

Our church hall is now skate park



A DISUSED church hall has been reborn as a skateboard park – complete with ramps and jumps.

St Mark's church hall in Wootton is used to help train around 100 children each week how to skateboard.

John Cattle's Skate Club has been running in the church hall for around two years. Hour-long sessions happen after-school and in the evenings during the week as well as Sunday afternoons.

John Cattle said: "I drove past the church hall many times when I was looking for a place to teach. It's quite hard to find somewhere suitable on the island.



"But I looked at the hall and realised that it would be perfect for what we wanted to achieve. It was a shell of a building and we could install some permanent ramps inside.

"I had been doing lessons at schools, but this meant I could come in and create an indoor training facility in one place.

"The church has been very welcoming. It started with one evening a week, then became two or three.

"Now we do it four evenings a week, with a special session for children with additional needs or

disabilities on a Sunday afternoon.

"Skate parks are normally geared up for those who can already do it, but we're set up to help teach people who might not know. We can teach them in a really gentle way, but within their first hour they'll be able to do some tricks.

"We provide everything – pads, helmets and skateboards.

Above and left: children learning how to skateboard in Wootton church hall

We have a beginners' session, after which they can graduate to the next level up and so on. It really helps the children to gain confidence and self-esteem, and it's also a social thing for them."

The skate hub offers different sessions for children aged 5-10 and 11-16 between 4pm and 7pm on weekdays, as well as separate sessions for adults after 7pm. It can also host children's parties, or offer one-to-one training.

The hub was awarded £5,000 recently from the building firm Jewson's to help to repair the leaking roof of the church hall. It was one of the regional winners in a Building Better Communities award scheme run by the company in 2016.

For more information, contact John via www.facebook.com/SkateClubIsleofWight.

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Hurdles for heroes?

IT'S one of the privileges of my role that I have the opportunity to speak to our government about things which affect the lives of others.

We've all heard about 'Help for Heroes' and the Royal British Legion which exist to help injured service personnel rebuild their lives.

What you might not have heard about is the Armed Forces Covenant, which aims to prevent Forces personnel experiencing disadvantage compared with other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.

Last month I led a debate in the House of Lords to ask the question – how well is the Armed Forces Covenant doing in this task?

It's certainly made some significant gains: for instance it's helped to persuade mobile phone companies not to charge



the last word

by Bishop Christopher

a cancellation fee when Forces personnel get posted overseas.

But there are still many other hurdles that Forces families have to face, mostly related to having to move frequently, such as difficulties getting children into schools, dentists and GPs.

Add to this the frequent problems Forces families have with their accommodation and you'll understand why the main reason cited by those leaving is the impact of their job on

family life.

More clearly needs to be done, which is why I hope the Diocese of Portsmouth will soon be one of those signing up to the Covenant.

That isn't to glorify or welcome conflict and war. We all, wherever we are and whatever we do, need to be sincerely grateful and respect the men and women, with their families, who are, like Jesus, prepared to lay down their lives for us.