

7th April 2014

VILLAGE HALL ANNUAL REPORT 2014

The hall has enjoyed a surprisingly steady year thanks to the continued support of the Trustees and the loyal hall users.

The funds have again benefited from generous donations from village events including, the progressive supper, a dance show, and Plough quiz evenings where winners have donated their prize money. We also received a generous donation from the family of the late Tom Bland who was a keen supporter of the village hall. These donations are paid into the new village hall account and are not used for running the current hall.

We continue work to maintain the current standard of cleanliness and decoration, working within the obvious restrictions, and continue to strive to deliver the best possible service for our users. We have made no major investment in the hall for some time, concentrating only on the essential running repairs. The repairs to the toilets, the lights, the taps, the wooden floor, the windows etc. are done on a voluntary basis by Jim Watson, who always provides labour, and often includes materials, free of charge. Richard Cawte also assists in this role and it is thanks to people like this that the hall can run as it does but we see deterioration in the hall every year and keeping it running gets harder and harder. The hall is very obviously subsiding in the corner near the fire doors and there is little that can be done to fix this without spending a lot of money.

If the village does not act soon, all the talk about preserving the war memorial, respecting the memory of those who gave their lives, the generous donation of the Strathcona family etc will be as nothing as the hall simply falls down. I do not know how long I can expect the Trustees to continue to work to provide the service the village says they want because it is totally thankless task. Last April we had a survey of the hall which was, to say the least, depressing. It is available for you to read if you are interested.

We have to believe that one day soon we will have a new hall but having had the same aim and having written these reports every year for the last 9 years the target still seems a long way off.

Usage of the hall remains at a high level during weekdays and evenings. Our income this year exceeded just our expenditure, which is worth noting, but weekend income is an area where we fall short when compared to other halls. I believe we will have to raise our hire fees this year in order to ensure that income stays ahead of costs.

The current hall has received in 2013:-

- a grant from Essex Community Fund (Searle Trust) to assist with the provision of additional storage, in the form of bike sheds located outside the hall on the road side to help store pre school equipment and
- to re-cover the floor in the bar area where it had become worn, and was eventually torn and irreparably damaged causing a trip hazard which had to be removed.

- a contribution of £100 per annum from the Parish Council towards the costs of emptying the 1100 litre container (£18.28 per fortnightly lift) which serves a waste disposal for the hall but which also takes litter from the bins (including the dog bins) on the meadow and which also serves a waste disposal site for the pavilion (which is owned by the Parish Council)

This year we say goodbye to another Trustee. Natasha Gilder-Wood gave notice at Christmas that she would be leaving after being a Trustee since March 2007 but having long been associated with the village hall management given that, prior to being a Trustee, she was Chairman of pre-School. Tash has provided excellent support in her role as Trustee, Secretary and provider of homemade mince pies at Christmas meetings and I should like to pass on my personal thanks to her as I wish her well in her retirement from active village hall service!

The Trustees remain committed to ensuring that the village hall provides an acceptable, if not perfect, facility for its users but we look forward to a time when we can give a more optimistic report on a shiny new hall.