

SKELSMERGH COMMUNITY HALL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2016/7 FOR THE AGM ON 21ST. JUNE

By the standards of most recent years this year has been one of consolidation combined with planning for the future. Notable achievements have included the installation of Wi-Fi, a seemingly simple task but greatly complicated by B.T. having to put in new poles all the way from the A6. Another improvement has been the trading-up of our old grass mower to a bigger, diesel model with grass collection, combined with the construction of a clippings composter. Both of these initiatives have been largely funded by grants for which we thank the grant awarders, including the Parish Council, and we thank our Secretary, Neil MacKenzie, for taking a lead in both projects and, of course, we thank Harry and Angus Wiseman for their as-ever excellent tending of the mower and the field.

Inside the hall the paint-out, re-covering of acoustic panels and new blinds has given the hall a bright, sunny look even on the dullest days. Again, generous grant finance sourced by Rick Garner helped achieve this at little cost to the hall. After several years of trying to balance the hall temperature at a level 22/23 Centigrade we finally gave up on the room thermostats and resorted to controlling the temperature just by the main thermostat on the heat pump. It is frustrating for users of the hall to realise that, with underfloor hot water heating from a heat pump, it takes up to 24 hrs. for a room thermostat to have any effect, and it was equally frustrating for hall committee members to have to rebalance the room stats. when they were 'fiddled with'. Although not ideal, the new arrangement works well most of the time; the hall is always cosy-warm on cold days, which are most days!

The hall website and on-line booking system have 'bedded-in' over the year and are now a real asset to many hall users. Our modern world seems to divide fairly evenly between the techno-phobe luddites, who resist new technology and new ways (sad to say, your author is of this number!) and the techno-philes, whose worlds revolve around their 'devices' and who expect to be able to do everything (well, nearly everything!) with a keyboard or a 'swipe'. The latter will undoubtedly inherit the Earth; we must keep your hall systems up to their demands.

One of the biggest events in the hall this year was on the 21st April for the Community Gathering evening, when around 75 friends and neighbours from the Parishes enjoyed an excellent buffet and a glass or two of refreshment whilst chatting and listening to presentations by The Church (Nigel), the P.C. (John Chapman) and the Hall (Yours truly) plus up-dates on the Church & Parish News Mag. from Jenny Farmer and on the prospects for high-speed broadband from Cllr. Hermann Moisl. The idea was to bring people together to consolidate our bonds as friends and neighbours, to try to highlight the roles that the 'mechanisms' of community play (the Church, the P.C. etc.) and to gently point out that, without new 'blood', these 'mechanisms of community' fade away. The Gathering was greatly enjoyed and plans are to hold an annual repeat if funds permit. As far as the hall is concerned, we are half way through our 28 year lease from the Church and we need a transfusion of new 'blood' to ensure a vibrant future. Many of the stalwarts who did so much to save the hall from closure at the end of the 1990's and built the 'new' hall have moved on through age or personal circumstances. Please do consider joining us on 't'committee'.

No Chair's report would be complete without giving thanks to (and for) the few active members of 't'committee' who, month-in and month-out, quietly (well, most of the time!) take the strain of running the hall for all to enjoy. Doyenne of these few 'do-ers' is our Booking Clerk, Sam Scarr, who does so much more than just run the diary; managing the cleaning, checking after each booking, putting right every little fault plus finding time to organise Skelsmergh Sports and catering for Community Gathering. Thank you, Sam. And for effectively and efficiently keeping 'the books' we thank Alison Semple, who has gently evolved our money systems to 'on-line' and away from coins and cheques (though we are not so fussy as to refuse either!) and has collected our P.V. feed-in money and grants and paid our bills. Thank you Alison. We also thank our cleaner, Janet Roberts. Together with Neil MacKenzie and the Wisemans, already thanked, the small nucleus of working

members has kept going, and improved yet more, your community hub, your hall.
Please do consider lending a hand ... just come along to any of our meetings.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER, 7.30 PM.

Ian Kell, Chair.