

## Evenley Parish Council

### Arts Co-ordinator Report March 2016

#### Accompanying documents

- EVA Development Plan 2015 – 2016 with review column completed
- EVA Development Plan 2016 - 2017
- Analysis of ticket sales
- EVA Accounts – NB 2015 – 2016 on 2<sup>nd</sup> sheet

#### Measuring success

This is my second report and, as I have now completed two full years in this post, I feel it is appropriate to review the activities that have been organised and consider measures of success. All events have covered costs and in fact a small surplus has been generated to off-set future losses. Some events have been presented as fund-raising events and Evenley Arts has, in the two years, raised £1,350 for St George's Church and £350 for the Air Ambulance. I am especially pleased with the range of activities and events that have been put on; variety is important to reaching as many people as possible. The EVA visits and play readings have not attracted large numbers but have enabled some who have limited mobility or are on their own or unwilling / unable to drive at night to get to things and form mutually supportive relationships. All events/ activities have received very positive feedback though this has not been collected systematically by survey.

However, behind these successes, there are issues which paint a different picture and call into question the worth of continuing with some arts activities/ events in the Parish. The original aim of Evenley Arts was: "to develop the arts in Evenley to provide a rich and varied set of experiences and to contribute to the sense of community by bringing people together." An analysis of ticket sales over the last two years (attached) suggests that events have sold out because of people coming from outside the parish; this was especially true in the December 2015 pantomime where only c48% of tickets sold were to residents of Evenley. In the initial proposal I put to the Parish Council in 2013, I did envisage that people from outside the Parish would have to be attracted to make main events viable but not to the extent that has been necessary for a couple of events. Events which have raised funds for the Church have naturally attracted people from across the Benefice. The low attendance from Evenley residents at the pantomime in 2015 perhaps suggests this is not an event to repeat even though it is clearly good for grandparents living in Evenley to have something that they can bring their grandchildren to.

Perhaps an even larger issue is that it is the same core of people who attend all or nearly all events and there are many households in the Parish from which no one has ever attended an EVA event. A rough analysis of this indicates that only 23% of households have had someone attend at least one event. This figure drops to c16% when counting representation of households at more than one event. The core attendance comes from c40 households out of 260. To some extent this is inevitable: some people live in a village because they wish to have a quiet, private life. However, the intention was to "contribute to the sense of community by bringing people together" and this cannot be said to have been reached when so many have never attended a single event. My belief is that if people do not come, it is because they do not want to and thus I must try to appeal to all tastes. However, what can be put on is limited by eg the size of our village hall and the level of risk I can afford to take. I would be interested in the views of Parish Councillors on these issues; as a cross-section of the Parish, with some never having attended an EVA event, it would be helpful to have feedback. I summarise below the points on which I particularly welcome comment.

In order to judge whether I am targeting the right groups of people, I have tried to get data from the 2011 census online so that I have an age profile of residents. However, I have only been able to find it by ward. If the PC has access to data by parish or can put me in touch with the relevant officer at SNC, I would appreciate it.

## Publicity

One of the questions raised by the above is how I have managed publicity. Given that some are in touch electronically and others not, I have used as many different forms of communication as possible but at low cost. These are the methods I have used:

- Parish Council web-site events page which has a weekly email alert of upcoming events to all who are registered
- seasonal programme delivered to every household in the Parish and to Mixbury (one also to Hinton) and given to contacts in other villages
- posters in village shop and on noticeboard outside the village hall
- events notification on Evenley Arts Facebook page shared to both Evenley PC and Evenley Residents Association Facebook pages
- Facebook invitations to everyone in and near Evenley with whom I am connected
- timely posts on Facebook similarly shared
- emails to those whose email addresses I have
- info to the Village Correspondent for mention in the Advertiser
- South Northants Council events page through Arts Officer
- Brackley Town Council events listing which is shared with Brackley online post
- specific flyers for some events eg pantomime to every household in the parish
- word of mouth

There is no doubt that the last of these is perhaps the most effective but it is random and leaves me vulnerable to becoming a social outcast because I am always trying to sell tickets! I am especially keen to hear the PC's suggestions as to how best to reach the households who do not participate in arts and indeed other events. I wonder. For example, how many people have registered to receive emails from the PC web-site and what the PC could do to promote this. I also wonder whether Parish Councillors could help by personal endorsement and encouragement.

## Events/ activities organised

I include a list below of all events and activities organised over the two years and also those planned for the near future.

- |                                           |                         |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Live screening Henry IV Pt 1 14/5/'14   | Theatre - visit         |
| • Live screening Henry IV Pt 2 18/6/'14   | Theatre - visit         |
| • Midsummer Madness 21/6/'14              | Music and theatre       |
| • Watercolour demonstration 16/7/'14      | Visual art              |
| • Alice in Wonderland screening 16/12/'14 | Dance - visit           |
| • Pantomime Cinderella 27/12/'14          | Theatre                 |
| • House concert 6/2/'15                   | Music                   |
| • Live screening Stoppard play 16/4/'15   | Theatre - visit         |
| • Play reading 17/4/'15                   | Literature/ theatre     |
| • BCOS Iolanthe 30/5/'15                  | Musical theatre – visit |
| • Live screening Comedy of Errors 9/7/'15 | Theatre - visit         |
| • Gig in the Garden 10/7/'15              | Music                   |
| • September serenade 19/9/'15             | Music (classical)       |
| • Piano recital Stowe 30/9/'15            | Music (classical)       |
| • Hound of the Baskervilles 16/10/'15     | Theatre                 |
| • Play reading 20/11/'15                  | Literature/ theatre     |
| • Artist in Wood demonstration 21/10/'15  | Visual art/ craft       |
| • Pantomime Sleeping Beauty 19/12/'15     | Theatre                 |
| • The Evenley Big Sing 12/2/'16           | Music – participative   |

Planned:

- |                                  |                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| • Art exhibition Oxford 27/2/'15 | Visual art - visit |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|

- |                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Irish Night 12/3/'16           | Music, dance and food            |
| • Play reading 1/4/'16           | Literature/ theatre              |
| • Shakespeare Unplugged 23/4/'16 | Theatre, literature, music, food |

### **Other issues**

I have suggested to the Village Hall Committee that they purchase a black backcloth (acoustic drape if possible) with two rails, one for the end of the hall and one for the side. My suggestion is that the backcloth can then be used in two positions, one of which facilitates 'in the round' performances. I am told this request is progressing.

In my last report, I discussed the issue of being a promoter for Northants Touring Arts and included it as an issue for further consideration in the Arts Development Plan 2015 – 2016. I am very firmly of the view that this is not worth pursuing for the following reasons:

- although as a SNC village we get enhanced guarantee for some events, the size of our village hall means that no event would cover costs at the sort of prices visiting groups charge;
- I am unhappy with the selection of groups for the list which excludes eg comedy and pantomime and there appears to be little transparency about the criteria used to select groups for inclusion in the list;
- there are numerous semi-professional and amateur groups who can provide high quality performance for a fee that is within our very tight budget;
- we are surrounded by arts venues within easy driving distance and together these have a very wide range of arts events on their programmes;
- the advent of live screenings has brought major theatre, ballet and opera productions within the budget and easy reach of most people;
- the EVA visits programme enables nearly every resident who wishes to do so to access the above two even if they do not have transport.

### **Thanks**

I do wish to record my thanks to those in the Parish who have attended nearly all or several main events. Without their support, I would not have been able or willing to put on so much. I cannot, however, rely on these good people but must extend the number of people who come to at least some events.

I am also very grateful to Mike Boshier and Alan Thornhill. We have used their marquee for two events in our garden for which it is ideally suited. Its size means it can seat 80 and still has room for a stage. There is no doubt at all that we would not have been able to put these events on without this as a commercially procured equivalent would be too expensive. I believe Mike and Alan bought it so that residents and organisations in the Parish would have access to a low cost, large marquee.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Carrie, who has supported me in all the events and activities undertaken. She has sold tickets, advised on formats, provided food, cleared up after events and brought her considerable vivacity to everything we have done.

### **Points for feedback and assistance from PC:**

- a contact who can supply census data on population spread for Evenley Parish;
- views of how to reach those who have not attended any events/ activities;
- advice on whether to abandon any type of event, especially the pantomime;
- any other feedback Parish Councillors care to give.

**Conclusion**

I believe that the Evenley Arts programme is probably fairly unique. The focus for the coming year must be on trying to increase the number of people who attend at least some EVA events. If I cannot achieve this in the coming year, I will need to hand over to someone else who may be more successful.

Kevin O'Regan  
22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016