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# Telford's historic Anstice Memorial Hall back on track - with pictures

By [Sophie Madden \(/news/authors/sophie-madden/\)](/news/authors/sophie-madden/) | [Telford \(/news/local-hubs/telford/\)](/news/local-hubs/telford/) | [Telford entertainment \(/entertainment/telford-entertainment/\)](/entertainment/telford-entertainment/) | Published: Jul 1, 2017

"It is a long journey, but we want people to come with us." That is the call from the trustees, volunteers and from Madeley Town Council who are all working together to bring the Anstice Memorial Hall back to life.



The team leading the renovation of Madeley's Anstice Memorial Hall, June Campbell, Andy Rose, Karen Price and Dot Holdon

Two years after it was bought by the town council, the historic Grade II listed hall is holding events again, with its ballroom open for hire by the public.

With lots of hard work going on behind the scenes to bring the hall back to its former glory, those taking over the running of the hall want more people to come forward to help.

The Anstice Memorial Hall – once home to the oldest working men's club in England was bought by Madeley Town Council on behalf of the town for £88,000.

The money came from the Community Pride Fund run by Telford & Wrekin Council to help projects and volunteers revive the places where they live.

The plan is to modernise the Victorian building and then hand it over to a new local charity – the Anstice Community Trust (ACT), which has been formed by a group of volunteers.

It will then be reopened for the people of Madeley.



Inside Anstice Memorial Hall

The modernisation work is set to cost £1.6million and the team have applied for Lottery funding to help with the majority of the work.

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But before the major refurbishment work starts, they have been bringing the Anstice up to standard to hold some events, with a busy calendar already planned, which will give people the chance to see inside the fabulous building, as well as raise much needed funds for its upkeep and to go towards the future work.

Brenda Smith, from Madeley Town Council, said: "We've got a really varied programme for people with all different interests.

"We've got bingo, a choir, we're organising a horse racing night with Ladbrokes. We've got a 60s and Motown night, a UB40 tribute, we're trying to make sure there's something for everyone in the community.

"And the ballroom is also available for hire."

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When the hall closed, the building was unsuitable to be used, and despite starting a number of events, the programme had to be stopped.

The boiler was condemned, the electricity and wiring had to be upgraded, work was needed on the emergency lighting.

But with these basic changes made, the Anstice is back in business, and the community is stepping in to get even more done.

And the hall's stunning sprung-floor ballroom is ready to see some dancing feet again.

Andy Rose, regeneration officer for the town council said: "We had the floor sanded and repolished last year, we had that done by a company from Dudley called CMT who did us a very competitive price due to the nature of the project."

For the past two weeks, a worker has been in repainting some of the windows in the ballroom.

Brenda said: "They were completely rotten, but we've had to go through all the planning procedure because the building is listed, so it is more than just a lick of paint."

And they are just some of the companies that have stepped in to help. A local lady helps clean the building for a competitive rate, Ironbridge Lions have recently donated crockery to help when the ballroom is hired for events, neighbouring Tesco has allowed trustees and volunteers to sell raffle tickets, all to help with the project.

Two weeks ago, housing company Lovell sent out two workers for a week who repainted the dark brown wood of the entrance hall and stairway. Part of the entrance has now been decorated

Ironbridge Interiors has also been out to the hall and is looking to provide it with a new kitchen.

Recently, the hall won an Architectural Heritage Fund grant of £25,000 which is going towards supporting the hall's bid for lottery funding, which will cover the majority of work for the major restoration work.

Mr Rose said they will hear back in September if they have been successful in the first stage, after which they will have about 18 months to put together a proper business plan. Once that second stage is complete, they will know if they have got the money.

He said: "It is early days and it is very competitive, we're competing with projects from across the West Midlands."

Architects PCPT have already drawn up artists impressions of what they can do with the building.

After coming up with several ideas, Mr Rose said the project that has been chosen for the hall is "ambitious".

It will involve removing a chunk of the 70s extension from the Victorian building to create a new glazed lift and stairwell.

The town's library, proposed for closure in cutbacks by Telford & Wrekin Council, will move into the back of the downstairs, with the front turned into two retail units, with the former bar hoped to become a cafe.

And hidden under laminate flooring in the hall is tiles created at Jackfield's Maws Craft Centre, which they hope to restore, showing more of the hall's link to local history.

Mr Rose said they have plans to create a local history centre, and they have been calling on people in Madeley to share their stories of the building.

He has also been collecting historic pictures of events, with pictures showing things like a tug of war in the hall right through to King George VI's coronation celebration.

But to keep up momentum, the hall needs more volunteers who are willing to help out. A recent call to arms attracted 22 people, 16 of who had nothing to do with the Anstice previously.

One of the newest volunteers is Dot Holden. She said: "I've had nothing to do with the hall because I only moved to the area two years ago.

"But I saw the notice and it is something I've always been interested in, I like to see old buildings done up, not knocked down or turned into housing."

Dot has been helping with publicising some of the hall's events, and said she has loved her time with the hall so far.

But the community's involvement with the hall goes back to 2014 when it was first announced that it may close after its members voted overwhelmingly to liquidate the club.

Some of those who are now trustees of the charity, were among the first people who launched the Save the Anstice campaign through a Facebook group.

Secretary June Campbell says she got involved three years ago, and treasurer Karen Price joined as a trustee with her mother Rita Mannering.

It became a charity in June 2015, thanks to a generous loan from the Madeley Partnership, which has since been repaid.

June said: "It was so sad to see it empty and unused."

Karen added: "We want to make it something for everyone in the community, we want it to be somewhere where people can come together, a focal point."

Anyone who wants to find out more about events at the Anstice, would like to help volunteering, or has memories to share should visit Madeley Town Council at Jubilee House, call Brenda on 01952 567 286 or pop into the Anstice on Wednesday mornings from 10am to 12 noon where volunteers and trustees hold an "open house" session for people to see inside the building.

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