



AUGUST UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL MORE ABOUT OUR HALL HEROES KEEPING THINGS SHIP-SHAPE

Keeping the Memorial Hall and its grounds in good order for everyone to enjoy doesn't just happen automatically. Just like in our own homes, problems arise from time to time – things break and wear out and other maintenance jobs suddenly need attention. Failure to keep on top of things can all too quickly result in the grounds and building falling into disrepair – which in turn could make our valued community asset become a shoddy and expensive community liability.

The Memorial Hall itself is a registered charity managed by a small Board of 14 Trustees. The term 'trustee' is important here – it's derived from the Old Norse word *treysta* meaning "to trust, rely on, make strong and safe". Our job, therefore, as trustees, (and we're each registered with the Charity Commission our Regulator), is to keep the heritage building *strong* (that is to say, in good order both physically and financially) and *safe* (giving confidence to all who use it). In short, we are *entrusted* with the safe keeping and protection of the Hall's future viability and relied upon to ensure it thrives.

In last month's update I mentioned the contribution of one of our trustees, *Alan Lewis*, who has saved the Hall hundreds of pounds over the last few years by regularly cutting, without charge, the acre or so of grass on our recreational field. Then, when he suddenly became incapacitated, another of our trustees, *Pauline Harcombe* spoke to her husband John, who quickly stepped up and gave the field a good cut – giving us time to make alternative arrangements while Alan recuperates.

But *all* 14 volunteer trustees play their part in what is truly a team effort to discharge our duties and responsibilities; and so over the next few months I'll be gradually introducing them all and telling you a little about their invaluable contributions – for without them there really would be no Memorial Hall!

This month, let me continue the introductions by telling you a little about *George Thomas* and *Stephen Seymour*, who both work incredibly hard every week behind the scenes. Between them they ensure that the building, together with the surrounding grounds are kept ship-shape, safe and welcoming.

George is really our volunteer caretaker. He visits the Hall regularly to check that the internal spaces are in good order. He always checks that lights and water heaters are turned off and the heating thermostats are reset to their default temperature. Hirers who fail to switch off the lights and the water heaters or don't reset the heating thermostats at the end of their hires would result in us incurring hundreds of pounds of additional energy costs over the course of a year. Although we are a registered charity, we're also classified as a *business* and so our unit prices for electricity are double current domestic rates. We may have solar panels and battery storage, but like all households we simply can't afford to waste

energy – and we know that the average cost of leaving lights and appliances switched on could potentially add up to £15 a day to annual energy costs! Over a year that would soon mount up.

But as well as *George's* regular checks to make sure that the Hall is set to 'standby' when not in use, he also checks for any minor (or major) damage and makes running repairs where possible. For example, over the past few months he has replaced broken toilet seats and broken locks, fixed loose wall tiles, repaired damaged cupboards, changed light bulbs, filled small potholes in the driveway, and repaired the damaged brickwork on the external low-rise wall. He also keeps a weather-eye on our air-source heating system and, in this regard, manages our relationship with the heating service engineers and Ofgem. His diligence and acquired knowledge of the building is priceless.

Then there's *Stephen*, who is our 'trouble-shooter' and perhaps our keenest trustee when it comes to making improvements to both the Hall's efficiency and amenities. He's always successful at squeezing the best possible prices out of local contractors for specialist repairs and new services – and is on constant standby to check that their work or their contracted services are up to scratch. For example, it was *Stephen* who secured the best deal for our Wi-Fi connectivity and for our business electricity rates. Last year he oversaw the essential drainage, sewage and roof repairs needed, not to mention being on Severn Trent's case when a major water leak was discovered under part of the field.

More recently he secured great deals on our enhanced loft insulation and 'industry standard' access ramp handrails. Not only that, but he was also successful in applying for a lottery grant to pay for the work. Then last month he organised the urgent pruning of some potentially dangerous tree branches overhanging the Playgroup Building. If you look carefully at the far right of the aerial photo at the top of this update you can see some of the branches before they were pruned back. And it will come as no surprise to be told that it was *Stephen* who managed to get overhead drone-camera video footage of the Hall's site, for free! (The photo above is a still taken from the video).

Between them, *George and Stephen* continue to save the Hall hundreds of pounds of expenditure every year. We are indeed so very fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers working for our community. Next month, as well as giving an update about hire activity over the summer, I'll be introducing you to the work and valuable contributions of two more of our trustees. Until then, enjoy the remaining weeks of summer!

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees