

Little Clacton Village Hall

- following a great tradition!



With nearly 70 years of trustee experience at Little Clacton Village Hall between them, John Dunnett and Peter De-Vaux Balbirnie are a veritable tour de force! And with a gentle smile and nod, they have gone about the job of (almost!) completely renovating and extending the hall.

By the year 2000 the hall was definitely tired and the coming of a new millennium provided the catalyst for change and John, Peter and the trustee committee have worked tirelessly to achieve the cosy and welcoming hall that is available now. Back in 2000, thoughts turned first to building a whole new hall and plans and a feasibility study were undertaken, but this wasn't to be – mainly due to a lack of major funding available and a feeling that they were perhaps overstretching themselves.

A reassessment was needed and the trustees took a good look at the hall – built in 1934 it was constructed almost entirely by volunteer labour with money raised through firstly a share issue of 5/- each – a lot of money in 1934!. The land had been given by local landowner, Harold Lilley and the recreation field and charity still bear his name. It had a good size hall, kitchen, toilets, snooker room and as

some halls did at this time, a rifle range which ran along the whole length of the hall in a 'lean-to' extension. There was a lot of scope for improvement and re-ordering what they had!



Since that time, changes have come thick and fast – toilets were moved from the front of the hall to occupy part of the rifle range and the 'old' toilets were made into a meeting room. The kitchen has been completely refurbished and provides modern, hygienic facilities. A new extension at the rear provides toilets and changing rooms for clubs using the sports fields; and new double glazed windows help prevent draughts and retain heat. A disabled toilet and baby changing facilities help ensure everyone can access facilities and feel comfortable whilst there. The installation of CCTV helps ensure people and property are kept safe.

One of the latest projects to be completed is the £41,000 playarea on the recreation field which has new equipment installed together with safety

surfacing, fencing and seating. Areas of the field which were overgrown and invasive have been cleared and new planting undertaken with shrubs and trees provided free of charge by the Woodland Trust.

John is the expert at completing funding applications and has raised a massive £195,000! Applications to a long list of funding organisations include Awards for All, ECC CIF, Tendring DC Big Society Fund, Garfield Weston and Little Clacton Parish Council.

And who benefits? When asked, John and Peter were able to instantly name a long list of user groups – two carpet bowls clubs, Tendring Eldercare Luncheon Club, Baby Clinic, WI, Quilters, Dog club to name a few of the twenty or so clubs who regularly use the hall.

Who knows what's next? Whatever it is, John, Peter and the trustees know it will be achieved as they follow in a long and steady line of volunteer footsteps.

