

Combe Reading Room – Chairman’s Report 2013

In the period since I last reported we have experienced both highs and lows.

Starting with the bad news, we have had to pull the plug on our plans for a Combe Coffee House in the Long Room. It was probably a pretty ambitious undertaking in the first place with a very significant requirement for funds, somewhere in the region of £150 to £200k and a virtual rebuild. We were initially most enthused when we received support in the form of a grant of £50k from Village SOS (The Big Lottery). Bucked by this and some encouraging informal noises we applied to WODC for a further £50k as a Community Facilities Grant. Sadly when our formal application was scrutinised the committee decided against it. We had also applied to the Prince’s Countryside Fund for monies, £50k, but were again unsuccessful. Given these knock backs and the obvious difficulty in accessing the necessary substantial grant money it was very reluctantly decided to call it a day and return the £50k to Village SOS.

The good news however is that as part of our plans for the Long Room we had decided to attempt the refurbishment of the barn at the end of the garden. For this we applied to Awards for All (again a part of the Big Lottery) for £10,000 towards the costs. We were successful and as a result have managed to produce the delightfully renovated barn and surrounding area that you can see today. That tells only a part of the story. What has made this undertaking possible is the hard work and commitment of those with our village close to their hearts, notably our brilliant clerk of works and roofer extraordinary Bob Days who was ably assisted by Jack Merry and Simon Oliver. It is only when you start a job that the full extent of what is involved becomes apparent and that is always more than first thought. This project was no exception, but no problem was too difficult to overcome and all done at rock bottom “mates rates”. The result is not only a more extensive refurbishment than was originally envisaged but also one that came in at only a little more than the Awards for All £10k grant. Thank you Bob and your fellow Combies, but for you the costs could easily have been double and the work not as satisfactory.

Day to day we carry on much as usual with our fundraising from inter alia Coffee Mornings, 100 Club, Cream Teas and Room Hire. Our financial

situation is reasonably healthy with £2,000 in our current account and £16,000 in our savings account. This will enable us to continue our refurbishment and maintenance programme with redecoration of the main room, the path and upgrading the lavatories amongst items on our “to do list”. The redevelopment of the Long Room remains a goal. All these and more are designed to make the Reading Room a village amenity which is not only useful but is also one of which we can all be proud

As ever the Trustees and I are extremely grateful for the support and interest we get from the village as a whole and from the Parish Council in particular, but also from WODC.

I say this every year, but that makes it no less relevant or sincere, 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
14th May 2014