

**The Milverton Victoria Rooms**  
**Registered Charity No. 293948**

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES**

**1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Secretary to the Trustees: Mrs Maggie Dinning, No 1 Courtfield, Milverton,  
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***[milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms](http://milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms)***

**Trustees at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Mr Philip Knowles	<i>Chairman</i> Elected from the Parish
Mr Michael Harvey	<i>Vice Chairman</i> Elected from the Parish
Mrs Maggie Dinning	<i>Secretary</i> Elected from the Parish
Mr Chris Pine	<i>Treasurer</i> Elected from the Parish
Mr Lindsay Fortune	<i>Insurance Officer</i> Elected from the Parish
Mrs Sue Knowles	<i>Events Co-ordinator</i> Rep for the WI and the Dramatic Society
Mrs Sally Ackland	Elected from the Parish
Mr Bev Blackmore	Rep for the Music Club
Mrs Carol Davidson	Rep for the Friday Club
Mrs Chris Field	Elected from the Parish
Mrs Frances Vail	Rep for the Milverton & Fitzhead Society
Mrs Gill Lumby	Rep for the Parish Council
Mrs Diana Smith	Rep for the PCC
Mr Geoff Elson	<i>Bookings Secretary</i> Rep for the Twinning Assoc
Mrs Sue Rotheram	Rep for the Garden Club

## **Appointments and Retirements**

During the period covered by this report we were delighted to welcome Sue Rotheram as a Trustee. Sue represents Milverton Garden Club on the Management Committee

So far as internal organisation is concerned, with the introduction of the new Milverton website, Chris Field has stood down from her role as the Management Committee's Webmaster, a task that is now performed centrally. We are grateful to Chris for having kept our pages on the old website relevant and up to date. Chris continues to run our 100 Club and the monthly market café, while Sally Ackland remains responsible for managing the monthly market.

The number of Trustees at year's end stands at 15. This leaves us with several vacancies and we would welcome enquiries from volunteers who are interested in maintaining and raising funds for our village hall.

## **Sources of advice and support**

Nat West Bank PLC

Somerset Community Council

Action With Communities in Rural England

Somerset County Council

Somerset West and Taunton District Council

Milverton Parish Council

Mr John Blackmore, property maintenance contractor

Mr John Clements, grounds maintenance contractor

Mr Nigel Morris, external accounts examiner

Ms Denise Masters, *Need Some Help?* cleaning and catering contractor

Regular suppliers: Milverton Stores; Exmoor Ales Ltd; Sheppy's Cider Ltd; Hickleys Ltd.

## **Governance**

The Victoria Rooms were built in 1887 by public subscription on land donated by the Broadmead Family. The Trustees form the Management Committee, responsible for managing the Charity in order to achieve the charitable objectives set out below. The Parish Council is the Custodian Trustee of the premises. The Charity is administered under a Scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales dated 19<sup>th</sup> November 1985 and amended on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2016. The Trustees approved a further amendment to the Scheme on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017, when The Milverton Trust was included in the list of organisations entitled to a representative on the Management Committee. The Approved Scheme and its amendments can be viewed on the new Milverton website at [milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms](http://milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms).

## **Objectives of the Charity**

- The provision of a village hall for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Milverton without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, race or political, religious or other opinions.
- Use of the village hall for meetings, lectures and classes or other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the social conditions of the life of the inhabitants.

## Appointment of Trustees

The Scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners governs the appointment of Trustees and the management of the Charity. Up to 8 Trustees may be elected from the Parish of Milverton, together with one representative from each of the local organisations currently named for that purpose in the Approved Scheme. Under the Scheme, as amended, the Trustees may, on application, add other non-commercial local groups to the list and may also delete groups, for example if they become defunct, no longer use the village hall regularly or otherwise cease to have a continuing interest in its management. (The Parish Council, as Custodian Trustee, cannot be deleted.) The Trustees have power to co-opt up to 3 additional Trustees.

Prior to the Annual General Meeting all current Trustees elected from the Parish are asked if they are willing to stand for a further year. The policy of the Management Committee is to advertise vacancies for such Trustees in the *Milverton and Fitzhead Magazine*. Vacancies are, in any event, announced at the public Annual General Meeting, which the Trustees have determined will be held no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the January following the close of the financial and reporting year (30<sup>th</sup> September) and of which 14 days public notice must be given.

Each local group regularly sending a representative to serve as a Trustee is asked whether they wish their current representative to serve for a further 12 months and, if not, is invited to nominate a new representative.

## Policies and Procedures

To guide the Management Committee in exercising its duty of care to Trustees, contractors and users of the village hall, and to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to the management of the Charity, the Trustees have adopted a Statement of Policies on governance, financial management, generating income, risk management, data protection, equal opportunities and the environment. The entire Policy Statement will be reviewed not less frequently than annually to ensure that it remains relevant and appropriate. A copy may be viewed at [milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms](http://milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms).

## Hiring Agreement

Use of the village hall is subject to a Hiring Agreement which must be signed by the hirer when booking. The hiring agreement incorporates the **Conditions of Hire** which set out the respective responsibilities of each party to the agreement. **It is important to note that when a hirer signs the hiring form, he or she signs an undertaking that the Conditions of Hire have been read, understood and will be observed.** The Hiring Agreement also includes the hirer's consent under data protection law to his or her personal data being used by the Trustees for the management of the village hall.

The Covid-19 pandemic (more of which see below) has resulted in the need for the Trustees to draw up **Special Conditions of Hire** to reduce the risk of infection. These Special Conditions are in addition to, not instead of, our regular Conditions of Hire and incorporate a requirement that hirers ensure observance of the Trustees' **Covid-19 Secure Guidelines** and comply with the actions identified in our **Covid-19 Risk Assessment**.

The Conditions of Hire are on display in the Victoria Rooms and all these documents can be viewed at [milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms](http://milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms).

## **Licences**

The Management Committee holds a Premises Licence issued by Somerset West and Taunton District Council authorising, *inter alia*, the sale or supply of alcohol on or off the premises. The Trustees have adopted a set of Bar Rules relating to the sale or supply of intoxicating liquor under the Licence. These are displayed in the Victoria Rooms or may be found at [milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms](http://milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms). The Trustees are registered with the District Council for small society lotteries, including bingo. The village hall also benefits from a PRS/PPL copyright licence for the performance of live and recorded music otherwise than for commercial purposes. Persons who wish to play music in connection with their businesses – and those who intend to screen films – are expected to obtain any necessary copyright licences themselves.

The Management Committee recognises the value of its licences in generating income for the Charity and will take all reasonable steps to protect them.

## **Risk Management**

### ***Insurance***

For the year 2019/20 the village hall was insured by Aviva through the broker Allied Westminster (Insurance Services) Ltd. The cover for main items were: buildings £804,083, contents £52,936, public liability £10,000,000, employer's liability £10,000,000 and trustee indemnity £100,000. No claims were made during the year, although a truck caused damage to the entrance porch roof late in September 2020 and may have to be the subject of a claim. It is our intention to renew the policy with the same insurer for the next 12 months.

The Management Committee recognises it is under a legal obligation to protect the building, its users and its contractors through adequate and appropriate insurance.

### ***Building Issues***

- Gas appliances and portable electrical appliances are tested by qualified personnel annually.
- The mains electrical installation is checked by a qualified engineer every 5 years.
- A Fire Safety Risk Assessment is updated annually by the Committee's own Fire Safety Officer as required by law.
- Fire fighting appliances are inspected annually under contract with the supplier.
- Volunteers from the Committee carry out other regular maintenance checks.
- The fire alarm system is serviced at the appropriate intervals.

## **Funding Strategy**

It is the strategy of the Trustees to manage the revenue budget on a self-financing basis. The contributions made by users of the hall are set to achieve this. At the same time, the Trustees recognise that hire and other charges should not be greater than necessary, bearing in mind the need for the village hall to remain accessible to residents within the Parish.

## **Reserves Policy**

The Charity held £17,931-99 in the bank as unrestricted reserves at year's end. This cash is available for unforeseen expenditure in relation to building maintenance or urgent furniture or equipment replacement. It is the Trustees' policy to maintain unrestricted reserves of between 100% and 150% of annual revenue budget expenditure.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance of the village hall and from time to time this involves major works far in excess of cash reserves held. On identifying such major works, fundraising is undertaken with the object of meeting the costs in full (i.e. without needing a loan). Such funds would be restricted. There were no restricted funds in hand at year's end.

## **Principal Activities in Pursuit of Objectives**

The hall is available for hire for private functions including children's parties and wedding receptions, as well as business functions, educational classes, performances and other events open to the public, village social functions and local fund raising events.

Up until the end of February 2020, the village hall was in use most days of the week for a variety of activities, including those organised by the Music Club, the Dramatic Society, the Friday Lunch Club and the Bridge Group as well as a variety of physical activity classes. The spread of Covid-19 to the UK and the subsequent lockdown resulted in the Trustees' having to close the hall, causing a serious loss of income. Fortunately, this has been more than offset by a Business, Leisure and Hospitality Grant of £10,000 from West Somerset and Taunton District Council. As indicated below, however, the Trustees have had to spend a not insubstantial sum to prepare the building for re-opening as a Covid-19 Secure venue.

The village hall re-opened, for limited purposes, in early September 2020. Prior to re-opening, a deep clean was carried out and the water systems were checked for legionella and given the all-clear. The Trustees were delighted to welcome back Barefoot Boogie, the keep fit classes and Red Dragon Karate. We were also pleased that Milverton Concert Society was able to use the hall for their AGM in September 2020. Unfortunately, at year's end we were unable to accept bookings for live performances likely to attract large audiences or bookings for other large gatherings. The hall is, however, Covid-19 Secure and the recent "Rule of Six" does not apply. We can host more than 6 people, provided that hirers ensure compliance with our Special Conditions of Hire, including maintaining social distancing, wearing face coverings, where appropriate, and agreeing with our Bookings Secretary a maximum number of attendees. The agreed maximum will depend on the nature of the activity or event and the vulnerability of those who are to attend but will not, in any event, for the time being exceed 30 in the Main Hall and 8 in the Reading Room.

## **Volunteer Effort**

Management costs are kept to a minimum through the use of volunteers. Substantial volunteer time is devoted each week to cover tasks such as bookings management, property maintenance, committee administration, financial management, fund-raising, publicity, insurance, website management, licensing and general administration. In addition, Trustees give up their time to participate in meetings of the Management Committee and its Fund-raising Sub-committee as well as, in normal times, some 200 hours per annum in organising and running fund raising events.

During the period covered by this report, Geoff Elson continued to represent the Trustees in local discussions on the new community website, which is now up and running with a strong

Victoria Rooms presence. We continue to review our website content to ensure that it is up to date and informative.

The Fund-raising Sub-committee, consisting of Sue Knowles, Maggie Dinning, Sally Ackland, and Chris Field continued to organise events up until the closure in February 2020, but of course their plans for other events, including our participation in the 2020 Street Fair, unfortunately came to nothing with the lockdown and the subsequent restrictions.

### **Fund-raising and Other Income**

The main fundraising events that took place during the reporting year were:

- Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2019 : Quiz Night
- Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2019 : Christmas Bingo Evening

Unfortunately, a performance of *Iolanthe* by Somerset Opera, scheduled for Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2020, had to be cancelled as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak and we have not been able to plan any other events since.

Additional income is normally generated from such activities as the monthly Saturday market, the sale of second hand books and used postage stamps, the hire of the Charity's gazebos and the 100 Club. Although we have kept the 100 Club going, the other sources of income dried up with the closure of the hall at the end of February 2020. The Business, Leisure and Hospitality Grant referred to above was, therefore, very welcome.

The Victoria Rooms has been registered as a "good cause" with the West Somerset Lottery, a local lottery for the benefit of good causes and charities in the local area. For each £1 ticket sold, the good cause receives 50p. To support us, please go to [www.somersetwestlottery.co.uk](http://www.somersetwestlottery.co.uk) and search for Milverton Victoria Rooms.

The Trustees acknowledge, with thanks, all those responsible for these valuable contributions to our fund-raising efforts. We also owe a debt of gratitude to all those who supported these activities in one way or another.

### **Property Management**

#### ***Covid-19***

Since the closure of February 2020, the Trustees have purchased a new set of chairs for the Reading Room. A dozen additional red plastic chairs have also been bought for the Main Hall to add to the 24 already there. All the new chairs have wipe-clean surfaces. The fabric upholstered chairs normally used in the Main Hall are currently quarantined for hygiene reasons. Other measures have also been adopted to reduce the risk of infection for those using the premises. Hand sanitiser stations have been installed at both entrances to the building; new liquid soap and paper towel dispensers have been fitted in the toilets and in the kitchen; floor mats and signs have been placed as reminders to people to keep their distance; locks have been fitted to the outer toilet doors to ensure that only one person uses each suite at a time; the kitchen is closed temporarily. In addition to hirers' own cleaning regimes, the hall will be professionally cleaned once a week in the first instance. By these measures, the Trustees hope that hirers will be assured that the village hall is Covid-19 Secure.

### **Other works**

The closure in February 2020 has given the Trustees the opportunity to refurbish the decorations in the Main Hall and the Reading Room and we are grateful to John Blackmore for the professional job he has made of it. The Trustees have, with the consent of the Parish Council, adopted the notice boards adjacent to the main entrance to the hall and these have been refurbished by John Blackmore and his team. John has also re-roofed the sheds in the side yard, which were found to be leaking.

During the Summer of 2020 it became apparent that swallows had taken to nesting, for a second year running, in the enclosed corridor leading from the side gate to the side entrance door. Delightful those these birds are, the Trustees were left with little choice but to conclude that the resulting mess was both a hygiene risk and a slip hazard. After considerable discussion, which had to take place via email, it was decided to seal the enclosed corridor after the birds had left. Rather than installing unsightly netting, which could have trapped and harmed the birds, it was decided to replace the iron railing gate with a solid timber door, constructed and painted to match the Victorian character of the building. The view was taken that a door would also have the added benefits of providing better protection from the weather and reducing the ingress of dirt, fumes and fallen leaves into the corridor. The Trustees held discussions with Gwil Wren, our District Councillor, and with Trevor Phelps, Deputy Chairman of the Parish Council, and it was agreed that alternative provision would be made for the swallows by constructing a shelter in the side yard of the hall - a structure that would also keep the worst of the weather off the civil emergency equipment stored there. Having been advised by the relevant authorities that planning permission and Building Regulations approval are not required, arrangements were put in hand at year's end to have the necessary works carried out.

### **Future Plans**

The Trustees are always striving to improve the facilities available at the Victoria Rooms and will continue to upgrade and replace fixtures, furniture and equipment as necessary, raising funds and applying for grants as and when required. No major works are planned for the 2020/21 reporting year, although there is a need to investigate a smell of dampness detected in the chair store adjacent to the Reading Room and two of the Main Hall gas heaters look as if they need some major attention, if not replacement. Maintaining a Victorian building is never going to be cheap and there are always surprises in store!

### **Thank You**

As always, the Trustees would like to express their thanks to the Friends of the Victoria Rooms who, although they are not members of the Management Committee, are always available to help out when required. We are also grateful to the many Parish organisations and residents who contribute in so many ways to ensuring that Milverton has a village hall of which we can be proud.

**I confirm that all Trustees have been provided with a copy of this Report.**

**Signed on behalf of the Charity Trustees and with their authority...**

**Philip J Knowles, Chairman  
Milverton Victoria Rooms Management Committee**

**January 2021**