

# **History of Sandbank Village Hall (SVH) - A Chronicle of Community and Heritage**

## **Early Beginnings**

SVH stands as a testament to the resilience and community spirit of the village of Sandbank. The origins of this iconic building can be traced back to the early 20th century when the village began to flourish as a hub of social activity and local governance. The idea of having a dedicated space for village gatherings, celebrations, and meetings was conceived by a group of visionary local leaders who recognized the need to foster a sense of unity and shared purpose among the residents.

## **Construction and Dedication**

The construction of SVH commenced in the year 1923, spearheaded by a committee comprised of influential villagers and philanthropists. Using locally sourced materials, the hall was meticulously designed to reflect the architectural charm of the era, with large windows, sturdy wooden beams, and a welcoming façade that invited citizens to partake in communal events.

On June 15, 1925, the hall was officially opened with a grand ceremony attended by the entire village. The inaugural event featured speeches from notable figures, musical performances, and a feast that highlighted the culinary talents of local chefs. The dedication of the hall was not merely a physical establishment but a symbolic gesture that solidified the collective identity of Sandbank's residents.

## **A Hub of Activity**

Over the decades, SVH transformed into the beating heart of the village. It hosted an array of activities, from town meetings to cultural festivals, charity events, educational workshops, and recreational gatherings. The hall's spacious interior and adaptable design allowed it to serve multiple purposes, accommodating everything from intimate family celebrations to large-scale public forums.

One of the hall's notable features was its stage, which became a platform for numerous theatrical productions, musical concerts, and talent shows. Local artists, performers, and students found inspiration and a receptive audience within these walls. The hall also housed a library, enriching the minds of the villagers with access to literature, historical records, and educational resources.

## **Community Profile**

Sandbank has been a place of settlement for many thousands of years and is an area rich in heritage, flora and fauna. The last century was an exciting and prosperous time for the village

with, in the early parts, many artisans and traders working to support the maritime businesses that operated here. There have been hard times with the closure of the 2 yacht building yards, and with the departure of the United States Navy.

Sandbank is once again on the up with the green shoots of revival now widely visible - the key to this revival is the success of small businesses that in turn can offer secure and increasing employment. The Sandbank Industrial Estate is largely full and set to expand - the bigger businesses involved in construction and telecommunications. The Holy Loch Marina expansion is now underway and the future vision of 400 berths, a bar and restaurant and trading units set to complete by 2013. The construction phase will bring difficulties with noise and vehicular traffic but once the vision is achieved there should be many positive benefits. The success of this venture will be vital in attracting business and people to the area. Dunoon may aspire to be the seaward gateway to the National Park, but it is becoming increasingly due to the Caledonia MacBrayne Ferry issues, that most visitors will see Sandbank first.

In terms of population structure Sandbank has a higher percentage of older residents than the Scottish national average and this looks set to increase. Of concern is the drop in numbers attending Sandbank Primary School over the next 2 years. This reduction in numbers of some 30 pupils will have a knock-on effect on groups such as the Brownies. The Gaelic Immersion Unit may help to sustain numbers - but these are drawn Cowal wide and not just Sandbank. There is a need to attract young families to the area and this can only be done if there is the security of employment, the opportunity to buy or rent quality housing and good education services for their children.

Most new homes in the Sandbank area are not for first time buyers but the Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) has embarked on a 5-year improvement plan for its properties; this should bring benefits to tenants. Expansion of Sandbank: The Village by the Holy Loch the village also means that there has been an increase in cars and commercial vehicles using the main Sandbank roads. In addition to the increase in frequency of traffic, there is concern over safety for cyclists and pedestrians, especially the young and elderly.

A recurrent theme is the lack of adequate recreational facilities for young people. This was a main theme in the Community Action Plan. There is an aspiration within the community that the play park area project be completed by the Trust - Sandbank has progressed but there is still much work to do!

For a small place, Sandbank has a fascinating story to tell. Beginning with the settlers of

Neolithic times in Ardnadam Glen, the Story continues through the times when the village provided Hostelrys for passing cattle droves, a distillery and support services for the nearby gunpowder factory. A quarantine station with a Lazaretto by the side of the loch served the whole of the west of Scotland and brought visitors from distant lands. The village later became world famous as a yacht building centre, with

Two thriving boatyards and many more interesting visitors. During its most prosperous years, the village altered with the start of the Great War, which brought the Royal Navy to the loch. WWII War brought more ships and submarines to the Holy Loch, with new residents in the village and much work for the boatyards.

Sandbank returned to its normal way of life when the war ended, but then another era for the village was soon to begin. In the 1960s during the 'cold war', the US Navy arrived in the Holy Loch. The Polaris submarine base remained there for 31 years.

Some lean years followed, but the village is now beginning to revitalize. Residents enjoy good forest and shore walks; there is an abundance of wildlife and bird life to enjoy, with a background of stunning scenery. Many of the Victorian villas have been renovated and the marina is providing both new business and leisure opportunities. The diversity and detail of local landscape and our rich history contributes to the quality and distinctiveness of our lives. There is, however, still much scope for improvement to our village, which is now a major portal into the National Park. There can be few villages with such a long and varied history, or with so many visitors from so many places.

## **Challenges and Renovations**

Despite its success, SVH faced its share of challenges. The wear and tear of time necessitated periodic renovations to preserve its structural integrity and aesthetic appeal. Fundraising efforts and community support played a crucial role in these endeavors, ensuring that the hall continued to serve future generations.

In 1978, a significant renovation project was undertaken to upgrade the hall's facilities and expand its capacity. This included the installation of modern amenities, improved lighting and sound systems, and enhanced accessibility features. The renovation breathed new life into the hall, reaffirming its importance as a central pillar of village life.

## **Modern-Day Significance**

Today, SVH remains a vital institution within the village, embodying a rich heritage and an unwavering commitment to community values. It stands as a reminder of the village's history, a venue for collective memory, and a beacon of fellowship. The hall continues to

host a diverse range of activities, adapting to contemporary needs while preserving its historical essence.

From wedding receptions to youth programs, health clinics to arts and crafts fairs, SVH is a symbol of enduring unity and shared purpose. Its legacy is not just in the bricks and mortar but in the countless lives it has touched and the memories it has created. As the village evolves, the hall remains a steadfast witness to the ongoing story of Sandbank, ready to embrace whatever the future holds.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, SVH is a Scottish charity registered with OSCR, currently managed by a group of volunteer residents who take bookings, provide concierge services to user groups, and arrange cleaning of the venue after events etc. The Management Committee is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the building through a regular programme of maintenance and repairs including internal decoration. SVH works to achieve social benefit, social change, and community involvement through its services and through working with partners in the social economy, including the local community.

SVH Management Committee has suitable governance to manage funds, e.g. financial reporting to OSCR, a constitution, holds monthly committee meetings, maintains an organisational bank account with a minimum of three unconnected trustees. Recent independently examined or audited annual accounts and a safeguarding policy are available.

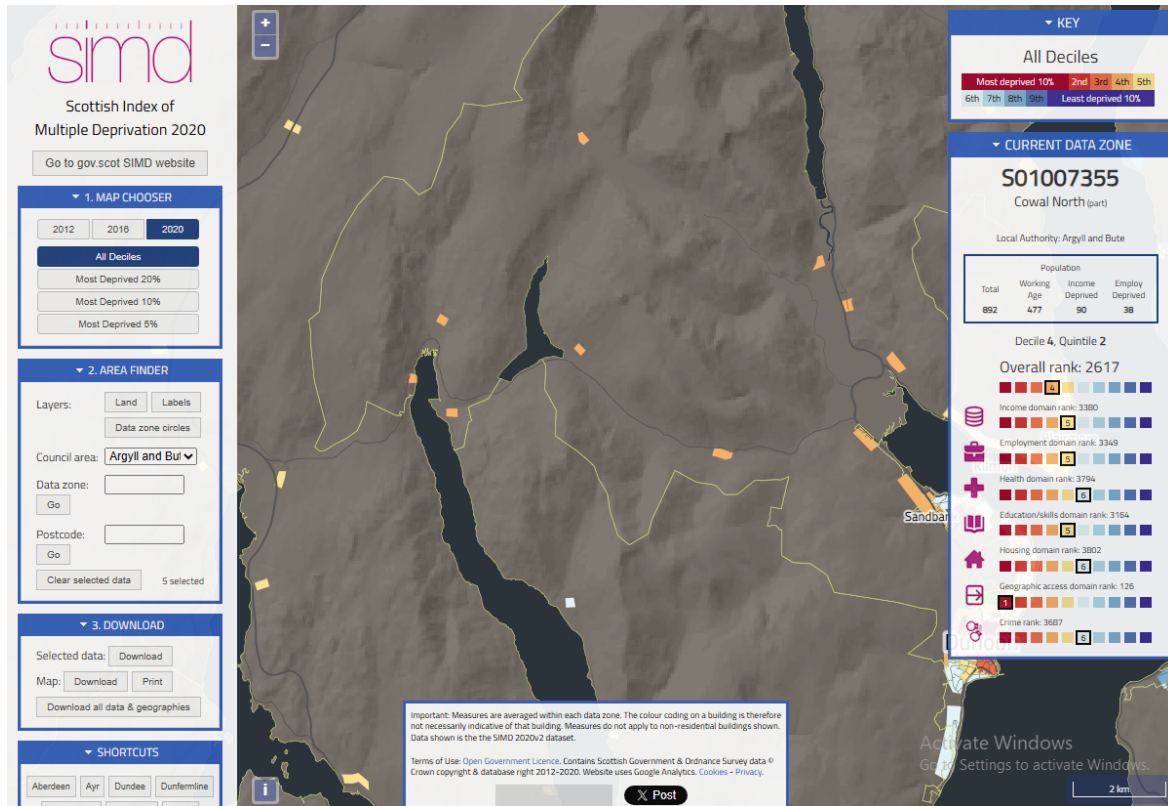
SVH works to achieve social benefit, social change and community involvement through its services and through working with partners in the social economy. It is a social enterprise, voluntary community organisation.

## Current Activities Timetable

	Mornings	Afternoons	Early Evenings	Late Evenings
Monday	Yoga Session	Yoga Session	Music Group	Yoga Session
Tuesday	Senior Citizens Lunch Club (Alternate Tuesdays)		Taichi Class	
Wednesday	Prescription Pilates Group	Masons (Bimonthly)		
Thursday		Yoga Session		
Friday	First Aid Training (Bimonthly)			Drama Group
Saturday		Masons (Monthly)		Various Functions
Sunday	Yoga Session	Family Bookings for Parties etc.		
Monthly	Scottish National Party 1 <sup>st</sup> Wed @ 19:30 Sandbank Community Council 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues @ 19:30 Sandbank Development Trust last Tues @19:00			
Annually	Summer Fundraising BBQ “Take Part in Beautiful Cowal” Silver Medalist Polling Station New Year’s Eve Fundraising Party			

SVH provides activities that will change people's lives, specifically for those in need (by reason of financial hardship, sickness, disability or other disadvantage or distress) in Argyll & Bute, Scotland. The main beneficiaries are:

- People suffering from sickness or disabilities.
- People from diverse groups.
- Disadvantaged or vulnerable people.
- People suffering from financial hardship.
- People suffering from mental health issues.



## SVH Activities Encompass: -

- Arts, Culture & Heritage
- Business Support
- Children & Young People
- Community Development
- Crime, Rehabilitation & Community Safety
- Education, Employment & Training
- Environment
- Health & Social Welfare
- Rural Development & Agriculture
- Sport, Tourism & Leisure

