

## **LAVANT MEMORIAL HALL ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

The year began with high hopes that we could build on the post-covid recovery begun in 2022. However, the River Lavant overflowed its banks early on the morning of Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January and flooded the village green, the hall and the car park.

At the time of the incident a Flood Alert was in place, but there was no Flood Warning for Lavant and no rain had been forecast overnight although, in practice, there was a very heavy downpour. In response our flood barriers were set up on all doors to stop the ingress of water and pumps deployed into the sumps to begin clearing the standing water inside the hall. Although there was water throughout the hall, except for the foyer where the floor is slightly raised, the relatively prompt action kept the water level to 1-2 cm, despite the outside level being around 30 cm. The internal water was also “clean” with no visible mud or detritus. External water levels dropped and all standing water was removed in less than 24 hours.

The hall was closed for most users for 10 days and an extended drying operation was carried out on behalf of our insurers lasting approximately 7 weeks. Damage was minimal. An insurance claim covering business interruption, minor remediation and additional operating costs was filed and paid in full. The consequence, however, was the withdrawal of insurance cover for storm and flood at renewal. Subsequently it has proved impossible to obtain such cover on acceptable terms, so the hall is currently operating a self-insurance policy for these risks, which are covered by reserves.

Having dealt with the flooding a restart was made on our rolling programme of upgrades and improvements, following completion of the Sports Section refurbishment in 2022. There was welcome news when the Lavant Parish Council generously agreed to cover the remaining costs for this project from CIL monies.

The Bleaches Room was redecorated and the carpet tiles, which had in any case been damaged by the flood, replaced. The room was fitted with a whiteboard and some photographs depicting the Bleach family's involvement with the hall. At the same time the village tapestry was moved to the main hall where it can be enjoyed by a wider audience.

Later in the year the main hall was redecorated and the partition curtains cleaned and fitted on new tracks. The opportunity was also taken to upgrade the lighting to modern LED panels, both improving illumination and reducing electricity consumption and carbon footprint. This work was supported in part by a grant from the proceeds of the Lavant Fete.

The foyer floor vinyl was also re-laid in a uniform and lighter colour.

During the year, the safety of glazing was reviewed and found to be generally satisfactory, with a small number of panels being treated to conform with current building regulations. The periodic Electrical Installation Condition Report was commissioned, all remedial recommendations implemented and the installation re-certified.

The Lavant Players installed a new motorised projection screen on the rear wall of the stage at their own expense and brought forward an ambitious plan to upgrade the stage lighting to a modern digital system, instal a short-throw projector to operate with the new screen and upgrade the audio system. Although there was no objection in principle, and there would likely be collateral benefits to other hall users, the management committee felt that work would

mostly benefit the Players, who would therefore need to fund raise for the majority of the substantial investment required. The project could then be reviewed against other hall priorities.

A number of discussions were held with Lavant Parish Council around legacy issues with the car park – lighting, marking out, drainage – and the extent to which the hall could help the council with the administration of bookings for the new sports field and the village green, thereby streamlining the process when associated hall bookings are made. These discussions are on-going. The remodelling of the car park entrance on Pook Lane was completed by the developers of the Blake's View estate. This has resulted in a smarter, landscaped entrance, with better visibility, kerbs and road furniture. Lavant's historic K6 phone box has been positioned adjacent to the junction in a joint project by the Lavant History Society, Lavant Parish Council and the Goodwood Estate.

Bookings to hire the hall continued to recover and reached pre-pandemic levels. The Lavant Players made a welcome return at the start of the year with a traditional pantomime. The Bee Busy home education group has become established and a new Pilates class is operating, a pleasing development after the loss of Tai Chi and Zumba in recent years. On the other hand, a novel attempt by the English Wine Company to launch a monthly wine-tasting failed to get off the ground and the Lavant WI has gone into suspension, although their Craft section continues. There was also an upturn in private bookings for parties and events. The overall result is that the hall is well-used. Hire rates were increased by a little below inflation in anticipation of higher energy costs next year and the need for additional reserves.

We began the year needing a treasurer following the resignation of Bob Mayne at the 2022 AGM, which he kindly agreed to defer pending the examination and approval of the accounts. Several false starts were made before we were able to appoint Miss Jess Riseborough, a Lavant resident, to the role in June, a satisfying result.

I am grateful to the management committee, several of whom have undertaken particular tasks to progress our endeavours, for their support over the year. Booking Secretary, Jennie Lindfield, and Caretaker, Tony Bleach, also continued to ensure that the Hall operated successfully on a day-to-day basis. My thanks and appreciation are due to all of you.

Sheila Sims has continued to combine the roles of Secretary and "200 Club" promoter with her customary efficiency and good humour and my Vice-Chair, Susan Ings, has been an invaluable source of advice, for all of which I am truly grateful.

Richard Wignall

Chair

December 2023