

A.G.M., 20th September 2006

Chairman's report on progress of Village Hall

This is my Report on the progress of Swanland Village Hall since the last AGM held on 21st September 2005.

Bookings for the Hall, both long term and single bookings, have remained at a high level and our balance sheet looks healthy. We seem to have gained an excellent reputation for the quality of the facilities and the high level of service, which we provide. We are a little concerned that two alternative venues have recently appeared in neighbouring communities, but so far we have not seen any adverse effect on the number of bookings at our Village Hall in Swanland. The refurbishment of the James Reckitt Memorial Hall also does not yet appear to have taken customers away from us. We will, however, have to maintain our high standards and do sufficient marketing to ensure that we keep up and even increase the number of bookings and events in the Hall. We should look in particular to Adult Education classes, and more activities, which involve teenagers. With the start of a new season of activities and classes, we are very happy to have a new long term booking for classes for martial arts, which particularly attracts young people.

The second Pancake Day, which, although organised by the two churches, was aimed at the whole community, and was again extremely successful. Fund raising events organised by the Playing Fields Association and the Twinning Committee were well attended by the public. A Wild Life Day and a Hedgehog Day added to the variety of events. The management committee is organising an "arts" event for the community for December through Artery. If the event is successful, this could be the start of further similar events.

Private birthday and wedding anniversary parties, and committee meetings of village organisations, made up the bulk of the single bookings, with variety being provided by a colourful Asian Henna celebration.

Most of the original subscribers to the 100 Club, our main source of raising funds, have renewed their membership, which now stands at 147. Draws take place regularly on the last Saturday of every month, and a special Christmas Draw took place in the Village Hall, with the winning numbers being drawn by Santa Claus himself after he had been rowed across the pond. All the members of the 100 Club were invited to mulled wine and mince pies for this draw, which provided the opportunity for another pleasant social occasion in the Hall.

When Andrew Craven left at the beginning of 2006, we were immediately able to appoint a new caretaker, Maureen Wilkinson, to be assisted by her husband Robert. The couple have become a great asset to the Village Hall, both in their enthusiasm for the job and the thorough, reliable and methodical way they have worked.

As a result of their move into the Village Hall as sub-tenants, the East Riding Library has increased its membership and use considerably. During this year's Open Day the librarians enthusiastically played their part by opening up the library with puppet shows and story telling for the children.

Our Open Day was also an opportunity to inaugurate formally our new lift, which we had installed to give access to the upstairs meeting room for those in wheel chairs or too infirm to climb the stairs. Money for the lift had been raised through grants, and from our own fund raising efforts. The lift has given us greater flexibility in that the upstairs room can now confidently be booked for meetings where accessibility may be an issue.

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Too many hard surfaces and a very high ceiling made the acoustics of the downstairs Meeting Hall too difficult for certain activities, including public meetings. A decision was taken to introduce sound dampening measures, but ones that did not spoil the Victorian Gothic look of the room. A 100% grant was obtained from Biffaward, and carpet was laid on the hard surface on the "roof" of the corridor, and padded panels were installed in the gaps in the walls between the neo-gothic trusses. The measures have had some effect, and one of our main long-term hirers, Stagecoach, who use the room for the performing arts, have confirmed that there has been a very satisfactory improvement.

In order to create a small meeting room and to have greater flexibility with prices in the upstairs area, a partition was fitted to create two differently sized spaces. This work was paid for by the Parish Council with the remaining money they had voted for the equipping of the Hall.

Two sets of exhibition boards were kindly donated to us by the Swanland Village Association, and these have already been put to good use. A notice board, donated by Mrs Yvonne Dumsday, was restored by Mr Steve Webb and this has usefully increased our display space.

The three major outstanding matters from the original building works were eventually resolved. The wall in the corridor which had been damp proofed and re-plastered was painted by the original contractor, Hall's. Heating control valves were fitted outside the heavy radiator covers in the relevant rooms and paid for by the Parish Council. A section of the sprung floor in the Main Hall was lifted, the damp area dried out, and the floor replaced after remedial action on down pipes which were considered to be the cause of the dampness; the cost of this work was covered by the contractors' insurance. We are grateful to the Parish Council for pursuing this last matter resolutely with the contractors and architects.

Numerous items of equipment have been purchased over the year, including chairs, tables, crockery and cutlery, so that we can now accommodate up to 120 visitors for large events. A grant towards the cost of the tables was obtained from the Managing Community Buildings Fund administered by ERVAS.

The practice of having working parties of committee members to carry out maintenance work has been established and we have held two successful half days for this purpose. A purchasing and maintenance sub-committee now meets regularly once a month.

This report covers the main developments of the past year. There were a myriad of smaller items which required attention, lots of decisions to be made, a variety of things to be purchased, etc. - all entailing work and time by the members of the management committee. I would like to express my gratitude to all the committee members for the time and effort, which they have expended in the past year, and for all their enthusiasm and creative thinking, which is making the Village Hall the undoubted success that it is.

Paul Priestley-Leach