

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 13th April 2026

Registered Charity number 1185608



CHAIRMAN

P Guildford

SECRETARY

P Anning

TREASURER

D Wort

Trustees in attendance: Peter Guildford, David Wort, Nicola Hulme, Tom Mortimer, Mina Soi-Westby

Villagers in attendance: Deborah & Peter Lord, Debbie Wort, Malcolm Brook, John Westby, Melanie Smith, Shauna Bitterworth, Ross Cunliffe, Sarah Spencer (EK Flower Club), David & Vivien Titchmarsh (Sec, Short Mat Bowls), Carol Taylor & Rosemary Codling (Short Mat Bowls), Keith & Judith Kerr, Karen Turner, Carole Harper, Julie Bradwell

Minutes: Nicola Hulme

1 Chairman's opening remarks

The Chairman began by welcoming all present to the AGM

2. Apologies for absence – Margaret Mosely, Elaine Bray, David Smith, Susan Lupton, Claire Carvis, Paul Evans, Peter Anning

3. The Minutes of the AGM of 7/04/2025 were approved as a true record.

4. Chairman's report

The period time of that we are covering this evening is from the beginning of January 2025 through to the end of December 2025:

Good evening everyone, and thank you for coming along tonight.

I'd like to take a few minutes to reflect on the past year—where we've faced challenges, but also where we've made real progress.

The Hall relies heavily on income from major events, particularly Saturday celebrations, which are mainly weddings.

This income is vital, as it helps keep hire charges affordable for our local clubs and regular users.

However, the wedding market has changed significantly in recent years.

Many couples who might previously have chosen our Hall were affected first by COVID, and then by rising inflation. For many, that has meant less disposable income.

We're also seeing changes in behaviour. Many couples have already been together for some time and may have young families. This often affects the scale or timing of celebrations, and in some cases delays—or even removes—the decision to marry.

Overall, income from weddings is now less predictable.

That said, we haven't stood still. Over the past year, we've worked hard to improve how we present and promote the Hall. We've launched a new website and invested in local advertising.

These steps are beginning to have an effect, although bookings have not yet returned to pre-COVID levels.

At the same time, costs—particularly energy—have been rising.

Electricity costs have been higher than we would have liked, due to a fixed contract taken out during a period of uncertainty. The good news is that from October, a new contract will reduce electricity costs by around 50%, which will make a significant difference.

We've also focused on reducing energy use. Insulation has been improved, lighting has been upgraded to LED, and better controls have been introduced.

Everyone using the Hall has been reminded of energy costs, and I'd like to thank you for that support—even if the savings have not been as high as we had hoped.

Grants have also helped us make further improvements.

Alongside a contribution from our reserves, we've installed solar panels and battery storage, which will benefit the Hall for many years to come.

You may be wondering about the climate change garden—whether it has added costs and led to the increases in hire charges.

I'm pleased to say that it hasn't. The project was funded through grants, donations, and a carefully considered contribution from our reserves.

Ongoing costs are very low, thanks to the support of volunteers and the East Keswick Wildlife Trust.

The garden has been designed to be low-maintenance, keeping expenses to a minimum.

The transformation from an agricultural field into a beautiful garden is already proving valuable. It provides a strong visual attraction for visitors considering the Hall for weddings and other events.

Early signs suggest it will help us move back towards pre-COVID booking levels. It is a very positive development for the future.

Before COVID, our approach to hire fees was more relaxed. Unexpected costs or new investments could often be covered by simply hosting additional events.

At one point, we held around 36 weekend events in a year. However, this raised understandable concerns locally, with some feeling the Hall was in almost constant use.

Looking ahead, the garden is already attracting additional interest and the financial benefits, we believe, will materialise further over time.

Some reserves have been used to fund the improvements.

Remember we must maintain a reserve equivalent to around six months of operating costs.

We have achieved this, although the margin remains tight.

Our aim is that future increases will be more moderate—ideally below inflation—rather than the sharper rises we have needed in the past to balance the books.

Before I finish, I'd like to say a few thank you's.....

To my fellow trustees—thank you for your continued support and commitment. It truly makes a difference. And thank you all for your ongoing support of the Hall.

5. Treasurer's report

The use of the hall and the associated hire income improved by £3,524 to **£76,206**.

15 Wedding events took place generating £33.4k (44% of our total),

Our three business users contributed £23.7k (31%)

User group income was £14.1k (18%)

Draw income, Interest on deposits, and commission made up the balance.

Our Total Expenditure was **£76,548**, £2,548 lower than 2024. Resulting in a net surplus of Income over Expenditure of **£1,654** in the year 2025.

Our utility costs (Gas, electricity and water,) were £13,323 10% lower than 2024. Achieved by lower water costs, and better temperature controls in areas heated by the gas supply.

Cleaning costs remain stable at just over £1,000 per month.

Repairs and maintenance were £5,976 in 2025, £3,228 less than 2024, reflecting the savings we have achieved through the skills and experience of our new facilities manager Jon Preston, who has also been part of the team involved in the solar installation this year.

The Balance Sheet at the yearend displays our net asset value as **£269,968**

An increase of £1,654 in the year

Although not part of our 2025 accounts, we currently have substantial liquid assets in our HSBC account and CCLA deposit account to ensure future economic viability in tougher times.

Full details of the accounts can be found under the administration section of our web site.

The formal part of the AGM closed at 7.40pm

6. Trustees

The following Trustees have agreed to continue their role:

Peter Guildford – Chairman

Peter Anning – Secretary

David Wort – Treasurer

Mina Soi-Westby

Nicola Hulme

Claire Carvis

Tom Mortimer

Paul Evans

The Chairman then offered to take questions –

1. David Wort mentioned that the cost of battery replacement for our defibrillator costs £500 every 5 years.

2. David Titchmarsh from the Short Mat Bowls Club voiced his concern regarding the recent hire rates increase. They are considering moving venue due to this.

Mina Soi- Westby gave a presentation on the progress of the Climate Change Garden and our carbon neutral reduction aims and progress for 2030.

Mina also highlighted our Open day on the 17th May – full detail to follow on the web site shortly. Volunteers were asked to help out.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm