

## **Ellisfield Volunteers Group – Chairman’s Report 2013**

Good Evening Everyone and welcome to the Volunteers AGM.

2013 was, I’m pleased to say, a very uneventful year!! Let me explain. If you recall 2012 was very wet resulting in many repairs to the equipment and many dates being rescheduled. In comparison, 2013 was warm and sunny (and I know it seems a long time ago....) with very little impact on the equipment.

I was doing the schedule last week for 2014 and it occurred to me that the number of volunteers now stands at 35. This is not an insignificant organisation and one that only exists from a desire and commitment from people to support the village community.

As chairman I sometimes overlook the impact of the group and its importance to the village. I’m often reminded by villagers of how fortunate we are to have an organisation that enables people to work together and feel as though they are making a contribution, even if it's in a small way, to the community. That word ‘small’ is important – it doesn’t matter how big your contribution is – any help is always appreciated.

In late 2012, the EVG took a conscious decision to request a significant increase in the annual parish grant for 2013. This was to address the cost of equipment repairs (largely due to the adverse weather) and also to fund a new home for the Lower Common equipment. This inevitably raised some concerns at the Parish Council given the pressures around costs. However, on reflection this proved to be the right decision as we were able to rebalance the EVG books and future proof against further repairs/replacements in the short to medium term. Having said this I can report that for 2014 we have been able to reduce the annual grant slightly when compared to 2013. Zani will provide more details in the Treasurer's Report.

Moving onto 2014, I’m pleased to say that all volunteers have committed their time again for the new year. I’d would also like to welcome some new volunteers to the group – Laura and Ed Fellows, John Hellewell and Dave Waters. As ever, my intention is to ensure that no volunteer should be asked to cut the grass any more than once or twice in a season (unless they request

more) recognising the importance of peoples' time. The addition of new volunteers therefore is always welcome in getting the balance right.

On the equipment side, repairs were minimal for 2013 but for 2014 we will have to replace one of the Burial Ground mowers and also part of the bridge at Lower Common – scheduled for Spring. One of the benches at the Gravel Pits will be replaced but will be funded by the Parish Council.

On the safety side, I do have to remind volunteers that we are subject to the usual Health and Safety regulations. The Risk Assessments have been checked for 2014 by the area co-ordinators and are up to date. If you haven't already done so please take some time to digest them. Details on the website.

It just remains for me to say a big thank you to the volunteers. Without your help the EVG would not exist. I would also like to thank the EVG committee who support me in the day to day running of the organisation and finally a thank you to Steve Brown who is stepping down as the Area Co-ordinator for the Burial Ground. Steve Brown has been working for the EVG for a number of years and I'm sure we will all agree that his dedication in this time has resulted in smooth running of the Burial Ground.

Lastly, I would also like to welcome to the committee Graham Simpson (who will replace Steve Brown) and Ray Reed who also acts as our representative - and indeed chairman - of the Memorial Hall committee.

***Andy Swanston***

EVG Chairman

January 24, 2014