

Renaming the Committee Room to The Westlake Room

Over 30 guests and colleagues of Gill and Peter Westlake gathered in the committee room of the Village Hall on Wednesday, 30th October to celebrate the tremendous job that Peter and Gill did in managing the Village Hall from the mid seventies until 1999.

In 1976 the Village Hall was at a crossroads. Solihull Council had rented the Committee Room for several years for use as the local library and had taken the decision to relocate the library to a larger purpose built building in the centre of the village (now the Jubilee Centre). Thus a substantial amount of income disappeared overnight from the Village Hall, and with very little cash reserves to fall back on, an emergency meeting was called to discuss whether the Village Hall could continue as a community venue. The total funds held at this time amounted to less than £1000.

Those present at that meeting included representatives from groups using the Village Hall for their meetings, including members of Balsall Common Lions and other Community groups who wanted the Village Hall re-invigorated for the benefit of the local community.

A new committee was formed and Peter took over the role of Treasurer. Over the next twenty or so years, the number of hirers increased, and Peter by April 1999 had steered the Village Hall finances to a very healthy £14,902 despite the committee carrying out major repairs and renovations during this period.

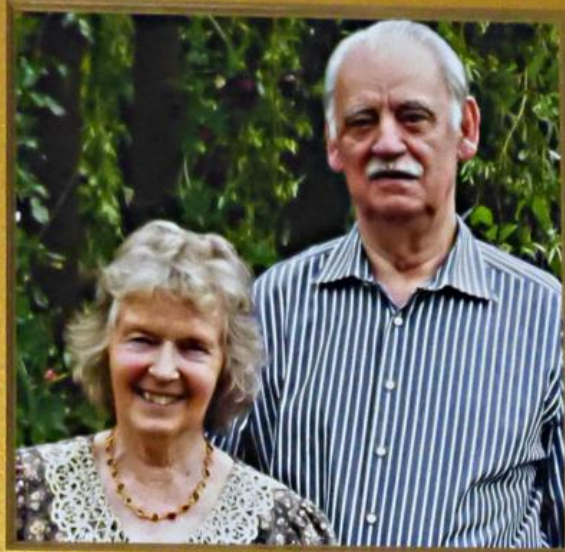
During the time Peter was involved with the Village Hall there was very little money available as grants for improvements to community buildings. Peter carried out most of the maintenance himself, with the help of members of his family, to keep down the running costs of the hall. In the early 1980's Gill also joined the committee.

In 2012 the Committee Room was extended to include a kitchen area, unisex disabled toilet and storage area, and the reserves accumulated by Peter during his years at Treasurer were used to finance part of the cost of this extension.

The residents of Balsall Common and the surrounding area all owe Peter and Gill a great debt of gratitude for running and maintaining the Village Hall as a community facility for future generations, and in recognition of their efforts, the Village Hall Committee decided to rename the Committee Room "The Westlake Room".

Gill and her daughter Caroline, son in law Ben, and grandchildren Charlotte and Jack attended the social evening, and Gill unveiled a picture of herself and Peter, together with an engraved brass plaque.

A basket of flowers together with an enlarged copy of the photograph of Gill and Peter were presented to Gill.



A MEMORIAL OF GRATITUDE

In 1976 the Village Hall came into a financial crisis. Solihull MBC ceased renting the Committee Room for its library, causing a major monetary loss to the hall's operational costs.

A special meeting was called by the hall's management committee, to include representative from the principal groups hiring the hall's facilities, to decide the future. A new committee was formed, and Peter Westlake became Treasurer.

From 1976 to 1999, Peter Westlake steered the Village Hall's finances from less than £1,000 to over £14,000.

This figure is after the costs the committee made of repairs and major renovations.

Peter, with the assistance of his wife Gill and family members, did much of the general maintenance themselves.

Gill became a member of the Village Hall Committee in the early 1980's.

In 2012 the Committee Room was extended to include a kitchen, storage and unisex disabled toilet.

Much of the cost came from the financial reserves accumulated by Peter Westlake.

Peter Westlake and his wife Gill are owed a great debt of gratitude for their selfless work and achievement for Balsall Common Village Hall.

