



CELEBRATING: Villagers, above, and Elsie Clarke, 82, and one-year-old Charlie Whelan and his parents Fiona and Conrad, below, at the new hall

Photograph:
LUCY TAYLOR

Celebration as hall is opened

FINISHED: £270,000 and six years in the making

By Craig Robinson

A COMMUNITY held a weekend of celebration to mark the official opening of a long-awaited village hall.

Residents of Bruisyard, near Saxmundham, turned out in force to watch as the red ribbon was cut in Parish Park.

The need for a new village hall was established in 2004 and the community worked hard to raise £270,000 for the project, with contributions from the Big Lottery Fund, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, Garfield Weston, Scottish Power and Adnams, as well as private donations.

The red ribbon was cut by 82-year-old Elsie Clarke, one of Bruisyard's most senior residents, and Charlie Whelan, who was born in February last



year. The ceremony was part of an Open Weekend in the village which featured a variety of games, activities and dancing.

The old hall – an ancient corrugated hut known as the Iron Room – collapsed and was carted away on a lorry in 1967.

Along with the closure of the post office, pub, shop and school residents were concerned the village was losing its heart.

As a result they voted in favour of a new village hall and

it has already started to flourish, with young people's evenings, "soup and pud" lunches, pub nights and Pilates and keep fit courses.

Peter Robinson, chairman of the parish council, said: "The hall has been built in the centre of the parish and we hope that it becomes an inspiration for other rural communities which have been similarly depleted during the last 60 years."

The ceremony was also attended by new Central Suffolk and North Ipswich MP Dr Dan Poulter.

He said: "The opening of the new village hall at Bruisyard is a testament to community spirit. It is fantastic to see that new initiatives are being undertaken that help create and improve facilities for the benefit of local people."

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