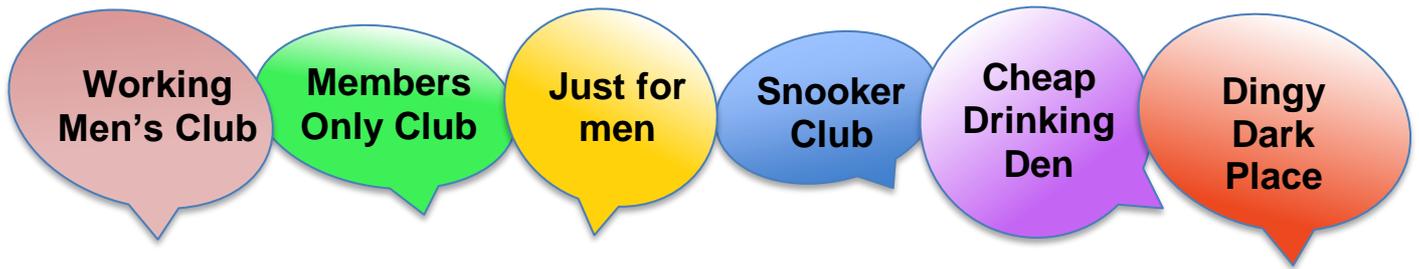


So, what is the St Agnes Miners & Mechanics Institute, the MMI?

A question that can deliver as many answers as persons asked, the more common being



In the past it has been one or all of these, **today it is none of them.**

The MMI has been transformed into a Community Hub, a venue that reflects Passmore Edwards vision when he donated the building. As a social egalitarian he saw the building being used to enable **all** persons to access opportunities to improve their well-being and quality of life.

Passmore Edward's Vision

Passmore Edwards believed that a well informed and educated populace was well placed to “**throw off the yoke of oppression**”, and improve their opportunities in life. In his lifetime he built 70 public buildings including hospitals, libraries and Institutes.

In his own terms “***an Institute was a place where education could be had by men, women and children, a centre of social culture with books, lectures and music***”.

Passmore Edwards offered to “build and present to the ‘town’ of St Agnes a public Reading Room and Library in memory of his late brother William”, an offer that was gratefully accepted.

Passmore Edwards laid down only **one condition** to his offer “***that the building shall be devoted in perpetuity to Literary and Scientific purposes for the public benefit***”.

Unfortunately it took very little time for the original Trustees to allow the Institute to drift away from its Passmore Edward's condition into becoming as the Charity commission said in 1986 a “***private members' billiard club***”.

A Kindred Spirit

Aware of the views of the Charity Commission, the Trustees during the 1990s looked for ways to make the premises more inclusive. Over a period of nearly twenty years a number of initiatives were developed including the whole scale renovation of the building. The renovation was poorly project managed and resulted in a large debt. There was the increasing threat of the building closing. Local financial help was sought and provided.

Mario de Pace, loved his chosen retirement venue of St Agnes and was a passionate believer in the value of promoting the social culture of the community through educational, social and cultural activities. He was well aware of Passmore Edwards' aspirations for the MMI these were akin to his. Like Passmore Edwards he was a social egalitarian, keen to promote activities and events that could be accessed by all in the community.

Mario de Pace provided considerable financial support to the existing Trustees to enable to MMI the re-open, but there was a failure to develop the facilities for the benefit of all the community. Unlike Passmore Edwards, Mario, despite his deteriorating health, was determined to bring the functioning of the MMI in line with the founding deeds, but modernised to meet today's needs. He sought help from locals who had no prior connection with the MMI.

The Recovery Team is a group of volunteers who have spent the past three years, identifying the issues and seeking to resolve them. Their work has been independent from Mario and they have received no financial benefit. Their work is almost complete in that they have recovered the MMI and restored it to a facility that espouses the vision of Passmore Edwards and Mario de Pace. The recovery will be finally completed when the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of the premises will be handed on to a new Board of Trustees.

Sadly, Mario died on 27th December 2015, so will not see the new Board of Trustees in action. His family however, want to continue their support for the work of the MMI as a community hub. Its continued use a legacy from both John Passmore Edwards and Mario de Pace. A place for the benefit of all.