

Haddenham Village Society
Chair's Annual Report - January 2024

This is my first annual report as Chair, having succeeded Roderick this time last year. He was always going to be a tough act to follow and I am grateful that he has kindly remained on the HVS Committee, so that we have been able to continue drawing on his wisdom and experience.

In recent months we lost our dear friend and Treasurer, Bill Burns – he was a very committed and loyal servant to the Village Society and we miss him greatly.

I am extremely grateful to Mike Cottrell who took over the financial reins in the last few weeks of Bill's illness and very capably extracted key information from Bill's records to enable us to maintain a grip on our financial dealings – all this, I might add, while Mike was still acting as our minutes secretary.

Gerald Knight decided to resign from the committee and, with Bill's demise, our committee was looking a little thin on the ground. I need to put the following slightly delicately but the committee's demographic was also looking increasingly mature and rather male dominated! So some active steps were required to address this.

I am delighted to say that Teresa Roberts kindly accepted the challenge of helping with the planning and organisation of our Community Fair and then graciously took over from Mike as our Minutes Secretary.

I am also delighted that Robyn Cook and Loraine Milmer also agreed to join the Committee in recent months and so, with Alison Watt kindly maintaining her much valued input and Juanita Hughes our membership secretary, we can now boast a committee of five ladies and five chaps – plus, we've lowered the average age significantly!

As I mentioned just now, Juanita wears the membership secretary's hat, but it has to be said that she has extended her role very significantly during the last year, picking up on all sorts of administrative needs way above and beyond our communications with members. I wish to record my personal thanks to her for her energy, enthusiasm and willingness to help wherever needed – she has been quite remarkable.

I would also like to thank Henriette Webb and Alma and Graham Tyack for their very kind help in providing the refreshments at various HVS meetings over many years – they've now handed over the baton, but we are sincerely grateful for all their years of service.

One of the early items on my agenda as the new Chairperson was to update the Village Society logo, which was beginning to look rather antiquated. Given the influence of social media and the ease with which we now capture large numbers of images on our mobile phones, modern society has become much more 'visually orientated' than previously and our logo needed to reflect this and move with the times. We asked local resident Andy Price to conceive a series of new designs and the one chosen by the committee is now clearly displayed on the HVS website and on all Society correspondence.

One of the Village Society's aims is to help maintain a sense of 'one community' as the village grows rapidly. In April, Alison Watt and a number of relatively new residents, got together to lead a public meeting to discuss such issues as:

- * What do different age groups need from the village -- 5 years, 10 years, 20 years...
- * How do we retain what we like about Haddenham?
- * How do we make sure that all inhabitants, new and old, feel welcome here?
- * What do we need to do to deliver what we want?

The meeting generated a number of helpful ideas, some of which have been taken forward by the group as well as being shared with the parish council.

Reflecting on the other activities of the Society over the last 12 months, I am proud to note that we have maintained an engaging series of public meetings that have ranged from a fascinating presentation from our local weather man, Matt Taylor, an extremely motivational talk by Steve Gregory of Fitlife fame and a heart-warming insight into the nurturing of dogs as vital companions for Deaf People.

Our Summer Garden Party was a great success and we are very grateful to David and Lizzie Banister for hosting the event at Manor Farm. Thanks are also due to Juanita Hughes and Lizzie for preparing the delicious canapés, and to Alison Watt on PIMM's duty, and to Cynthia and Roderick Floud and Loraine Milmer for their practical assistance on the night.

Our trip to visit DAF Trucks on the Haddenham Business Park was very popular and the evening proved to be a great success – several folk commented on feeling proud that such a successful company has a strong presence in our village.

Another major success was the Community Fair, held in October, when we were able to showcase over 40 local groups and service providers. The primary organisers on behalf of the Village Society were Alison Watt and Juanita Hughes, with valuable support from Teresa Roberts. Alison's key input straddled a time when she was frequently away from the village, so her organisational skills were particularly sharp. We are grateful also to Teresa's daughter, Evie, who's artistic talents adorned the programme cover.

The year concluded with a delightful concert in St Mary's Church presented by the Witchert Chorale and we are grateful for their contribution to HVS funds from the total monies raised.

Among the Society's wider roles is a desire to influence planning matters in the village. As a so-called strategic settlement, substantial housing growth is inevitable, but through the focused and unstinting efforts of Richard Hirst (with kind assistance from Roz Owens, Judy Brandis and others) we have, in partnership with the the parish council, sought to shape building design and site layouts of new developments, as well as lobbying for walking and cycling routes to be incorporated and traffic management and surface water concerns to be adequately addressed.

Talking of walking and cycling, I would like to highlight the work of Alan Thawley and his colleagues in HADSWAC, the Haddenham Safe Walking & Cycling Group, which (as it says on the tin) has continued to campaign for safe walking and cycling in the village. On behalf of HADSWAC Alan Thawley and David Stevens produce an excellent seasonal newsletter which we are pleased to offer in electronic form via the Village Society website. This has particularly encouraged public engagement in the Streetscape project organised by of the Parish Council and it is pleasing that further work is now underway on the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit throughout the village, one of the most popular proposals arising from the public consultation sessions.

One additional role that I would like to acknowledge is that of committee member and HVS President, Brian Bowman, who is the village's unofficial Duck Warden! Brian kindly keeps a close

watching brief on the Church End pond in particular and replenishes the flock of white Aylesbury Duck looky-likees when the numbers drop significantly.

Finally I need to thank Jim Robins who, lucky chap, is currently sunning himself in Australia. Jim has been a solid and reliable Vice Chair and his project management skills have been particularly helpful in the initial planning process for the recent Community Fair. Sadly, Jim feels that he now has too many other plates to spin, so we are looking to recruit someone willing to take on the role of Vice Chair.

Dr Keith Milmer

Chair, Haddenham Village Society