

The Joe Cooley Memorial Hall

By Bertie Keely

In 1974, shortly after the death of Joe Cooley the internationally known accordion player, a committee was formed in Peterswell to erect a monument to his memory.

Various suggestions were made and eventually it was decided that the most fitting monument would be to build a new Community Hall. This would have a two fold purpose: a) it would replace the 'old school' which was in need of repair and which had served the parish well as a school up to 1944 and as a Community Hall for the next thirty years and b) it would act as a focal point in the local community, where the music, dancing and traditions of the Joe Cooley era could continue.

Many different people did great work in these early committees and many fund-raising events were held - some successful and some not. Eventually in 1980 it was decided to begin the work of building the new Community Centre. Fundraising and building continued together for the next five years.

It was always the intention of the Committee not to go into debt and it is a great credit to a rural parish as small as ours that this intention was always adhered to.

Eventually in October 1985 the dreams of the parish were realised when the then bishop of Galway, Dr. Eamonn Casey officially blessed and opened the Joe Cooley Memorial Hall.

In 1987, thanks to a grant from the National Lottery a heating system was installed. Down through the years, as in any building, small improvements and repairs were carried out and these were always done voluntarily by people from the parish.

In 2003 a major renovation of the kitchen/meeting room and toilets was carried out. At the time of writing this article a grant from Galway Rural Development for 50% of the cost of this work s being sought.

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the generous grant given by Fr. Callinan from the Peterswell/Kilbeacanty Diocesan funds towards this latest renovation.

Continuos fundraising is necessary for the day to day running of the hall. These expenses amount to around 3,000 Euro annually – half of

which is paid to insure the hall. The excellent support for the annual sale of work defrays most of this cost.

The committee is anxious to encourage the use of the hall. An open meeting is held on the first Monday of each month at 9.30pm from September to May and everybody with a contribution to make to our local community is welcome to attend. You will get a cup of tea and a biscuit and you will probably also get a job, but don't be afraid – its all to better our small and close-knit community.