



# Annual Report 2020

## **Role of the Trust**

North Waltham Village Trust was established in the early 1950s when Mr William Rathbone gifted the land now known as Cuckoo Meadow to the village of North Waltham and its environs.

The Trust became a registered charity in 1953 with the object, “to provide or assist in the provision for the inhabitants of the Parish of North Waltham and the surrounding neighbourhood facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation in the interests of social welfare, with the object of improving the conditions of life”, for the inhabitants of the area.

**The Charity:** The Trust is a charity registered with the Charity Commission. The Management Committee (Trustees) are responsible for the running of the organisation.

**The Trustees:** are local people who are either life, elected or representative, members. All but the life Trustees are elected annually with management meetings held monthly. The AGM is held in January or February each year.

Further information and details can be found in the Trust Deed which is available from the Trustees.

## **Management Committee**

The composition of the Management Committee has been subject to some changes during the year. Allan Hawkey resigned in July owing to pressure of work and, for similar reasons, Gus Macdonald has advised that he will be standing down after the 2020 AGM, although he has kindly agreed to continue supporting the Big Lunch when this can be resumed; the Trustees are grateful for their extensive contributions over many years. Additionally, Malcolm Knight has advised that he wishes to stand down from the administrative roles of Chairman and Secretary, although he will continue to serve as a Trustee with joint responsibility for external issues in Cuckoo Meadow.

In October, we were delighted to welcome Nicky Carter as a new Trustee; we would also welcome further recruitment of another one or two members, particularly representative of younger villagers.

The composition of the Management Committee is currently:

Malcolm Knight – Chairman  
Julia Preston – Bookings Secretary  
William Rathbone – Life Member  
Mike Robinson – Life Member  
Adrian McLaughlin – Life Member  
Nicky Carter  
Angus Macdonald  
Peter Osmond  
Jim Stevenson  
Emma Turner  
Neal Turner  
Geoff Chapman – Parish Council nominee  
Judith Williams – Parish Council nominee  
Nick Dudman – Primary School nominee  
Trish Wyatt – Parochial Church Council nominee

During 2020 Denise Liddiard retained the role of Honorary Treasurer and her contribution continues to be greatly appreciated.

Other than Life Members, all the above are standing down in accordance with the requirements of the Trust Deed, but other than Gus Macdonald are available for re-election or re-appointment by their nominating societies.

Election of a new Chairman and Secretary will take place at the first monthly Trustees meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

## **Events**

The year was dominated by the Covid 19 pandemic, as it has been for so many other organisations.

After initial planning activities and bookings, the usual Big Lunch and Church Fête had to be abandoned; it is not at present clear whether this joint event can be resumed in 2021 and no date is currently set. The annual visit by Father Christmas to the Pond on Christmas Eve organised by Lucy Henry also had to be cancelled.

The scope for resuming these annual activities will be kept under review in the light of Covid statistics and evolving national/local rules and guidance.

## **Rathbone Pavilion**

The hiring pattern for the Rathbone Pavilion was extensively disrupted from March and, of our regular hirers, only Pre-School has been able to maintain significant, albeit sporadic, hiring through 2020. Of the remaining societies, only the Dancing Club was able to briefly function within government guidelines concerning spatial arrangements compatible with our two function rooms, and this had to be curtailed whenever lockdown rules applied. Disruption has continued into 2021 although it is hoped that the extensive vaccination programme now under way will permit something like a normal pattern of activity to return in the second half.

The cleaning services contract had to be suspended during the first Covid lockdown and has not been resumed by agreement with Pre-School, whose staff are conducting their own daily deep-clean when their activities are proceeding. The Trust made a goodwill payment to our cleaning contractor who was, in any case, due to suspend service in May for a maternity break.

The lighting system in the main room was frequently subject to failed fluorescent lamps and other components. Accordingly, towards the end of the year, the whole system was replaced with LED units; these have received favourable comment from Pre-School in terms of light quality and should cut down our costs for electricity and maintenance.

In the Doris Cook room, there was noticeable rucking up of the flooring, which was thought to date from the construction of the building to its present form and required adhesive tape repair in some places. The old material has been now been removed and replaced.

Quotations are being obtained to the replace the barge boards and fasciae with uPVC for progression in spring.

The Pavilion suffered some damage due to vandalism, with the retaining hooks for the main room emergency exit being ripped out from the wall and removed; replacements were sourced and fitted. Additionally, the small storage shed's roof is badly bowed - thought to be due to people climbing on it to access the main roof, which has had to be repaired several times. At the end of the year, a contractor has been appointed to replace the roof of the small shed; this work should be complete early in 2021.

The basketball backboard and a supporting strut were damaged, probably through normal wear-and-tear and strong winds. The strut has been repaired and a new backboard should be fitted shortly.

During 2020, the hire rates, which were last changed in 2012, were reviewed and revised; the current rates are published on the Village Trust's page of the village website under <https://www.northwaltham.net/village-trust/rathbone-pavilion/> .

## **Cuckoo Meadow**

The grounds maintenance contractor appointed at the beginning of 2018, Joe Noades, continues to deliver an excellent service.

When required, we have held working parties to clear the Meadow of tree debris dislodged by storms and as ever, we are indebted to Alan Purkiss for his support in removal of the substantial debris collected, as well as to the villagers who supported the clean-up.

The area adjacent to the car park entrance formerly taken by a large holly bush has been converted to a garden, with a range of low-level trees and shrubs planted which flower in differing seasons and colours. They have developed well in their first year and have subsequently been supplemented with spring-flowering bulbs and some summer/autumn flowering plants. This change has opened the sightlines to and from the car park and received favourable feedback from several villagers.

On the recommendation of our insurer's legal advisers, an additional sign was installed near the car park which states that users of the Meadow's facilities do so at their own risk.

SSE conducted some substantial work to replace the wooden support pole and transformer on the edge of the overflow car park. This did result in some damage to the reinforcing mesh underpinning the overflow car park created in 2019 but additional repair work and subsequent grass growth has largely remedied the consequences.

The tennis court was subject to closure when required by Covid regulations.

## **Play Area**

The Play Area had to be closed during the first Covid lockdown starting in March 2020 but has been permitted to remain open for the second and third lockdowns, subject to conditions specified by the government.

In addition to general maintenance and clear-up activities by Trustees, the wooden tractor had to be rebuilt by our regular contractor owing to extensive rot. This item is particularly popular with smaller children and the Trust is grateful to the Parish Council for their offer of support for this repair.

We also replaced the vertical climbing net owing to a broken connection on one edge.

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council continue to conduct a weekly safety inspection of our Play Area equipment but have advised that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 they will make an annual charge of £500 if we wish to continue receiving this service. The Trustees have unanimously agreed to accept this proposal and retain this independent professional inspection.

## **Possible new projects**

Several proposals are currently being considered for developing the recreational and environmental facilities in Cuckoo Meadow:

- Petanque court at the Mary Lane end of the grassed area
- Outdoor table tennis near the Rathbone Pavilion
- Fitness trail around Cuckoo Meadow
- Conversion of tennis court to Multi-Games Usage
- Planting some new trees in the north-west corner “wild area” to supplement natural vegetation along the Steventon Road and Mary Lane verges

Progression of these possibilities will be dependent upon several factors including support from villagers, availability of funding from grants and our reserves, planning permission and an overall prioritised strategic plan.

The Trustees would welcome direct input from interested villagers to take these items forward.

MRM Knight,

Chairman.

## **Financial report**

The Covid 19 pandemic has of course had a major impact on our regular income from hire of the facilities of the Rathbone Pavilion and this is continuing into 2021. We have however been extremely fortunate in two respects:

- Via Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, we have received government support for the first and second lockdown periods amounting to £11,344
- The Trust received very generous donations amounting to £5,365, including from Bill Rathbone, the son of our founder, and a legacy from the late Richard Tanner who made an immense contribution to the life of North Waltham

As a result of these exceptional contributions to our income, the Trust has been cushioned from what would otherwise have been a poor year financially.

Income, at £ 24,579, was high by historic standards owing to the exceptional items detailed above, which collectively formed 68% of the total. Expenditure was £17,764, thus leading to an overall surplus for the year of £6,815.

At year-end, reserves stood at £52,894; this is a much more favourable position than we expected to be in in spring when the pandemic necessitated the first national lockdown.

A budget for 2021 has been reviewed by the existing Management Committee based on an assumption that normal hiring for most hirers can only resume for the second half but that Pre-School can operate for close to a full year. Clearly, this could go either way, but we do have good reserves to tide us over and continue to support village life if major disruption reoccurs. No further government support is assumed for 2021 but we will make an application if a relevant fund becomes available.

These working assumptions lead to a projected deficit for the year of £5,954, including provision for some discretionary support to new projects. We will always aim to protect an adequate reserve sufficient to cover core expenditure essential to our function in North Waltham.

Villagers are reminded of the opportunities to generate valuable income for the Village Trust by using charity donation schemes such as EasyFundraising and Amazon Smile when making online purchases.

MRM Knight.

Chairman.