

## Opening of the Pavilion – 14 September 2019

Little did we realise when we started on the road to provide a village hall for Williton that it would take 22 1/2 years to realise the building of the Pavilion. Many may think that this journey started in March 1996, when at the Annual Parish Assembly it was decided that a village hall was needed.

The first thing that had to be done was to form the Village Hall Steering Committee followed by a questionnaire being hand delivered to every house (1112 in total). The results came back with overwhelming support (82% of those who responded)) saying that they would want to use a village hall in Williton.

3 main sites were suggested in the questionnaire results; The Bury (the old St Peter's School playing field); the old St. Peter's School and the Memorial Ground. Somerset County Council owned the Bury and when approached they said they would consider selling it for £400,000 but really wanted to build houses on it. Croft House has since been built on the land. The old School was sold to Magna for their offices. This left the third site of the Memorial Ground to be pursued together with approximately another 16 sites around the village.

At the Annual Parish Assembly in 1997 it was unanimously resolved to launch a public appeal for funds to build a village hall and charitable status was obtained. The Trustees were Tracey Copp, Bev Machin, Paddy Gower, Phil Platfoot and myself. It was thought that the hall would be built within four years. If only we had known!!

Further consultations was held over the years including a packed public meeting in 1998 about building on the Memorial Ground but the Parish Council decided that due to there being many obstacles that the hall should not be built on the Ground but still considered that the Steering Committee should continue to look for a site for the hall. At this stage the proposed building would have been located on the Memorial Ground behind the Doctor's Surgery. It was to be two storeys and would have incorporated changing rooms as well as a hall. The hall would have been on the ground floor. The reason for it being two storeys was to ensure that the footprint of the building was no larger than that required for the changing rooms.

In 1999 the Parish Council obtained planning permission for a single storey sports Pavilion with community facilities. This was to be a joint venture with the Steering Committee. The building was to be sited behind the Doctor's Surgery in the same position as the Pavilion but the Parish Council did not progress the scheme.

In 2006 the Williton War Memorial Recreation Ground Charity were approached by the Steering Committee about buying part of the rear garden of Croftways which is adjacent to the Children's Play Area as the owners of Croftways had approached the Steering Committee about selling the land for a village hall. The Charity agreed that the site was an ideal investment opportunity and suitable for a village hall and were sympathetic for disabled access to the site subject to public consultation. In 2007 the principle of the access was agreed. This caused a lot of debate within the village

resulting in the formation of the Friends of Williton War Memorial Recreation Ground who wanted to register the Memorial Ground as a village green in 2009 which did not happen as the Memorial Ground is protected by the Open Spaces Act.

In 2007 another questionnaire was delivered to all households asking about building a village hall on either the land that had been bought on the rear garden of Croftways and behind the Doctor's Surgery on the Memorial Ground. The results were positive for either site.

The Williton War Memorial Recreation Ground Charity took over the village hall charity including the ownership of the land behind Croftways in 2012 and the Village Hall Steering Committee was disbanded.

Planning permission was refused in 2014 for the Pavilion, a MUGA and reordering the old changing rooms to be in the corner of the Memorial Ground. Another application was submitted; this time the Pavilion was to be sited behind the Doctor's Surgery and was granted in late 2014. It was then found that the hall had to be made slightly larger and for Lottery requirements other alterations to the approved scheme were needed. Planning permission was granted in 2016. The Pavilion you see today is the result.

At the beginning I said that many people will think that the journey to having the Pavilion started in 1996. It did not. Mr Harry Isaacs, a businessman and the owner of Bulpin and Isaacs contacted the Village Hall Steering Committee in 1996 and explained that before the Second World War there was a meeting in Williton Club about the Coronation or Jubilee and he put forward the suggestion to start a fund for a village hall for Williton which was agreed but was later rescinded. Then during the war he wrote suggesting that a fund for a village hall be started and again it was agreed. Mr Jackman (Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector for Williton Rural District Council) drew up the plans and they were put on show in the window of County Stores, now the Spar. In addition, in September 1945, the Parish Council unanimously agreed that a village hall be built on the Memorial Ground. The hall was to be a war memorial and was to be available to all, and I quote, "for the living, as well as a memorial to those who laid down their lives". Again in the Parish Council minutes of September 1960 there is a reference to a village hall fund being started in July 1937 and that £5.17.6d was left in the account.

Over the years fundraising has been done including the fortnightly bingo sessions, jumble and car boot sales, the village fete, a Williton calendar and tea towel, open gardens, 100 Club and the selling of used computer cartridges, aluminium cans and stamps. The Steering Committee successfully obtained a grant towards the purchase of the land at Croftways and after getting through stage one of the Big Lottery and then being unsuccessful at the next stage two further applications were successful by the Charity in 2016 and 2017. Grants from EDF, Williton Parish Council, Somerset County Council and West Somerset Council were also received which has meant that the idea of a community building for Williton could become a reality.

Many people have made a large contribution over the years including Viv Butler, Rona Chilcott, Ian Aldridge, Joan and Graham Scott, Alison Calloway, Carol Sully Alison Jordan, Diane Hooper, Mo Mossman, Lisa Bullock, Shirley Allnutt, Paul Morse, Jane Watts, Tricia and Doc Doherty, Kim Pearson, Parish Councillors, in particular Bill Vaughan, the Parish Clerks and many others, some who are here today. A big thank you because without you we would not be here today celebrating the Pavilion. I would also like to thank my husband Roger and children, Katherine and Megan who have put up with me disappearing to do things for the hall and in the case of Katherine and Megan dragging them to events from being toddlers until they left home. There are also those that are no longer with us and who should also be remembered for the contributions they made. They are;

Judy Doherty

Robin Taylor

Lin Pinfold

Kath Chedzoy,

Janet Spratley

Sharon Sully and,

Mrs Stockwell

all of whom did not see the Pavilion come to fruition but Geoff Hooper did get to the dinner dance held as the first event in the Pavilion last year.

Since last December there have been approximately 500 bookings. Of these, 100 were private events including a christening, a funeral, birthday parties, badminton and training sessions.

Pilates and Zumba are the top two public sessions. Aikido, Youth Group together with Dance and Gym are also popular. The Film Club and Bingo are well supported and there have been more unusual bookings such as the Potato Day and a Bee Keeping Course. The village Christmas Festival and the village fete have also made use of the Pavilion. Many more events are booked including two wedding receptions. Short Mat Bowls is starting with two taster sessions at the end of the month and work is also in progress to form a table tennis club.

Hopefully the Pavilion will be here for generations to come and will always help to bring the community of Williton together and be a well-used focal point for all of us.

It is therefore with great pleasure that I declare the Pavilion open to everyone.