

Community Association News – Spring is on the Horizon and we are preparing to grow again!

A belated 'Happy New Year' to everyone reading this update as when you read this article Spring will be on the horizon.

At the time of writing, the Government is very optimistic that the worst of the pandemic is behind us and are lifting all remaining restrictions – let's hope they are right 'cos we are doing our best to get things going and as you will read later, preparing to grow again following the last 2 years of uncertainty.

Before that a quick winter catch up.

Back in October 2021, we staged our first indoor event since the 2020 January Wise Owl Quiz, with the Other Lives theatre company who performed 'The Catch'. The consensus opinion was that it was fantastic to have live theatre back on our doorstep and despite a challenging plot the acting was very good and with an excellent set. All in all, a very enjoyable Friday evening.

Into November and another challenging experience awaited us as we staged the Village Firework event with the Football and Cricket clubs on a new site on a stormy night. With more spectators than ever, we found it hard to serve everyone as quickly as we would have wished. The good news is we sold everything and as it was so windy, on any other site, the display would have been cancelled! The spectacular display went ahead and we hope to see you again at an improved event this November.

We are delighted to report that several new groups are using the Community Centre; Village Mums and Tots are delighted to welcome back Cheeky Monkeys on Monday mornings and for those a bit older BabyBand is a great way for pre-school age youngsters to try musical equipment, while Miss Annabel's MiniMovers needs no explanation for aspiring tiny dancers.

For the more mature movers amongst us, there is Fitsteps with Charley, a great way to burn off the Saturday night or previous week's excess on a Sunday morning, while Yoga Flow offers a relaxing experience to combat the stress of daily life.

These are all in addition to the many existing groups – please have a look at our website.

Going forward, by the time you read this the 2022 Wise Owl Quiz will have taken place after missing the 2021 quiz night, there will be some proud holders of the prestigious, much sort after Trophy along with some not so proud, but sporting recipients of the loved, but not treasured, Wooden Spoon.

Later in the year, all being well, members will be able to enjoy a 'Games Night' in May. Plans are being made to help stage the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend and, of course, the return of the Beer Fest on the 16th and 17th September.

Preparing for the Spring and Beyond - Community Centre Developments

You may recall, in the last edition of Hillam News, we reported that we were going to meet to discuss the development of Community Centre Facilities and how we could best spend the funds which were ring fenced and frozen at the start of the pandemic due to the financial and future uncertainty. Almost 2 years on, the meeting was postponed again due to the arrival of the Omicron strain, and was finally held on January 18th. Around 20 members came and led by Trustee Kristina Verney and Chair Robin Parkin, many suggestions were made, consolidated and prioritised. Firstly, small projects which those present felt were 'needed' were proposed; such as upgrading chairs, replacing damaged tables, adding additional storage space inside the Centre, and for the outside, providing hard standing for benches in the playground, replacing wooden picnic tables near the end of their lives, marking car park spaces to increase capacity or projects felt to be 'essential' such as more anchor points for marquees on the patio at fund raising events.

The process was repeated at the next stage, for the more ambitious enhancements. The suggestions included extending the building with a large entrance lobby, to provide a cloakroom and shelter for those waiting to use it or meet youngsters; to create a Community Café by extending into the area between the Newton Room and the Conservatory; to extend the Centre and create another self-contained space similar in size, as demand is such that we cannot accommodate everyone who wishes to use the centre. Externally, suggestions were made to provide

more car parking without compromising the green space. Other suggestions were to replace play items and make specific provision for older children and everyone agreed we needed additional storage for our own event equipment and users' equipment.

Clearly, we cannot do everything at once, so the next step is to get costings for the top priorities as well as to do the easy, low-cost ones, such as marking out the car park lines. After that it will be to work out an investment and fundraising strategy. It seems that the Community Association's strap line – 'Fund Raising through Fun' will be heard even more in the next few years – we hope to everyone's short and long-term benefit.

Watch this space!

If you would like to become a member and have a say in how the CA's funds are invested and/or simply want to help us, please contact us via www.mfhcc.com/support-us/ or call Sally on Tel: 07790 018745

Robin Parkin

Chair and Trustees