

16 | Local History:

Smalley Institute's Centenary Celebration

2008 is a very special year for Smalley Institute and the Art Group, who meet there to draw and paint. A commemorative plaque reminds us that the building was funded by two wealthy local families – the Swingers of Smalley Hall and the Sitwells of Stainsby in 1908.

Originally it was a Young Men's Institute. Was it intended to keep the local youths off the streets? It has had other uses too: whist drives, a storeroom during the 1939 war, and a meeting place for a youth club.

In the 1960's it appeared to be abandoned and derelict, but the newly-formed Smalley Art Group saw its potential and approached the late Mr Dix, a Trustee, with a view to renting it. He was delighted at the prospect; it was agreed that the Art Group could have it for a peppercorn rent on condition that they kept it in good repair and decorative order – quite an undertaking! However, a deal was struck.

Undaunted, the members set about converting the unappealing, comfortless building into a habitable meeting place where they could draw and paint. It was all a DIY exercise; the men's skills with electricity and plumbing were invaluable. And it was rewarding to work together and bring a neglected building back to life. Now it is comfortable and well equipped. Local people have been most generous and supportive, recognising the difficulties of maintenance.

Now, in 2008, members of Smalley Art group plan to mount a very special exhibition as a centenary celebration in June. They are doing work inspired by famous artists who lived in 1908 when Paris was the hub of the art world - a very exciting project!. The exhibition will take place 14th - 22nd June and is open to members of the public between 4pm - 8pm weekdays and 10am - 8pm weekends. Entry is FREE.



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