

Chairman's Report for 2018-19

INTRODUCTION:

After the very challenging 2017-18 year following the near collapse of the charity in May 2017, this year the VHC has organised and supported a series of positive events and initiatives and has implemented the key proposals of its financial review set out and approved at the 2018 AGM.

THE EVENTS PROGRAMME 2018-19:

This year we have maintained the regular events of the Harvest Supper in October, the Christmas Party in early December, The Bateman Arms in February and the Market, covering the Well Dressing, the Market, the Middleton Trail and the Teas over the Spring Bank Holiday in late May. The Harvest Supper was very well attended; it made a profit of £238. The Christmas Party was well attended and enjoyed. This remains a free event; this year it cost us £133.50.

The new Middleton electric sign designed by Charles was greatly appreciated. We will ensure that the Christmas Lights in The Square are displayed from the time of the Christmas Party in early December.

The Bateman Arms was organised by Jamie and Sam. This provided traditional pub games and proved to be a very enjoyable evening. A small profit was made. The event was well attended by Middleton and Youlgrave residents, but the organisers felt more Middleton residents would have been preferable. We are very grateful to Jamie and Sam for putting the event together, 101 years after the pub's closure in 1917!

The 2019 Market was the largest event undertaken by the committee. A working group started preparations in January.

This year for the first time the committee was responsible for all the events which constitute the market.

The well dressing theme was 'Children in the Community' and the design was drawn up by Helen Burtonshaw and Amy Bingham. The well dressing was displayed in the week from Saturday 25th May and was viewed as a real success. The image will be added to our website page display of Middleton well dressings since 1978.

We were fortunate this year to be able to borrow covered stalls from Great Hucklow Village Hall. The market included traditional stalls of cakes, plants, raffle, books and tombola, and the addition of the Shabby Chic stall.

The playground provided traditional children's games and a nice seating area for families.

In addition to the excellent teas provided in the hall, we also provided a barbecue and cold drinks in the Square, and strawberries and cream. This was the second year of the Middleton Trail, with the addition of Middleton Hall to the open gardens selection of The Garden House, Rock Cottage, Factory House and The Stone Barn. This event, with an updated leaflet and stickers for those walking the trail was very well supported. The children's mouse hunt was also popular.

A key feature this year was a series of dances in the Square by the Winster Morris Dancers. We are very grateful to them for such a wonderful display on a beautiful sunny afternoon.

Overall the market, embracing all these elements, made a net profit of £2,587.92.

These events were only made possible by a very large number of parishioners who made their contributions to this very well attended and enjoyable afternoon.

The committee will undertake a full review of the market at its meeting on 18th July – all suggestions for improvements to the 2020 market are very welcome. In addition we introduced 'Middleton by Walking', a new regular event in the autumn between October 27th-29th. This walking festival provided a series of family walks, with guides, leaflets and refreshments available in the hall. The event received £500 sponsorship from Peak Aggregates and made a profit of £450. This pioneering event was prepared by Charles Monkhouse. We hope to build on this pilot this coming October with a new Middleton by Walking weekend.

OTHER EVENTS:

Reflecting our increasing population of children, Charles organised the 'Middleton Mapping Project'. Starting at February half-term, the project involved a series of workshops exploring Middleton's past in both the hall and comprising visits to local sites of interest. The project will culminate with a 'Middleton Map' devised by the children and displayed in the village hall. The VHC provided £200 in support of the project. This initiative inspired the theme of this year's well dressing – 'Children in the Community'.

Another initiative has been the Middleton History Initiative, although like the mapping project not an official VHC event. This initiative is currently focusing on two aspects of Middleton's history: discovering which residents hold material on Middleton's past which can be catalogued, copied or donated to a village archive; and secondly, taking forward the Middleton Oral History project of 2008-09 which produced 22 hours of recorded interviews with local residents. Three meetings have been held so far.

Middleton Rocks took place on 1st June and was very much enjoyed.

THE FUTURE OF THE HALL:

After 23 years of efforts to achieve ownership of Middleton Village Hall for the community, the decision has been taken by the Parish Council and the Village Hall Committee to actively seek an alternative building. This follows a year of awaiting a response from the hall trustees to our community letter requesting transfer of ownership and, subsequently in September 2018, seeking clarification on what the trust would ask as a commercial offer for purchase. No response was received on the latter request.

In the spring of 2019 the Parish Council organised a consultation with parishioners on next steps on this matter. A questionnaire was distributed with options for a new-build hall on the playground area or the conversion of the church to a dual usage purpose as a place of worship and a community centre. 53% of households responded; on that positive basis, the Parish Council is now collating the responses and will present its findings at its next meeting on July 10th. Currently further work is being undertaken to seek clarification from the Middleton estate regarding the acquisition of land behind the playground and with the Derby Diocese on options with the church.

HALL MAINTENANCE:

The 2018 annual checks on fire equipment in June required a new fire blanket and a recharging of the water extinguisher which will last 5 years; the CO2 cylinder was replaced in 2017 and will not be replaced for 9 years. The 2019 checks are imminent.

The portable appliances in the hall were checked and certificated in June 2018; the PAT checks for 2019 are now due.

The annual check of the emergency lighting was undertaken and certificated in the autumn of 2018; changes in regulations will require a new light on the front exterior of the hall in 2019.

Given that the trust has not been prepared to resolve the future of the hall, the VHC has limited maintenance this year to having the hall gutters cleared and repaired by a local tradesman. No repairs have been made to the window frames which require attention.

The hall is insured jointly by the VHC and the PC.

THE HIRING OF THE HALL:

As part of our financial review, Mary considered our hall charging policy. This included looking into the charges of other halls in the area. Following her recommendations, the committee agreed that local users would be charged £7

an hour up to a maximum of £40 and that other users would be charged £10 an hour. There would also be a charge for electricity based on meter readings. A new booking form was prepared. We are most grateful to Mary for the work undertaken to review our charging policy.

Over the year in addition to the regular programme of events, the hall has been used for birthdays, teas for the Middleton Walking event in October, walkers' groups, meetings on Middleton's history, a children's mapping project and two elections.

INTER-HALLS MEETINGS:

We meet every 2-3 months with committee members from other local halls, including Hartington, Biggin, Monyash and Wardlow. This is coordinated by Keith Quine, chair of Hartington Village Hall. This informal village halls network enables us to exchange useful information and help each other. An example to our benefit was the donation of 8 tables in good condition from Warslow Village Hall Committee which is upgrading its furniture stock.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The VHC email network continues to expand. This is our main means of contacting parishioners. For those not on our email address list, we provide paper versions of newsletters and circulars.

We continue to provide a monthly newsletter, with a combined 'Spring' March/April and July/August editions.

We have not developed our website page on the PC website sufficiently and need to edit it more effectively. We are seeking the advice of Jack Aston on how we can improve the page.

We have had several features on Middleton this year in The Bugle, including the Middleton by Walking event, the Market and the Well Dressing.

We are now on the list of 'sponsor organisations' of The Bugle, paying £25 a year.

VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE:

As the report demonstrates, this year's programme of events would not have been possible without the work of our Middleton Village Hall Committee: Helen, Janet, Steve, Geoff, Dianne, Alison, Mary, Charles and Robert. We are indebted to Charles as Treasurer for his very effective stewardship of our finances and to Mary for all her work as our excellent Secretary. Geoff and Robert are standing down: we are very grateful for their efforts over the years.