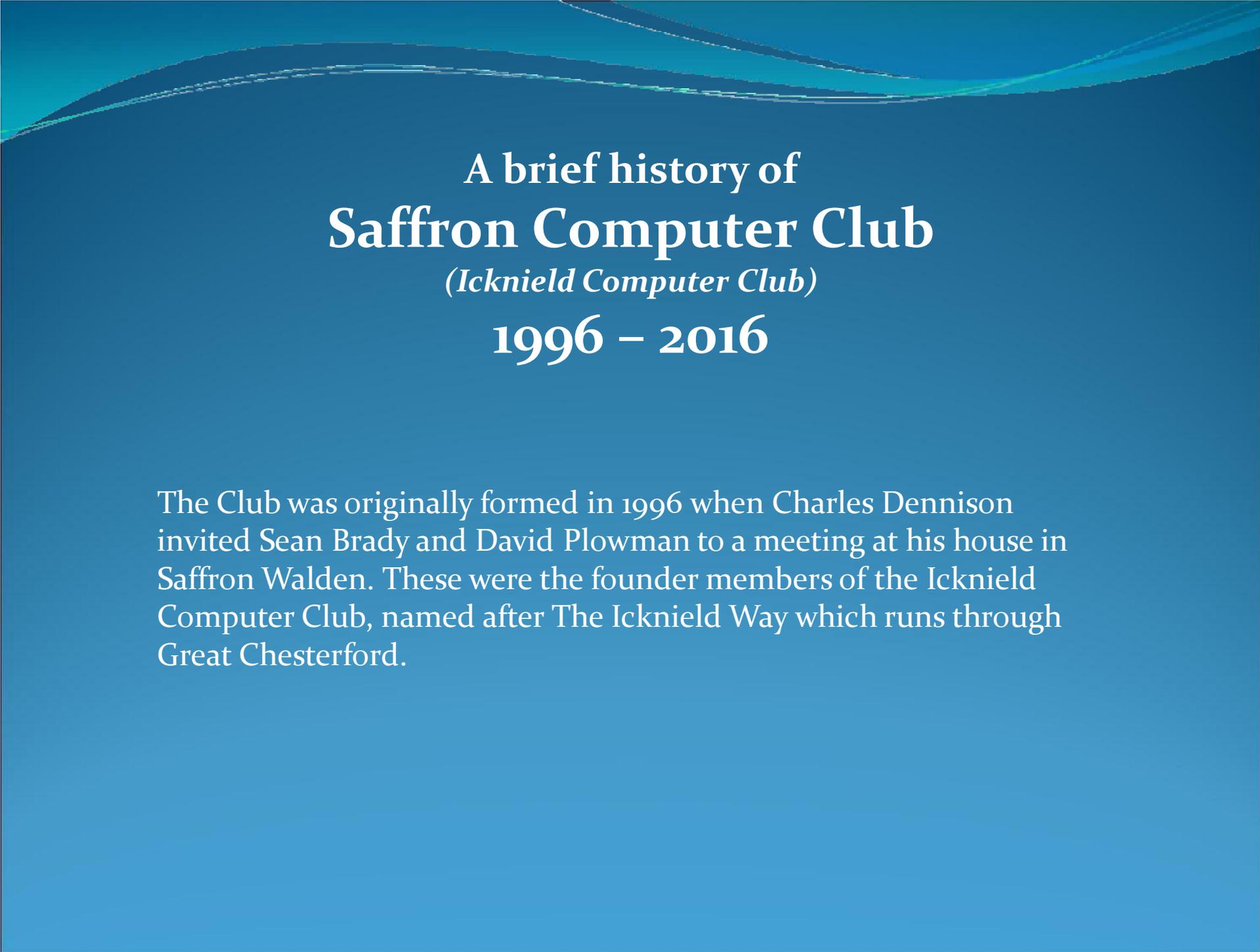# A brief history of
Saffron Computer Club
(Icknield Computer Club)
1996 – 2016

The Club was originally formed in 1996 when Charles Dennison invited Sean Brady and David Plowman to a meeting at his house in Saffron Walden. These were the founder members of the Icknield Computer Club, named after The Icknield Way which runs through Great Chesterford.

The Icknield Way Trail is a route open to walkers, horse-riders and cyclists.
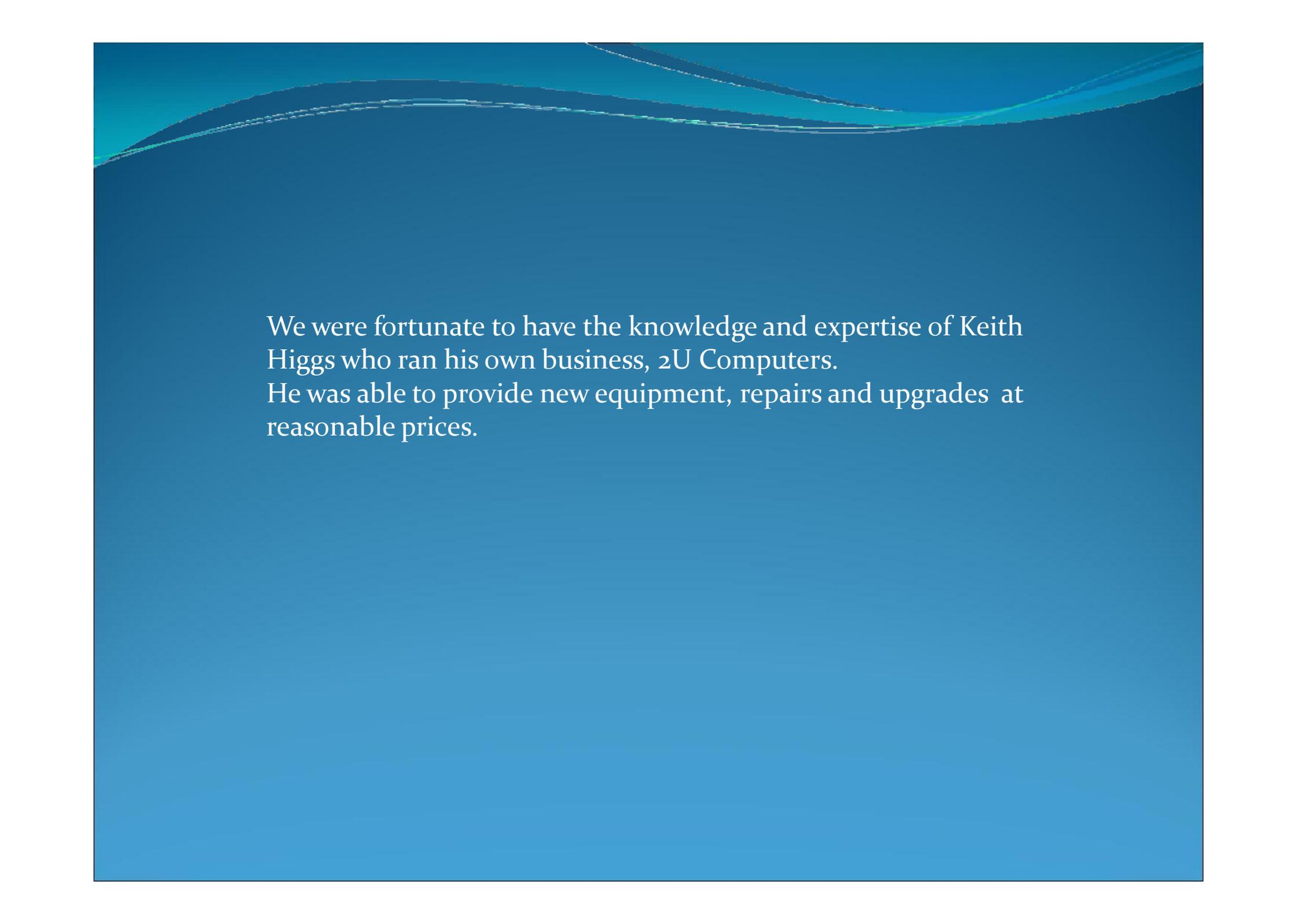
The Icknield Way is unique among long distance tracks because it can claim to be "the oldest road in Britain", extending from the Dorset coast to Norfolk, the ancient route of the Icknield Way consists of prehistoric pathways and is waymarked along its length with a distinctive Neolithic flint axe emblem.

After a while the Club moved to Emson Close, Saffron Walden in an office used by Paul Hickmot who acted as host and technical advisor. The club operated here for a few years with minimal Committee. For business reasons Paul decided to move out in January 2001 and so the Club was again looking for a new home.

We were fortunate to have the knowledge and expertise of Keith Higgs who ran his own business, 2U Computers.
He was able to provide new equipment, repairs and upgrades at reasonable prices.

Having to find new premises was not easy but the club managed to rent a room at Fairycroft House. At this point the club needed equipment as the previous premises had come complete with four computers.
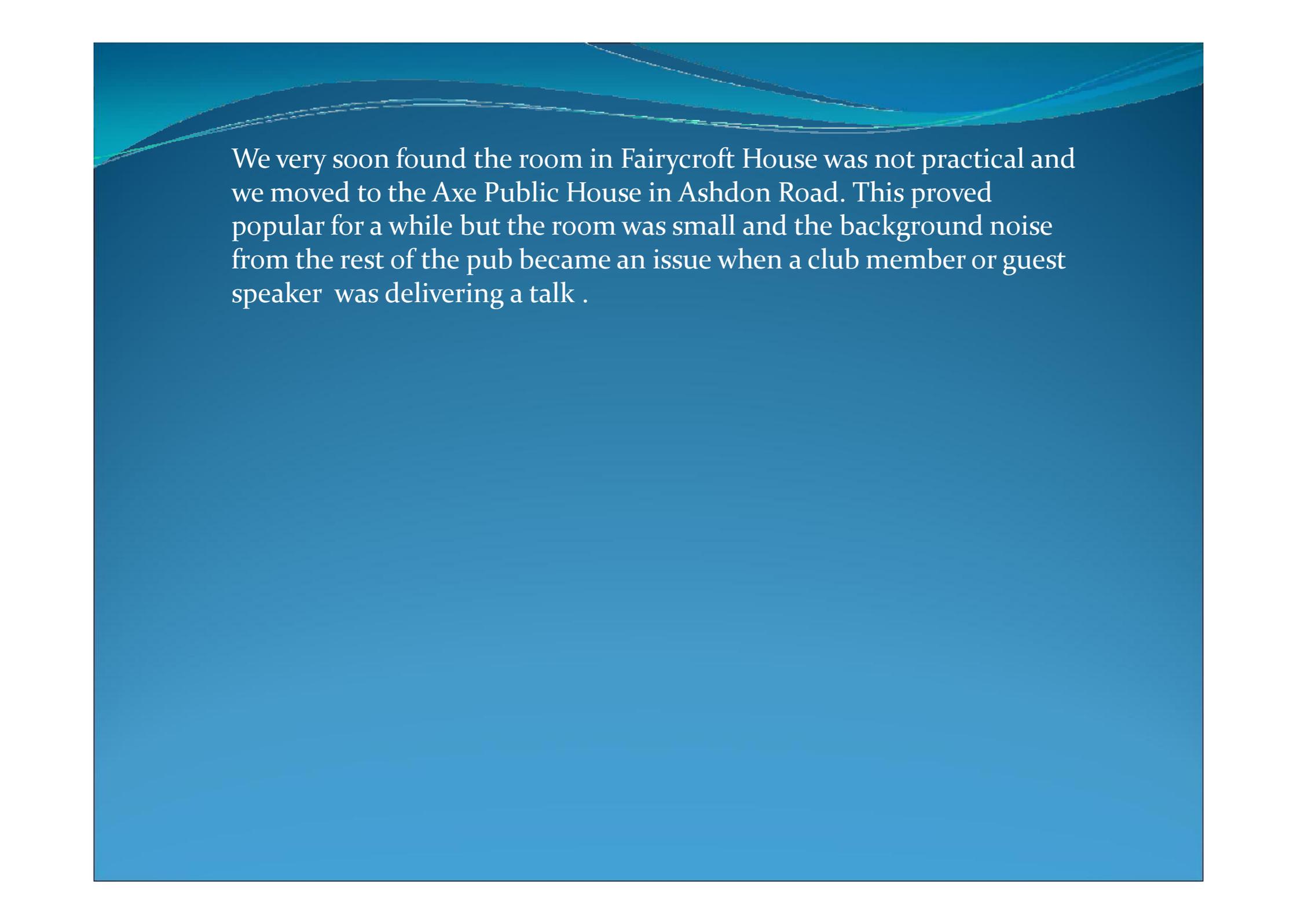
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The first meeting in our new home was the AGM, the object being to form a Committee.

As there were only a few members, Gordon Ridgewell agreed to become Chairman and Peter Damary-Homan who had been looking after our accounts, offered to continue. Tony Smith who had attended two previous meetings volunteered to act as secretary. Because Gordon was always phoning him for help with computer problems Tony volunteered to act as technical advisor to any member who need assistance.

One of the Committee's first ideas was to change the Club name to Saffron Computer Club to be more in keeping with the town.

We very soon found the room in Fairycroft House was not practical and we moved to the Axe Public House in Ashdon Road. This proved popular for a while but the room was small and the background noise from the rest of the pub became an issue when a club member or guest speaker was delivering a talk .

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During this time we had to bring a desk top computer and monitor to every meeting but the members felt this was impractical so the hunt was on for new premises.

Gordon viewed three different venues before deciding on the Friends Meeting House in the High Street. Although this was a very nice room, there was nowhere to store equipment or to park.

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Because the club didn't have any equipment at this time Gordon offered to seek finance for the Club. He approached Uttlesford District Council for a grant but the first application was turned down.

In the meantime it had been brought to his attention that the Lottery Grants for Local Groups was a possibility and after a number of telephone calls he received an application form. After spending around two months gathering information, attending meetings with the Council, filling in dummy forms and getting the UDC to be Referee for the Club, he finally received acknowledgement that the application had arrived on the correct "desk" on 17th October 2001

In order to apply for a grant the Club had to create a Constitution and a meeting was held at the Bell College on 14 August 2001 to pass a quickly worded document that would cover the requirements.

In the meantime Gordon's wife, Megan, saw an article in the local paper on 10 September stating that a grant was available to help "Older People". After a quick telephone call to an office in Great Dunmow, Gordon was told that the deadline was on the next day but they were willing to hold it until the following Monday. He was promised an application form and by 5.00pm the following day a young lady had driven from Great Dunmow to deliver the form by hand. This was Friday evening and the form had to be completed and delivered back to them by the Monday morning.

With the help of Sean Brady, Gordon spent a number of hours filling in the forms for the Uttlesford Primary Care Group, this had little to do with Computer Clubs but reading between the lines they extended the deadline, presumably they didn't have enough applicants to hand out money to! We shall never know, but eventually Gordon received a letter dated 7 November saying "Congratulations" and announced the Grant to the SCC meeting on 13 November 2001.

Whilst at Bell Collage the Committee decided to organise visits to local places of interest one of which was a visit to COSMOS in Cambridge.

The Group picture shows Saffron Computer Club members with
Dr Stuart Rankin (4th from right) on the roof garden overlooking
the site 23 March 2003
Dr Martin Landriau (far left) No pictures were allowed of the
COSMOS computer.
Buildings picture from roof garden showing one of the pavilions.
Both pictures by:- Gordon Ridgewell (Chairman Saffron Computer
Club)

The following write-up appeared in the local press.

The Saffron Computer Club attended the open day at the Department of Mathamatics' new site, situated in north Cambridge , on Saturday, 23 March 2003. The glorious sunshine and nearly cloudless blue sky served as a dramatic backdrop for the stunning new award-winning buildings with their almost "Star Wars" appearance. The club members were privileged in being invited to take an exclusive peep behind the scenes and were escorted by a member of DAMPT, Dr Stuart Rankin. After the private tour, members joined the general public in viewing many of the exciting and interestingly presented stands and demonstrations involving fluid dynamics, relativity, quantum physics and cosmology.

As well as visits the Committee also arranged occasional guest speakers.

So now, with our meeting place at Bell College we had a storage cupboard, and with the grant we were able to buy equipment. With publicity in the local press regarding the grant we soon had new members attending.

On 30 January 2004 Gordon Ridgewell stepped down as Chairman and Sean Brady was elected.

(Mike Fearnley proposed that a case be made to the Club that Gordon Ridgewell be named Honorary President in recognition of the sterling efforts he has contributed to the club; all agreed. See minutes.)

An Open Evening was held at the Bell College on Tuesday, 14 March 2006 and a number of new members signed up.
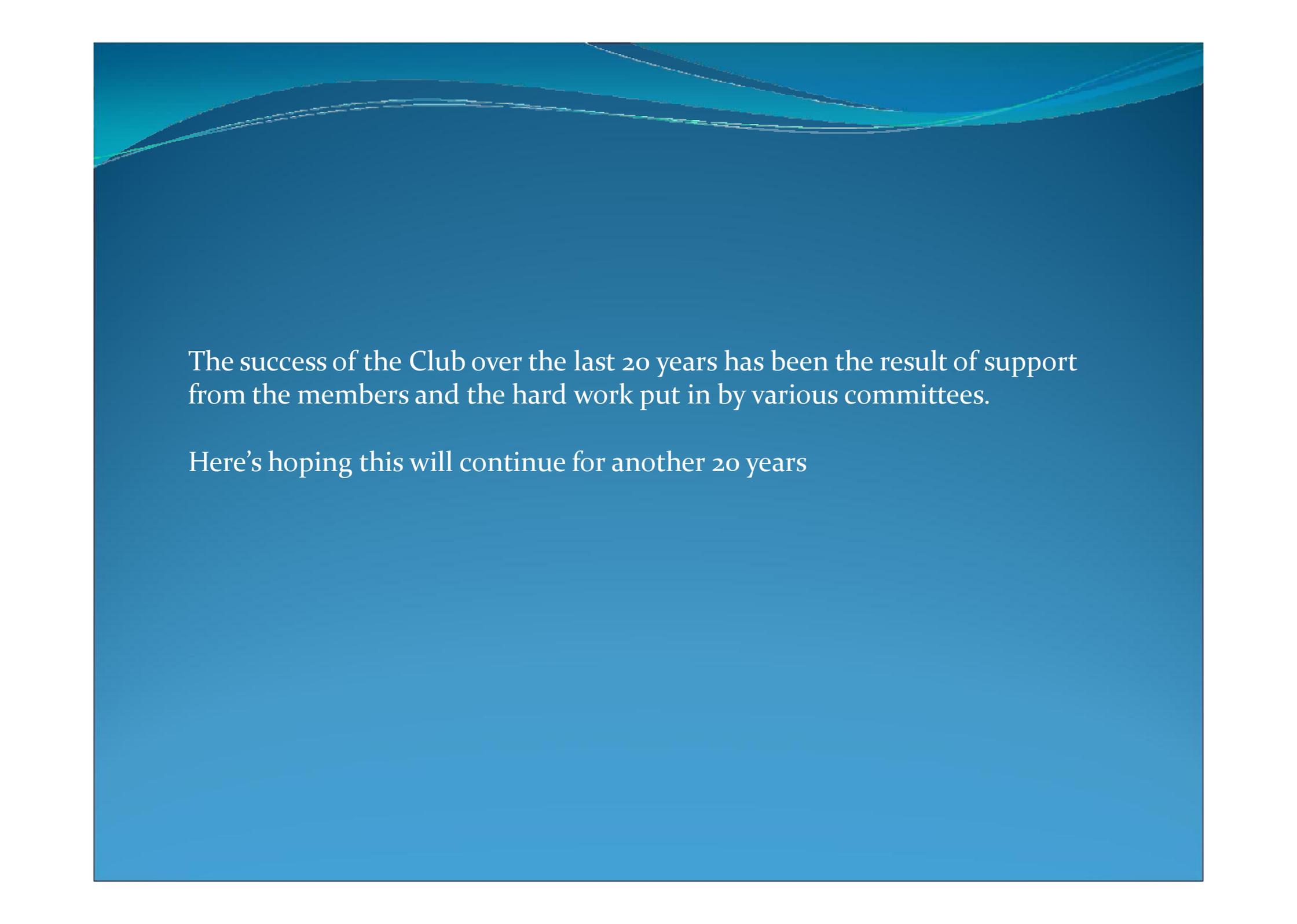
At the AGM on 9 January 2007 Sean Brady stepped down as Chairman and Ann Pickhaver was elected to the office.

During 2007 we discovered that the Bell College was closing so once again, the hunt was for another meeting room and on 28th August of that year we held our first meeting at the Garden Room.

At the AGM in 2009 Christine Swan was elected as Chairman and still holds the post.

Since moving to the Garden Room the Committee have purchased a new screen 25 March 2010 and projector 29 March 2012.

The success of the Club over the last 20 years has been the result of support from the members and the hard work put in by various committees.

Here's hoping this will continue for another 20 years

8 March 2016