

BRANCEPETH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Report 2015-16

The start of our year in March 2015 saw both the work on the kitchen refurbishment and the installation of disabled facilities in the gents toilet well under way although, due to a number of delays in the schedule the work took longer than anticipated, extending to June before the kitchen was commissioned and able to return to full use. There remain, at the year end, a small number of snags to be attended to but, overall, we are delighted with the result which has received widespread praise from both villagers and professionals and is already enabling us to be more ambitious and versatile in what we can offer. A Health & Hygiene Certificate has been awarded by Durham County Council and two Committee Members have successfully completed a Level 2 Food Hygiene Course. Externally, the emergency exit steps have been widened and new handrails fitted to provide a safer exit route for disabled members of the community, in particular. As yet, the final part of this work is still awaiting completion.

Other maintenance and improvement work carried out during the year includes: the construction of an outside storage area; improvements to the exterior lighting; PAT testing of equipment; repairs to the dishwasher; sanding and resurfacing of the main hall floor; resurfacing of the downstairs floors; redecoration of the Committee Room; chimney sweeping; the installation of a vent adjacent to the fireplace in the Committee Room and tidying of some of the land surrounding the Hall. The installation of a telephone and broadband connection is underway, but as at 31 March, delayed by the need for additional underground cabling by BT.

ps just after the year end, BT have connected the phone line & broadband. Phone number 0191 3783952. Our next plans will be to encourage IT training etc. We now have a website (www.brancepethcommunityassociation.btck.co.uk) which is up and running and enables us to keep members of the community up to date with forthcoming events, classes, and even bus times from the village.

Although some of our regular activities were able to continue during the building work, anything involving the use of the kitchen or Committee Room areas had to be cancelled: Wednesday Coffee Mornings took place in different houses around the village, which was much appreciated. We returned to a full range of activities at the end of June. These include: Yoga; Badminton; Snooker Club; Coffee Mornings; Knit & Natter; Art Class; Youth Club; Choir practice; Country Dancing; Drama Club and, more recently, Chinese Dancing; a Mandarin Class, and the possibility of T'ai chi. Both the Garden Club and the Archives & History Group hold regular meetings and exhibitions in the Hall and there have been a small number of private bookings.

Our social events have been re-established, initially aimed primarily at bringing the community back together again after the enforced break, but also starting to raise some much needed funds. They have included a casual Jazz Night; Quiz Nights; Table Top Sale; Ladies Night; an evening of Fine Dining; Lads Curry Night; Peter & Beena's Curry Banquet and a pantomime presented by the Northumbrian Theatre Group.

During the year, the Parish Council gave a grant of £6000 to contribute towards the building costs and have agreed to provide an annual grant of £3000 to help to compensate for the loss of the Durham County Council grant. We also received a £400 grant from the AAP small grants fund to assist with some essential electrical work. The priorities agreed for the coming year are the refurbishment of the ladies toilet; the purchase of a new

dishwasher; the upgrading and re-surfacing of the car park area and the clearance of surplus vegetation around the building.

We welcomed three new members to the Committee this year: Jo Dalton as Social Secretary; James Dalton as IT Co-ordinator and Joan Taylor, responsible for Wednesday Coffee Mornings. We were sorry to say goodbye to Carole Reed who had represented the WI, and to Vivienne Lowe and Josie Armstrong, both long-serving members who contributed so much in so many ways to the Community Association.

This year, as is clear, has been an exceptionally busy one and has placed unprecedented demands on Committee Members, many of whom have given a huge amount of their time and energy to cope with the impact of the building work; the fund raising; the decision making and the sheer physical effort involved in dealing with everything that has taken place. I sincerely thank everyone for their involvement and hope that the coming year will see things return to somewhere nearer normal.

Janet Molloy