

Chairman's Report at AGM 2007

In its third year the management committee of Swanland Village Hall has continued to build on its previous success. We have managed to increase the number of "one-off" bookings, and to maintain the number of long-term bookings, although one of our major long-term bookings, because of her own particular circumstances, will not be renewing her contract for the coming year. We are also aware that there is a growing provision of rooms to hire for large functions in our area, and we must do all we can to make our Village Hall attractive to potential hirers by maintaining high standards of appearance, tidiness, cleanliness and facilities.

As we meet, the interior of the building is being redecorated; in the most used areas a paint is being used which is hardwearing and scrubbable, but which will maintain the matt effect which in turn helps towards creating a less institutional feel to the building. Through our new caretaker and the trustees' own efforts we are making sure that the building is kept as clean as possible; we are also aware that high standards of hygiene must be maintained in the kitchen. In the past year we have added to and improved our kitchen equipment through the purchase of a new sink with double bowl and drainer, a dishwasher, a larger microwave oven and grill. As the Library likes to show that the library is open by leaving the old "gothic" door open, there has been a problem with ingress of cold air and leaves. Therefore we had an extra internal door fitted to match the existing internal doors. This new door is kept closed. In the toilet for the disabled a folding baby changing table has been fitted, and an extra low boy's urinal in the men's toilet. Numerous other pieces of equipment have been purchased, including extra tables and another table trolley.

A fire risk assessment has been carried out, as a result of which a new fire extinguisher has been purchased and fitted in the Boiler Room. These fire risk assessments will be carried out annually.

We are in the process of testing a built-in sound system for the two large halls, with the intention of purchasing such a system if it proves satisfactory. We are putting together a package of grants, and allocating money from our "100 Club", and our own funding towards purchasing a demountable and storable stage system at the beginning of next year.

During the year we were very sorry to lose our caretaker Maureen Wilkinson and her husband Robert who assisted her. Maureen thoroughly enjoyed her job, and was very reluctant to give it up, but had to do so owing to changing domestic circumstances. We are extremely grateful for the positive way Maureen and Bob did their work and the charm and good nature they showed to the customers.

To replace a caretaker is always difficult: the hours are awkward and he or she should ideally live in the village. After a short interim during which trustees covered the caretaking duties, we appointed a new caretaker, Mr Robert Chippendale, who has now been working for two months of his three month probationary period. The caretaking and cleaning schedule of work is somewhat complicated (no two days are alike), and we are carefully monitoring the performance of our new caretaker.

It is important that some events in the Village Hall are truly open to and suitable for as many villagers as possible. To this end the committee arranged two events through Artery, the East

Riding of Yorkshire's sponsored touring scheme. The first was a concert by a group of young folk musicians in December, the second a masked pantomime in May this year. Both performances attracted sufficiently large audiences for the events to pay for themselves. A third musical concert has already been booked, and the committee will review the future of such events in due course.

A third Pancake Day, organized by the Churches in Swanland, was joined on the year's programme by a Harvest Supper, and both events attracted a huge attendance. A Swanland reunion day was a tremendous success, attracting enormous numbers of former and present Swanland residents, coming to reminisce and meet old acquaintances. The Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council chose to have another training conference for volunteers in village halls in our Hall in Swanland, and the general opinion of the participants was that we had a wonderful facility here.

Repairs and maintenance are a continuing concern and a draw on resources. The initial problems which could be assigned to the original works now seem to be behind us, except for the roof which continues to reveal yet one more leak just after we have solved the last one. The rain recently may well have revealed yet more leaky spots.

We have done some work voluntarily ourselves; I must particularly draw attention to the railings outside the entrance doors, which John McKain, with a little help from others, has sanded and stained, to very good effect.

Marion Riley continues to organize the membership and the draws for the "100 Club". This provides a very useful source of funds to add to other grants for the purchase of equipment. Many thanks to Marion for administering this. Membership at the moment stands at 147.

As Chairman I am enormously grateful to the other trustees for their voluntary effort in running the Village Hall. It is a big undertaking, where the public and users of the Hall may not always appreciate that the whole enterprise relies on this freely given time and hard work from the trustees. I will again particularly single out John McKain, our secretary and booking secretary, and John White, our Treasurer, both of whom do jobs which on occasions verge on a full-time occupation. But every trustee has duties and responsibilities which each carries out voluntarily and willingly.

If we are to maintain an income which allows not only for the essential maintenance of the building, caretaking, insurance, fuel costs, etc. - but also for improvements in the provision of equipment - we will have to be constantly looking for new customers to replace those that inevitably drop out from time to time. So in the future we will not just be able to rely on word of mouth by satisfied customers to attract new hirers, but we must actively market the facility that we provide.

Paul Priestley-Leach, Chairman.
30th July 2007.