

GREAT GRANSDEN READING ROOM

Martha Sophia Webb Charity, Number 1077994

Annual Report for the Year 2020

Presented to the AGM 23 February 2021

This is the annual report of the trustees of the above-named charity for the calendar year 2020 which is also its financial year for the purpose of preparing final accounts.

1. Governance

1.1 The following individuals served as trustees during this period:

Anne Constantine	Elected
Lynne Taylor	Elected
Sue Meredith	Elected
Vikki Murphy	Nominated by Barneys Club
Ann Girling	Nominated by the Gransdens Horticultural Society
Martin Davies from 10.03.2020	Nominated by the Gransdens Society
Ralph Goodchild	Nominated by Carry On Learning
Emily Glover	Nominated by the Gransdens Guides
Irene Cooper	Nominated by the Allotments Society
Elaine Boyd from 10.03.2020	Nominated by the Revellers Drama Society
Peter King	Nominated by Great Gransden Parish Council
Teresa Merrill until 10.03.2020	Nominated by the Evergreens*
Margaret Cuming until 10.03.2020	Nominated by the Ladies Group**
Stephanie Beaumont from 10.03.2020	Co-opted

*Evergreens remains a nominated group but did not nominate a trustee following the AGM on 10.03.2020

**The Ladies Group ceased to be a nominating body on 10 March 2020 under the revised constitution.

The Royal British Legion remains a nominating group but did not nominate a trustee in 2019 or 2020.

1.2 The Management Committee (the trustees) normally meets twice a year in addition to the AGM. Two additional meetings were convened in 2020 for the purposes of i) agreeing amendments to the constitution and ii) agreeing the COVID risk assessment for the partial reopening of the Reading Room in the summer

1.3 The charity is governed by a Scheme that was adopted on 19 June 1953 and amended on 11 February 2020. This Scheme describes the purposes of the charity as *“physical and mental training and recreation and social, moral and intellectual development through the medium of reading and recreation rooms, library, lectures, classes, recreations and entertainments or otherwise as may be found expedient for the benefit of the Parish of Great Gransden and its immediate vicinity”*.

1.4 The Reading Room is, in normal times, in regular use by a number of local groups and societies that provide lectures and other activities for their members. Barneys Club provides play and educational activities for primary-age children after school and during holiday periods. There are occasional small-scale concerts or other performances and charity fund-raising events. The hall is available for hire for private celebrations or other purposes. Several organisations such as the Parish

Council hold regular or occasional meetings in the Reading Room. Much of this activity was curtailed in 2020 because of COVID restrictions.

1.5 Amendments to the Constitution (“the Scheme”) were formally agreed at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 11 February 2020 and accepted by the Charity Commission. These amendments were to the membership of the Management Committee and to the list of nominating organisations (User Groups). New Trustees were appointed at the AGM on 10 March 2020 and have received an induction pack and training. The Charity Commission entry for the Martha Sophia Webb charity has been updated to the new management trustees. The committee Chair is now the point of contact and responsible for the annual return.

2. Village Halls Week January 2020 (this was also reported in the March 2020 Annual Report)

This was a national event to celebrate the value of village halls in their communities. A special Quiz Night was held in collaboration with the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group whose Chair, David Prest, was the Quiz Master for the night. The event was quickly sold out and feedback was very positive. The event raised £620. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of this evening.

3. COVID

3.1 The pandemic has had a devastating effect on activity in the Reading Room. Full closure was required in the first lockdown and only childcare activity allowed in subsequent lockdowns. A full COVID risk assessment was drawn up and approved by the Management Committee in July to enable limited re-opening for Barneys Club. The Club made use of the Reading Room and the school (for different ‘bubbles’) for a short while when parents went back to their workplaces but subsequent restrictions led to a drop in numbers which made continuation unviable.

3.2 In theory lettings were possible in the early autumn but numbers were limited to 14 because of the distancing rules and only one small letting took place in addition to Barneys. Hirers were obliged to sign an addendum to the hiring agreement confirming adherence to the COVID measures set out in the risk assessment. The Management Committee will consider how something similar needs to be explicit in the hire agreement itself in future.

4. Lettings

4.1 Lettings income was £4968.70 in 2020 compared to £9,236 in 2019 and £7,837 in 2018 (affected by summer closure for re-thatching). This substantial loss of lettings income was entirely due to COVID and the enforced closure of village halls and will continue into 2021. It is not known when village halls will be able to re-open or return to normal or whether the experience of COVID will have a longer-term effect on hiring. The Management Committee will devise a marketing strategy for the Reading Room and ensure that the highest standards of hygiene remain in place permanently to reassure potential users.

4.2 Huntingdonshire District Council has been providing businesses forced to close with financial support for loss of income and village halls have been included in this. The Reading Room received £11,334 in support from HDC in 2020 and has already been notified of further support for 2021.

4.3 Lettings fees have remained unchanged for a number of years. The Management Committee will review its fees policy during 2021.

5. Repairs and maintenance

5.1 Damage to roof tiles caused by high winds were repaired. The repairs needed to two windows has been delayed because of COVID and the resignation of the caretakers; this will be carried out this year. The main hall curtains are in need of relining.

5.1 A full electrical inspection was carried out 5 November 2020 and repairs made to the external supply cable and some internal wiring; the consumer unit was replaced with the most up-to-date version.

5.2 A fire inspection of extinguishers and fire blankets was carried out on 3 November 2020.

6. WiFi

Wifi was installed in the Reading Room in July and has been used by Barneys Club for TV and film through their Apple TV subscription. We are very grateful to the Parish Council for meeting the costs of installation and the first 18 months of the contract. We are confident that wifi will be a considerable attraction and benefit to users once we are up and running again.

7. Caretakers

David and Jenny Brown retired in October and relocated to Norfolk close to their family. Interviews for a replacement were held on 9 October and Georgia Yarrow's appointment was confirmed by the Parish Council on 16 October. Georgia took up post on 1 November. Because of COVID restrictions her work has been mainly confined to routine maintenance, oversight of works and administrative work on setting up a digital system and documents for booking and hiring.

8. Thank you

Thank you to all Members of the Committee in 2020 including our Treasurer Lynne Taylor, who is standing down at the AGM after more than 20 years, and Secretary Sue Meredith, and to the Caretakers David and Jenny Brown and Georgia Yarrow for maintaining the Reading Room and managing the bookings.