who became our friend and our 'rock'. The people of Drinkstone have a lot to thank him for. He will be very sadly missed.

Sue Foulsham
Chairman Drinkstone War Memorial Institute

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