

OLD BASING VILLAGE HALL

Most residents will have visited Old Basing Village Hall whether for an Antiques Fair, Jumble Sale a party or other occasion and although not one of the more historic properties in Old Basing, its history is nonetheless interesting. The fact we have a village hall at all is due to the resourcefulness, determination and, in some instances, disregard for their own safety of a small group of residents that formed the village hall committee and to a large extent built the hall themselves as Sheila Grassi the wife of Don Grassi, one of the founder members and current Chairman recalls

The old Village Hall was pulled down and the ground given to the Trustees of the Church to look after. In 1976/77 the village asked for a new hall to be built so a committee was formed to find a piece of ground and raise the money to build a new hall. After 3 years all suggestions had been turned down by the village and the committee became fed up with trying and resigned. Betty Holmes, who was the Chairwoman, asked Trevor Dyer to form another committee – which he did.

A piece of land in Riley Lane had been given by Lord Camrose but when the committee looked into this they were advised that they couldn't build due to a covenant stating that no building was permitted on this land. Luckily for the village Betty Holmes then donated a piece of land at the bottom of Oliver's Battery for the hall to be built on and the ground given to the Parish Council with a small rent agreed.

In 1978 when the present committee was formed its first task was to discuss fund raising and the building of the hall. It was thought more help was needed and a Fund Raising Committee was elected which then formed a Charity. The Committee was to have 9 elected members, to be re-elected each year, together with representative members from organisations within the village (one of the requirements for a Village Hall).

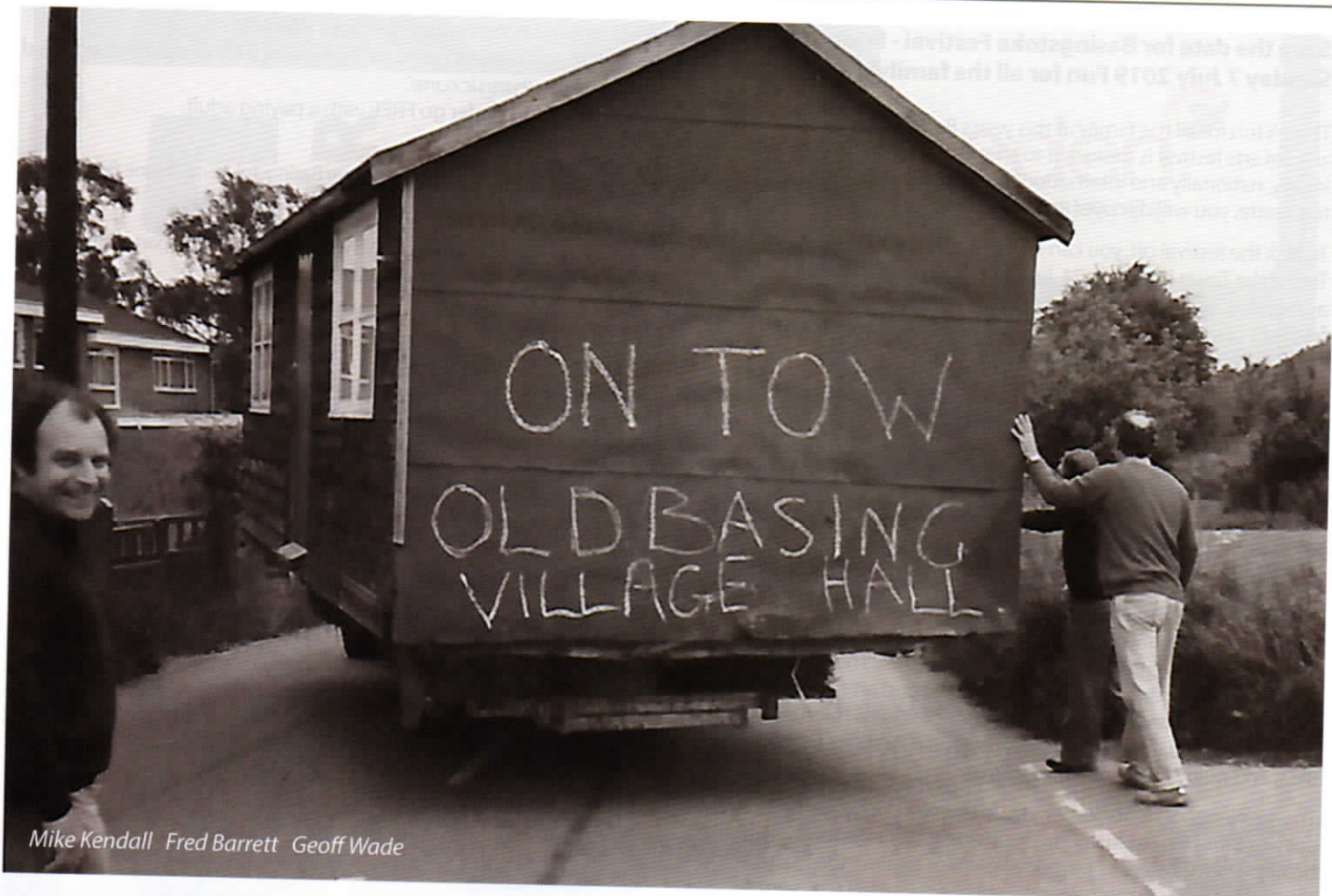
Problems with the money from the sale of the old village hall land were encountered but a design for the hall was drawn up with the help of Derek Kearns, a local Architect, and the various needs of hirers were considered.

The hall was to be constructed from brick around a steel frame, supporting a high pitched tiles roof. Badminton and other activities were one of the requirements for the hall and an area off the main hall with removable partitions was also a requirement to provide a committee or games room. There was a bar area, gallery running across one side of the hall, kitchen, toilets and changing rooms. A metal gantry would be built to the full length of the roof so that electric light bulbs could be changed.

The land surrounding the hall would be planted with trees and a car park laid for between 70-80 cars. The estimated cost was £80,000 for which there was a Capital Grant of £40,000 together with a Local Government Grant of 20,000 leaving £20,000 to be raised by the committee.

*John Davie
Peter Thorn Joe Wrey Dave Vickery
Fred Barrett Geoff Wade Ron Cox Don Grassi*





Mike Kendall Fred Barrett Geoff Wade

Savings were made, especially with the hall floor, when Peter Thorn, one of the committee members, was advised that he could have a wooden floor being pulled up at Salisbury College. Geoff Wade and a couple of other chaps went to Salisbury College and took up the floor which was collected by various village hall committee members and brought back in lorries and stored in garages until needed. This maple floor is the current floor to this day.

The first fund raising event was a May Day with a May Queen being chosen on the day. It was a beautiful day with maypole dancing, bowls and many different stalls; in fact it was so successful someone had to go and buy lots more ice cream. Over £700.00 was raised from this event. Other events included a Medieval Banquet in the Tythe Barn which at that time was owned by Seth Barton and all the villagers made their own shields which were hung around the walls. A "King" came in on a horse and maids went round with jugs of wine. Everyone attending dressed up (you couldn't attend if you didn't).

Other events were a Barn Dance, Jumbles, Waste Paper collecting every week, Carol Singing round the streets with the Junior School Band playing or with an organ pulled on a trailer.

The half marathon which was run from the hall for 3 years became very popular and raised lots of money. For 2 years the committee organised the Village Carnival and football was played every evening at the school for boys from the age of 5, men and even ladies with the final played on the recreation ground bringing all the village together. Baby Shows and Tug of War were also very popular and the result of all these activities was good sums of money being raised.

A date of Saturday 8th May 1982 was set for the opening of the hall but the final opening date was Saturday 5th June 1982.

Unfortunately Trevor Dyer, one of the original instigators, died in a boating incident so did not see the hall finished.

After completion New Year's Eve parties with live bands and a full supper became popular annual events. The hall became established as a popular venue for many types of event and was booked for many hours on a daily basis which resulted in the committee needing to employ a Booking Secretary and Caretaker.

Over the years there have been extensions to the hall, a porch was added to the front doors then a larger extension with access to the main hall but also its own entrance was added to the side creating a further committee room with a small kitchen and additional toilets.

The Village Hall has now been open for 37 years and is still used every day, making a small annual profit. The committee ensures it is maintained in great condition with funds allocated for maintenance and decorating.

At the end of 2017 the hall was booked by St Mary's Church for a Free Christmas Lunch for people from the village which was provided and cooked by volunteers. An excellent lunch and afternoon was enjoyed by all who attended.

Many of the original committee members are still on the Management Committee today and I think it is fair to say the Old Basing Village Hall Management Committee has, over the years, achieved what the residents of Old Basing & Lychpit wanted.

Details of what the hall has to offer and how to book are on page 36 of this Newsletter on the "Meeting & Party Venues" page.