

Combe Reading Room – Chairman’s Report 2012

Since I last reported to you the Reading Room has had a very satisfactory year both socially and financially.

Financially our underlying fundraising has prospered with our traditional sources, notably coffee mornings, room hire and cream teas together with a garage sale providing the bulk of the monies. The current position is that we have some £4,200 in our current account and £7,500 in our savings account. This is after having paid for the restoration of the railings (£3,180) and the outside furniture (£450) and for which we received grants of £500 from the Doris Field Trust, £1,680 from the Ironmongers’ Foundation and £350 from our own Parish Council. .

Our current major project remains the Long Room or as it is to be known the Combe Coffee House. This comes in two stages first we need to move the barn over a bit to make way for the slightly wider Long Room. This is likely to cost in the region of £13,000 and for which we have received a grant of £10,000 from Awards for All, which is part of the Big Lottery fund. Work on this will start as soon as we finalise the detail and we can get the builder on site. Given our summer fundraising programme a realistic start date may not be until September. The second phase is the long room itself which will be the Combe Coffee House housing not just a cafe but a small shop and an exhibition area and will essentially be a central village meeting point. This is, as you can imagine, a rather expensive venture and a rough order of magnitude cost is £180,000. We have secured an unconditional grant of £50,000 from Village SOS, again a part of the Big Lottery Fund. We have an application in to West Oxfordshire District Council for a further £50,000 and about which we should hear in early June. We are currently exploring sources for the balance amongst which are the Garfield Weston Foundation and a village share scheme.

Another major milestone achieved since last year has been the securing of a 35 year lease from our landlords who are the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance and the Adela Brooke Trustees. This document is fundamental in any application for grant monies. I would like to record my thanks for the hard work put in by all sides, but in particular Freddie Freeland of the Adela Brooke Trustees.

Last August 2nd we had our 120th birthday party in celebration of the original opening by the Duchess of Rutland. Sadly, though invited, the current Duchess was washing her hair that day. Despite the rain it was a great success and gave us an opportunity to show off our plans for the Combe Coffee House.

The Diamond Jubilee was a terrific success with hearty congratulations to all who were involved. It is only Combe who could throw an event like that and in which the Reading Room was proud to take part.

Our current fund raising programme continues apace with our monthly coffee mornings, summer cream teas and an Open Gardens event on 1st & 2nd June.

The Trustees and I are extremely grateful for the support we receive from the village as a whole and from the Parish Council in particular. We are a lucky community to have in our midst such a proactive body.

My personal thanks go to my fellow Trustees who work so hard to raise money and make things happen. I would also like to extend the warmest possible thanks to Sue and Gary Golder who not only look after the building and gardens so well but in so doing make the Trustees' burden so much lighter.

Roger Purssell

Chair

8th May 2013