

The Brooklands *Centre*

Ousebank Street, Newport Pagnell

The Story 1959 to 2011



1959
Laying the
Foundation Stone
of the original
Brooklands Club



The Brooklands Club 1970 - 2009

The New Brooklands Centre 2010



a bridge across the community



Peter Adams
Col. L. Payne Ron Groom

Large Vision - Small beginnings

Circa 1953, Three Newport Pagnell men: Col. Leslie Payne, Peter Adams and Ron Groom, realising that the town had little to offer its senior citizens, decided to raise money for extra comforts and benefits.



From their initials they formed P.A.G. Productions and ran comedy/crazy events to both entertain the townsfolk and to collect donations, being money thrown by the crowds into blankets held by members of the Territorial Army of which Leslie Payne was C.O.

From these small beginnings, providing such items as deckchairs, games etc. the idea of a permanent club was formed, and the Newport Pagnell Urban District Council of which Col. Payne had become a (vocal)

member, putting the idea forward, found a vacant plot on which to build in Ousebank Street overlooking the public gardens.

£3,200 was the sum needed. Everyone set to work with a will. The community spirit prevailed, and every way to raise money was used... for instance bricks were sold at a shilling each. (5p). Eventually the total raised came to £2,050... then came a sum of £1,000 from the King George VI memorial Fund, leaving a balance of £150... so a mammoth draw was promptly held, and the final money came in.



The club was accordingly built, with volunteers helping the builders and was officially opened on October 31st 1959 by Mrs Lovelock Jones, Chair of the Bucks Old People's Welfare Committee and County Health Organiser. The first Chairman was Bert Ellis.

The club was open from 2 – 5pm on weekdays, and members would drop in for a chat, a game, to read or listen to the radiogram! Thursday was club day with organised programmes, still operating (on Tuesdays now). The members had their own collecting boxes e.g. Sick Fund, Flowers to Invalids and Building Account Expenses.



The club flourishes – more space required

Slowly the furniture and effects built up, records, books etc. The growing membership threatened to outgrow the building, when like an answer to a prayer, Arthur Mitchell, a local baker, left a legacy in his will, which enabled an extension to be built. Twelve feet more at the west end, giving 320 square feet and additions to the east end, providing dressing room and storage for the stage.

Transport



Needless to say over the years the club has grown and flourished. There are two specially equipped vehicles for transport of less mobile members, driven by volunteers. The purchase of the smaller bus was made possible by a legacy from a grateful member of the Day Centre. Many activities are arranged, summer outings, visits to the theatre, garden centres etc.



New Name

In the 1950's the building was known as the Brooklands Club, it was well known by the majority of older people in the town of Newport Pagnell as a place to meet and socialise. Today (2011) it's a fine two storey building on the same site in Ousebank Street and has been renamed 'The Brooklands Centre'. It is being opened up to be used by the wider community, with the emphasis still on serving the older people in Newport Pagnell. How did this all happen?



The BIG Project

The old building had played a wonderful role in giving the older generation a special place to meet and had been built especially for them. However, after many years the club house was showing its age, with a leaking roof, an ancient central heating system, subsidence and general wear and tear.

The Trustees also wanted to provide more space to offer greater choice to the younger retired as well as those in the town who were living on into their nineties.

You may wonder why the Trustees decided to embark on such a big project which would cost around one million pounds – money they didn't have!

After much discussion about going ahead with the project – some Trustees felt the building should just be repaired and updated, but in the end agreement was reached –they would go for a new building!

Wanted Project Officer

A Project officer was required to write a business plan, to manage the new build and apply for the all-important funding. Monies were made available to enable the appointment of a part time Project officer Christopher Flower (Fred) who was just the right person.

A steering group of Trustees, Councillors and funding experts was formed who met regularly with Fred and kept the larger committee informed of progress.

Demolition Day

In May 2009 the demolition people moved in and seeing the old building razed to the ground was a heart-stopping sight. What if the money could not be found to build a new Centre? The old one was no more!



Service as normal

A big effort was made to continue providing services whilst building work went on.

The twice-weekly Day Centre for the frailer elderly who come for the day with transport provided and have a hot midday meal, settled in well at the British Legion building down the road. Both 'members' – those who came to spend the day and volunteer helpers managed to cope under the care of the Day Centre Manager.



The Saturday Lunch Club that caters for approximately sixty people carried on at the Baptist Church while the United Reformed Church hall was the venue for the Exercise and Activity Group.

The Tuesday Social Club had several moves during this time but ended up happily enough at the Portfields Community Centre.

Leaders/organisers of the groups felt a bit like snails, carrying belongings if not homes around as they trekked to sessions with the items needed for each activity.

Building Commences

Building of the new Centre which started in August of 2009 went well until Nov. /Dec. when the huge crane which had been brought in, had to stand idle for a while due to strong winds and then snow in January 2010 made further difficulties.



It was exciting to watch progress as the building went up but the site was cordoned off and one could only look through the wire fence and walk around to the rear of the new build in Ousebank Gardens to try and get an idea of how the building was progressing until the day hard hats and yellow jackets could be donned to be shown around the building! There was still, a long way to go but by carefully climbing the concrete stairs the outline of the rooms could be seen.

It was a great day when a bottle of champagne was cracked open for a small “Topping Out” Ceremony.

“Buy a Brick” Appeal

The “Buy a Brick” Appeal was re launched so that local people could donate (£5 a brick) if they wished to. The Town Council and Camborne Travel kept buckets in their premises in the High Street for donations to be left and many people contributed generously. (For which we were very grateful.) The then Mayor of Milton Keynes, Euan Henderson launched the Appeal and the local press took photos with an article to make people aware of the project. In all the public gave around £16,000 towards the new build.



The Centre was completed a couple of months late but the first groups moved into the new

premises in July 2010 and were delighted with the spacious, airy building with its large upstairs patio and its extra rooms.

Official Opening

The Trustees had decided not to rush with the planned Official Opening Day until they had moved back the user groups and felt at home in the new building.

September 4th 2010 was the chosen date for the Official Opening Ceremony in the morning and “open house” in the afternoon so the public had an opportunity to come and have a look around.



Brooklands Centre officially opened by Euan and Irene Henderson

The day dawned bright and warm and photographs were taken of guests as they arrived. Canapés and champagne were served. Irene and Euan Henderson having shown great interest and support in the project were invited to perform the opening ceremony.

The afternoon saw many local people coming to look around. The lovely weather meant that visitors could sit out on the upstairs terrace, being served tea and cakes while enjoying the view.

As the centre continues with all the activities that were run in the old building now there are rooms upstairs which can be used independently of the ground floor.

The first floor has been used for Receptions, Meetings, Art Groups, Wedding Preparation Classes, National Childbirth Trust, Tai Chi and Yoga Classes.

The ground floor is/has been used for a Brownie pack, the Mother's Union, parties and a busy Carer's Group. These are all extra to the regular use by the varied groups the Centre is responsible for. A new group is the Pop in on a Tuesday morning where the over 50's are

welcome to drop in for coffee and snacks, read the papers, take part in a craft activity, chat to friends or join the Tai Chi class

Monday and Wednesday Day Centre

Many words have been written in the past of the days when Sister Jean Harris and a small band of volunteers embarked on providing day care for the frail and elderly people in Newport Pagnell at Brooklands.

That work and care has now been provided successfully for over 30 years 2 days a week.



People are referred to the Day Centre which provides transport and care for those who benefit from being in an environment among other members with differing problems caused by ageing.

Members of the Day Centre enjoy the social side of being with others, the quizzes, games, raffles and other activities that are provided.

A mid-day hot meal is a highlight of the day. Birthdays are celebrated with cake and sherry.

Families benefit from knowing that their loved ones are in a safe and happy environment.

Our volunteers (from all groups) are CRB checked they are a happy and sympathetic body of people.



Members have the opportunity of going on an annual holiday which is open to members from other groups too.

Group Photo Centre Holiday to Torquay May 2004

Tuesday Pop In

The Tuesday morning 'Pop In' group commenced as a result of requests from the Open Day at the new Centre.

The group is aimed at anyone 50+ and commenced in February 2011. People are welcome to come and go between 10a.m. and 1p.m.

Refreshments are available with light lunches also being served.

Activities including crafts, a Tai Chi Class (a small payment involved), an opportunity to sit and chat make new friends, to read the newspaper or have a game of cards.



Taster sessions of different activities have been tried including: Boccia (a new version of carpet bowls, Zumba, Yoga (we currently run a class on a Wednesday morning). We hope to be able to offer other activities as the group develops.

If you are free on a Tuesday morning please do come and visit us you would be most welcome.

Tuesday Club

The Tuesday Club was the original group at Brooklands and has been running every Tuesday afternoon for over 50 years. Over the years the club has evolved; currently there are 22+ members male and female who enjoy a variety of activities including Bingo, Fish and Chip Lunches, Bring and Buy Sales and a Christmas Party. It is a very friendly group and welcomes new members. Transport within the town to and from the Club is available.



Wednesday Art Group



The Art Group started in 2011 is run on a Wednesday afternoon from 1.30pm until 3pm. Those attending enjoy drawing, painting in water colours and plan to move onto using acrylic paint. New members are welcome to join.

Thursday Exercise Group

Older members of the community need to keep themselves as fit and active as possible. The Brooklands Centre has been running exercise groups for a considerable length of time to help maintain fitness and flexibility amongst its members.

Initially the exercise groups were held fortnightly on a Thursday and were followed by optional activities such as Scrabble and cards and a light lunch of soup and sandwiches. For the last 3 or 4 years, the groups have been held weekly and regularly have between 20 and 30 participants.

Exercise sessions are about 45 minutes long and include both sitting and standing exercises designed to improve the fitness of most muscle and joint areas. All those taking part clearly enjoy themselves and the number attending continues to grow.



Saturday Lunch Club



It is very important that the older members of our community maintain good nutritional habits and are stimulated by the company of others. The company of others is especially important at weekends when, in general, older people tend to be left to their own devices.

To address this problem to some extent, the Brooklands Centre has, for some years now, organised a Saturday lunch once a month.

Members are given transport to the Centre from their own homes if they need it and, on arrival, are given a hot drink and biscuits.

When all members have arrived, a 2 course hot lunch is served together with a hot drink. Then following a raffle, members are then taken home.



The average number of members attending is currently around 50 and everybody seems to enjoy themselves.

2012 and into the future

The Trustees aim is to keep the Brooklands Centre providing facilities and serving the senior age group of Newport Pagnell in the years to come.

The Centre is grateful for the support given by the residents of the town. Especially to all past or current volunteers; without them it would not be possible.

Inevitably the Centre will continue to evolve and change as the years roll by. May Brooklands continue to be a "Bridge across the Community".

Current Groups run by the Centre include:

Mondays and Wednesdays Day Centre

Tuesday a.m. Pop In including Tai Chi Class

Tuesday p.m. Tuesday Club

Wednesday Yoga and Art Class

Thursday a.m. Exercise Group

Saturday (monthly) Lunch Club

The Centre is available to hire for meetings and private functions. For further information please contact the Centre Manager.

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