

## **A.G.M., 21st September 2005**

### **Chairman's report on progress of Village Hall**

After the Parish Council took the decision that that the new Village Hall should be administered by an independent management committee of trustees, in July last year Colin Hotham, Chairman of the Parish Council, persuaded John McKain, John White and myself, to act provisionally as officers and trustees on the proposed committee. The Hall was due for completion at the end of October.

Seven other volunteers were recruited from those who had previously expressed an interest in serving in the defunct Village Hall Association or had responded to a new appeal for volunteers to serve as trustees. Two have since withdrawn and we are left with the eight people you see before you now, one of whom, Yvonne Dumsday, is the representative of the Parish Council. Our first meeting was held on 3rd September at which the three already mentioned were officially voted into office.

The first task was to draw up a lease so that the management committee could start running the hall and start receiving an income as soon as possible. A provisional lease was signed on 15th November,

An Open Day was held on 20th November, which over 560 people attended, all very curious to see how the new building would look on the inside. Nearly every comment from visitors was extremely favourable. Our first booking for December was taken on this occasion.

The second major task was to have ourselves registered as a charity. After a frustrating start, this process was completed very quickly by the end of November.

A Health and Safety Policy, an Equal Opportunities Statement, a Child Protection Policy and other policy documents were drawn up together with letting policies. All hirers are made aware of this information.

With the start of 2005, bookings for regular events were quickly established. In addition to high running costs for items such as power and insurance, equipment had to be purchased. The Parish Council had voted us a sum of money for start-up costs, and in addition we received grants, which were invaluable, such as that from the James Reckitt Trust for chairs tables and crockery, and from the SVA for our cooker and fridge.

To help pay for the equipping of the hall we established a "100" Club which, as a result of the charming powers of persuasion of Marion Riley, now has well over 120 members.

The Hall was officially opened by the Chairman of the Parish Council on 22nd January, when again the Hall was filled with people coming and going all afternoon.

Proof that the Hall was filling a need for a community focus was the enormous success of the Pancake Day, when three or four pancake makers were kept busy for hours catering for the large numbers who turned up to not only eat pancakes but to toss and race with them as well.

After detailed negotiation a final lease was signed on 26th January this year.

However, a major problem at this time was finding a caretaker and cleaner. Finding people who would do just the cleaning proved relatively easy, finding a caretaker was much more difficult. So a rota was established by which five of the trustees acted as caretakers on a weekly basis. As the number of lets increased, this became a more and more onerous task. In early summer Andrew Craven was appointed as caretaker and cleaner until the end of November when his contract is due for renewal. He quickly committed himself to the success of the Village Hall, and on his own initiative organised a table-top sale to raise some funds.

Although we have been very pleased with the number of lets, we have had a large number of “one-off” start up costs, and we have had to draw on part of the remaining money that the Parish Council had set aside to equip the Hall. For example, in order to obtain our Premises License we had to install extra exit lights and electrical safety equipment and pay for costly adverts in the Hull Daily Mail. In addition we were very keen to make full use of the upstairs room, which because of the stairs is inaccessible to the infirm and disabled. We therefore have successfully applied for a series of grants to the tune of £14970 which together with £1500 which we have raised through the Open Day activities and the “100” Club will cover the cost of a lift for wheelchair users. This should be installed in November.

A long held desire by the Parish Council to see the East Riding Library established in the new Village Hall came to fruition at the beginning of May when, under a sub-lease from us, the Library Service moved into the two rooms overlooking the pond. Although we see that the community benefits from this lovely new facility, the rent, which is paid by the Library Service, is lower than we would have wished.

At the beginning of May, six months after the completion of building works, the contractor was due to rectify any outstanding faults and omissions. Most of this work has been done, but two matters have not yet been resolved: the bowing of the sprung floor in the Main Hall and the provision of heating control valves outside the heavy radiator covers. The Parish Council as owners of the building, and the body, which arranged and supervised the contract are now trying to resolve these two problems with the architects and contractors.

So far, with new autumn programmes just beginning, the number of bookings is looking very healthy. Looking at our aims to provide a service for the whole community it would be nice to see more activities for men and for teenagers, and more cerebral activities as opposed to dance and keep-fit activities, and additional events open to the whole community.

However I would claim that the first year, in spite of the inevitable physical difficulties of converting an old building into a modern multipurpose new one, has been a very pleasing success story. Since 20th November 2004 there have been 95 short term bookings at an average of over £50 per booking, and 13 long term bookings. We look forward to achieving our 100th booking before we celebrate our first anniversary. The Village Hall facility has provided Swanland with lots of new activities and a much needed, and already much appreciated, new focus for the community.

Before finishing I would like to thank our landlords, the Parish Council, for their trust and support. If we have had to call on promised money for the start-up costs, we have had an immediate positive response. In the case of the bowing of the floor in the Main Hall floor and the radiator valves, as owners of the building they are pursuing these matters resolutely.

I would also like to thank Graham Latter for providing us with our own pages on the SVA website. The programme of regular events looks very impressive and we will try to make sure that Graham receives all the latest information.

In conclusion but most important of all, I would like to thank the members of the management committee for all their work. Regular and fully attended meetings have ensured that all trustees have participated in the development of the Hall. However, I would particularly like to single out John White and John McKain. After we first took on the task of running the Village Hall, one could literally say that the posts of Treasurer and Secretary / Booking Secretary were full-time jobs with, in the case of the Treasurer, sleepless nights agonising over the details of leases (three different ones), employment contracts, policy documents, etc. and of course money matters. It is to both these people’s credit that the person responsible for giving advice on Village Halls at the Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council, Graham Betts, said that he had not encountered a more thoroughly organised Village Hall. He has chosen Swanland as the venue for their Village Hall Conference on 1st October.