



Chair's Report 2023-24

Thank you all for attending the BCA's AGM. This gathering marks our most significant meeting of the year, providing both the committee and our esteemed members with a chance to reflect on the association's management and affairs of the last year.

Before delving into the review of our 2023 financial accounts and the election of officer posts for the upcoming year, I would like to offer a summary of our activities of the past year and outline future priorities.

Firstly, I would like to thank Val Gibbons for leading on the collection of annual subscriptions, which constitute approximately 10% of our total income. This year, we implemented a new approach to collecting subscriptions, trialing an envelope scheme developed by Anna. Remarkably, nearly 80% of our subscriptions were collected using this method, significantly streamlining the collection process and alleviating the burden on our volunteers. We will though, aim to continue collecting subscriptions door to door for any new villagers where feasible, as it provides an excellent opportunity to personally welcome them to the BCA. Additionally, next year, we will be reclaiming gift aid, with a return to HMRC backdated to our last submission where claiming multi years in one claim is a more efficient approach and will bolster future accounts.

I would like to extend appreciation to Jo for her proactive management of hall bookings. Over the past year, she has significantly boosted the BCA's income from new hirers. While our primary focus remains on providing and preserving a facility for our members, diversifying our income sources is crucial for ensuring the ongoing viability of the building. The BCA will maintain this equilibrium, prioritising the building's use for its members while also accommodating non-member bookings.

A big thank you once again to Josie Armstrong for her invaluable contribution to organising social activities. Although no longer serving as the BCA's social secretary, Josie graciously and brilliantly coordinated the Barn Bash event held last May, alongside Jo and Val. Special appreciation to David & Vickie Jackson for hosting the event at Littlewhite Farm and for their tremendous efforts in ensuring its success, resulting in raising over £600.

Josie also stepped up to direct the Christmas Show, taking over from Rosemary Monument, who had fulfilled that role for many years. Heartfelt gratitude to both Rosemary and Josie for facilitating a seamless transition. Brancepeth wouldn't be the same without that show!

Also, thank you to Christine Jones for organising the coffee morning rota and keeping this weekly meet-up going. It's an important social activity which contributes a significant amount of income. Other activities included working with the Northern Heartlands Charity to run arts and craft workshops in the hall – free of charge for members. The classes were very well received and added value to villagers BCA membership. Thanks to Val and Jo for organising these. Also thanks

to Anna for hosting an open event to watch the King's Coronation and to David Jackson for organising the monthly's men's nights.

The BCA's two newer sections are thriving: carpet bowls are almost at full capacity, prompting discussions about investing in a second set of mats and bowls using the group's own savings. Additionally, the Tuesday evening community choir is attracting a strong turnout and bringing joy to its members.

Given the reduced number of members on the BCA management committee, it is brilliant to note that a wide range of social events and activities have taken place. Thank you to everyone, I appreciate there are many volunteers involved.

Regarding the maintenance of the building, the planned renovation and painting of all windows in 2023 had to be postponed due to exceptionally wet weather conditions. Unfortunately, the painter was unable to fit in a start date with a sufficient dry spell to proceed with the necessary works.

Furthermore, despite remedial efforts undertaken in 2023, damp patches in the main hall persist as an ongoing concern. Historical BCA records from previous decades indicate that these damp patches tend to resurface approximately every ten years or so. Unfortunately, the remedial repairs implemented last year have not yielded the expected results, particularly exacerbated by more wet weather conditions these past few years. As we move forward, it appears necessary to now take more extensive measures ...

Looking ahead, our key priorities in 2024 include:

- To address the persistent damp patches in the hall, and resolve the problem once and for all, it is probable that we'll need to remove the two chimney stacks. Thankfully, there are sufficient ring-fenced funds within the BCA for this necessary work. However, we may need to postpone some of the green investment initiatives for the building until funds are replenished after this expenditure. We will know more in due course.
- The painter hired last year has prioritised the hall, aiming to carry out remedial repairs and repaint all windows. This should extend their lifespan by 5-10 years, enhancing the building's overall condition. Fingers-crossed for a dry late spring and summer to facilitate this process smoothly.
- I'm pleased to announce plans for celebrating '100 Years of our Village Hall' with centenary festivities. Jo, alongside Vivienne Lowe and Richard Jackson, has been diligently working on a publication tracing the hall's history from its inception to the present day. The book is set to debut at a drinks event in November, coinciding with an exhibition commemorating a century of our cherished building.
- Additionally, Josie is kindly organising a centenary champagne tea event with entertainment scheduled for September and will again direct the Christmas Show. Thank you, Josie.

- In the summer we will be turning the hall into a tea shop to support the Open Gardens Event on the 20th July, working with Garden Club.
- We're also committed to continuing our efforts to implement further green energy-saving enhancements to the building, wherever feasible and where budgets allow.
- We are looking for replacement chairs for the committee room to replace those which are in a poor condition and to improve the overall ambience of the space.
- We remain committed to collaborating with St Brandon's, the Castle, and the Brancepeth Parish Council to coordinate joint social events that contribute to the vibrant atmosphere of our village. Thank you to the parish council for their continued facilitation of the annual £3k grant, which is used to help cover the overall running expenses of the building.
- We also need to continue our efforts to find new volunteers to help run social activities and join the management committee.

I extend my gratitude to all BCA committee members for their dedication in managing the association's affairs. Additionally, a heartfelt thank you goes out to all members, volunteers, cake makers, and coffee morning helpers for their invaluable contributions. Your collective efforts are the foundation of our association, and without them, we wouldn't be where we are today.

Lastly, a sincere thank you to Ian for his commitment to overseeing the association's finances throughout the past year, even amidst health challenges. I'm pleased to report that our overall bank balance remains strong, and Ian will provide further details following my report.

Martyn Jones, Chair