

SOUTHWICK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

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Southwick Community Association

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>President</i> | Maxine Coomber | |
| <i>Vice-President</i> | Michael Coomber | |
| <i>Chairman</i> | Malcolm Gough | |
| <i>Vice-Chairman</i> | David Comber | |
| <i>Honorary Secretary</i> | Tony Brownings | |
| <i>Hon Treasurer</i> | Bob Ryder | |
| <i>Board Members</i> | Simon Armes | Maureen Cripps |
| | Philip Evans | Yvonne Fair |
| | John Garland | Roger Needham |
| | Ray Richards | Philip Simons |
| | Angus Dunn | <i>(Adur District Council)</i> |
| | David Simmons | <i>(West Sussex County Council)</i> |
| | Martin Oakley | <i>(co-opted)</i> |

MEMBERS OF STAFF

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>Office Manager</i> | Sharon Watts |
| <i>Admin Secretary</i> | Carol Comber |
| <i>Admin Assistant</i> | Amanda Severn |
| <i>Premises Manager</i> | Adrian Kenward |
| <i>Caretaking Team</i> | Malcolm Woodhams, Bill Clements John Derby, Stuart Fogden, Rod Nash, Terry McKanna-Maulkin |
| <i>Café Manager</i> | Rebecca Goffin |
| <i>Café Cook</i> | Kim Drew |
| <i>Café Assistant</i> | Etsuko Morita |

IMPORTANT NOTE

This Annual Report has been produced in the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, which continues to cause huge disruption to normal business across all sectors. We have not been able to hold the Annual General Meeting where this report was due to be considered, nor do we know when it may be feasible to do so.

Introduction

Every year it's customary to open the Association's annual report with a glowing account of new achievements, of improvements made, of new targets that have been reached. Who would have dreamt that after 75 years of evolving and serving the people of Southwick, our Community Centre would be required to shut its doors and close down to the people who use it most. The shutdown was of course necessary because of the developing national emergency that would eventually threaten the lives and health of so many people both locally and nationally.

It was whilst taking control of the shutdown, with all the urgent actions that had to be taken, that we began to realise that there was one important achievement the Association could be particularly proud of - which was that it had built up a very strong financial and administrative foundation on which to operate and survive. It's something perhaps never fully appreciated except at times such as this when external factors surface and threaten our existence.

We are also very fortunate in that we have the support of a strong Board of Trustees, who work hard steering the Association both professionally and conscientiously, always ensuring it maintains and adheres to our community values. At our first "virtual trustee meeting" on 23 March, we agreed to appoint an "Officers Group" (Tony Brownings Dave Comber, Bob Ryder and myself) with authority to make urgent decisions on SCA's behalf during the crisis. This group keeps all Trustees informed of day-to-day decision making, reports on significant matters, and seeks quick "remote" confirmation of Trustees' agreement when required. This has worked very well so far and Trustees have been happy with the system that's been set up.

Of course, no officer, trustee, volunteer or member of staff underestimates the size or height of the hill we have to climb once the lock-down period is relaxed. However, with the solid foundation we have in place, we are optimistic we can weather the challenging times ahead of us.

I would like to thank all who have helped deal with the crisis so far. We very much look forward to opening up again and welcoming all of our users back to this vital part of Southwick. Let's hope it won't be too long before we are all back on site.

Malcolm Gough

Finance - a summary of 2019-20 and the emergency in 2020

Unfortunately, this can only be a preliminary outline of the financial position at 31 March 2020. At that date, the Centre had already been closed down for a fortnight and all of our staff had been placed on “furlough”, as we quickly took up the lifeline of the Government’s emergency “Job Retention Scheme”. We are still in that very challenging position at the time of writing.

Since the enforced closure of the Centre, the focus has had to be on how to defend and prop up our finances - when nearly all our main sources of income have collapsed.

It will therefore be a while yet before we can put together all the information needed to finalise proper accounts for last financial year, 2019-20. But here is a reasonably accurate outline of the overall position at 31 March, when the crisis had only just broken upon us.

OPERATING FUND *(for the day-to-day running of the Community Centre)*

We will have finished last financial year with a good surplus of about £32,000 (taking account of some re-structuring of our Funds). This would have been higher, but our income from room hires and Café sales all but vanished during the final month, March 2020.

- **Income** was approximately £224,000 for the whole year
down 4% from the previous year
- **Expenditure** on running costs was about £192,000 for the whole year
down 1% from the previous year

DEVELOPMENT FUND *(for improvements to our facilities and equipment)*

In line with the successes in recent years, our major community events and other smaller fundraising initiatives yielded a very valuable surplus - of about £10,000 - in 2019-20. This is a tribute to the effort of many keen volunteers who plan and carry out the community events, ably supported by the Centre’s staff. Also during 2019-20, we were extremely grateful to receive several donations, as well as a significant legacy from a much-missed friend of the Community Centre. These generous gifts, all designated for future improvements to the Centre, totalled £43,000.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE for the year was lower than in most years, at a total of about £18,000. Most of this (£12,000) was spent on building improvements, mainly the upgrading of lighting installations and the mains electricity systems. Other capital expenditure (£6,000) was for new kitchen equipment, theatre equipment and archive storage units. As things have turned out, this ‘quiet’ year for capital spending may prove helpful in the circumstances of the economic crisis we have to face in 2020-21.

THE FINANCIAL POSITION LOOKING AHEAD

The situation going into 2020-21 is of course very worrying.

- We have no income from the everyday hire of facilities and from Café and Bar sales. In other words, we've lost about 90% of our overall operating income.
- We are unable to conduct our main fundraising activities - for example, we would have expected to raise at least £10,000 from our annual Beer Festival, which was all set up and ready to take place in May 2020.

We also have no clear idea about when the emergency restrictions on the use of community buildings like ours will be eased, let alone lifted.

And we cannot know what decisions the users of the Community Centre will make about whether or not to return to us for the meetings, classes, activities and performance events that were our life-blood just a few months ago.

But we are determined to survive the crisis and to rebuild the community activities and public uses of the Centre that have developed and flourished over the last 75 years.

This is not going to be easy, but the Association's officers, trustees, staff and volunteers will all be working tirelessly towards the survival of the Centre and its return to strength.

Bob Ryder

A round-up of the Community Centre year 2019-20

Last year's report described many projects and objectives planned for this year. Then along came the coronavirus which has curtailed nearly all of the Centre's activities for now, forcing us to shut down and reorganise.

Before the shutdown we had achieved some of projects, such as Simon Armes taking over from Tony Brownings in the running of the bar with volunteers. In the short time it's been running (about 7 months up to the shutdown) the bar was showing a healthy profit and was well received by the users.

Martin Oakley and Maureen Cripps had taken on the organising of the Christmas Fair, which was a success once again and raised about £1,000 to go towards the continuing replacement of chairs throughout the Centre.

A big thank you to Nigel Bubloz and his team for raising about £9,000 from the 2019 Beer Festival, which goes towards improvements to the Centre's facilities and equipment. The organising team were well under way with preparations for the 2020 event, when we had to take the painful decision in

March to postpone the Festival to 2021. Depending on what restrictions are still be in place later in this year, it is hoped that a Christmas Fair and a smaller Cider Festival may be held.

With regard to building and maintenance work in 2019-20, it is worth highlighting the fitting of safety film to the Café/bar windows and the Glebe Room windows; safety glass to the Garden Room windows; and the re-lining of the car park. These works were all carried out by our landlord, Adur District Council. We have also continued ourselves with the replacement of existing light fittings with low-energy fittings, both internally and externally, and with the general ongoing maintenance and decoration.

The proposed replacement of windows to the Café/bar area and the Porter Room was, we believe, in next year's Council budget, but in the shutdown no further discussions have been held with the Council for the time being. When things are a bit more settled, we will be recommencing those discussions. It had been thought that, at the same time as the replacement window work was going on, we would take the opportunity to refurbish the kitchen, café and bar area. However, with the uncertainty of the current situation we might need to review the timing of that as a separate project.

Work has started on the archiving project, with the installation of racking in the attic of the Homestead in preparation for sorting out the boxes into the allocated store room in the Homestead. Once the Centre is open again this room will be fitted out to become an archive room and office.

We are taking advantage of the enforced shutdown to carry out a tidying up of the garden area either side of the new gateway; and installing a drain to the upper grassed area, outside the Comber Wing foyer, to prevent the flooding of surface water which seems to be occurring more frequently these days.

Comments had been made regarding the lack of ventilation in the Barn, especially during theatre performances last summer. Just before lockdown, a report was being prepared into the existing system, which was installed as part of the major refurbishment works back in 1996. When things get back to some form of normality, this will be completed and proposals will be put forward to the Trustees. Most of these works and some staffing issues at the Centre are being overseen by the newly reorganised General Management Committee, who report back to the Trustees.

With the enforced shutdown, volunteers are keeping a careful eye on Centre to make sure it is safe and secure. With the eventual easing of lockdown restrictions we will be looking into ways on how we can safely open to all our users. I hope you are all keeping safe and well and are looking forward to coming back to "the jewel in the crown of Southwick".

Dave Comber

The activities taking place at the Community Centre

Over the last generation or so, the kind of use the community makes of the Centre has been slowly changing. Quite a few of the traditional community ‘membership societies’ have found it much harder to flourish in today’s social scene, than in the days when the Association was founded at the end of the Second World War. We now have 21 affiliated societies, which are very active - but that compares with the five dozen or more such groups which we had for much of the 1950s and 1960s. We lost two affiliated groups during the year - Independent Lives and (more recently) the Mid-Hants Railway Society. We also lost the dance-fitness class ‘Clubbercise’.

Some idea of the variety of activities taking place can be seen from a quick look at the list of affiliated groups (see next section of this report). But in addition, there are of course a great many other user clubs and groups which are not affiliated to SCA but are very regular users of the Centre. And we continue to see a rise in the use of the Centre for various ‘participation’ activities in the fields of fitness, leisure and well-being

Increasingly too, the Centre is popular with organisations in the social and health sectors. For example, NHS bodies are not only using us for Blood Donor sessions (as they have done for very many years) but also now for large training courses in the Barn hall and other rooms, sometimes for the training of staff themselves, sometimes for educational courses. We are also still delighted to receive foreign language schools, whose students use our rooms for lessons - until early 2020, of course, when all the student trips began to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 emergency. Up till February, the Centre’s bookings as a whole had been doing very well, with more NHS departments than ever using us, and more training groups using our rooms, and more of them availing themselves of the Café’s lunch service. We also acquired a few new groups, including a new family contact service group and the wonderfully named “Snap-On Zeus Customer Training”.

When the Centre is allowed to re-open, a major challenge will be to entice our daytime ‘corporate’ users back - when many of them may well have become used to holding ‘virtual’ meetings, training sessions, etc, to meet their business needs. This is such an important part of our income base that it’s vital we restore as much of it as possible.

In recent years, user demand for the Centre has increased through word of mouth and recommendations of our service and facilities. Now we may find that we must roll back a decade - and start promoting the Centre more actively and aggressively again. Fortunately, we do now have the benefit of an excellent website and can make use of other new resources, including social media.

Thanking our Volunteers and Staff

So much of SCA's success over the years has been the result of contributions by local volunteers. Equally, we are extremely fortunate to have a team of part-time staff who have the values of the community centre very much at heart and who are dedicated to its future. **A big thank you to all involved !**

Beginning with **OUR VOLUNTEERS**, our thanks go to:

- All the many volunteers from our affiliated groups who help out in the Café in the evenings; and all the volunteers from the Individual Members section, especially in the work of our Christmas Fair.
- Kate Armes, Simon Armes, Ken Bennett, Ann Beer, Elizabeth Burchell, Maureen Cripps, Sally Diver, Steven Hall, Christine Hewitt, and Julie Howells, who are all part of our daytime volunteer team. Paul Watts, who looks after the large lawn in the main garden, and Maureen Cripps, Brian Jones and Graham Lewis-Pond who put in a great deal of time looking after the Centre's flower-beds and gardens as a whole. Brian also helps with the general maintenance of the Centre.
- Nigel Bubloz and Martin Oakley, who oversee the lighting and sound operation for the theatre, as well as general maintenance of the Barn.
- Sally Diver, who is still coordinating the front-of-house training for theatre companies for the time being - we thank her for all her hard work.
- Steve Borer, our volunteer painter and decorator, who has very skilfully redecorated all of the rooms and communal areas (at least once!).
- John Young and Maureen Cripps, who run the Centre's stall at our Friday Market.
- Thanks also to our volunteer Box Office Team, consisting of Jane Denyer, Margaret Murrell, Vicky Parkin, Jennifer Moore, Peter Joyce, Maureen Cripps and Alison Atkinson.

We have now changed how our Bar services are delivered. Jake Ananth left us as bar franchisee after many years and we wish him the very best for the future. An independent contractor was recruited to manage weddings and party events, which has worked out very smoothly.

Even more successful has been the Association taking over the running of the Bar for theatre events. I initially set this up with a small team of volunteers, and from the start the results and customer response were very good. Simon Armes has then taken up the reins and has moved it on from strength to strength.

Thanks also to **OUR TEAM OF PART-TIME STAFF**, now comprising:

- Our office team, led by Sharon Watts, our Centre Administrator, dealing with finance, room bookings and a great deal else; and Carol Comber, who provides secretarial and general office support. Sadly, we lost our office support member, Amanda Severn, who had been with us for 18 months. We wish her all the best for the future.
- Adrian Kenward, our Premises Manager, who is in charge of the overall up-keep of the complex, its maintenance, security and cleanliness. He heads our caretaking team of Malcolm Woodhams, John Derby, Rod Nash, Stuart Fogden, Bill Clements and Terry McKanna-Maulkin.
- John Walker retired during the year after more than 12 years of service. For many years John was the face of the Centre during the evenings and he will be sadly missed.
- Many of you will know that Rebecca Goffin, our Café Manager, became very ill earlier this year. I am pleased to say she is now recovering well and we look forward to seeing her back when the Café is able to re-open. Many thanks to Kim Drew and Etsuko Morita for running it in her absence, and to Sharon Watts in adding her experience and support.

Tony Brownings

Affiliated Groups 2019-20

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|--|---|---|
| Adur Photographic Society | Southdowns Model Group | Southwick Opera |
| Adur Stamp Club | Southern Electric Group (Sussex Branch) | Southwick Players |
| Individual Members | Southwick Art Club | Southwick Rifle Club |
| Lazy River Square Dance Club | Southwick, Fishersgate and District Horticultural Society | Southwick (Sussex) Society |
| Mid-Hants Railway Society | Southwick Camera Club | Sussex Motorcycling Lodge |
| Mid-Sussex Branch IPMS | Southwick Duplicate Bridge Club | Sussex Quilters |
| Royal British Legion (Southwick Green) | Southwick Masonic Lodge | Wick Theatre Company |
| | | World Ship Society (South Coast Branch) |

Individual Members Section

Now in its 74th year, the pioneering “IM” section of SCA is still welcoming new members. They come to join us for many different reasons - to hear interesting speakers, make new friends or try something new. The “IM” are a very sociable group - come and join us, you will always feel most welcome!

Serving as Trustees of the Community Association. Maxine Coomber was re-elected as President of SCA at the 2019 AGM and Michael Coomber was re-elected Vice-President. Also at the AGM, another of our members, Maureen Cripps, was nominated by IM and elected as a Trustee of the Community Association. Several other elected Trustees, nominated by other groups, also happen to be IM members.

Supporting SCA with donations and fundraising. IM Members helped sell tickets for the “Grand Draw” which is a major fund-raiser at the Christmas Fair (organised this time by Martin Oakley and Maureen Cripps). As well as selling tickets on the day, our members ran a sales table and ‘lucky dip’ which raised over £150, which was donated to the Association.

We also contributed to the 2019 Beer Festival with a donation of £50.

IM members help as volunteers in many ways across the Centre - for example, helping in the Café, in the Centre’s gardens, in the Barn Theatre Box Office, and at the Friday Market.

Outings. We held several outings for members, including a trip to see “Oklahoma” at Chichester Festival Theatre and “The Lady Vanishes” at the Theatre Royal. Our Christmas lunch was a great success, involving a coach trip to the Ship and Anchor pub on the banks of the River Arun.

Speakers. We hosted an interesting programme of visiting speakers during the year, including talks on the history of local newspapers, the world of musical theatre, Portslade through the years, and the Brighton & Hove Bus Company. The final speaker sessions after January unfortunately could not take place, first because of illness and then of course because of the Covid-19 emergency and the closure of the Centre.

Sadly, the Community Centre remains closed during the crisis. We will do all we can to keep our members informed through email. We certainly hope to be up and running again just as soon as we can.

Maxine Coomber

Why not become an Individual Member of SCA?

Annual Subscription: Single £6.50 Double £10

Please contact **Mike Coomber** (IM Hon Treasurer) at
Southwick Community Centre, Southwick Street, Southwick BN42 4TE

Cheques payable to: “*SCA Individual Members*”

Keep up to date - use the Community Centre website !



Southwick Community Association is a registered charity (No 305370)