

WILBRAHAMS MEMORIAL HALL REPORT FOR GREAT WILBRAHAM & LITTLE WILBRAHAM PARISH COUNCILS APM MAY 2022

After a very difficult 18 months, it was a relief to reopen the Memorial Hall for our community from November 2021. However, as Covid variants have waxed and waned, this has been a very tentative restart. On the way, we have lost some community groups and regular users - and often bookings are cancelled at the last minute due to covid infections. Still, things are gradually steadying, villagers are getting more confident, and we hope that we can eventually build back up to our pre-covid level of use.

As a result, we had very little rental income over the last two years. In 2020-2021, our income from rentals was 14% of the (pre-covid) year before. 2021-2022 will only be slightly better. Thankfully, this loss has been mitigated by several government Covid grants administered by South Cambs District Council. However (along with everyone else) we have exceptional challenges going forward. Our projected electricity bill is set to more than triple from approx. £2000 - £7000. The costs to keep the hall comfortable are basically fixed, so we need to urgently look at ways to increase our income by attracting more private and business rentals.

The Memorial Hall is now 6 years old, and our other main challenge is to keep up the maintenance routine on the building and keep it looking fresh and in good order. This year we have arranged for contractors to redecorate the exterior woodwork and the main rooms internally. We will arrange a volunteer day to redecorate some of the smaller, more manageable rooms.

Covid has also affected the events that we have been able to run over the last year. The annual Flower & Produce Show was held outdoors again on a scorching day in July '21 with individual table displays. This was a great success, but we are looking forward to reverting to our tried and tested format back in the Hall on Saturday July 16th 2022. The monthly Farmers' Market has run regularly since spring 2021, with a short break after Christmas. This is very popular with villagers and visitors alike and is gaining a reputation locally for quality food and craft stalls. Each market raises a modest amount from stall fees for Hall funds. More importantly, it is a great social event for villagers. The 'Wilbraham Produce' stall now rotates through village charities so that we can share the fund-raising potential of that.

The next event to be organised by the Hall Committee will be the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on Sunday June 5th for the residents of Six Mile Bottom, Great & Little Wilbraham. This will be an all afternoon, open event – a 'bring and share' lunch, music, games and entertainment for all ages.

It is fantastic to see the new Play Area so well used, having had it closed for a few months last year. The grass mound / tunnel was completed by volunteers, and benches / tables have been installed. New trees have been planted, part funded by Great Wilbraham Parish Council. The next task is to replace the 50-year-old red swing set. We have applied for grants to assist with this £10,000 project. We should hear soon whether we have been successful. In applying for the grants, we conducted an online survey of the use of the Play Area. 317 children from 128 families were counted as using the play area for an estimated 594 child hours in a good weather week! This shows how important this facility is for our own community and also for neighbouring villages who use it too.

Sadly, two members of the Committee, Derek Fabb and Keith Precious, died this Spring - they will be much missed. Derek had been the staunchest supporter of the Memorial Hall for decades, serving on the committee for 28 years. He, Leslie & Carole Fabb together launched the F.A. Double B Country Music Club at the Hall over 30 years ago. The Country & Western dances were known for miles around and raised thousands of pounds for local charities, the Memorial Hall and the Play Area. Keith had served on our committee for the last few years as the representative for the Over 60's Club. He helped out with building repairs in and around the old hall building, and also helped Shirley Morley with her Hall Christmas Draw for many years by calling out the winning numbers.

The Memorial Hall Trustees and Management Committee continue to meet monthly to manage and coordinate the facility. We have a challenging year ahead, where our efforts will be focused on raising regular revenue and encouraging new members to join the committee. Our AGM will be held in July.

Emma Adams
Chair