

HADLEIGH

SALVATION ARMY FARM

A Vision Reborn



GORDON PARKHILL
AND GRAHAM COOK

BOOK CHARTS PLANS FOR £6.8M HADLEIGH TOURIST ATTRACTION

ESSEX County Council's £6.8m vision to transform Hadleigh Country Park into a top tourist attraction catering for 400,000 visitors a year is featured in a reprint of the book, 'Hadleigh Salvation Army Farm - A Vision Reborn' by local authors Gordon Parkhill and Graham Cook.

The council's vision is the legacy of the Olympic Mountain Bike event held in the Country Park in 2012.

Originally, when the event had taken place, there was talk of two options for the park - that the whole area should be restored to its natural state or, on the other hand, there were those who felt the mountain bike track was a valuable facility and should be retained.

The authors explain: "It was the latter view that in the end prevailed. It was decided to keep the tack but modify it to make it suitable for riders of all abilities."

A further proposal that also divided local opinion was the idea of a 'Hub'.

This was to replace the existing buildings in Chapel Lane, including the former dairy, with new purpose-built facilities. These would include new workshop units, improved facilities for the Country Park rangers and a visitors' centre with a café.

The work on constructing the Hub began early in 2014 and was described as a 'huge milestone in bringing the legacy devel-

opment project to life'.

The Hub is now the main gateway to a network of recreational trails in the area. The visitors' centre, café, bike shop and changing facilities are situated within the Hub alongside an area run by The Salvation Army that 'focuses on bringing the community together, offering support to families and providing work experience and training to people finding barriers to employment'.

Visitors

The Hub is now attracting hundreds of visitors each week - justifying Essex County Council's decision to go down this route.

The demolition of old buildings on the site during the course of the development has yielded some fascinating artefacts from the past - original milk bottles from the old dairy, some original rail track and a wheel from the engine room.

BOOK REVIEW

It is significant that the legacy development has been completed on the 150th anniversary of The Salvation Army, the 125th anniversary of the publication of 'In Darkest England and the Way Out', which led directly to the establishment of the Hadleigh Farm Colony by The Salvation Army, and the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Hadleigh Training Centre by the late General Eva Burrows.

The full history is brilliantly dealt with in the book by the two local authors who have included an attractive new cover which shows the Farm shepherd, a Fred Wanstel, who was also a member of the Leigh Salvation Army Band.

● *The book is now on sale at the Book Inn, the Leigh Heritage Centre and the Hadleigh Farm Tea Rooms.*