



# TEES VALLEY VILLAGE HALLS NETWORK

self-governing • self sustaining • self help village halls support organisation

## Spring 2021 Edition No 16

### GRINDON PARISH HALL TRANSFORMED – PART 1 Chairman John Tait tells the story



Grindon Parish Hall is in Thorpe Thewles. In 1923 the local landowner gave a patch of land to build the hall on. It proved popular and was the focus of village life for many years, hosting dances, sports activities, the W I etc. Over the years, most recently in the 80s, it had been refurbished, modernised and extended but by the last decade of the 21st century it was looking tired and outdated (see photos). It was kept going by a small and active group of volunteers who, by the middle of the decade were all in their 80s and 90s. Sadly, the three leading lights passed away in the space of a couple of years.



In 2017 Committee member, Paul John, produced a report. It was a shopping list of necessary changes and improvements: \*creation of a small meeting room to save heating costs for meetings

\* relocating and updating the kitchen

\*creation of storage space

\*providing improved facilities for the disabled

\* providing a modern IT system.



It was going to cost well beyond the resources of the Hall!

Gareth Rees (long-time resident and chair of the Residents Association), the late Bob Mullen (with experience of a similar situation at Nunthorpe) and Paul John became our funding sub-committee. They got funding from Catalyst Stockton for employing Antony Richardson from Trotter & Miller to produce detailed costings. Detailed plans, including some illustrations, were drawn up and presented to the Management Committee in September 2018 entitled 'Future Proofing Grindon Parish Hall'. The entire project was to cost around £150,000.



Looking back, says John Tait, I should perhaps have taken more time explaining the project to doubtful Committee members and residents and persuading them that, huge and overwhelming through the proposals seemed, they were well worth a try.

**How did things turn out?  
Find out in our next edition.**

# Meet The Team

**Our second committee member to be introduced to you is Mr. Bill Goldfinch. Bill, as well as being a Network Committee member, is the Clerk to Whessoe Parish Council.**



I'm from London and came to the North East after I retired. My wife had the opportunity to relocate and work in the region, which is where she came from originally.

As well as being the Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer I am also the Clerk to the Hall and Social Committees for the Parish Council. In fact, around 60% of my work is managing the Parish Hall, in normal times of course.

I was a career Civil Servant for almost 40 years. During that time, I had a variety of positions and job experiences. My specialism was purchasing and supply and contract management. I have a lot of experience of dealing with bureaucracy, rules and regulations which is ideal for my work as a Parish Clerk. Managing the Hall is just a mini version of what I was doing for the last 20 years as a Civil Servant.

I thought I would miss living in London when I came to Darlington 9 years ago, but I've only been back three times. I enjoy the friends we have made and being able to afford and play golf whenever I want. The pace of life is slower, and people are generally more friendly.

A couple of things that were a bit strange though. On our first visit to the local pub, I had to call my wife over as I couldn't understand the barmaid's accent.

While doing something in the front garden in the first few days we were here a couple said hello, which took me aback as I been in London on and off for 40 years and aside from friends and relatives had never experienced it before.

The Parish Council, including both committees are made up of forward-thinking individuals who want to make a difference rather than be hamstrung by rules and regulations. They are a can do organisation. As such it's a pleasure to work for them.

This Parish in Darlington (we're to the North a few miles from the A1(M) Junction 59), is zoned for housing and outline planning permission has been given for more than 1,000 dwellings over the next 10 years, so the semi-rural nature will change. The Parish Council's long-term plan is to put themselves in a position where they can provide the best service to the new parishioners as they come to the area.

Engagement with the existing community is difficult. The Hall is not in the centre of the community. Parishioners only seem to engage when there is an application for a large housing development. Our challenge is to find innovative ways of bringing our community together.

The Hall is well used, and we use the TVVHN for publicising it as well as social media and our website. We have a good relationship with our Borough Councillors and use them at every opportunity to push forward our plans. The latest is to take an interest in a piece of land closer to the centre of the community with the intention of running some outdoor events.

# Help For Others Survey

We recently conducted a survey which we thought would be helpful to other halls. Here we share with you (anonymously of course) the information we received.

## What methods does your Hall use when it was in full flow before the days of lockdown to publicise what it put on for the local community Replies included:

- Posters \* Facebook \* Word of mouth \* email \* Website \* Google \* External notice board
- email social media \* Hall Newsletter \* Free events
- MailChimp (This is an email marketing service) \* Google Maps
- Parish magazine / Council Newsletter \* Local newsletter
- Vinyl Banners \* Parish Assembly \* Local notices
- Village Notice Boards \* TVVHNetwork website
- Participation in community events \* Professional Website
- Hand delivered flyer \* Next Door Digest \* News in the Pews
- Community contacts displaying our posters on their halls/boards.
- Posters fixed to strategic points (mainly lampposts) \* Webmaster \* Local Radio



## What grant help your hall had from or via the Local Authority since March 2020?

Replies included

- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant - £10,000 (April 2020)
- Extended retail discount – giving the Hall 100% relief on Business Rates £230.40
- Local Restrictions Support Grant 5/11/20 to 2/12/20 £1,334.00 (£667 per 14 days)
- Tier 3 Restrictions Grant 9/12/20 £667.00
- Tier 3 Restrictions Grant 18/12/20 £667.00
- Tier 4 Restriction 31st December to 22/2/21 £2,239.21
- Lockdown Grant ( one off top up ) £4,000
- Lockdown Grant 15th February to 31st March £2096
- £500 through Stockton mayor

Caretakers were furloughed from the initial lockdown to present day. (This is due to finish at the end of April).

- That's easy – none

## How does your hall keep up to date with government/legal requirements? Replies included

- Email \* Facebook \* A.C.R.E \* TVRA
- TVVHN mailing list
- TVVHN meetings \* Insurance Company
- (from a council) Gov.uk daily updates,
- Professional body and National Association of Local Councils.
- Council Website \* Catalyst e-bulletins. \* WI committee Newsletter \* Charity Commission



# Membership Subscriptions



The Covid 19 pandemic has curtailed the Network's intended events for 2020/21 and forced halls to close.

So our subscription holiday to April this year has been extended to the end of September.

## Swap & Share



During the last few months the Network and its members have been able to provide help and information about all sorts of things. Here are some of them.

- A hall wanting to look at the pros and cons and practicalities of on-line banking was given information from a hall with the necessary experience of that sort of banking.
- A hall which operates on-line booking has offered to guide another which is looking at whether to go down that road.
- Also in relation to booking, one hall has suggested to another that it might consider Hall-master, a commercial firm, which, for a fee, will carry out bookings and, for a larger fee, booking payments.
- Advice has been given to a hall thinking of changing its constitution so that it is no longer a company but retains its useful situation as a legal entity.
- Various halls have shared their experience of applying for and getting local authority grants during the pandemic restrictions.