



PRIORY HALL

Priory Hall Management Committee

Annual General Meeting

Monday 8th March 2021

Chair's Report

In last year's report I referred to Priory Hall's busy year. I also paid tribute to the effort that the members of the Management Committee had put into our achievements which make Priory Hall a great community venue.

This year members of the Management Committee have worked even harder, but in different ways, to ensure that Priory Hall was able to be used to the fullest extent under unique circumstances. The Government's guidance on social distancing, sanitizing, and ever-changing rules regarding what activities were permissible meant that many hours were spent reading the regulations, and considering advice from both Shropshire Rural Community Council (RCC) and Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). Sub-groups were formed to address both the guidance and the physical layout of the hall. This involved a one-way system, an isolation room, an extensive cleaning procedure, hand sanitizer stations and closure of the kitchen.

Users were very understanding of the position in which we found ourselves and we as a Management Committee were very mindful that some of the regular hirers run sessions from which they generate part of their income. To this extent we were keen to help them in whatever way we could. One tangible action was to discount the usual hire rate for an extended period.

We were helped in this by taking up the offer of Government grants, administered by Shropshire Council, which meant that the Management Committee's coffers were not

adversely impacted by the actions we were forced to take. This was important because we were unable to run our traditional fund-raising events.

On the contrary, we are now in a stronger financial situation. This may provide the headroom for consideration of further works to secure the future of Priory Hall. This could be by working with the Parochial Church Council on the overbearing trees growing on our mutual boundary, **or** on our roof which, from time to time, doesn't keep the weather out as well as we'd like, or addressing our inefficient glazing - which is a challenge given our location in the Much Wenlock Conservation Area.

During the course of the year two initiatives took place which make managing the hall easier. The first was a digital lock on the front door which means that we have dispensed with the numerous sets of keys in circulation and we are now not reliant on the kind services of Mrs P's sweetshop, which used to hold keys for us. This innovation improves security and allows us to control far better access to the premises.

The second was remote control of the heating, facilitated by our broadband connection. Up until now, some hirers found it necessary to turn the heating up ahead of their booking to ensure that their clients didn't get cold. Inevitably, some users forgot to turn the heating down which is not only a waste of energy but contributes to one of the Hall's biggest outgoings. Remote control overrides most of these concerns and makes for a more predictable environment.

Our website and social media continue to be vital means of promoting the hall, along with the traditional monthly advertisement in the Wenlock Herald. The past twelve months have seen us use digital media to keep the community updated about the status of the hall during the Covid restrictions. Our Facebook engagement is significantly ahead of comparable local hall's pages.

Last year I referred to the enthusiasm and good humour of the highly-motivated group of local residents who comprise the Management Committee. This challenging year has demonstrated this very clearly. Management Committee members make their contribution to the smooth running of the Hall in their own way, and to the extent of the time they have available. As ever it would be invidious to pick out any for their efforts, but all committee members know the valuable contribution that they make, and I pay grateful thanks to them for that.

In closing I quote from ACRE's Village Halls Week, which took place in January: *"Village Halls Week is a national celebration of the 10,000-plus village halls which can be found across England, their volunteers and the difference they make to the rural communities they serve. Our 2021 campaign will be a celebration of how village halls are survivors. Many have been bringing people together in rural communities since the 1920s. And in the past year, the volunteers who manage these buildings have shown great determination and resilience in the face of Coronavirus, negotiating lockdowns and putting in place Covid-secure measures so they could continue supporting their local community."*

Much Wenlock's Priory Hall is no different in this respect, and your Management Committee has served our community well.

David Turner
27th February 2021