



SCA

Southwick Community Centre
A Place for Everyone

Clubs and Courses

Meeting Rooms

Café

Bar

Gardens

THE BARN

Theatre

Weddings and Parties

Conferences



www.southwickcommunitycentre.org.uk

SOUTHWICK COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES *(as at June 2023)*

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

MEMBERS OF STAFF *(as at June 2023)*

<i>Centre Manager</i>	Jayne Routley
<i>Office</i>	Kate Armes, Sue Wilton
<i>Finance</i>	Sharon Watts
<i>Premises</i>	Paul Martin Stuart Fogden, Cosmo White, John Derby, Bill Clements, Ian McRae, John Wells, Malcolm Woodhams
<i>Café and catering</i>	Connie Devlin Etsuko Morita, Debbie Moore

Introduction

When I wrote last year it was with a feeling of anticipation. The Centre had just started to recover from the crushing experience of the lockdown years; and although progress was being made, it was painfully slow. This was no doubt due to the lingering lack of confidence that was still felt by many users of the Centre - and even among those of us working and volunteering for the Centre. I am pleased to say the situation has really turned around. Confidence has returned, activity levels are up, and there is generally a feeling of enthusiasm throughout. I think it would be fair to say the feeling now is that we are over the worst and heading for a better future.

The report from my colleagues will give you a good indication of the progress made and the direction we are taking. I hope this will give you the same feeling of enthusiasm and satisfaction it has given me.

I'd like to thank everyone connected with the Centre for their support through a very trying time. I can assure you we will do everything we can to strengthen the Association and keep it as the vital part of Southwick it has always been.

Malcolm Gough (CHAIRMAN)

RECOVERY *AND* RENEWAL

This Annual Report records what has been a remarkable recovery in the Association's vitality and confidence.

The two preceding years were a hard struggle, in the long shadow of the Covid pandemic. And the recovery effort was difficult and uncertain, with serious worries about being able to build back up to levels of activity that we had back at the beginning of 2020.

But we are pleased to report that the progress made in this last year has actually exceeded the hopes and expectations we had at the beginning of 2022.

The story of the year is set out in the body of the Annual Report that follows below, along with an indication of our plans for the future. This account has been compiled by **Jayne Routley** (our Centre Manager), **David Comber** (Vice-Chairman) and **Tony Brownings** (Hon Secretary).

The Annual Report concludes with a financial summary by **Bob Ryder** (Hon Treasurer).

Staff and volunteers

Our staff team has changed significantly, in both structure and personnel. Jayne Routley, who joined us in early 2022, manages three supervisors: Kate Armes for the Office, and - joining us during the last few months - Connie Devlin for Café and Catering and Paul Martin for Premises. In addition, Sharon Watts works exclusively on the financial work of book-keeping and accounts.

During the year we said goodbye to four members of staff - Kim Drew, Rod Nash, Terry McKanna-Maulkin and Brad Green. As well as the two new supervisors mentioned above, we also welcomed three new members of the premises caretaking team - Cosmo White, Ian McCrae and John Wells.

At the time of this report, we have a total of 16 staff on the Association's payroll, all of whom are part-time. This represents the equivalent of 6 full-time staff.

Volunteers are involved in nearly every aspect of the Association's activity. The Board of Trustees, elected annually, oversee the management and direction of the Association; and the principal 'honorary' officers are responsible for specific executive responsibilities, for example in financial and legal matters.

But volunteers are also involved in a host of practical jobs to support the running of the Centre and the business of fundraising. The Café and the Bar are supported by volunteer workers; the Box Office team and the Barn Front of House team are all volunteers; maintenance of our large garden areas is carried out by volunteers; the organising and running of fund-raising events is heavily dependent on volunteer effort. And many volunteers with specific skills use their expertise to help out in areas such as technical or professional services, design and publicity, social media, technology and accountancy.

From returns made by many of our affiliated groups, we estimate that more than 2,000 hours of volunteer time were given to the Centre in 2022. There are way too many people than can be mentioned here, but we are hugely grateful for their contribution. Overall numbers are down from pre-pandemic levels, though not dramatically so. But we are working now on a programme to recruit new volunteers - and to make the work of *all* our helpers and contributors more rewarding and better supported.

The Centre's services

Our rooms and facilities were in growing demand during the year. Although levels of use were not fully back to those of 2019-20 (the last 'normal' year before the pandemic) the rising trend was clear as the year progressed. Also - noticeable trends across the various 'sectors' that use our facilities.

- 'Youth' has seen a significant increase, across pre-school, theatre, music and dance. So have the sectors we call 'Community Interest' and 'Well-being and Fitness'.
- Hires for 'Weddings, Receptions and Parties' increased considerably over 2019 levels, as did those for 'Corporate Events'.
- Exceptionally, since the autumn we have also been hosting regular sessions each week for Barclays Bank to help customers in need of advice, following the sad closure of Southwick's last bank branch in September 2020.
- On the *down*-side in usage, there was a big drop in hires from the 'Care and Social Service' sector, and a significant if smaller drop from the 'Health Organisations' sector - both of course working under great financial and funding pressures.
- But proportionately the biggest fall was in hires by 'Foreign Language Schools', which dropped to just a third of the 2019 level - mainly due to the effect on this particular sector of the UK's passport and visa regime since Brexit.

We should also report a further drop in the number of groups affiliated to the Association, which was 20 at the start of the year (see list at the end of this report). This had fallen to 17 by the end of the year. Over the decades, there has been a slow but steady decline from a high point of more than 60 such groups in the 1950s and 60s.

This is a reflection of wider changes, over the last two and three generations, of the ways in which people spend and organise their social and leisure time. We will be trying to promote the benefits of affiliation in the coming year. But we will also need to review the implications for our Constitution, which relies quite heavily on an 'affiliated' structure.

The Barn has continued its strong recovery since re-opening in autumn 2021, with usage this year at about 30% above the 2019-20 level. As well the 'wedding and party' hires mentioned above, the demand for theatre and music events has been high.

We have increased the number of one-night events taking place in the Barn. The first, a folk-rock concert at the end of March, was a great success - and has been a good pointer for the future. Some of the future bookings (such as 'tribute

acts’) will involve a similar kind of ‘profit-share’ approach to the hire of the Barn.

An ambitious Music Festival is planned for August - the first such Centre-run venture since the last ‘Rockin the Barn’ in 2012.

Other big gatherings in the Barn this year have included events like the traditional Christmas Fair and the annual Beer Festival, back to its former strength.

The Café and related catering activity have had a good year, steadily growing towards 90% of the pre-pandemic levels of 2019. The improvements made to the Café space during the lockdowns (replacement flooring and full redecoration) together with many enhancements since, have improved its ambience and appeal. We have introduced ‘special’ events, like ‘coronation-themed’ cream teas, with further Sunday afternoon tea and musical events coming up this summer. And we are now accepting wedding bookings where the Centre itself will be providing the catering (rather than external caterers).

The Bar has continued to thrive in serving audiences for theatre shows and other events in the Barn, and has been able to operate very successfully with a wholly volunteer team. We are now considering opportunities to expand the bar ‘offer’ to cover weddings and parties in the Barn (instead of bringing in external providers) - which will of course raise new challenges.

Office and customer service. Over the year we modernised several areas of the Centre’s business systems. These have helped to improve our efficiency, and also our responsiveness to users and customers.

Our computer and email systems have been thoroughly upgraded, so that staff can communicate more effectively with each other (often ‘remotely’) and with customers. Also, our accounts and payroll work has been transferred onto a fully online system, which has brought many advantages once we got through the hard work of making the transition.

We have also started the process of getting our bookings diary managed on an electronic system. Also under development is a renewal of our 10-year-old public website, with new design and new practical features.

One technical improvement that has already had a noticeable effect is the upgrading of the 8-year-old ‘wifi’ network around the Centre. This is a formidable challenge because of the number of buildings spread over our one-acre site. The upgrade has improved the reliability of our ‘business’ functions (for example, the growing use of electronic payment methods *via* card readers). But so many of our users are also getting the benefit: indeed, they fully expect “good wi-fi connectivity” as a standard service in public buildings like the Community Centre!

Community development

One of the areas we have focused on this year is widening the reach of the Community Centre, aiming to stimulate new activities and social opportunities for local people. It's an ambition that goes wider than the activities covered by individual groups, clubs and classes based at the Centre. Our shorthand for this is 'community development'. Here is some of the progress being made.

'The Big Give' initiative. Taking part in this scheme helped us secure donations - and, with it, matched funding from The Reed Foundation - totalling £5,000. This is a resource that's now helping us to facilitate a range of low-cost courses, lectures and coffee afternoons this year. It will also support us in developing a wider community of "Friends of SCC" in the future.

'Warm Spaces'. We secured a £500 grant from Adur District Council that allowed us to start a Tuesday afternoon group. Anyone can pop into the Centre for a free drink and biscuits. Initially this grant was to help with the 'cost of heating' crisis, but it has achieved an equally important benefit in relieving isolation and loneliness. Supported by some amazing volunteers, it is now a space for the community to get together chat and laugh, sing, play bingo and do quizzes.

'Dementia-friendly Communities'. This initiative, which was launched by the Alzheimer's Society, encourages a shared responsibility to ensure that people with dementia feel understood, valued and able to contribute to their community. We have received our "Working Towards Becoming Dementia Friendly" certificate (see the many stickers around the Centre!) and are part of the growing Adur Dementia Friendly Community. We're supporting dementia groups to use the Centre - with the "Love to Move" / "Time to Chat" groups receiving room hire that's subsidised by grant support. We've helped them with funding bids to provide for their service, so far receiving grants totalling nearly £3,000.

Christmas Tree project. We made an early start on this, so that local people are already making knitted or crocheted squares which will help create a range of Christmas trees - for a display in the Centre's garden at the Christmas Fair. This may become part of a hoped-for Southwick Advent calendar, linking with local businesses.

In the offing ... we have been working on further community projects, including possible weekly drop-in sessions on IT; and on 'employability' advice; courses for the over-50s on retirement, and on change planning; Art and Craft courses; and a monthly lecture programme.

The ‘fabric’ of the Centre’s buildings & equipment

As community centres go, we are unusually blessed in having such an extensive range of buildings and facilities, grouped around a magnificent garden, and in an overall setting adorned with listed buildings and other fine heritage features.

This blessing is also quite a wicked challenge! So - with the support of Adur District Council, the freeholder of the site and our ‘landlord’ - there is a lot to do to keep the facilities in good repair, and to continue to improve the facilities we can offer. Here are some of the things that have been happening this year, or are in development.

Of course, during the two pandemic years there was necessarily a pause in the normal pace of improvements to the Centre and its equipment. The activity was mainly constrained to things that were essential for us to be able to re-open properly when the time came. Key items in 2020 and 2021 were replacement of defective flooring in the Café, sorting out the surface drainage in the upper garden area, and the renewal of outworn mains and lighting circuits. We also had some thorough work done to resolve - we hope for good! - a long-running problem with malodorous drains in the old Barn toilet area.

But in 2022-23 we felt able to begin reviving earlier plans, to decide on priorities and start preparing for new work.

A clear priority remains the need replace two very large areas of rotting window frames - 1960s frames in the Café and 1950s frames in the Porter Room. We have held meetings with Adur District Council staff and they are carrying out investigations for the scope of works, and preparing costings and a possible programme budget. Technically some of the work could start as early as next January. But a great deal depends on the Council’s budget - and also the need for the Council’s Planning Committee to approve the necessary adaptations.

We revisited a longstanding issue about improving the ventilation in the Barn Hall. A system that was installed in the major building scheme of the mid-1990s soon proved to be too noisy in operation. An investigation about four years ago indicated that adapting the existing plant into an air-conditioning/heating system could cost in the region of £50,000. Given other pressures and priorities, this matter is now very much ‘on hold’ - until perhaps, in time, global warming makes the problem unbearable. (Today’s rare uncomfortable heatwave might become the standard summer horror in 20 years from now.)

We’ve already mentioned the investment in new IT and broadband equipment for the Centre. This was a significant upgrade (costing £9,000) in the fittings and equipment. Another significant upgrade (£15,000 spread across this year and

next) is the replacement of the 25-year-old sound system in the Barn Hall. The result will be a big increase in quality, with the versatility to support a wider range of events - theatre productions, concerts and (potentially) cinema screenings.

The Café saw replacements in two key refrigeration units (£3,500) this year. But there are bigger kitchen developments in the offing. The commercial ovens are more than 30 years old, and are now failing. We also need to replace the big old cooker hood with a larger and more powerful new version to meet today's regulatory standards. This, and some incidental improvements, will cost £25,000. Work will take place this summer, with a brief shut-down of the kitchen while it's done.

Finally, the business of day-to-day maintenance has been ticking over through the year - much of it needing professional contractor input, but a significant amount being tackled by members of our Premises team. Paul Martin is taking the lead in this area, and in liaising with Adur District Council on matters affecting the building 'fabric'.

Financial overview, 2022-23

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

The overall result was a surplus of £19,800 for the year. This is a hugely better result than was expected when we made budget decisions in January 2022. In fact, that budget (just 18 months ago) pointed to a deficit of £7,000 in 2022-23 - unless we could restore levels of 'hires' towards their 2019 level, and that we could also increase income from our café and bar activities.

But as the year unfolded, the hire of general rooms and the Barn Hall did indeed continue to build up further. And our café and bar activities did indeed deliver increases in net income. Across the Operating Fund as a whole:

- **Income** (at £266,000 gross) was £42,000 (19%) higher than in the last 'normal' year before the pandemic, 2019-20.
- **Expenditure** on running costs (at £247,000 gross) was £54,000 (28%) higher than in the last 'normal' year, 2019-20. As expected, inflation increases - and some planned increases in staffing levels - came into effect.

DEVELOPMENT FUND *(for improvements to our facilities, equipment and services to the community)*

We raised £14,000 in grants and donations. Of that, a remarkable £13,000 was directly in support of 'community development' events or activities.

And we made an excellent fundraising surplus of £9,500 from our annual Beer Festival, which in May 2022 made a very strong return in the two-day format of the pre-pandemic years.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

After two years of holding capital spend back to the essentials, we returned this year to more typical levels of investment in improving the Centre's facilities and equipment. We spent a total of £28,000 :

- £3,000 on upgrading fixtures & fittings to the buildings
- £9,000 on major upgrades to the broadband and IT systems, for the administration of the Centre and for the users of the Centre
- £7,000 on improvements to Barn equipment
- £5,000 on replacement kitchen and bar equipment
- £4,000 on new seating for users of the Centre

OVERALL

Even though we spent £28,000 on those capital improvements, we were still in a better overall financial position at the end of the financial year than at the beginning. Our net current assets increased slightly, by 3%.

This is a good sign of the recovery that we have made since the “pandemic years”. It well exceeded the expectations the Trustees had at the beginning of 2022.

List of Affiliated Groups 2022-23

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

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Scenes from our fundraising community Beer Festival (across the last 10 years)

