

# Harlow to K2 and Beyond

A voluntary project to record the story of the UK community indoor sports centre - a phenomenon of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries

ISSUE 9 - Update for all our supporters & interests - January 2018

[www.sportsleisurelegacy.co.uk](http://www.sportsleisurelegacy.co.uk)

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## Sports Halls: Do you agree? Do you disagree? Do you have a view?

We are pressing on with the preparation of subsequent chapters, having published the first three on the website in October. Our Project research for the later, reflective chapters is suggesting an interesting 'mixed economy' with regard to community indoor sports halls these days. Some centres are finding that with popular outdoor floodlit artificial turf 5-a-side pitches and recreational badminton not as strong as it once was (less badminton for fitness with the advent of gyms?), demand for sports halls has changed from the 1970s, 80s and 90s (see also Issue 5).

Several are looking to follow the Billingham Forum model from 2 years ago - it split the sports hall in 2, with a kids' climbing centre (Go Climb) and a martial arts space. Even the newer Harlow Leisurezone has already converted one of its 3 indoor tennis courts to a large, very successful kids soft play area and extra cafe outlet for watching parents! However, it does have a large sports hall.

The Sobell Centre in Islington is planning a trampoline centre in its sports hall, causing local controversy. The emphasis these days seems to be on activity for health rather than sport for activity. Good perhaps, so long as the activity fads last long enough to justify the investment but not necessarily good for sport itself. Nonetheless many existing centres have maintained a traditional sports hall programme. The plans for quite a few new centres have not included a sports hall, in favour of a pool + a very large fitness gym and ancillary activity rooms - or gone to 3 or 4 badminton courts from a previous 8. A few replacement centres have repeated their larger 8-court hall. Income is the priority these days as the larger and smaller trusts seek to gain income and cut the cost for hard pressed local government and, in some cases, meet adventurous financial bids. Pricing has pushed many basketball teams, for example, into the numerous and cheaper-to-hire school sports halls.

In total there are now 4,500 multi-sport halls in England with 3 or more badminton courts (Sport England Active Places Data Jan 2011). 44% are operated on a pay and play basis. We also need to add in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and recent openings to that total.

**HAVE WE GOT ENOUGH SPORTS HALLS NOW AND WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR INDOOR SPORT AS WE KNOW IT - IS IT NOT NOW A PRIORITY AGAINST NEWER, POSSIBLY SHORT-TERM, GIMMICKY 'MODERN ERA' ACTIVITIES?**

Let us know what you think through the [contact form on our website](#)



### RECENT PROJECT ACTIVITY AND CONTACTS

**Our website is catching on.** Searches for some of the very early centres and dates, which largely preceded the internet, can bring up our website link.

**The Islington Gazette found** our website to contact Hywel Griffiths about his reflections about the early days of the Sobell Centre for a special article.

### REMEMBERING PAST FRIENDS

Inevitably, with a project that started in 2013/14 and stretches back to the late 1950s and '60s, we were sadly going to lose some friends and supporters along the way. Since the project started we have been saddened to hear of the death of Ian Douglas, Peter Barson and Geoff Bott, all of whom lent their support to the Project. Ian, Peter and Geoff are universally known for their superb contributions to sports centres and recreation management. These will be acknowledged in the story,

### A word from our sponsors....

The international sports and leisure architects, and our **Project sponsors**, have been known as S&P for many years, dating back to the days of the late Peter Sargent and Nick Potiriardis. The company has now rebranded from S&P and AFLS+P to **Space & Place** and their new website not only tells of the company's present skills and activity but gives an excellent timeline of their previous projects. [www.space-place.com](http://www.space-place.com)

### THE EDITORIAL ADVISORY GROUP

continues to support the development of the Project and next meets at Littlehampton Swimming Centre on January 31st. The Group will be welcoming to the meeting Keith Ashton and Nic Bryant from our project sponsors Space & Place. They are designing the new Littlehampton Leisure Centre to open on the adjacent site in 2018/19. GROUP: David Fisher, John Birch, Hywel Griffiths, Jack Wilkinson, John Thorpe, John Stride, Gerry Carver & country members Mike Fulford, Mike Fitzjohn and Malcolm Tungatt.

Previous issues of the newsletter are in the News Section of the website [www.sportsleisurelegacy.co.uk](http://www.sportsleisurelegacy.co.uk)

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