

**The Tangled Tale
of the
Provision
of
Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall**

SLIDE 1. Several factors over the last 120 years have come into play in Sawbridgeworth that have affected the history of Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall.

1901 Sawbridgeworth Urban District Council

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meets at Offices in Bell Street

First Monday in each month at 7.30 p.m.

Chairman Alfred Nockolds

Vice- Chairman T.A.H. Rivers

Thomas Burton

Fred N. Lawrance

George Day

Ralph A. Parminter

Joseph Dorrington

Harry A. Roberts

Charles W. Dyer

T. W. Rogers

Stuart Colquhoun Grant

Charles A. Rose

SLIDE 2 1908 ENTRY CITY & COUNTY DIRECTORIES

On April 1st 1901 part of the former parish of Sawbridgeworth was constituted the new civil parish and Urban District of Sawbridgeworth to be governed by an Urban District Council of 12 Members. Slide shows details for 1908 Met at Offices in Bell St 1st Monday of month at 7.30pm.

November 1909 – Assembly Hall



SLIDE 3 NOVEMBER 1909 - ASSEMBLY HALL

The Assembly Hall was opened Nov 1909 in what was then known as Barkers Lane, now Station Rd. It was the property of Mr. George Day. George Day is shown as 'baker' in the City & County 1912 Directories. An entry for the Assembly Hall continues to 1937 at least and thus until WW2 as a Hall with room to seat 300 people and open to the public for hire for all events.

1929 Aerial View of Sawbridgeworth from East



SLIDE 4 1929 AERIAL VIEW OF SAWBRIDGEWORTH

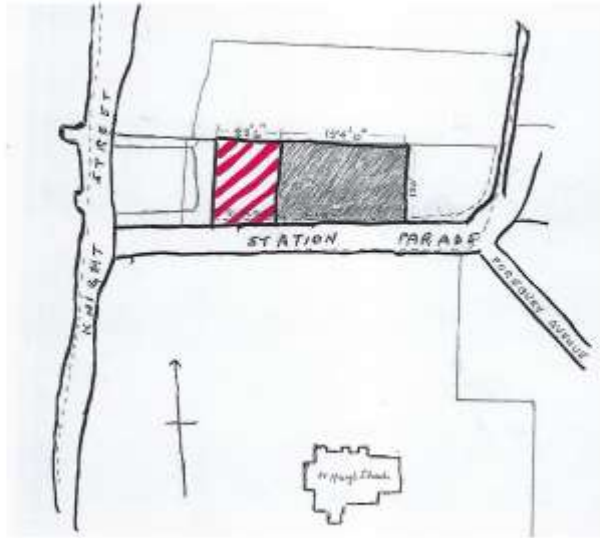
UDC in 1933 City & Country entry - met in Church St

By 1933 the UDC had changed its Offices to Church St. As UDC it had many responsibilities in running Sawbridgeworth. It set and collected both the domestic and business rates - managed refuse collection - planning committee controlled the development of all domestic and business building and many more. It thus needed more administrative space to operate than the office in Church St.

So it turned to Arthur Cutforth, then living at Rowneybury, for assistance in finding land for new Council offices. Cutforth had already set up the Sports Association, supplying Town Fields for cricket, tennis and bowls and land for the Football Club in Crofters.

To the right of Great St Mary's can be seen the Fawbert & Barnard School fronting onto Knight St. To the right of that is shown a field that, in 1929, was still being cultivated for cereal crops. It was to this field that Cutforth turned his attention.

1933 Land purchased by Arthur Edwin Cutforth



SLIDE 5 1933 LAND PURCHASED BY ARTHUR EDWIN CUTFORTH

Cutforth bought whole site himself and then sold the part red stripes to UDC for new Council Offices, while retaining ownership of the larger part as children's playground. In 1933 Forebury Estate was just nearing completion and Station Parade was renamed The Forebury.

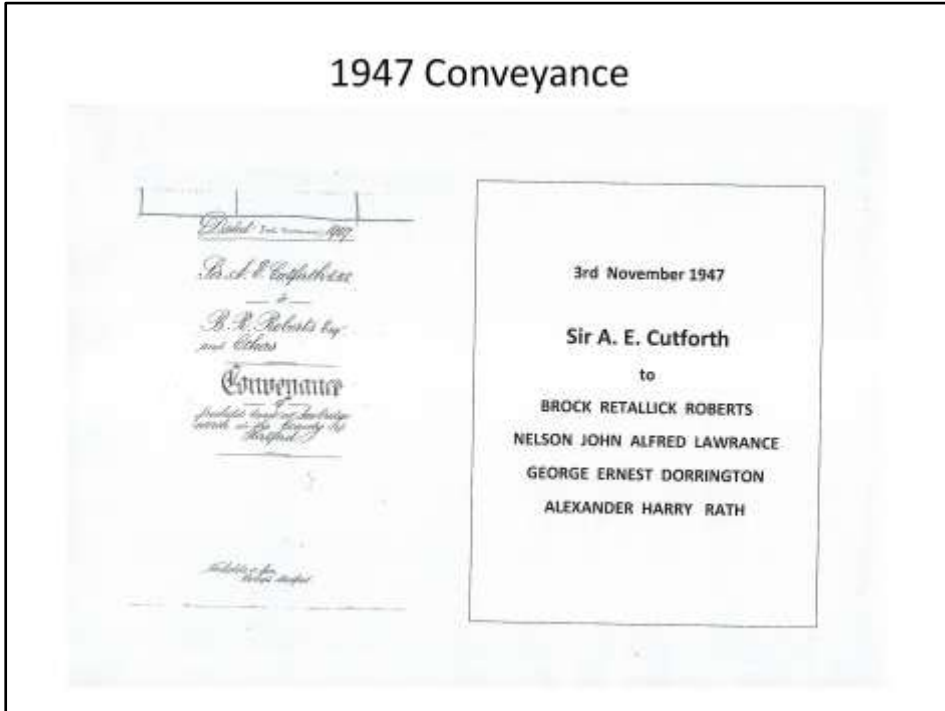
1933 SUDC New Council Offices



SLIDE 6 1933 SUDC NEW COUNCIL OFFICES

This is the building that the UDC had built in 1933. The 1939 City & County Directory for 1937 records that the UDC 'Meets at the offices in The Forebury on the first Monday of each month at 7.30pm'. This was to be the Council Offices and Council Chamber until 1961.

1947 Conveyance



SLIDE 7 1947 CONVEYANCE OF REMAINING LAND TO 4 TRUSTEES

After WW2, the residents of Sawbridgeworth sought to raise a Memorial to honour the people of Sawbridgeworth that had given their lives during the second world war. The war memorial to those lost in WW1 stands in the churchyard.

It was decided to raise a Memorial Hall in honour of those lost in WW2 - a living memorial particularly pertinent since Sawbridgeworth had lost the Assembly Hall during the war.

First they needed land in order to build a Hall. They turned to Sir Arthur Edwin Cutforth, who made available the remaining piece of land he held in The Forebury.

He conveyed this land for £162 to 4 trustees through a Conveyance that required the trustees to hold the land in perpetuity as a charitable trust for the provision and maintenance of a village hall for use by the inhabitants of the area.

Having secured the land, attention turned to building the hall just after WW2 when rationing still continued (until 1954) and building materials were in short supply.

Location of gymnasium, chapel and cinema



SLIDE 8 MAP OF AIRFIELD AND LOCATION OF GYMNASIUM, CHAPEL AND CINEMA

For help with building material they turned to the Gymnasium, Chapel and Cinema on the airfield. Nelson Lawrence (the builder) took as much as possible from the gymnasium - roof, floor, light fittings, gas heating, stage. Dismantling and shifting to site was assisted by the airmen still on the airfield.

Memorial Hall circa 1960



SLIDE 9 MEMORIAL HALL CIRCA 1960

Hall built in 1950 was only the main hall, stage, with cloak room, toilets and entrance lobby in front. The Annex, kitchen and green rooms came later.

First Reception December 1951



SLIDE 10 FIRST RECEPTION DECEMBER 1949

The foundation stone was laid by B.R. Roberts, Chairman of Memorial Hall Fund, on 31 Dec 1949 and a reception was held in the new Hall in celebration.

Note the original gas fire heaters high up on left. There was no Annex yet, so wall on right has no openings and with bar set up in back corner. The reception appears to have been organised by Chamber of Trade. Approx 130 seated at reception in evening dress.

Opening by Sir Arthur Edwin Cutforth



Sir Arthur Edwin Cutforth opening the Memorial Hall in 1951

SLIDE 11 OPENING BY SIR ARTHUR EDWIN CUTFORTH

Sir Arthur was recalled from retirement in Cumbria, to open the Hall that he had established. This picture came from a local paper clipping (undated). So the 1951 date on the caption is wrong and it is more likely to have been 1949. The Hall was obviously in use at the time which appears to be the pantomime season with the Sawbridgeworth players staging *Babes in the Wood* (?). Possibly the stage curtaining and lighting also came from the airfield as did all the structure of the stage - still there today. Sir Arthur stands at the microphone, while his wife sits to the left with bouquet of flowers on lap.

1951 SUDC requested to become Trustee

In 1951 the Committee applied for a grant in order to extend by adding the Annex, kitchen and green rooms. The Ministry of Education (to which the application was made) declined the fund application on the grounds 'That it could not award grants to charities with 'Transient Trustees' but only to 'Permanently established bodies such as the UDC'. Hence Rath's letter (as Secretary of Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall Fund) to SUDC asking if they would assume the role of Trustee. The Council accepted to become the Trustee - the grant was given and the rear extensions were added. This time the floor for the Annex was taken from the Officers Mess at the airfield. But it required the drawing up of a new Trust Deed.

<div>DR1</div> <div>1951 Trust Deed</div> <div>drawn Up by the Legal Dept. of Ministry of Education</div>	
First Schedule Defines the Land in Trust as in the Conveyance 1947 Sir Arthur E. Cutforth to Brock Roberts Nelson Lawrance George Dorrington Alexander Rath	Second Schedule 1. SUDC appointed Trustee of the land. 2. Purpose that the Trust premises are to fulfil. <i>Village Hall for inhabitants for physical/mental training and recreation.</i> 3. Management Committee of 38 members of whom 3 elected at AGM and 35 appointed by named groups

SLIDE 13 1951 TRUST DEED THE TRUST DEED DRAWN UP CONTAINED 2 SCHEDULES
 First Schedule defined the land held in trust as in the 1947 Conveyance from Cutforth to the 4 initial trustees - the land set for the provision of a Village Hall in perpetuity.

Clause 1 of Second Schedule appointed the Urban District Council as the Trustee of the land - now termed the Custodian Trustee

Clause 2 of Second Schedule states the Purpose that the Trust Premises are to fulfil. Purposes of physical and mental training and recreation and intellectual development of reading and lectures, classes, recreation and entertainments. For the benefit of the inhabitants of Sawbridgeworth.

Clause 3 of Second Schedule moves to establish the general management of the Trust premises through a Management Committee consisting of 38 members, of which 3 elected annually at AGM and further 35 appointed by named groups in Sawbridgeworth - including the Rabbit Club, Sports Association, British Legion, Girl Guides, Women's Inst, PCC - BUT none from SUDC. All councillors were Trustees and were not allowed to participate in the Management Committee. The SUDC, as Custodian Trustee, function was to hold the Conveyance (Ownership) of the land set in trust and check that the Management Committee strictly kept to the management clauses in the 1951 Trust Deed.



SLIDE 14 CARNIVAL AND FETE 1964 -1969

The Hall operated very successfully for the first 19 years under the 1951 Trust Deed. Income and Expenditure were always in balance and the Hall was well used.

To raise money for improvements, an annual Carnival and Fete was arranged by the Management Committee. This involved holding a dance in November to select the Carnival Queen and attendants for the following year. The Carnival and Fete would be held May/June the following year, when the carnival of floats and fancy dress would form up in Sayesbury Road and then proceed at 2pm, with traffic stopped, along London Road, Bell Street, Knight Street, Cambridge Road to Cutforth Rd and The Children's Playing Field for the Fete to be opened by the celebrity. There the Fete would have all the usual sideshows and events staged in a central arena. The event raised about £400 (£4000 in today's money) to be put to reserve funds for improvements to the Hall.

1961 New Council Offices for SUDC



SLIDE 15 1961 NEW COUNCIL OFFICES FOR SUDC

In 1961 Hatterscroft (then a private house) came up for sale. SUDC bought it as their Council Offices and sold their previous Office in The Forebury to Hertfordshire County Council as the Library. The County Council gained the freehold of the library site in The Forebury.

In 1972 the Government reorganised Local Government. Urban District Councils were abolished and District Councils were established. Most of the functions previously controlled by SUDC were passed to East Herts District Council. SUDC became a para-borough or Town Council (STC). But the new EHDC also claimed the property owned by the former SUDC and so Sayesbury Manor became the property of EHDC who then leased it back to Sawbridgeworth Town Council for their use and Council Chamber.

1973 Second Trust Deed and Governing Document
Foundation founded by Conveyance of 1947
Foundation and Endowment to be
administered by SUDC
Council hereby appointed as Trustee
Trust Purposes copied verbatim from 1951 Deed
Rules of Management
Committee of 10 members
5 Members appointed by Council
5 co-opted Members - subject to Council approval

SLIDE 16 1973 TRUST DEED

The Hall ran well until 1971, when financial difficulties occurred. Income from lettings barely covered routine expenditure and the Management Committee found that the profit made on Carnival & Fete were required to pay Business Rates charged by the SUDC. So an offer to SUDC was made to take over both the management of the Hall as well as ownership of the land as Custodian Trustee.

This led to the drawing up of a new Trust Deed in 1973 by the Charity Commission Foundation - founded by Conveyance of 3rd November 1947

Foundation and Endowment to be administered by Sawbridgeworth Urban District Council

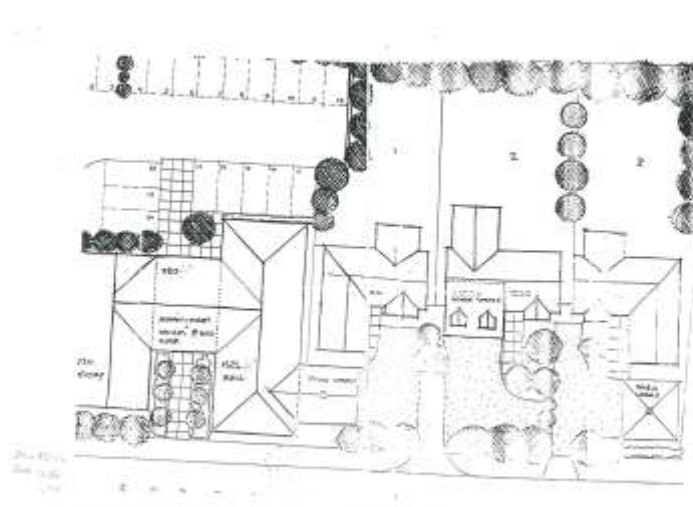
The Council is appointed to be the Trustee

Trust Purposes - Copied verbatim from the 1951 Trust Deed

Management Rules (Drawn up by SUDC) Managed by a Committee of not more than 10 members - 5 members to be appointed by the Council - Council will also appoint the Chairman of the Committee - 5 Members to co-opted by the Committee. The co-opted members will be subject to the approval of the Council.

SUDC became STC in 1971 and then managed the Hall for the next 30 years. At first they were enthusiastic to raise a large grant to improve the Hall built after WW2. But no grant was forthcoming and no major improvements were achieved. Maintenance and repairs on the building were neglected and the Hall fell into serious disrepair, such that business faded and the annual deficit rose to £2500 per annum, which was met by the Council awarding itself as Trustee an annual grant of £2500 to balance the books.

1999 SUDC plans development of Memorial Hall site



SLIDE 17 1999 STC PLANS DEVELOPMENT OF MEMORIAL HALL SITE

In 1999 the Town Clerk commissioned a survey and report on condition. Report conclusions

- Since the construction of the Annex, it is understood that no major work has been carried out other than routine maintenance.
- Although structurally sound, the hall has suffered from a lack of general maintenance and as a result there are now a significant number of repairs that are required.
- The report listed repairs necessary estimated to cost £45,000 and included repairs to roof - replacement of windows - removal of asbestos.

Plans were then drawn up to demolish the Hall, sell 1/2 of the land for housing development and, with the income from selling the land, build a much smaller Hall and library on the plot.

Budgeted Development estimates were supplied by the developer

3 plot value £210,000

New Small Hall, Admin Toilets

Planning fees, consultants,

£210,000

contingency i.e. Value of land = Construction Cost

Also New Library cost estimated £132,500. Which, on basis of 9% yield, new lease to library at £12,500 per annum. Council then agreed the plan to demolish the Hall and proceed with the development but order the removal of the asbestos from the Hall so that it could be used until development proceeded. The Town Clerk then contacted the Charity Commission to check that STC had its permission to demolish the Hall, sell 50% of the land, and build a smaller Hall for the needs of the Town.

October 2000 After removal of asbestos



SLIDE 18 OCTOBER 2000 AFTER REMOVAL OF ASBESTOS

The Town Clerk contacted the Charity Commission to report that the current Hall was no longer needed, was in disrepair, would be expensive to repair and that a smaller Hall would suffice. Had the Council the Charity Commission's permission to demolish the Hall and enact their plan?

The Charity Commission checked the 1973 Trust Deed and replied

- the Council have the right to sell the land, but must first hold a public meeting where at least 60% present must agree to the plan.
- The Town Clerk and executive committee had activated the removal of asbestos before calling the public meeting and revealed that the state that the Hall was in just before the public meeting was announced.

The Council called the public meeting at short notice for Saturday 25th November 2000.

Public Meeting Saturday 25 Nov. 2000

(Officer - Editor)

Closure of hall: it was 'orchestrated'

WITH reference to the article Hall Built With Demob Money (some editions of *The Herald*, November 16), I have been using the hall for the past six years every Monday.

It was noticeable that no attention was being given to upkeep and we were of the opinion that this was all orchestrated.

We had heard rumours that some builder wanted to build on the land, but we could not prove anything as there had not been any plans submitted.

But regular users were discouraged from using the place by various tricks.

In short, many people think this has happened by design and town councillors are going for a quick fix.

Sawbridgeworth people are the losers yet again. This is a prime site. It'll make money for somebody! - *Jill Dwyer, Sawbridgeworth.*

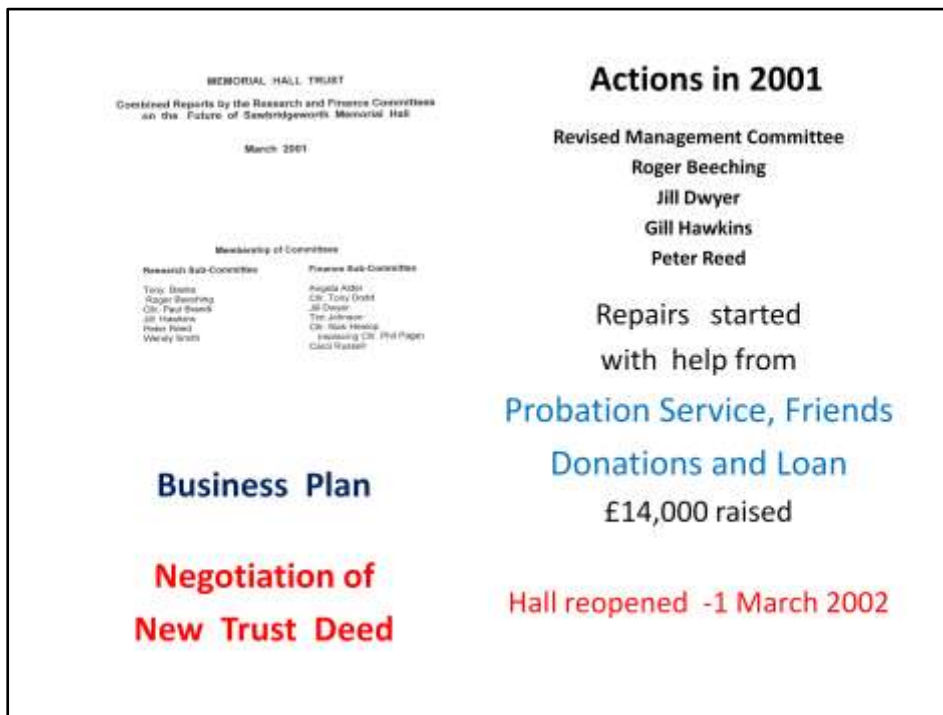
SLIDE 19 PUBLIC MEETING SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2000

The Council advertised the Public Meeting only 4 days before it was due to be held. Luckily one inhabitant, Jill Dwyer, took issue through a letter to the Herald - published 2 days before the scheduled meeting. But Jill Dwyer went further and printed leaflets informing of the upcoming meeting and stood in Bell St. distributing the information.

Consequently, instead of the Council's expected 8 - 10 residents to come to the meeting, some 100-150 residents arrived at the Bullfields Centre. The Council's proposal received rough treatment and the proposal to demolish the Hall and adopt the development plan was very firmly rejected.

Without public consent, the Council's plan was not granted, which left the Council with a derelict Hall and little idea of any way forward. Also the Charity Commission informed that, having closed the Hall without their permission, the Council could be considered to be 'In breach of Trust' and must get the Hall reopened as soon as possible.

The Town Clerk and Council then planned a further public meeting to advise on a way forward, which was held in the Football Club's pavilion in Jan. 2001.



SLIDE 20 JOINT REPORTS JANUARY 2001. The Public Meeting led to the formation of two Committees - Research and Finance. The Research Committee conducted surveys to ask what the Public wanted in their hall - big or small, what features were required and also compared other venues for hire in the area. The Finance Committee considered many different ways to finance a restoration project. The conclusion was that the Town wanted their existing Memorial Hall restored.

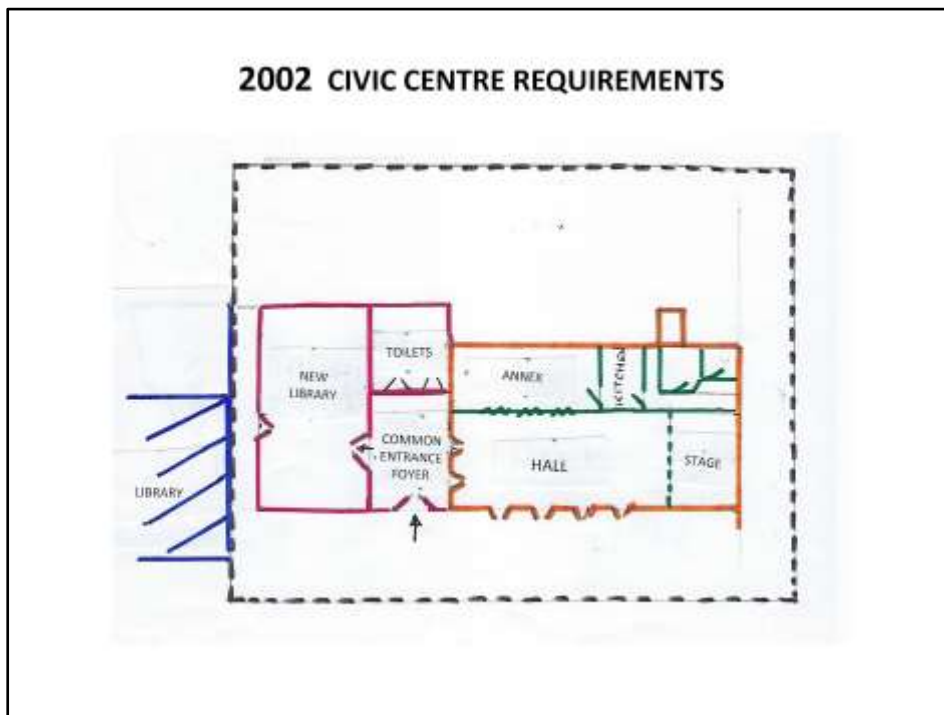
The reports went to the Council, who then demanded a fully appraised 5 year Business Plan for the Restoration and that the Plan must be delivered in 3 months.

With the help of the CDA for Herts, the business plan was produced by Peter Reed with operational and financial detail showing how the Hall could operate successfully again and how £226,000 would be raised to complete the restoration. The plan was presented by the Council's representative on the small management committee (Roger Beeching) for consideration.

The Council, reluctantly, accepted the Business Plan and formally restructured the Management Committee by adding Jill Dwyer, Gill Hawkins, Peter Reed as the 'lay members' and with Roger Beeching as the Council's representative and communicating to the Council.

Furthermore, Richard Slater, the Village Halls Advisor for Hertfordshire was consulted and asked to see the 1973 Trust Deed. This was found to be inconsistent with Charity Commission's Schemes for Village Halls in that the Council had been made both Custodian Trustee and Managing Committee. So persuaded the Town Clerk and Council that a new Governing Document had to be prepared by the Charity Commission.

The renewed Managing Committee started work on restoring the Hall with help from the Probation Service, the 'Friends' under Mary Whitehead's leadership, local donations and one loan of £3000, raising a total of £14,000 towards the projected £226,000 needed to fully restore. So the Hall was patched up and was reopened for use on 1 March 2002, but under the 1973 Scheme. where STC were still both the Custodian Trustee and Management Committee.



SLIDE 21 2002 CIVIC CENTRE REQUIREMENTS

The Council then faced separate problems that they needed to resolve -

1. The District Council decided to 'rationalise' their property holdings, which required the Town Council to vacate Sayesbury Manor and find new premises. They temporarily rented the top floor of the Health Centre at 2b The Square.
2. The Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 would come into force in 2004, requiring that all buildings open to the public should be modified to give unhindered access for the physically and visually impaired.

Both the Council offices at 2b The Square and the Library did not meet the DDA standards..

So plans were drawn up by STC to sell allotments land off Reedings Way to raise money to build a Civic Centre, incorporating The Library and The Council Offices, for which land was required.

The Council formed the 'Sawbridgeworth Area Action Committee' with representation of STC, the Local and County Libraries and County architects to plan the proposed Civic Centre with Library, Council Office and Memorial Hall built on the Memorial Hall Trust property, since STC as Custodian Trustee mistakenly considered that they owned the land.

The planned layout comprised an open public foyer giving access to the retained Hall on one side, the Library on the other, communal toilets to the rear and new Council Offices above.

The plans were completely unacceptable to the new Hall Management Committee because the common entrance foyer would have meant that the toilets planned would serve as Public Toilets so that private parties and vulnerable groups would find booking the Hall unacceptable and indeed in contravention of the 1947 Conveyance requiring the Hall to be available for hire by everybody.

But, since the Council were still the Trustee and Managing Committee in 2002, the nascent Management Committee could not stop the plans at that point.

3rd JULY 2003 Governing SCHEME



SLIDE 22 3RD JULY 2003 GOVERNING DOCUMENT

The 3rd Governing Scheme was received from the Charity Commission replacing the 1973 Scheme

The title of the land in trust was transferred from the Council to 'The Official Custodian for Charities'.

The Management Committee structure became - 4 elected members at the AGM plus 10 nominated by ten user groups holding regular bookings of the Hall. The Scheme was very similar to that drawn up in 1951, with much local involvement and only 1 councillor, but not the 35 user groups of 1951!

At the first AGM in Nov 2003 the new Management Committee unanimously rejected the plan to create the Civic Centre on the Hall land and the Sawbridgeworth Area Action Committee then changed its plan to having the Civic Centre created on the Library site next door, to incorporate the Library and Council Offices.

2004 HALL INTERIOR



SLIDE 23 2004 HALL INTERIOR

By late 2004 the Management Committee, had raised and invested £40,000 in the restoration and towards the projected £226,000 estimated under the Business Plan set 3 years earlier. The Hall had been brought back from the virtually derelict condition in 2001 remaining after removal of the asbestos, but still had a long way to go on restoration.

[illegible]

By the end of 2004, the Hall was operating very successfully and financially viable having attracted several extra groups to hire which included Valdez Gymnastics, with much gymnastic equipment to store. The problem was storage. The only storage area was under the stage which was dangerous and access was limited to only the Hall manager/caretaker.

The first stage planned to build a ground level store for the tables and chairs stored in the toilets, plus the gymnastic equipment stacked around the Hall and also the children's play group's equipment stored in the green rooms.

A maximum BIFFA grant was obtained, plus grants from EHDC and STC totalling to £63,250.

2007 STORE EXTENSION



SLIDE 25 2007 STORE EXTENSION

The new store was completed by 2007.

The case made to obtain the BIFFA award was that it would enable the introduction of short mat bowling for the community to store and manoeuvre the mats safely and also handle all daily used tables and chairs safely.

So short mat bowling was introduced with the Friends Association providing the last of their funds to buy the bowling mats and some bowls. By 2007 the Management Committee had raised £132,000 towards the estimated £226,000 required in the Business Plan, through the Friends, generous donations from the public, successful grant applications and from the Hall's own funds.

Thoughts then turned to considerations of planning funding the next stage in the architect's design for refurbishment, which were for new toilets.



SLIDE 26 APRIL 2010 CIVIC CENTRE REVISITED

In April 2010, the Council's plans to locate the Civic Centre with Library and Council Offices on the Library site collapsed, leaving the Town Clerk with a problem - where to find new land to build the Council Offices. He approached the Chairman of the Management Committee to see whether the previous idea to locate on the Memorial Hall site could be investigated.

The chairman agreed to investigate and re-employed the architect to draw up plans so that the Council Offices and Hall were completely separated for their operations. Draft Plans were drawn up - with separate toilets for both sections - such plans were speculative to check space needs, but would have been subject to approval by Management Committee and Charity Commission.

But the Management Committee chairman seized the opportunity of requesting that, if the Council were to get new premises, a financial contribution from Civic Centre funding would be required to complete the restoration of the Hall.

The request led to a tour with the Council's surveyor which brought about estimates for new roof, new toilets, new heating system, new doors and windows. The estimate totalled £150,000 and this amount was taken to the Finance Committee and Council for approval as part of a Council led contract to construct the Civic Centre on the Hall land.

Nov. 2010 CLOSURE OR FUTURE?

AGM December 2010

The Town Council is prepared to support Capital Refurbishment of the Memorial Hall if it can be demonstrated that the legal issues relating to the trustees and operational issues relating to running the Hall are resolved



ORIGINS 1947

This Hall was erected in memory of the people of Sawbridgeworth who gave their lives for the cause of freedom in the Second World War



SLIDE 27 November 2010 CLOSURE OR FUTURE?

In October 2010 the AGM approached and the 4 elected members who had run the Hall for 10 years were standing down. Knowing that normal notification would bring insufficient interest from the public, action was needed to recruit and elect new Committee members to take the key roles of Chairman, Treasurer and Booking Manager. A Public Meeting was called under the title 'Closure or Future' at which the case was made that unless new management came forward at the AGM it could lead to the closure of the Hall.

At the public meeting the Mayor at that time spoke to assure 'That the Town Council is prepared to support capital refurbishment of the Memorial Hall if it can be demonstrated that present problems can be resolved by the election of new officers to manage the Hall.'

Thus the Management Committee received new blood who were the benefactors of the £150,000 previously negotiated for the completion of the restoration of the Hall. This completed the £226,000 estimate in the 2001 Business Plan for restoration.

The Memorial Board in the foyer reminds that the Hall was erected in memory of the servicemen and Sawbridgeworth residents who gave their lives in WW2, and it is fitting that a pilgrimage from the Hall to Sawbridgeworth Airfield is arranged each year as part of Remembrance Day.

The picture shows the Hall in 2021. Little of the parts brought from the airfield in 1947 remain. The main thing is the floor in the main hall which is the original sprung gymnastics flooring. It is the same floor on which the servicemen used for gym and sport - and for which they sat to watch films projected onto the back wall of the stage - and the same floor for service led by the Chaplain on a Sunday morning.