



Dormansland War Memorial Hall One Year On

The Hall is a Hall for All. It was built by the parish of Dormansland on land given to the parish by the Nichols family, one of whose direct descendants is a Trustee, in honour of the soldiers returning from World War 1. The Hall is held in trust for the members of the parish. This means that, literally, it belongs to the parish. The trust is also a registered charity. In October 2021, the current Trustees were elected in a public meeting by an overwhelming majority of votes.

Here is a summary of key points from the year to date...

First, thanks:

We found this a very difficult section to complete, as we have received so much support from so many people. We are grateful to a number of organisations who have generously supported us, including Bryan Williamson and Daughters, UKPN, Full Power energy brokers, Lingstead builders, our lawyers MWE, Howdens (who, via Cheryl Roux, are giving us a new kitchen), the Heat Company. We are grateful to the Parish Council, who have awarded us grants towards the update of the power system, and clearing the grounds.

There are too many to mention by name, but the Trustees would particularly like to acknowledge the help provided to restore the grounds, lead by Cynthia Jones and Rosemary Williams, and to coordinate the work to refurbish the Hall, lead by Michael Mackie-Clark, Colin Jones and Katy Madkins, Trevor Griffiths, whose advice and donations were hugely valuable. Our local Councillor, Sir Nicholas White supported our successful application to write off inherited business rates arrears, and for us to be zero rated going forward. We would also like to thank the dozen Duke of Edinburgh volunteers, who have worked diligently every week end inside and outside the Hall. It is so inspiring to know that our future is in good hands.

Events during our first year

We started work straight after being elected. We “celebrated” Halloween with help from Dormansland Primary School. Appropriately, our first event was opening the Hall in November to take part in the village’s Memorial Sunday reflections. In December, we held our first Christmas Fayre, which was a wonderful success (this year’s Fayre is on 3rd December!). We were privileged to take part in the village’s celebration of the Diamond Jubilee, and opened our doors for all 3 days. Finally, it was our sad honour to host to the village’s moment of remembrance for Her Majesty.

As we look to work more closely with the groups already serving our community, we have “hosted” the fridge and freezers which have been used to provide food support by the Dormansland Diamonds, and were pleased to lend equipment to the Dormansland Carnival. We are hoping to be able to contribute to the Village Hub initiative, and hope to be able to provide a third venue at some point alongside the ST John’s Centenary Room and the Baptist Church.

Since being in a position to hire out the Hall, we have taken bookings and held birthday parties, dog training classes, a barn dance and fitness classes, and are delighted to be able to host the next Parish Council open evening.

The grounds

Our grounds team, lead by Cynthia Jones and Rosemary Williams, have worked tirelessly to transform the grounds. When we became trustees, the grounds had been untouched for at least 3 years, and our army of volunteers set to work strimming, mowing, cleaning, clearing, cutting and creating. In particular, we have transformed the grounds on Hollow Lane with flourishing flower beds and the renovated garden benches. We are particularly grateful to the grounds team for the wonderful Jubilee troughs, which have had pride of place at the front of the Hall.



Refurbishing the Hall

The Hall had been closed for over 3 years. Over the last year, our team has spent hundreds of hours on refurbishing every part of the Hall. This has been a massive undertaking: the Hall has 27 separate rooms, and common spaces.

We had first to (insure and) secure the Hall, and then we set to work: patching the roof, repairing broken windows, mending leaking pipes, installing a water heating system, putting in a state of the art emergency lights system, repairing ceilings, replacing windows, cleaning everywhere, replacing lino, checking all the contents, cleaning and refurbishing wherever we could, or removing them if they were no longer usable. We repaired the Hall music system, and the coffee machine, and the fans, and the hoovers, and the exterior lights. And we painted room after room, and wall after wall, inside and out: the Hall walls alone required 4 coats of paint!



Our biggest challenge was electrical: how to make the Hall electrics safe, efficient and up to best in class modern standards. This involved systematically checking, replacing and repairing all of the electrical wiring in each of the Hall's rooms and open spaces, and all the outside electrical systems. We have ensured that the electrical works are safe, efficient and up to modern standards.

Finance to year ended 31st December 2021: the charity's accounts run to 31st December. In the period 1st January 2021 to 15th October 2021, the former trustees have stated that there was no income or expenditure. We have seen no evidence of any expenditure.

In the 11 week period from 15th October to the end of the 2021, the trustees incurred costs relating to putting in place insurance, urgent repairs, making the Hall secure and in connection with the Christmas Fayre in the amount of £2,620. These expenses were met by donations by the trustees and donors. The Christmas Fayre raised nearly £1,500, which allowed us to invest in the urgent work needed to begin bringing the hall back to life, giving an overall cash income of £4,110.



Opportunities for you to provide support

This is your Hall. Over the next year, we expect to finish phase 1 of the refurbishment, and to be fully open. Looking ahead, we expect to carry out more extensive work on the property and make it more widely available. We are hugely excited about the opportunities for the Hall to be a central part of community life. There are many ways in which you could help us:

- * first, pass on the word about the Hall for All. We want to reach the point at which everyone, throughout the Parish knows about us;
- * second, many of you have already given up your precious time, for which we are extremely grateful, and we would welcome anybody who at any time can lend a hand: inside or outside the Hall, on admin, governance, fundraising, cake making. There is no skill we cannot put to good use; and
- * third, financial. Every penny donated to the Hall will be used to improve it for use by the community. Our fund raising team will continue to apply for grants from all available sources (we have 2 grants outstanding). There will always be opportunities for, and we have 2 means in mind: one off donations, or standing orders, as Friends of the Hall. We have Gift Aid forms for both of these options.



Contact details

We are always delighted to hear from anyone with any interest in or questions about the Hall. And, of course, the Hall is available for hire!

Feel free to contact us at the Hall, via our facebook page, or by email on dwmhtrustees@gmail.com.

It is your Hall, and if we can help, we will help.

THE TRUSTEES: Dr Lindsey Bell (Chair) - David Birchall - Sarah Comber - Phil Davy - Tracey Morris - Bertie Nichols - Nicola O'Riordan

