



Mepal Village Hall

Conveniently located close to the heart of the village, the Hall is licensed for public entertainment in the form of stage plays, (maximum capacity 100), music and dancing (80), and cinema performances (100).

Normal hire charges are:

Daytime, regular users	-	£5.00 per hour
6p.m. onwards, regular users	-	£7.00 per hour
Occasional bookings by		
Community groups at any time	-	£7.50 per hour
Private parties-Mepal residents	-	£50.00
Damages deposit	-	£50.00
Private parties - non Mepal residents	-	£50.00
Damages deposit	-	£100.00
Commercial bookings by negotiation		

For further information and bookings contact Jenny Sparrow on (01353) 778895

A 'Temporary Event' licence for the sale of liquor *may* be obtainable - please enquire.

History

The building which is now Mepal Village Hall was originally built in 1873/74 as Mepal National School and saw its' first pupils on 4th May 1874. The original cost, funded entirely by voluntary contributions, was 551 pounds, two shillings and sixpence. By the mid 1960s the old school building was no longer large enough to serve the needs of the villages of Mepal and Witcham and a new school, Mepal and Witcham

Primary School, was built in Brangehill Lane. By the end of 1966 the inhabitants of Mepal had raised sufficient money to buy the old school building for the purpose of transforming it into a meeting place and social centre for the residents of the village and on 16th February 1967 Mepal Village Hall was officially opened. The wheels of our legal system ground exceedingly slowly and it was not until October 1968 that transfer of ownership from the Church authorities was finally completed.

Use of the Hall

The Hall is used regularly by local organisations such as the Youth Club, the Good Companions, the Gardening Club and the Bridge Club, and by the East Cambs On-Line computer access point. There are annual events such as the Produce and Craft Show, and the Hall is the local polling station for parliamentary, European and local elections. The Hall is also let for private parties. The Committee itself organises events such as tombola evenings, auction sales and from time to time gala days or street parties, especially on days of national celebration. In particular the Committee, with the help of ADeC (Arts Development in East Cambridgeshire) and Arts in Cambs on Tour, has been developing the use of the Hall for arts events, both amateur and professional, such as the local artists' exhibition in September and the professional drama and music performances that have become a regular feature. In organising events the Committee aims both to provide for the enjoyment and edification of the local community at an affordable price and where possible to raise funds for the improvement of the Hall.

Constitution and Purposes

Mepal Village Hall is administered by a charitable trust on behalf of the whole local community. This trust was set up

in 1968 when the Hall, formerly the village school, was bought from the Church authorities by public subscription. The trust deed mentions particularly "use for meetings, lectures and classes and . . . other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the . . . inhabitants".

The Village Hall Committee

The Hall is run by a management committee appointed in April each year at an Annual General Meeting open to all adult residents. The Annual General Meeting has to be publicised by fixing a notice to the building. In practice, in addition to this, the meeting is publicised in other ways including the delivery of a notice to individual households. Some of the Committee members, up to a maximum of nine, are elected at the Annual General Meeting. The rest are appointed by local organisations. Some of these organisations were named in the original trust deed in 1968, and others can be, and from time to time have been, added to the list. Members can also be co-opted to fill vacancies during the year. Once appointed, the Committee elects a Chairman and other officers for the year. The Committee is required to hold two ordinary meetings each year, but in practice it meets about every six weeks.

Before taking office each year, members are required to sign a declaration in the Committee's minute book, accepting that they are willing to act as trustees under the 1968 deed. This means in effect that they are to look after the property as carefully as if it were their own and they are personally responsible if they fail to do so. Irrespective of who elected or appointed them, they must administer the Hall in the interests of the whole local community.

The Parish Council

The Parish Council is "custodian trustee". This means that it has to sign formal documents to do with the property

when asked to do so by the Committee but it does not have any responsibility for running the Hall. However, the Committee has been very grateful for the Parish Council's support, for example in making an annual grant towards upkeep and in giving its formal backing to various plans the Committee has proposed.

The Future

It has been clear for some years that the Hall is in dire need of refurbishment and improvement to meet the higher material standards and changing needs of our greatly expanded village. Between 1998 and 2001 there was extensive debate in the village about the development of local social and sports facilities. In the course of a Village Appraisal a questionnaire was distributed to all households. On this topic a substantial majority of replies to the questionnaire favoured a combined centre on the playing field. A working group was set up and engaged an architect to help organise a hands-on exhibition to explore the options more thoroughly and research the likely continuing levels of support for new or improved facilities once they had been built. In the light of the findings from the exhibition the working group did not feel that sufficient numbers of people preferred the option of a combined building to make it viable. The group recommended maintaining the current Hall and building a sports pavilion as a separate project.

Accordingly in 2002 the Committee held a series of public events, at which members of the local community put forward ideas for the development of the Hall. These ideas were then incorporated into plans drawn up by an architect. This scheme would greatly extend the useable space for all types of public and private events, and would enable this to be used either as a single space or as separate partitioned rooms for simultaneous events. Large capital grants are no

longer readily available for projects of this kind, and so during 2005 the Committee decided to approach the work in phases, using smaller sources of funding as these became available. Already in 2004 the Youth Club had obtained grant aid from the Local Network Fund for a project to decorate the interior of the Hall with artwork and to effect other detailed improvements. With advice and assistance from the Committee this work was carried out and transformed the internal appearance of the building. At the same time, improvements were made to the heating system. In 2005 the main pitched roofs were stripped, re-slatted and fitted with thermal insulation, using part of the "Section 106" money held by the District Council from the development of Chestnut Way. In 2007 with the aid of grants from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd) and from Community Leader Plus, a new gas boiler and up-to-date heating controls were installed. Applications have recently been made to a number of potential sources for grants to enable the next phase of improvements, a new toilet block and entrance lobby, to be carried out. Some of these applications have been successful and work will begin this winter.

Footnote

These notes are only a very brief summary. For fuller information on any of these matters, contact the Secretary of the Committee, David Stazicker, at The Willows, Low Bank, Mepal, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2AU, phone 01353 778129, e-mail david.stazicker@gmail.com.

Mepal Village Hall Management Committee
Registered as a Charity in England and Wales No. 297314
Chairman Allen Sallis Treasurer Jenny Sparrow Secretary David Stazicker