

Dunchurch Sportsfield and Village Hall

By Paul Smith

Dunchurch Sportsfield in Rugby Road was conveyed to a charity of that name by Baron Waring on the 2nd March 1929 for sporting purposes. It was administered by three trustees, two nominated by the owner of 'White Lodge' in Vicarage Lane and one by the clubs who used the field. (White Lodge was occupied by Baron Waring's daughter until about 1970.) In 1987 the Charity Commission made a new scheme to govern the sportsfield and under it the field was to be administered by a committee which had representatives from the Cricket and Football Clubs and the Parish Council.

Dunchurch Village Hall Charity owned the old village hall on Daventry Road. The site was donated on 6th March 1936 by The Dunchurch Lodge Stud Company which still exists but does not operate locally. The hall was of wooden construction and by the mid-sixties was little used so the trustees leased it to WCC for use as a youth club, although it remained available for hire.

Around 2000, Marilyn Greenwood with the backing of Dunchurch Parish Council formed a committee to investigate the possibility of building a modern



and practical village hall. Marilyn and a representative from the WCC Estates Department searched the village to find a suitable site. An approach had already been made to Dunchurch Sportsfield, but initially permission for a new building had been declined. The most likely site identified was the old County Council depot in Southam Road but the County Council would only sell at full residential value, about £500,000.

An idea formed to terminate the WCC lease of the Daventry Road hall and apply for planning permission to build two or three houses on the site to raise funds. The Village Hall and Sportsfield charities could then merge and use the money towards building a new hall and changing rooms on the Rugby Road site.

Dunchurch Cricket Club was the most active of the sports clubs, and had done a lot of work in maintaining the sports field and had erected a pavilion with changing rooms, but by 2000 these were in rather a sorry state. The trustees of the two charities agreed a merger

although there were some issues to overcome with the Cricket Club who would lose their facilities. However, they were persuaded to agree in return for improved amenities. The Charity Commission made a scheme on the 25th January 2002 merging the two charities and creating the Dunchurch Sportsfield and Village Hall.

Raising funds was a challenge but selling the Daventry Road site raised £296,000, giving a good start. (The deeds relating to this site had a restrictive covenant against its use for any purpose other than that of a village hall but this was overcome by a technical point and a single premium insurance policy for £750.) Funds were raised by local appeals but the majority came from such bodies as County, Borough and Parish Council and Entrust, which distributed the Landfill Community Fund. The late Councillor Gordon Collett was most helpful in getting money from the local authorities, and phase 1 of the project started in January 2003 and was opened by Gordon Collett on 13th December 2003.



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At this stage, the Cricket Club had lost their lounge but were still using their old changing rooms. Further fundraising took place to build the new changing rooms and the County Council gave £150,000 to build what is now the Club Room but was originally a room for the youth club. The new facilities were opened in May 2005 and the entire project erected without borrowing any money, at a total cost of about £750,000. The original budget included £10,000 to cover the initial running costs but this was never needed as the premises were well used from day one.

The current committee members are largely active retired people. About half were involved from the beginning before the premises were built. Most of the trustees are 'hands on' but are not getting any younger! If anyone is prepared to become a trustee and give a bit of time towards keeping this well-used facility going, please contact jane.bookings@dunchurchsportsandvillagehall.co.uk or 01788 522444. You can also get further information from the Charity's website on www.dunchurchsportsandvillagehall.co.uk
Registered Charity Number 519906

Look out for the next Dunchurch Festival Event

20th and 21st September, 'Whisking Eggs' by Jackie Lines - An all female cast perform this one-act adult-only play