

WILBRAHAMS MEMORIAL HALL REPORT FOR
GREAT WILBRAHAM PARISH COUNCIL APM APRIL 2021

Spring 2020-Spring 2021 has clearly been a strange and unprecedented year for the Memorial Hall as well as for every other community facility in the country. The hall was closed in line with UK Government legislation from March 23rd 2020. Although we were able to 'reopen' from September 2020, the restrictions and Covid-safe measures that needed to be in place meant that, in practice, it was used very minimally for a couple of months before closing again in November. From April 12th 2021 community facilities are allowed to open their doors again. There have been no updated government guidelines since January 2021, so the assumption is that these restrictive measures will still apply. We do not envisage that there will be much use of the hall until measures are potentially relaxed when a greater proportion of the population has been vaccinated against Coronavirus.

Without any regular lettings or fund-raising activities, the hall has been without revenue for a year. However, we need to keep the building heated and insured. We have been fortunate to have received Covid-support grant funding from South Cambs District Council to mitigate this loss. We have also been able to utilise the Job Retention Scheme in respect of the cleaner's salary.

We have had to think laterally about the events we run during the year. We were able to redesign the annual Flower & Produce Show to be a distributed tabletop show outside exhibitor's houses. This was a great success, and we will do something similar in July 2021, bringing the event onto the Recreation Ground where we will hopefully be able to serve refreshments outside. We also resurrected the Autumn Food & Craft Fair and converted it into a monthly Farmers' Market, again on the Recreation Ground. We managed to have markets in September, October and December 2020, and have just re-started this year on April 10th. This has been the only possible community event during the autumn / winter, and villagers have been very supportive. The markets raise a modest amount for hall funds, but we have had plenty of feedback that the social aspect of the market (even if distanced) is hugely appreciated and is clearly important for the community.

On March 24th, the Memorial Hall celebrated its Centenary. There has been a hall of some sort on the same site for 100 years. We posted information about this on the village websites and we plan our first social event to be a celebratory tea party when covid rules allow.

It was sad to see the newly equipped Play Area closed from March - July 2020, especially as the weather was so warm. Since then, it has been really well used and we have had good feedback on the quality of the new installation. We were able to secure a grant from Wadlow Wind Farm Community Fund for 50% of the cost of a new black metal fence that was installed in August 2020. We have now installed new benches and tables. We have also planted new trees (with financial assistance from the Parish Council). We have one remaining project taking place this month, which is the completion of the play tunnel / grass mound by volunteers. Landscaping of the wild area is ongoing.

It was very sad that Richard Wright passed away in October 2020. Richard was an enthusiastic advocate of efforts to re-build the Memorial Hall in 2015/16 and it is no exaggeration to say that the re-build would not have happened without his support at crucial times during the planning. He was President and latterly Honorary Vice-President of the Hall Committee, and he was a regular attendee at meetings until March 2020, providing enthusiasm, caution, financial acumen in good

measure at appropriate junctures; in short a steady stabilising influence. His vision was for a new Hall to be available to support major village events at the church, such as weddings and funerals. A specimen tree has been planted to commemorate Richard within the wildflower area of the Play Area.

The Memorial Hall Trustees and Management Committee continue to meet monthly on 'Zoom' to manage and coordinate the facility. We look forward to the situation improving and the gradual reinstatement of our community life in the Memorial Hall, hopefully during this summer.

Emma Adams
Chair