



## **Update from the Chair December 2020**

2020 has been an unprecedented year, not just for Barnwood Reading Room, but for many halls and hire facilities. Covid 19 has had a massive impact on the availability of the BRR for hire and upon its regular and adhoc users in the local community for which its use was gifted. This has presented many challenges for us as Trustees. I am proud to say we have risen to these challenges.

We have used the availability of the hall to undertake some significant improvements to the structure and use of the building and its grounds.

Firstly we were aware that the cloakroom and toilet area were in need of updating. The toilet and sink have been replaced to aid users with disabilities and the heating, flooring and décor upgraded. We have also added a baby change unit for users with babies. The result is a clean, versatile and safe room.

The parquet flooring of the main hall was looking very tired and detracted from the recently redecorated walls and ceiling. The floor has now been sanded and polished to within an inch of its life and looks fantastic.

Whilst undertaking the internal maintenance improvements, we have also been able to make our hall Covid compliant with clear signage and hand sanitisation points throughout the building.

Potential hirers had been making us aware of the need for Wi-Fi and internet access to allow for educational training and presentations to be made in the hall. We have now installed this facility with Virgin which is available to all of our users.

The BRR is a beautiful and historic building which we felt lacked visibility and presence in the community for which it was built. Very productive discussions were undertaken with the Acorn Dental practice next door who agreed to let us reduce the height and paint the wooden fencing surrounding the building previously obscuring it from passers-by on Barnwood Road. The old railings were removed and the drive way cleared and gravelled. Along with the mounting and lighting of our new sign, kindly donated by the late Lise Noakes last year from her local councillor budget, the BRR is now clearly visible to passers-by and current and potential hirers.

In this period of low demand for hire, the Trustees have taken the opportunity to increase our presence through social media with Facebook. The website and booking system has also been updated and improved making use of the hall more accessible.

Last December we were able to run our first Carol Service with the attendance of a small brass group from Gloucester Salvation Army. This was a great success and we plan to develop such community events in 2021.

None of these activities and improvements would have been possible without the fantastic and dedicated support of the BRR Trustees. Special thanks go to Bruce and John our property maintenance specialists, Mark for his very excellent IT and marketing skills, Tricia for her incredible administrative and organisational abilities, Andrew for his considered and thoughtful support and Richard for his very professional and thorough accounting.

Mark and Richard are working on the process of converting our constitution to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and we hope to carry this out during 2021. We are very lucky to have such an eclectic mix of talents amongst our Trustees which makes my role as Chairman incredibly easy.

Although this year we have sadly lost some of our regular and loyal users, we hope that next year may allow some of these groups and new to benefit from our beautiful, historic community hall.

Thank you for your continued support.

With thanks

Mandy Scott  
Chair of the Trustees