

Pop in Place 10 year Anniversary 1996 - 2006



How it all began!



When Alison Bennett sat down to watch the television one afternoon ten years ago, little did she know that it would change not only her life, but also the lives of countless other people. The programme she watched described the isolation and social deprivation of young mothers with small children living in high-rise flats in the Midlands. It struck Alison forcibly that isolation was not confined to urban communities. People of all age groups could feel just as lonely and cut off in rural communities amid the leafy lanes of Dorset.

Steering Committee

Herself then a mum of three young children, Alison set about thinking of this problem and what could be done within a small community like her own of Bere Regis to combat it. She enlisted the help of a friend, Tina Elford, who had six young children. Together they sat down and discussed plans to form a steering committee. Their aim was to draw together community-minded people of different age groups and social backgrounds in order that the project itself also would attract a wide range of people of different age groups and social backgrounds. Alison and Tina, Edna Collis, Shelagh Rowan, Tony Wise, Maria McMahon, Sheila Leigh and Denise Croom formed that original committee.



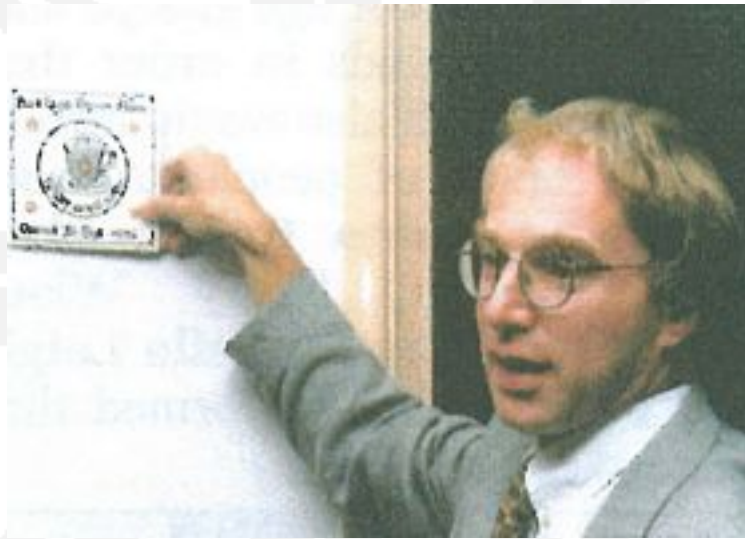
A feasibility study was carried out with a questionnaire circulated to households throughout the village. Would people use a meeting place if it was set up? The initial response was mixed. Some established organisations in the village were encouraging; others had reservations. The survey however established a need, and the committee were motivated to go ahead.

Funds were required to get the project off the ground. A sponsored walk raised some initial money, and various organisations were approached for help. Alison and her committee needed to be able to convince these groups that the scheme could work. Dorset Community Action gave £500. The Talbot Village Trust also gave substantial money, sufficient to carpet the hall. The Thomas Williams Trust which provides under 25s of the parish with financial support for educational needs purchased books and educational toys to stock the children's corner.

Choosing a venue

An obvious venue for the meeting place was The Drax Hall in North Street. The smaller downstairs hall would be adequate but it had been little used over the years, and was in a dismal state. Undeterred the committee and families set to work to paint and decorate it, install warm and attractive carpet tiles, make new curtains for the windows, and buy tables around which people could sit and chat and drink coffee. "I wanted to create a very special, warm and inviting atmosphere", said Alison, "so that the people who came would feel valued - that they were important enough to be taken trouble over." The committee wanted to avoid calling the new project a drop-in centre because of the term's association with drugs and alcohol and decided to call it "The Pop In Place".

On September 7th 1996, The Pop In Place opened its doors to the community. Local G.P. Dr Tim Harley carried out the official opening (see photo below). He has been totally supportive of the venture throughout. He says that, having known the project since its beginning, he feels that it is a brilliant example of what local people can do for each other - and it works.



Two members from each of the village organisations were invited along to the opening. There were two sessions a week, 10am - noon on Mondays & Fridays. The trickle of clients was slow to start with. 7 or 8 people were coming along regularly. Over the years this has grown to 20 or 30 with a total of 100 people involved. A library was stocked. A Book Day, in which villagers were invited to donate good quality books, provoked a massive response. Denise Smith took on the task of cataloguing them all. This ran for five years, after which it was decided to close it and operate a video library instead. "There is a need to be flexible, and to meet the on-going needs of the community," Alison explained.

The 50-50 new-to-you clothing stall has been very popular throughout, and enough income is generated from this and from the teas and coffees to pay the rent of the hall. In fact The Pop In Place is the main user of the Drax Hall through the year. Hall Committee Treasurer Chris Maunder said that he feels the group does a wonderful job. "It was an inspired idea and somehow the formula has worked and brought everything together successfully for the community," he added.

Raising money for Charities

The group now holds events to raise money for local charities. In 2000 £3,000 was raised for the Poole Body Scanner Appeal. In 2001 £1,800 was raised for the Bere Regis Doctor's Surgery. Sadly one of the founder members of the committee, Tina Elford, died from cancer at the young age of 38. In her memory Gardens for Tina was instigated and has now become the Bere Regis Open Gardens Event with monies going towards many worthy causes, including the Village Hall.

Over the years others have shared Alison's initial vision to provide a vital service to the local community. Julie Lye has been a key worker for many years now. She has been involved in organising the poetry mornings and the bingo. She also has acted as compere for the many shows the group puts on. Julie said that when she moved to the village she found it very difficult to make friends, and stayed in a lot. Finally someone took her along to the Pop In Place. She quickly found

herself getting involved and is now proud of all the group have achieved. "I totally love it" says Julie" if only I'd had the confidence to go along in the beginning, before all those lonely years. Most of all I love the performances. I would never have imagined myself able to get up and present shows and narrate stories on stage. I think so many of us have a lot to thank The Pop In Place for."



Julie in costume for a BBC "Children In Need" Event

Poppets & Performers!

In latter years the group has also launched a Wednesday Poppets Toddlers Group, currently led by Trish White and in 2002 The Pop In Place Pipsqueaks was launched to encourage youngsters to get involved in music, dance and drama - this has evolved into the Pop In Performers Group that have presented several successful shows in recent years - although it would be true to say that shows have been a regular feature of the Pop In Place since its early years. The Annual "Performer of the Year" is another spin off of the group, encouraging local talent to take part in an annual show.



When Pastor Jim & Janet Morris came into the village to pastor the Butt Lane Chapel in 2002 they soon became regularly involved in the Pop In work and Pastor Jim is a regular face at the Monday & Friday sessions. "As a minister it gives me a great opportunity to meet a complete cross section of the village in an informal setting," he says. Along with his wife, Janet, he has become a regular supporter of the group and helped out with a number of the shows and pantomimes. He comments, "It's great to see the enthusiasm of these youngsters and their desire to be involved in the performing arts - especially when there is so much bad press about youngsters these days."

Over the last ten years the Pop In Place has provided a first class service to our village community. May it long continue to flourish! Here's to another ten years!

Bere Regis Open Gardens

The Pop In Place started Bere Regis Open Gardens in the year 2000 as a tribute to the memory of Tina Elford, who was one of the founder members of the Project and sadly died of cancer.

The original event was entitled "Gardens for Tina" and together with other events during that year, £3,000 was given to the Poole Hospital Cancer Treatment Trust.

The event was an overwhelming success and it soon became apparent that there was a huge interest in visiting gardens. Equally there was a real passion for gardening within our own community with the generosity to allow the world and its wife to amble through your gardens. This year sees the sixth Bere Regis Open Gardens and a record twenty gardens are opening on the 9th of July between 10am - 4pm. We are grateful to these people without whom we would not be able to stage what has become one of the village's most popular events.



The BBC "Children in Need" Appeal

For the last nine years the Pop In Place has done crazy things to raise money for the BBC "Children in Need" Appeal. More recently we have roped in Pastor Jim Morris & Kath Jeeves to provide the music, and somehow we have been able to raise approximately £2,700 over the years.

It's always good when you sit and watch all the amazing projects that the money raised is used for and to think that the people of Bere Regis got involved. Well done everyone and we hope to see you again for this year's fundraiser!



Its Show Time!



From it's inception The Pop In Place has fostered and encouraged local talent and produced a number of entertaining shows over the years from the stage of the Drax Hall. They have included the following:

1996 Pop In Palladium & Mary Pop ins!

1997 Pop in Goes West

1999 Millenium Musical Memories

2000 Sacred Concert at Bere Regis Church

2001 The Sound of Music

2002 Pipsqueaks in Concert

2003 Alice in Pantoland

2004 Rock around the Christmas Tree

2005 "In search of Christmas" - A Pirate Pantomime

2006 "Let's celebrate" Anniversary Show

Tribute Concerts

"Thank you for the Music" (Nick White)

"A little bit of Dorset" (Cis Lewis)

Also

"Peace & Love" Concert

Plus

The Annual "Performer of the Year" Show

(Now in it's 6th Year!)

The Pop In Place 10th Anniversary Community Celebration

Saturday 16th September 2006 at the Drax Hall, North Street

Programme of Events

2 - 3pm "Mr Colours" (children's entertainer)

3.30 - 5.30pm Durnovarian Silver Band

7.30 - 11pm "Loose Connections" (live music from a very talented group)

Afternoon & evening Photographic Exhibition and Painting Exhibition by the children of Bere Regis School in the Lower Room

Refreshments available at each event

This day is entirely free of charge and is open to everyone but due to fire regulations restricting numbers, places must be reserved by the 1st September

Contact Alison on 01929 472 023 or Lyn on 01929 471 528

The Pop In Performers

The Pop In Performers is a relatively new group. It was suggested that the youth music group Pipsqueaks, which had already put on and taken part in a number of shows should be renamed in order to invite older members of the community to get involved - hence the new name, which covers all age groups

We have currently 50 people involved in the "Let's Celebrate" 10th Anniversary Show - and 37 of them are under 16's!

To say that rehearsals are hectic is somewhat of an understatement, but overall we are delighted with the commitment and enthusiasm that all members of the Group - old and young alike - have shown. We are so lucky to have the opportunity in a small village to allow people to come together and share their skills and talents and have a lot of fun in doing so.

Thanks to everyone that makes it possible!

Helping Charities



The Shows and Events sponsored and organised by the Pop In Place over the past ten years have benefited many local Charities. In excess of £16,000 has been raised, including £5,500 towards the Drax Hall. Local Charities that have benefited have included:

The Fourways Day Centre in Poole

St. Michaels Nigh Shelter in Bournemouth

Lawrence Dean Emery of Sandford

The Bere Regis Scout Groups Kenya 2000

The Bere Regis Doctors Practice

The victims of the 7/11 Bombings

The victims of the Tsunami

The Bere Regis Village Hall

The Poole Hospital Body Scanner (in memory of Tina Elford)

The Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance (in memory of Nick White)

The Julia House Children's Hospice

And our annual contributions to the BBC "Children in Need" Appeal

Pop In Chat Room...



Angela Jones took over as Team Leader in April 2005. She comments, "In the year that I've taken over I have found the support of the Team has been really tremendous. Without everyone's help we couldn't do the work we do. At present we are supporting the Julia House Children's Hospice and we shall continue to do our best to help and support funding for local charities."



Colin & Gwen Vowles are familiar faces at the Pop In Place. They say, "The Pop In Place has meant a lot to us over the years. We've made so many new friends - it seems to get everyone in." Colin adds, "Without it I feel the social life of the village would have died. We have also enjoyed the shows that have been fantastic and good entertainment. All in all the Pop In Place is a good place to be!"



Liz Gale comments, "I've been coming for the past nine years since Tanita my daughter was quite small. She has enjoyed taking part in most of the Shows over the years. And I've enjoyed helping out and being part of the Shows too. I couldn't imagine the village without The Pop In Place. I've certainly had a lot of fun over the years. May it long continue."



Dave & Cecilia Clarke - "We've had some wonderful times here at the Pop In Place. We have both been involved since it began in 1996 and have fond memories of some of the early events, including the Bere Regis Carnival. We love to meet people and have a laugh. It's a good contact point in the village and over the years we have seen it grow."

Pop In Place - Bere Regis

"Bringing the Community Together"

Pop In Place Sessions - Monday & Friday mornings 10am to 12 noon

Pop In Place Poppets - Baby & Toddler Group Thursday 1.30 to 3pm (term time only)

Pop In Place Performers - Performers of any age are welcome for music, dance and drama
Thursday 6 - 7.45pm (not 2nd Thursday)

The Pop In Place aims to draw the Community together in a variety of creative ways, why no visit
us you will be made very welcome

ThePop In Place is at theDrax Hall

For more details Tel. either -

Angela 01929 472 261

or

Alison 01929 472 023

Volunteers are always welcome

Personal thoughts from Alison



When Tina & I used to sit in my kitchen and put the world to rights and decided to forge ahead
with the idea of The Pop In Place, little did we know that it would have touched all the lives of
the people that are involved today.

I suppose its fair to say that it has in many ways exceeded all expectations. I wish that she were still here to witness and enjoy it today, but in some ways she always will be, her name is so often mentioned and her spirit lives on in everything that is good and positive we do.

I would also like to thank my husband Paul, and my family, for the way they have allowed me to see this dream come true and supported me throughout. I could not have coped without them.

Finally The Pop In Place has a very poignant logo - "Bringing the community together" and this we believe we have done in a very special way. And that is down to every single person that has been involved in every single way. Thank you all."



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