

PARWICH PARISH ANNUAL MEETING 2024

Report on behalf of Parwich Memorial Hall

Parwich Memorial Hall was rebuilt and reopened in September 2010. The incredibly facility that we have today was funded completely by grants and donations, which were received after the mammoth task of researching and completing lengthy application processes and lobbying anybody who would listen, by the committee at the time, some of whom are still members today.

We enjoyed two decades of relatively straightforward upkeep, and usage and hire charges were enough to keep the books balanced and things running smoothly.

However, the last 4 years have been incredibly challenging, culminating in a situation where we are now in the application and lobbying process again.

In March 2020, we were required to close the Hall due to the Covid-19 crisis. Thankfully, due to the various grants from the Government and the incredible generosity of our late dear friend Colin Sims, we managed to navigate the various lockdowns and stringent restrictions, and reopened again fully in the summer of 2022. Since then, the rocketing energy prices and subsequent knock-on effects on other costs has meant that the income from hiring hasn't been sufficient to cover the outgoings and so we have relied upon the previous Covid grants received, to subsidize revenue. In the autumn of 2023, we took the difficult decision to increase hire charges, the first time since re-opening in 2010, but these still are unfortunately not enough to keep the hall in the black.

In 2023, to help reduce the electricity costs, we replaced all of the light fittings in the hall, so they are now LED.

At the beginning of December 2022, just as the temperature took a nosedive, the heating stopped working. The system had been temperamental for a number of years but with a degree of dogged determination, Arnold Chadfield managed to keep it going. However, this time it soon became apparent that this was more than just replacing the soft start relay (usual issue) and required the help of a relevant heating company. Following numerous surveys and investigations, several problems were discovered along with the fact that parts had to be ordered and were on a several week lead time. In the meantime, portable infrared heaters were hired which meant that that the hall could be kept open for certain activities, albeit not for other less active pursuits. Once again, the residual money from the Covid grants was called upon and several thousand pounds later, we were able to reopen fully again at Easter 2023.

It was hoped that this would mean that the heating system would again run for a good number of years, however, looking on the not so bright side, the Committee decided to tentatively explore alternatives should the worst happen, which it did when the temperature plummeted at the beginning of this year. Once again, Arnold persevered and kept it limping along for a few weeks until at the beginning of March, it failed completely.

At this point, the alternatives that we had looked at in 2023, became an urgent matter for consideration. Following numerous discussions, a solution of dark panel infrared heaters was decided upon due to the documented advantages and wide use in village halls. Once quotations had been received, it was calculated that it would cost c£30,000 to complete the work in full as a new hot water system would also need to be installed.

At this point the Committee asked for help from the community. We are all volunteers, with full-time jobs and commitments, and the challenge of knowing where to go for grants and subsequent application process required was too much. Thankfully, Jon Micklefield came forward to offer his experience and with our assistance providing the information required, immediately started the mammoth task of researching and applying for grants.

Part of this research has been to look at the running costs of the old system alongside the proposed new system. The main downside of the ground source heat pump was that it had to be on all the time, whether the hall was being used or not. This meant that the electricity costs in winter could be hundreds of pounds per month. The proposed new system will only be on when the hall is in use (and for a warm-up period prior to the booking) and will be controlled remotely via wireless controls. This also means that we will install Wi-Fi, a requirement we have been asked for by hirers numerous times over the years.

Obviously, there is a limited timescale on this project as it realistically needs to be complete by autumn and the downturn in temperature.

We, the Committee, regularly supported by Andrew Martin representing the Parish Council and Stuart Chambers representing the Church Committee, are doing all we can to support and assist Jon, and remain committed to keeping Parwich Memorial Hall the invaluable facility that it is. Whilst some people may not agree with the decisions that we have been forced to make, it can be said that these have been made without agenda and with full regard for what is needed to keep the Hall a viable place for the whole community to enjoy for many years to come.

Whilst we are progressing well with the project, there is still a way to go, and we are always grateful for any help or advice that can be offered.

In the meantime, **the hall is still open.** Warmer weather means that it is a comfortable temperature even without the portable heaters and we encourage people to use it as much as possible.