

Loweswater Village Hall AGM

Tuesday March 18th 2025, 7.30pm

Chairman's Report

The Committee:-

Val Bell – Treasurer, Lyn Furniss – Acting Vice Chairman, Roger Hiley, Penny Leck, Barbara Robinson, David Robinson, Sue Severs, Debbie Watson, Andy Burr – Chairman.

You will notice that Peter Winfindale is no longer listed as a member of the committee. Unfortunately I received notification this morning that Karen, Peter's wife, is resigning as caretaker to the hall and accordingly Peter has decided to stand down from the committee. We thank both Karen and Peter for their contributions over the last eight years and wish them well for the future.

Within the year Harriet Davies has stood down from the committee. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Harriet for her contribution to the running of the hall, and her ongoing support.

On Harriet's departure, Lyn Furniss was nominated for the role of Acting Vice Chairman, which she accepted and was unanimously voted in.

The Village Hall Committee has had another full and successful year in meeting its multiple objectives of:-

- raising funds
- maintaining the fabric of the hall
- improving and extending the range of facilities available to the hall's users
- promoting the use of the hall as a community-based venue

In March we held our second Mother's Day Afternoon Teas event, which again was a very successful sell-out. This was closely followed by our Spring Arts Out West evening with David Mynne's very amusing one-man interpretation of Canterbury Tales.

At the end of May we were entertained by Cath & Emma's Abba Night, with song and dance participation from a large and enthusiastic audience.

Our Autumn Arts Out Evening in September welcomed back soprano Lucy Stevens, with pianist Elizabeth Marcus, who presented their much appreciated interpretation of the life and times of Gertrude Lawrence.

We were pleased, once again, to host the Melbreak Communities Coffee Morning in October. The committee's thanks go to Rosamund and John Macfarlane, whose display of their wildlife photography helps to boost attendance numbers, whilst their donation from the sale of calendars, prints, cards etc is very much appreciated.

At the beginning of November we tried something completely new and invited members of

the community to entertain us with their skills in performance art in our Magnificent Melbreak Showcase. A very appreciative audience thoroughly enjoyed two hours of music, recitation, dance, comedy and audience participation. It is hoped to repeat the showcase again this autumn.

Just before Christmas, we offered festive refreshment to the carol singers, at the end of their evening's tour around the neighbourhood, as well as to other members of the community. A collection was held in aid of the NSPCC.

Last week we came full circle by hosting the Spring Arts Out West evening featuring the acclaimed Bluegrass band Old Baby Mackerel, who entertained a full hall with their American roots music.

Our thanks go to Arts Out West for enabling us to bring a broad range of entertaining performance art to our rural community.

Alongside events organised by the committee, the hall is in regular use by, amongst others, local groups, such as The 77 Club, Loweswater Ladies, Melbreak Communities, Loweswater Show, the Parish Council and The Church, by charities like the National Trust and West Cumbria Rivers Trust for meetings, training sessions and workshops, by leisure groups such as swimming with yoga, cycling, Scottish country dancing, fell racing and art sessions and by individuals for christening and birthday parties, weddings and funeral gatherings. The most frequent user of the hall in the last year, with around 75 bookings, has been Val's thriving Keep Fit group, the proceeds from which go straight into village hall funds.

The hall's website and Facebook page continue to be valuable resources in promoting the hall and its activities.

The committee continues to search for ways to bring repeat and new events and incomes to the hall.

Earlier in the year, the committee agreed that the prospects for an oil buying group should be investigated, to run in parallel with the hall committee, where membership fees to join the group are donated to village hall funds. The group is now up and running and has been championed and run by Lyn.

Throughout the year, the committee has managed a number of capital projects to enhance the facilities that are offered to hirers. These include laying tarmac at the rear of the hall to facilitate a disabled access, and the refurbishment of the gents' toilets, which is nearing completion. Baby changing facilities have been installed in the ladies/disabled toilets. For the benefit of hirers holding social events, the hall now carries PPL & PRS music licences and an alcohol licence.

The events and activities that the committee organise and support is only a small part of the work and time that, as volunteers, the committee contribute to the ongoing development of the hall. In my report last year, I recorded that legal aspects of the hall's booking procedures and terms & conditions had been comprehensively upgraded, which was led, at the time by Harriet. Subsequently, Harriet established a comprehensive and

robust framework for all aspects of the hall's governance, and since her departure from the committee, individual committee members have taken on the very time-consuming responsibility for progressing specific areas of governance. A lot has been achieved, with a lot still to do.

To assist with the legal aspects of governance, the committee has engaged a firm of solicitors who specialise in charity law and administration.

We are also assisted in the running of the hall by Action with Rural Communities in England and Action with Communities in Cumbria, both of which we lean on for advice, and appreciate their support.

In her financial report, Val will review our financial performance. I am pleased to say that Val has secured the services of Claire Walton who has prepared our accounts for the first time this year.

Although Karen and Peter are both leaving us, it is important that I reflect, acknowledge and appreciate their services. As the use of the hall has increased over time, they have ensured that the hall is prepared and presented, ready for every event, as well as administered all aspects of the hall's bookings.

The village hall committee is a small group of now nine members. If any members of the public here tonight are interested in joining the committee and would like to know more about how it operates, please contact any committee member. Alternatively, you may not wish to join the committee, but may, instead, prefer to support us by helping out at events, as your time permits, in which case we would welcome the opportunity to hear from you.

A final and very big word of thanks has to go to the village hall committee, without whose support, enthusiasm, time, commitment and good humour, we would not have been able to reach the achievements of the last year. In saying that, it is also very important for me to add my thanks to the spouses of committee members who turn up and add their much-appreciated support in times of need.

Andy Burr
Chairman
March 18th 2025