

Knowstone Parish Hall Annual Activity Report 2025

Committee Activities in 2025

During 2025, the Committee experienced a particularly busy and productive period. In addition to managing our regular responsibilities and ongoing events, we dedicated considerable attention to a major improvement project: the installation of a new modern kitchen. This initiative involved transforming the old storage area to better serve the needs of the Parish Hall and its users.

The success of the kitchen project was made possible by the remarkable commitment and hands-on efforts of our Trustees, many of whom contributed a significant amount of time and DIY expertise. Their hard work and dedication ensured that the new kitchen was completed to a high standard, providing a valuable enhancement to our facilities for both current and future community activities.

Committee Membership and Acknowledgments

We are grateful to have a dedicated group of Trustees who consistently give their time and energy for the benefit of our community. Their commitment ensures that the Parish Hall continues to thrive and serve as a valuable resource for all.

This year, we bid farewell to our longest-serving Trustee and Treasurer, Wendy Sweet, who retired in early autumn. Additionally, Martin and Gill Smith stepped down from the Committee at the end of 2025 to pursue new interests. We extend our sincere thanks to Wendy, Martin, and Gill for their devoted service over the years. Their contributions have been instrumental to the success and progress of the Committee.

The 2025 roster of Committee members (our Trustees) is as follows:

Chairperson:	Tiina Paju-Pomfret
Treasurer:	Wendy Sweet / Tiina Paju-Pomfret September onwards
Secretary:	Liz Barrett
Members:	John Pomfret (council liaison) David Barrett (VE80 day instigator) Gill Smith (social media & communications) Martin Smith (maintenance, grants and bookings clerk) Kim Newton (catering lead and grants) Paul Stevens (kitchen project lead & maintenance) AJ Wilson (maintenance, cleaning and policies)
Prospective member:	Isla Dunbar from October onwards

In 2026 we are hoping to welcome both new Trustees and volunteers to the team.

Highlights from Our Year of Events

Throughout this year, our team worked diligently to plan and host a total of 24 different events, which kept everyone engaged and busy. Among these, several newly introduced gatherings and VE80 Day stood out and created lasting memories for all involved. The Summer BBQ and Social brought people together in a relaxed atmosphere, while Curry Night offered a flavourful experience that was well received by attendees. The Christmas Social, featuring entertainment by the Bicycle Repairman duo, capped off the year with warmth and celebration. These new events, alongside our regular activities, contributed to a vibrant and memorable year for our team and community.

EVENT	DESCRIPTION
Coffee Mornings	Over the year we sold a lot of cakes with gluten free options and introduced some savoury alternatives. Coffee and walnut cake is always a favourite, however, the more adventurous ones are well received too. There is always

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	lovely chatter during coffee morning when people gather enjoying cakes and a cuppa. Our November takings were donated to the Royal British Legion.
Killer Skittles & Village Social Evenings	We added a licensed bar and made the Skittles optional. They were on the schedule for the wintertime drawing people from surrounding villages too.
Big Breakfast	Always a popular event A big thank you for our chef extraordinaire Kim Newton for organising and to Claire Cave from Ford Farm who provides the delicious sausages and helps Kim on the day.
Ceilidh with the Oggle Band	People continue to enjoy our Ceilidh events hosted by the fabulous Oggle Band (Jan & Oct). The January Ceilidh was Burns Night themed. The licensed bar along with Max & Mike's Street Food add to the evenings' enjoyment.
Quiz Night	It seemed that in June people were too busy to attend a Quiz as attendance was low at 16. However, those who came said that they really enjoyed it. The quiz was running a little differently using more technology to keep things moving.
VE80 Day Celebration	David suggested that we organise a celebration for the war ending in Europe 80 years ago. The Parish Council kindly gave us a £250 grant for this public event. As we have gained more experience over the past couple of years, this event was admittedly our best so far. Over 60 people came to enjoy war time savoury and sweet delights, watch Winston Churchill's famous speech, listen to music of the era, raise a glass and listen to Reg Howe's memories from that time. The Hall was full of chatter and laughter. People clearly enjoyed the afternoon, and the team received many compliments.
NSA Sheep Summer Show Tea Tent	Martin and Gill took on running the tea tent at the Sheep Show held at Stanbury's family farm. It was an enjoyable event and good for representing our community. However, due to lots of free drinks offered by other stalls, sales were low.
Spring and Christmas Bingos	In April we held our second Spring Bingo event with prizes themed around Easter. It was reasonably well attended and not so busy and hectic as the ever-popular Christmas one. Christmas Bingo had a good turnout with 80 people and raised a good amount of funds for the hall upkeep. The bar was busy. Again, in good community spirit 10 volunteers put together their versions of our traditional Bingo Boxes. Our special prize meat boxes were packed with delicious local meat thanks to the Caves (Ford Farm) and Swanzys (Great Wadham)! Another great evening of Christmas Cheer.
Summer BBQ and Social	Our first Summer BBQ proved our most popular event of the year. Even the inclement weather could not dampen the enjoyment. Kim perfectly barbequed the delicious beef and venison burgers and sausages supplied by our wonderful local farms; Weston Farm, Ford farm and Great Wadham. The rest of the team were busy with food service and the bar.
Autumn Fayre & Craft Show	A busy day with lots of last-minute entries resulting in healthy competition in all classes. Plenty of delicious and creative entries with the scarecrow competition proving a hit again. This time there was no fixed stall fee, but the stall holders were asked for a voluntary contribution to the Hall, apart from the ones representing the charities for Air Ambulance & Help the Heroes. The Tea Room was busy all day and the Raffle and Tombola proved popular too. A big thank you to Wendy Vigus for organising the event and judges.
Curry Night	Our first curry night offering Kim's delicious butter chicken and Claire's delicious beef masala with a vegetarian option. 32 people came along, enjoyed the food and bar offerings – a very successful evening.
Christmas Social with Bicycle Repairman duo	An excellent afternoon with a fabulous guitar duo. People were enjoying the music and the bar was busy. Kim's venison Bourguignon along with beef stew were well received. Christmassy puddings included spiced fruit crumble, Schwartzwald trifle, chocolate mousse, fruit pavlova and mulled wine cheesecake. By the end of the afternoon people were swaying along to the music and waving the little electric candles.

EVENT	DESCRIPTION
Together with the Parish Church Committee	
Harvest Festival supper and auction	The team was delighted to assist the Parish Church team again, offering the Hall for both the service and supper as the church was out of action. Our new kitchen was in full use for the first time as we prepared and served a beef, onion and rice traybake with salad & French bread followed by a dessert table – desserts donated by parishioners. Enjoyable evening with lots of chatter. Thelma's auction items sold well.
Christmas Coffee Morning & Festive Stalls	This time we combined our coffee morning with the traditional festive stalls helping to raise funds for the Parish Church. A lovely morning of cakes and refreshments along with Thelma's beautiful Christmas wreaths.

Regular and Special Uses of the Hall

Ongoing Community Activities

The Hall serves as a central venue for a variety of regular events organized by parishioners, fostering a sense of community and well-being. Weekly classes in Pilates, Yoga, and Keep Fit are held, providing opportunities for physical fitness and relaxation. The Gardening Club offers members a chance to share their passion for plants and cultivation, while the popular "Pickleball for All" sessions encourage inclusive participation in this fast-growing sport. We sincerely appreciate all the organisers who dedicate their time and effort to these events, as their commitment helps ensure we have the necessary funds to maintain and care for the Hall.

Private and Community Events

Beyond scheduled activities, parishioners have also made use of the Hall for a range of other gatherings. These include various meetings and children's parties, with one memorable occasion featuring an indoor bouncy castle—an exciting first for the Hall.

Support in Times of Need

During the winter months, the Hall provided a comforting space for four wakes honoring much-loved parishioners. In these instances, the Committee extended the use of the Hall and all its facilities free of charge, supporting families and friends during their time of loss.

Commitment to the Community's Benefit

Collectively, these activities and events demonstrate that the Committee continues to fulfill the Hall's purpose of serving the inhabitants of Knowstone, as established in the Governing Document of 1986.

Licensed Bar and Premises License

Over the past year and a half, we introduced a licensed bar at selected events held in the Hall. Due to limitations on the number of temporary event licenses permitted each year, the decision was made to pursue a full premises license. The application was successful on the first try, and the license has been active since mid-October, allowing us greater flexibility in hosting events that include a licensed bar.

Kitchen Project

After the Batsworthy fund reopened in late 2024 and our kitchen project grants were approved, progress resumed. Kim and Martin secured the funding, while Kim sourced affordable kitchen units and appliances, allowing for flexibility. She also hired a trusted builder, assisted by Paul, AJ, and Martin. All have dedicated significant time to complete the work—thank you to everyone involved.

The works included:

- Removing everything from the old storeroom along with the wooden structure and the lobby wall and sink unit, making good of the floor and walls and plumbing
- Replacing the church end exit door with a window and the outside double doors with a fire exit door and window unit

- Re-plumbing and electrical works including improvements to the main electrical supply, covering the walls with hygienic wall covering, new flooring, painting the ceiling and end wall, transforming the old internal double doors into a serving hatch opening
- Installing the units and appliances, sourcing and installing a fireproof electric serving hatch

The old kitchen has been cleared of old units and appliances and is now used as the storeroom.

The kitchen was officially taken into use in September 2025 and has already been put to good use during various community gatherings. The modernized space now allows us to cater for our events with much greater efficiency and comfort. We look forward to seeing how these upgrades will enhance our future activities and benefit all hall users.

Application of the funds

The Committee strives to raise funds towards the Hall's maintenance and running costs whilst providing a variety of activities to appeal to as wide an age range as possible, to ensure support for the hall as a community asset from across the Parish.

Committee Fundraising and Grants

Ongoing Fundraising Efforts and Financial Management

The Committee is committed to raising funds to support the maintenance and operational costs of the Hall. By offering a variety of activities that appeal to a broad age range, we aim to ensure that the Hall remains a valued asset within the Parish, supported by the entire community. Throughout this financial year, we have managed the Hall's finances with care and diligence, resulting in a surplus of over £3,000 from our regular fundraising activities.

Grant Funding and Improvements

In addition to our fundraising efforts, we have successfully secured substantial grants from the Batsworthy fund. These grants have enabled us to make several important upgrades and improvements to the Hall:

- Replacement of the original heavy wooden staging with modern, lightweight staging to improve flexibility and safety during events.
- Installation of a surround sound system, enhancing the quality of audio for gatherings and functions held in the Hall.
- Replacement of the old shed with a new, larger metal shed, which has significantly increased our storage capacity and improved organization.
- Transformation of the former storage room into a spacious, modern kitchen equipped with a large serving hatch and shutter. The new kitchen facilities allow us to efficiently host coffee mornings, operate a bar, and prepare and serve hot food during events.

These improvements have not only enhanced the functionality of the Hall but have also contributed to making it a more welcoming and accessible space for all. We are grateful for the continued support from the community and grant providers, which enables us to carry out these essential projects. Looking ahead, we hope to further invest in sustainable upgrades and develop new initiatives that will benefit the Parish for years to come.

We start 2026 from a strong financial position and aim to continue to operate effectively and invest our funds wisely.

Here's to a successful year ahead full of fun and beneficial activities. We are always looking forward to welcoming new team members and anyone who wants to come and get involved in any of our events and activities.

Tiina Paju-Pomfret

Chairperson