



PRIORY HALL

Priory Hall Management Committee

Annual General Meeting - Monday 4th March, 2019

Chair's Report

This old stone building called Priory Hall used to be the National School in Victorian times. Now, in the 21st century, it is the Community Centre at the heart of Much Wenlock and it rocks!

During the past year two couples have held their wedding receptions here and the hall has looked fabulous! Parties of all kinds work in this space. Birthdays for the very young and the very old, Christenings and Wakes, celebrations at Christmas, Burns Night and New Year. Whenever something happens in the town, Priory Hall is part of it, be it the annual Wenlock Christmas Fair, the biennial Wenlock Festival or the Town Council Charter Day. It provides a soothing space for those who enjoy Mindfulness, Tai Chi and Yoga; a creative space for those workshops in Art, Folklore and Floristry and apparently the right space for a Psychic Medium Evening! People join in Barn dances and Ceilidhs here, they listen to music, enjoy singing and practice their ukuleles. The local groups flock in regularly - the U3A, the W.I., the Civic Society and Slimming World. Both Holy Trinity and the Catholic Church use it, political parties of different persuasions, the Bowling Club and the Twinning Group, the Brownies and the Allotment Society. It's amazing isn't it? What a mixture!

Improvements to the kitchen continue and more will be done in August when the Hall will be closed for that purpose. The new kitchen store room really came into its own for our chief fundraising event in November. Delicious food was prepared and presented to all those who came to the ever popular cafe. Lesley to the fore - superb caterer that she is. Meanwhile out the back John tamed the huge, speedy new dishwasher, during the morning being the go-to person for instructions with Cherril taking over in the afternoon! Super home-made baking attracted so many compliments. Ann's Christmas cake a triumph - particularly as she had made it just before entering theatre in hospital. Libby too dropped off her mouth watering flapjacks on the way to finger surgery. What a team!

Faith was the organiser of the Craft Fair. Somewhat dropped in at the deep end she calmly and successfully oversaw a great day with happy stall holders and she made the Hall look so pretty too with arrangements on tables and sills. This year the Christmas Hamper was a joint effort. Lesley provided a lovely home woven willow basket (yet another talent!) and Karen bravely took on the task of organising the donations. I think she nearly went grey - 12 committee members all choosing between crackers, chutney, cranberry sauce and prosecco.... Anne (G) a super help though and by Saturday mid morning it was all beautifully parcelled up and displayed next to Ann (W)'s beautiful Christmas Cake (yes another one -this made as she packed her hospital bag). Pat sold the raffle tickets for these super prizes as only Pat can. Very few punters got past her. It's a joy to watch!

Four things which are meaningful in different ways happened during this last year. In October, the Wenlock branch of Barclays Bank closed - the last remaining bank in the town. This was indeed a blow for everyone and means time-consuming journeys to Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury or Telford with any bank business.

Then, following the Remembrance Day celebration in November, the Roll of Honour Board originally hanging in the British Legion Building was needing a new home. Town Councillor Dan Thomas approached us in the hope that Priory Hall might be the answer. Considerable thought was given to this matter with deliberations about dimension, appearance, condition and security as well as wanting to make the right decision about this memorial, something very special to the Community. Finally, a unanimous decision was made. Priory Hall was not an appropriate location but it was made clear to Dan Thomas that the Committee would be keen to help with funding if required when the right setting for the Board were found.

Thirdly, Babies and Toddlers has been a regular use of Priory Hall for decades and so it is with sadness we see them move to new premises at Much Wenlock Primary School. However, this does mean that the Store Room will be at our disposal (or Lesley's anyway!) which is mega and it will no longer have to be an item on the agenda!

Lastly, the Scouts have been on the other side of the wall for ever too! And now they have gone to the old Youth Club - so new neighbours for us - I think in the shape of antiques?

Before finishing, a word or two about those who make it all happen. Robert who became Lettings Secretary just twelve months ago has it running like clockwork. He knows all the users, he charms them so they want more slots, he finds new people to fill empty slots. He understands the PA system, the dishwasher, the heating. He has drawn up notes for users, for members; he keeps us all informed and, he has sorted GDPR. Thank you Robert. Mark continues to work tirelessly on the maintenance and upkeep of the building. This in spite of having to wear Frankenstein like apparatus on his knees from time to time. Still he goes up ladders with Lesley to disentangle the bunting after some fiend puts it up wrongly. Always considerate to the users, he could be found this time last year using a tile-cutter outside in the snow so as not to disturb the yoga group! We welcome Anne our newest recruit, to the Committee- already hands on and full of ideas and energy!

Keeping the Hall clean is quite a challenge and we are lucky with Kerry our cleaner who copes well with such a unique building. The new cupboard outside the kitchen for all the cleaning materials is a great asset. John does a grand job keeping an eye both inside and out so the windows are kept clean, we don't run out of paper towels and the borders always look pretty and cared for. And woe betide anyone who abuses or misuses our bins! A true caretaker! We are grateful to Karen who keeps our accounts in good order year in year out and who deals efficiently with a lot of dry paper work. David has not only brought the website to a new level but also been responsible for our now having a super logo. Thank you David for keeping us abreast of modern technology and thanks too to Lesley and to Libby for this. Libby, who always keeps her eye on the next ball. Currently, I know, she is wondering if there isn't a way in which Priory Hall can't be all singing and all dancing with sound system, PA system, screens, projectors, the lot, all inextricably intertwined. Watch this space.

I am not standing for re- election this time and thus finish my report by saying that it has been a privilege working with you all. You are clear and positive about the future, you throw up new ideas, provide lively meetings and exude a cheerful energy. Just fun to be around! Priory Hall is lucky.

Thank you,

Lalage Hampson