

Journal of Somerset's Community Council

# Thatch



**Success for Seavington**



# Seavington Millennium Hall

Despite all the hard work, the rejections, the problems, come opening day all these are soon forgotten. Here in Seavington we have passed



football club were the main erectors but with the help of many others.

After nearly 20 years of its second life our Pavilion was getting towards the end of its time. Although the basic structure was still very sound it was becoming more difficult to keep up with changes in the Health and Safety requirements.

Back in November 1992 open meetings were held to discuss the future of the pavilion and it soon became obvious that some 95% were in favour of a new building instead of 'wasting' money on repairs and renovation.

through just about every emotion but the last is the best – success!

Encouraged by a bequest of £3,000 specifically for a new hall a small working party was set up to consider this route in greater detail.

Our good fortune starts way back in 1974 when a group of villagers formed Seavington Playing Field Association and with considerable help of a local landowner acquired the Playing Field.



The next stage was the

acquisition in 1979 of an ex-army hut for £1 but then as now far more cost is involved in dismantling, moving and re-erection. As the building was to become the Sports Pavilion the

As the villages of Seavington St Michael and Seavington St Mary had lost the school, the shop and the Post Office, the prospect of having a new hall to put a 'heart' back into the community received a

lot of support. To this end a proper sub committee was set up, namely 'Seavington New Village Hall Committee'.



# Seavington Millennium Hall

Round about March 1995, leading up to the Parish Council elections, the most commonly asked questions were how big is the hall going to be, whereabouts

(on the playing field) is it going to be built and how much will it cost?

Having got to about £10,000 in our fund raising efforts, it was decided to get proper plans drawn up and after further open village

meetings, go for planning approval. As everything appeared to be acceptable a full specification was then drawn up to enable proper estimates to be obtained.

There is no doubt that this course of action was the right thing to do, because once everyone could not only see the determination but also how the new hall would look, where it would be sited and how much it would cost, it gave all but the few doubters real encouragement in their efforts.

As the funds grew it became obvious that we could go for 'official' financial support as we were heading for having the amount of matching funding required by both the District and County Councils.

Because we already owned the Playing Field and hence the land on which we were to build, our grant application to South Somerset District

Council and Somerset County Council found favour and we were granted the maximum permitted. Even with these we were a long way from being able to start building.



Around this time the National Lottery seemed to be the obvious source of the required shortfall in funds; we were learning of huge amounts of money being handed out left, right and centre, but in fact getting any of it was a completely different matter.

The National Lotteries Charities Board seemed the most appropriate to go for but even their themes were not strictly appropriate for our needs.

However, needs must and we felt that we had a very valid cause which was sure to be acceptable. How wrong can you be! No reasons

given – just a simple straightforward rejection.





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Not to be deterred we watched the themes very carefully and soon spotted another where we were even more confident of success, but again no! A slight touch of despondency was beginning to creep in, where do we go next.

An application to the Rural Development Commission was also turned down due to lack of funds which was more acceptable than just being turned down when money appeared to be being scattered like confetti to some dubious good causes in the minds of many.

Although our fund raising continued we were also aware that costs were going up as well. Not deterred, everything was done to raise money, all the usual village activities such as whist drives, bingo, quizzes,

coffee mornings, bring and buy as well as 'Gift Aid' and 'Covenants'; in fact you name it and we have done it, except a duck race because we have not got a river!

AND THEN, have the Community Council for Somerset ever let us down? No! At a Village Hall awards presentation occasion held at Nunney Village Hall one of the speakers told of the £10 million that the Millennium Commission were giving to ACRE specifically for Village Halls under their 21st Century Halls for England programme.

At this time the only thing we had not got was Building Regulation Approval otherwise we were

ready to start building once we had acquired funds.

Although there were some doubts about our going for the money our original application was accepted and we were given a full application to complete. For the first time this grant claim was for a total project cost, i.e. including all the fixtures and fittings. Despite this giving a lot more work, at the end of the day this was to our benefit because the bottom line of our grant claim, £70,202, was what we were granted – after a heart stopping mix-up which was fortunately soon cleared.

But this was only the beginning.

We were the only hall in Somerset to get a grant in the first round of the 21st Century Halls for England programme and were also therefore one of the

first in the programme and this led to a difficult situation as the procedures and paperwork were resolved, with ourselves feeling that the goalposts were constantly being moved. In the end our project manual is some 100 pages thick plus some drawings.

A few detail points we have learnt along the way may be helpful; don't start applying for grants for the whole project – at least have the land or a building for conversion or a substantial bank balance to replace either of these. Have proper plans, specification and prices – do not guess, do not round up (or down) state figures as they are. You are not allowed to build-in for price escalation but do allow for the cost of a solicitor; you will have to provide a legal opinion of your

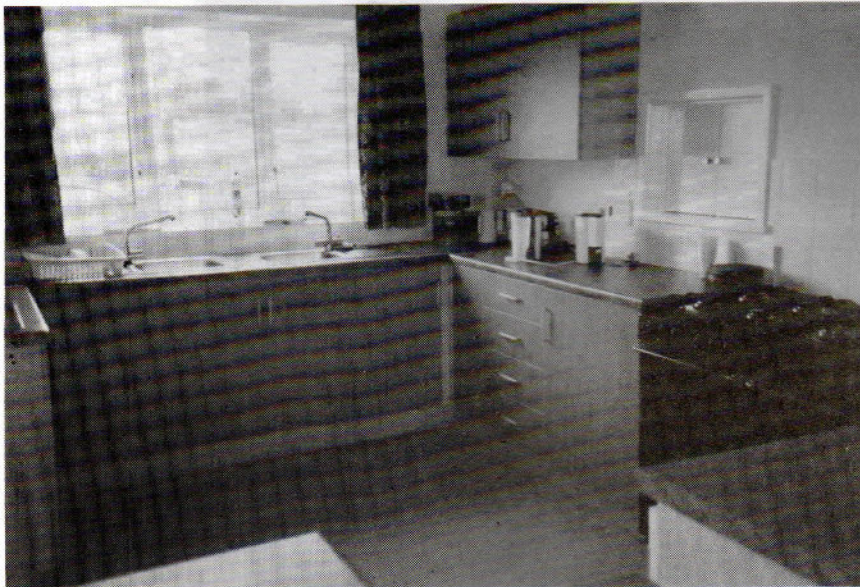




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set-up, to check your constitution and any deeds of your land and/or property, you will be required to give a Deed of Dedication, you need Deeds of Collateral Warranty between all the main parties and you have the Main Agreement itself if awarded a grant from the 21st Century Halls for England Fund.



Pay great attention to what you are asked to do – if you do not understand ask. Remember it's their money you are wanting.

Quoting from the old saying, remember if at first you do not succeed, try and try again. Success will come if you have a good case.

Of course, having a new hall is reward for all the past hard work but also makes future fund raising so much easier but that is not the end. Having

submitted our last grant application which has been paid we are reminded that annual reports, of not less than 1000 words, have to be submitted at the end of the first year, third, fifth, seventh, tenth and every decade for the next 100 years! Regrettably I have had to decline that responsibility.

Please let nothing I have said put you off – it was all very worthwhile. The opening sight of a packed hall on opening day was something beyond description. Again an opening party in the evening with a spread fit for a

king for 180 people confirms you have achieved what you set out to do.

Bookings are already beyond our expectations with use and attendance by villagers much higher than we ever dare expect.

Peter Ashley  
Treasurer Seavington Millennium Hall

## ***Key to Photographs***

***Page 11 Top - The Old Army Sports Pavilion***

***Page 11 Bottom - Seavington New Millennium Hall***

***Page 12 Top -- Inside of Hall Stage Area***

***Page 12 Bottom - Extra Storage Space Inside Hall***

***Page 13 - A Packed Hall at the Opening Ceremony***

***Page 14 Top - Villagers at the Evening Opening Party***

***Page 14 Bottom - Seavington's New Kitchen***