

AGM of the DWMI - 19th June 2025

Chairman's Report

This year, the Management Committee of the DWMI has been working with a full complement of 11 voting Trustees + two further non-voting Committee members who represent the PC and the PCC.

The people of Drinkstone and the local community have continued to support the long-standing regular bookings and events held at the Hall which also continues to be an attractive venue for residents and non-residents alike to hold one-off events, parties and weddings. Our thanks to Liz for continuing with the vital role of Booking Sec.

Hall hire fees were reviewed by the Committee in January and once again it was decided not to raise them for the year 2025-6, meaning that residents will continue to pay the prices which were set 12 years ago, when the Hall opened. As the Hire fees for non-residents were raised last year, no further increase was proposed for the coming year.

Our bookings 'bursary' has continued to assist small groups to fund their bookings by providing a grant towards hall fees, and the concessionary rate of a flat £5 fee per booking for Church events, has continued. We have also continued to work with the PC and the PCC in using the Hall for joint events for the benefit the Community.

However, it is important that we remain very much aware that every-day costs, in addition to the costs of the specialist services required to maintain the legal requirements of a public building, have been increasing considerably. As trustees of the Charity, we are required by the Charity Commission to ensure that we manage the Hall responsibly, not just for the present day, but to ensure that its long-term future is secured.

To raise awareness for our Trustees, a Safeguarding session delivered by CAS, and a Cyber Security session delivered by the Police, were organised and were attended by members of the Village Hall Committee and other interested parties.

As far as the maintenance of the Hall is concerned there have been two major changes during the year. It became necessary to employ a new cleaner. We were delighted when Jan Longley (a Drinkstone resident) took over the role in the New Year and her work has made huge, and very noticeable, improvements to the general condition of the building. We were equally delighted when we had an enquiry about the Caretaker post from Andy Hart (who lives in a nearby village) who consequently took over the post in January. He too has made great inroads into 'taming' the site. What a relief for us to have two such special people on board!

We were also pleased when operatives from Sisk (A14 contractors) offered not only to donate some nearly-new filing cabinets to the Archiving group, but also to address our problems with the potholes in the car park. They were true to their word and we are very grateful to them for the successful completion of both projects last summer.

The Committee also made the decision that, after 13 years of heavy use, the hard floors on the ground floor of the Hall were in dire need of a professional deep clean. The cleaning of all the downstairs floors and of the upholstery on a number of chairs, was carried out by local firm Rothwells in September.

It was also agreed that the wooden seats and backs of the old retro outdoor chairs were becoming a H&S risk due to the splintering and general deterioration of the wood - they were consequently sold on Ebay for in excess of £600, despite the fact that it had been the opinion of some that they were worthless! Two antique books donated by Edna Gunnett were also sold at auction – our thanks to Robin Sharp and Lyn Hannant for their perseverance in taking these tasks on board. Other improvements at the Hall include the installation of a handrail on the stairs to the upper store rooms and an understairs cupboard for the storage of the cleaning equipment.

Pub nights have been very popular and we have been opening earlier, with child-friendly games, so that families with younger children can also come along. Thanks to Christine Emery for taking this forward. One in particular was extremely well attended - people were attracted by the combination of a pizza van visit, Colin Field's Drinkstone Ales and a bingo session – an all-round excellent community night-out. The annual VH events, such as the over-60s lunch, the Mulled Wine Christmas Draw and Art exhibition, the Sale Trail and the Pantomime, continue to be very well supported and enjoyed by all. The new Film nights have proved to be a popular new addition to the calendar. The ever-popular Race Night + Fish and Chip Supper, will make a welcome return in the Autumn.

In March, the final curtain finally came down on the Hut Theatre with a fantastic concert by Joanna Eden. A very special night to celebrate nearly 30 years of fantastic events - a huge 'Thankyou' to Sheila Beswick for her organisation and enthusiasm over so many years. Remaining Hut Theatre assets have now been handed into VH ownership to ensure that they are available for future community use. Our thanks also to all the volunteers who regularly turn out to help with VH events – their support is invaluable.

We have recently held an approach from a Chevington Parish Councillor, who was seeking advice about building a new village hall in their village. Dave Woodward, David Ford, Liz Schmitt and myself, all members of the original Steering group set up to manage the build for our own hall, met with Jamie recently in our Hall. Some very valuable advice was passed on and his thank you email ended with the following words:-“If what we are trying to do comes off, and we do create something fun, engaging and new for Chevington, I can tell you now, Drinkstone will have played a part in it.” A nice thought!

A heartfelt 'Thankyou' to the DWMI Trustees - they are all volunteers who, throughout the year, give a great deal of their spare time carrying out the every-day tasks and responsibilities involved in managing and maintaining high standards at our Village Hall. Without their selfless commitment and dedication, the DWMI would not be able to

achieve its aim of providing our lovely village with the very special community hub that it deserves. I am very privileged to work with such a great team!

An excellent year for the Charity in all sorts of ways – long may it continue!

Sue Foulsham – Chairman Drinkstone War Memorial Institute

June 2025