

HEDCA "CHAIRMAN'S CHAT" No.4

Hardway Elson Districts Community Association - January 2026

Dear members,

A Happy Prosperous & Healthy New Year to you and your families for 2026. I do hope you all enjoyed the Christmas festivities with your families, relatives, friends and colleagues. Summer & Autumn have passed since my last chat newsletter No.3 so during this period a lot has happened, all too much to mention, so I will focus and concentrate on the positives, mostly social to minimize your reading and time.

You may or may not have been aware that in September Nick was our newly employed caretaker but due to having to relocate with his family to Dorset at the end of October he was replaced by our newly appointed caretaker **Colin Marshall** on 3rd November 2025.



A reminder that if you have any questions, issues, concerns or constructive feedback then by all means initially have a chat with Colin (David Eves, Office Administrator in Colin's absence or speak with me if it's personal or you want further information etc. or there has been, in your opinion an unsatisfactory outcome or an issue remains outstanding).

There is also an opportunity (and this is the preferred option as there is then a written record) to refer in writing via the 'Maintenance Book' held in the entrance corridor lobby. This book can be used for any topic, subject, issue or related item that requires addressing or action and investigation by the caretaker upon liaison with the office administrator or even a general observation for thought and consideration – not to be confused with the 'suggestion box'.

Yes, I hear you say 'what about the heating' in these winter months. Not wishing to make excuses, but I'm sure you appreciate the building is now decades old and the boiler and pipework system is not as good as modern day heating systems. Having said that, Colin supported by Matt Wagstaff (a Royal Navy Senior Engineer) believe they have found 'a fault' in the system that is restricting the flow of warmth which hopefully will be resolved in the not to distant future and to the benefit of the users of the hall & rooms, especially Room 1.

In previous newsletters, I have mentioned the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) 'Unpaid Workers' (UPWs) who have been onsite and in my opinion, and hopefully you'll agree, have completed extremely good jobs for HEDCA during 2024 & 2025 supporting us via various projects such as the removal of hedges, lawn and grass cutting, décor of the main hall prior to the placement of the new floor and maintenance and upkeep of the pre-school playground (during school holidays). Pictured below is Jason, MoJ work Supervisor of the UPWs.



Subject to additional ongoing 'red tape & bureaucracy' having recently been introduced by the MoJ Health & Safety Executive, I do hope we will continue to see the UPWs onsite during 2026 with a plan for them to redecorate Rooms 1 & 2, the toilets (especially the Ladies), the corridor and 'touching up' of the hall, during the winter months.

In advance, I therefore respectfully inform you that during the next 3 months you might find yourselves having to be "weary of the wet paint and possibly the tardiness of the décor" as it may have to get worse before it appears better, so your patience in this respect would be appreciated.

Whatever the task the UPWs have undertaken or will undertake supports the caretaker & HEDCA in the saving of time & effort and importantly finance.



The latter part of the year of 2025 saw the introduction of a new social adventure held in the lounge area hosted by Derrick 'Del' Ince i.e. An 'Open Mic' event which has proved extremely popular. So much so, that the intention is for this social community activity to continue to be held monthly during 2026 with the next being held Wednesday 28th January. A decision is pending regarding a regular monthly time and date February onwards.

Project Linus” - On Christmas Eve 1995 in the USA, an article appeared in Parade Magazine entitled ‘Joy to the World’ by Eddie Adams. Part of the article featured a petite downy haired child having gone through intensive chemotherapy and her blanket had comforted her whilst undergoing treatment. Karen Loucks who had just learnt to crochet reading this article decided to provide home made blankets to Denver’s Rocky Mountain Children’s Cancer Centre and thus Project Linus was born. Project Linus UK started in 2000 and is 100% volunteer based and non-profit making so they rely on donations of quilts to deliver (<https://projectlinusuk.org.uk/>) – Are you interested in supporting and helping?

Pictured below is just some of the work completed by the “Sew Creative” group who use Room 2 weekly on a Wednesday morning – Excellent work ladies and well done!





A sell-out of 50 Children & parents & relatives visited Santa's Grotto – Pictured are Cerys Crosswell / Sylvie Hasson / Ali Wagstaff / Gary Jeffrey / Graham Brown / Tina Brown / Jessica Gell – "Santa's Team".



12th December saw the 'Friday Bingo Club' members & guests holding their Christmas Bingo party and festivities, the last of the year held on this occasion in the main hall. Usually, this activity is held weekly in Room 2. I'm sure you'll endorse the gratitude of all the members of HEDCA for Gill Hughes' commitment and organisation for her efforts during 2025, together with the support and inclusion of Gill's co-workers and Friday night volunteer team comprising of Gary, Gill's husband, Sylvie Hasson, Helen Seager, Becky Hughes, Chas Maguire & Chris, Charley & Kev (apologies to anyone else I've missed?).



Doors Open at 7pm

Eyes Down at 8pm

Saturday 20th December saw the accumulation of the sale of raffle tickets during the period of months of 2025. This led to a 'Grand Draw' evening with a total of over 180 raffle prizes to be won, ranging from electrical items such as TVs, coffee makers, and other domestic items, together with dozens of bottles of spirits and several selections of meat, all totaling in excess of £4,000 (an amazing amount and worthwhile effort). I'm sure you know that events like this don't just happen and this was down to the organizing by the Social Team, led mainly by Gary Jeffrey & Matt Wagstaff so please join me in thanking them; especially if you were one of those that won, I did. Tickets for 2026 will be available soon.



Joining me as my guests for the evening were The Mayor of Gosport, Councillor Kirsten Bradley, pictured above with Tina Sisk, Secretary of the HEDCA Social Club, with a Christmas pudding head piece/hat and my good friend 'Blind Clive' Jones MBE from Market Drayton, Shropshire who travelled down especially for the occasion (also a winner of Booze)

Clive received the MBE in the 2026 King's New Year's Honour List after overcoming his own sight loss and going on to become a role model for injured veterans, having served in the Army for 12 years, and losing his sight in 2000. Since then, he has been involved with Blind Veterans UK & is a Team GB Archer.

Old Year's Eve rounded off 2025 with yet another sellout social function with everyone being entertained by 'The Vernon Principle', a 5-piece 80s covers band and by all accounts everyone had a most enjoyable evening seeing in the New Year of 2026.



I'm sure I speak for you all when I say that we all wish for 2026 to be an even greater year both socially and financially to ensure that HEDCA remains a valuable commodity for the good of the local community, as it has done for decades. Having said that, this is as always totally reliant on "The people that care i.e. the Trustees, employees, volunteers, members and participating hirers" so heartfelt thanks to everyone in whatever capacity of involvement may it continue throughout this year and beyond. For the next & 1st 2026 HEDCA event ..



Saturday 14th February

7.30pm Doors Open

£7 Members

£10 Non-Members

Tickets now on sale

'The Decades' covering 50 years of music with great vocals and an amazing show.

Enjoy 2026! – Les Heyhoe BCav, Chairman HEDCA Management Committee (HMC)

(Please note that this document has been compiled and produced entirely on my own initiative, reflecting my own personal views and opinions and therefore is not necessarily that of the Social or HMC Committee members, so the content and wording remain my accountability)