# **Chair’s Annual Report for 2020**

In 2020 we were delighted to be able to keep mostly the same Committee which gave both continuity and progression in their roles and responsibilities. The group works well together and operates within the constitution. This Management Committee is made of representatives elected at the AGM and representatives from the community groups.

The AGM was scheduled to take place in April 2020 but was obviously postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the first lockdown. The virus situation had not eased by the autumn, so the Management Committee took the decision to hold the AGM via Zoom in November. It was felt important to hold the AGM actually in the year 2020! Members of the public were invited to attend via Zoom. Two members of the Committee who had been going to stand down at the April AGM stayed with the Committee until the AGM was held in November and for this the Management Committee was extremely grateful. We had co-opted a new Bookings Secretary in April and there was a change of Vice Chair from the November AGM. The rest of the Committee stayed the same with the same Chair.

**Well, what a year 2020 was!** After all the superb Christmas activities in 2019, we started the year with a lovely ‘Best of British’ meal at the end of January, a ‘Leap Year Breakfast’ at the end of February, and a talk about the ‘Classic Monte Carlo Rally’. The monthly Saturday morning Café Burtle was buzzing and the monthly Wednesday morning ‘Community Coffee Shop’ was flourishing. The Hall hosted regular weekly bookings; including the Burtle Silver Band rehearsals, the Burtle Babies mother and toddler group, young children’s dance classes run by Hannah’s Hoofers, a Pilate’s group and various dance practices. Meetings were held and the year was set to be another full and busy one – there were lots of plans.

As part of our on-going improvements and projects, at the end of January the Management Committee had installed a built-in Projector and Mobile Screen. This was to support our own visual displays and meetings but also to attract further bookings – many users of the Hall request these facilities. The Management Committee had also applied for Hallmark Three. We had achieved Hallmark One and Hallmark Two in 2019 and were looking forward to being visited and assessed for this final Award. Hallmark Awards are Nationally recognised Quality Standards for Village Halls based on set criteria for good management and good practice. An Energy Audit at the Hall was also undertaken.

The curtains covering the fire exit and those covering the foyer doors were old and had been patched continuously and it was felt they would not withstand dry cleaning. These were replaced with new curtains and the stage storage area which is a prominent feature in the Hall also had new curtains and tracks fitted.

It was all looking so promising!

**Then….. Coronavirus happened and 2020 changed beyond recognition.**

The Burtle Village Hall was closed in a National Lockdown from March 20th until 14th September. We reopened safely and successfully but only for a small number of groups who could comply with the rules and regulations. The Burtle Village Hall was then forced into a second lockdown from 5th November. We did not reopen again in 2020. It was a very difficult time for everybody. The Burtle Village Hall Committee also faced difficulties, with four of our members being front line and other key workers. Their time was severely curtailed for volunteer work, although they continued as best they could. This meant that the other members had to try and pick up the pieces. Even with no social events or activities, there was a great deal to do.

The Management Committee had to plough through the new Legislation and Government guidance, guidance and information from ACRE and the Community Council for Somerset, and adhere to strict Insurance regulations. All of these changed frequently with subsequent implications. The Committee was bombarded with information and paperwork, attended County Zoom meetings and was involved in frequent phone calls. We applied for and received a £10,000 Government grant in May for the first Lockdown which helped to make the village hall safe and Covid-19 compliant and helped towards the severe loss of income. An investment was made in 50 new vinyl padded burgundy chairs and 6 centre folding tables that could be wiped easily, fixed and mobile hand sanitisers and sprays, new locks and keys for doors, new posters, signs and floor markings.

A new Covid ‘Risk Assessment’ had to be written, ‘Terms and Conditions’ for hirers and users was updated, ‘Special Conditions’ for Hirers Covid-19 and paperwork for users to adhere to was produced, a new ‘one-way’ system for reopening had to be introduced, new cleaning arrangements had to be organised and put in place, and everyone from user groups to residents had to be kept informed. All of this was happening in an atmosphere of uncertainty and unknown conditions, along with changing pandemic circumstances.

At the same time, the maintenance of the Burtle Village Hall continued. The Management Committee has to ensure the hall complies with all relevant legislation and is up to date with all the necessary checks and assessments – whether the hall is open or not. All appliances have to be tested and serviced regularly by qualified personnel, and all equipment inspected and serviced under respective contracts. Once again, we had visiting rodents and the Pest Controller was a frequent visitor. All of this maintenance had to be scheduled and paid for. We were persistent with the Electricity Company and with our Water supplier and eventually received welcome rebates. We also had a Water Meter fitted in October 2020, so our bills will now be more accurate. It’s all been quite a struggle, time consuming and without any of the social benefits!

As a result of the Energy Audit in February, the Management Committee considered the installation of Solar Panels and in the autumn discovered a one-off Somerset ‘Climate Emergency Community Fund’ which if the bid were successful would cover all the costs of the project. Four energy companies were approached and a full proposal was put to the Burtle Parish Council in November 2020 through whom the application had to be made. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the Burtle Parish Council did not support the Burtle Village Hall proposal and the opportunity was lost.

As a result of prudent housekeeping and more accountability over the last three years, the hall reserves were in good shape which was fortunate when Coronavirus pandemic descended. The income from rental hire had accounted for almost half of the annual £10,000 running costs. In 2019 this had risen to £6,148 but in 2020 it was only £556 – a staggering difference. The remainder of the income had come from fund raising events and bar receipts. In 2019 this was £2,019 but in 2020 it was only £556 (not including the 100 Club) – again a massive difference. Thus from March 20th, there has been very little rental income, no fund raising or social events and no use of the bar.

However, the Management Committee did continue to run the Burtle Village Hall 100 Club which adheres to the gambling rules and regulations, with a one-off yearly payment for a number and monthly cash prizes. This raises funds for the Hall and was continued all through the year, making a profit of £650.

The Management Committee applied for and was lucky enough to receive a small discretionary grant from Sedgemoor District Council of £1334 at the end of the 2020 year which also helped the hall finances.

The Government Grants were vitally important in being able to keep the hall financially viable and to help with the severe loss of income. The Grants were also used to make the hall Covid-safe and be able to comply with all the rules and regulations. Without the two Grants, the finances of the Burtle Village Hall for 2020 would be a totally different picture.

**So, 2021** – we need to be positive and hopefully can now see some light at the end of the tunnel. Vaccines have started and are still being delivered and slowly we should be able to progress towards some ‘normality’. It is hoped that the Burtle Village Hall will reopen later in April and welcome back a small number of user groups. Later in May, it is hoped that more groups will be able to return and that social and fund raising activities can resume later in the year after Government restrictions are eased in late June. It will be so good to meet and see people once again in our lovely Village Hall but this will only happen when it is safe and legal to do so. The Burtle Village Hall is the social hub of the village and it has been sorely missed.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the present Committee, plus Steve Allen and Helen Jones who continued to stay with the Committee until the November AGM. It has been a difficult time for the Committee as a whole and individually they have all faced different but no less difficult issues.

Bharti, Ieuan, Helen and Tracy are key workers and their time for voluntary work has been severely curtailed, yet they have continued to support the Burtle Village Hall whenever they could and have been vital to the Committee. Tracy also battled Coronavirus. Jayne has had to deal with her business and furlough, yet still manged to sort and print the important lifeline of the monthly Burtle Newsletter. Natasha has had an interesting if somewhat different introduction to life on the Committee but has slotted in well to her new position of Bookings Secretary and added a new and welcome voice to discussions. Steve and Lyn, although retired, have faced difficult domestic challenges in 2020 but managed to keep everything moving forward in a positive way. We have continued to meet monthly via Zoom throughout the entire year.

The Management Committee would also like to thank Maureen and Jenny for running the Café Burtle with the help of Zac, Heather and Elaine for running the Community Coffee Shop and to those who helped behind the bar in the early part of the year until Coronavirus forced the first lockdown. Thanks also to Chris Mockridge who helped with the research and installation of the new projector and screen in the Hall.

The Management Committee would especially like to thank the Community Council for Somerset (CCS) for their continued advice and support. This year in particular we have appreciated the guidance, help and support of both ‘Action with Communities in Rural England’ (ACRE) and CCS – this has taken the form of numerous information sheets with updates as the situation constantly changed. There have also been Zoom Webinars on various topics concerning the pandemic and the running of village halls which have been both informative and helpful.

We would also like to thank the Burtle residents and friends who have continued to support the Burtle Village Hall throughout this somewhat challenging year!

***Lyn Goodliffe – Chair Burtle Village Hall – March 2021***