DON'T PANIC: Beginner's Guide to Building a Club Website

by **Dave Watterson**

Your club needs a website. You're willing, but new to this ... let's take it step by step ... and make a website ...

Copy and Paste

It is often useful to copy text and pictures from somewhere and paste them into your website. For example you might draft the text for a page on a word-processor. The simplest way to do this is to click your mouse cursor just before the start of the first word, keep the mouse button down and drag the cursor along to the end of the last word. That selects the text.

On a PC you then hold down the key marked Ctrl and press C to copy it. Click to the window with your website design on it, click where you want the words to go, hold down the key marked Ctrl and press V. (Logically it should have been C for copy and P for paste, but the P was already being used to mean print.)

For Mac users it is almost the same but instead of "Ctrl" key use the Command key (marked with an apple or four scrolls making a square) and press C or V.)

You have to start somewhere !

Producing a website is an repetitive process batting ideas back and forth. But you have to start somewhere so that others can react. Also you might be impatient like me - so I suggest we make a start right now. Once your first rough website is up ... then have a planning session with others and adapt the website to suit. That way your planning group has something to start from. And you have proved that you can do it.

Tools?

You can spend hundreds on professional web creation tools. You can download umpteen free web making tools. Guess which type I suggest? **Neither!**

For this course we will use **Weebly**. Yes, it is a silly name. Yes, it is full of American enthusiasm. Yes, it invites you to pay for the "pro" version but with the free **Weebly** system you can build attractive websites quickly - and many movie making clubs have done so. Using a common system allows us to give specific notes instead of vague generalised ones.

- You do not need to download any programs. The work is all done online.

- Weebly "hosts" your website (*see box on the right*).

- It is free and does not add adverts other than a discreet mention of its own services.

- It does not matter whether you use Windows, Apple, Linux or any other computer system.

- If necessary you can see and change the code that is behind-the-scenes,

- but mostly all the technical stuff is handled by them without us having to worry about it.

- It helps keep page designs consistent.

And no, we don't get paid by them for recommending you to try Weebly!

Hosting

Any website must be "hosted" (stored) on a computer which is always on and always linked to the internet.

It is not practical to do that on your own home computer, so you keep a **copy** of the website on a computer owned by a specialist company.

Companies which supply this service are called "web hosts". You can find companies to host your website for a *fee*. Some host *free* but usually with adverts.

Weebly is unusual in being both free and without adverts.

One small problem

Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser (version 6) sometimes has problems with Weebly websites. We do not regard that as a big issue. In March 2014 fewer than 5% of web users worldwide and fewer than 1% in UK worked with that version of the browser and the percentage is dwindling sharply. Most people have moved to later versions of Internet Explorer or use other browsers.

Let's Go!

Open a web browser and type into the address bar at the top www.weebly.com

Weebly - like most commercial websites - changes its look frequently, but our illustrations will give you a fair idea of what to expect. The first thing you see will be something like this:

Check their "terms of service" if you wish. It is the usual legalistic gobbledygook. The essential elements are that you must be over 13 to sign up, must not put anything illegal on your website, must respect copyrights and that if you cancel or the company folds then all your work is gone forever. *Don't worry about that part. I have a cunning plan ... more later.*

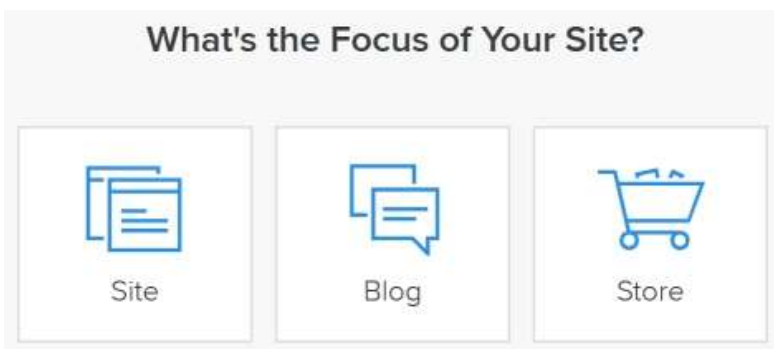Type in a **Username, password** and a valid **email address**.

I strongly suggest you tell the username and password to one or two other club members ... so that if you go to Australia for six months or just need help with updates - someone else can look after the club website.

When you have typed in the **username**, an extra box appears. This is known as a CAPTCHA system and is to make sure that you are a human being not a computer program. Type the letters, numbers and punctuation and click "Sign Up".

If at first you don't succeed: try, try, try again ...

NO!

Try once more - a different set of letters will be shown. If that does not work, click the little picture of a loudspeaker and listen to a distorted voice reading out letters and numbers and type them in. (Watch out for "zero" which can sound very odd.) *CAPTCHA systems are a nuisance but they help keep down spam.*
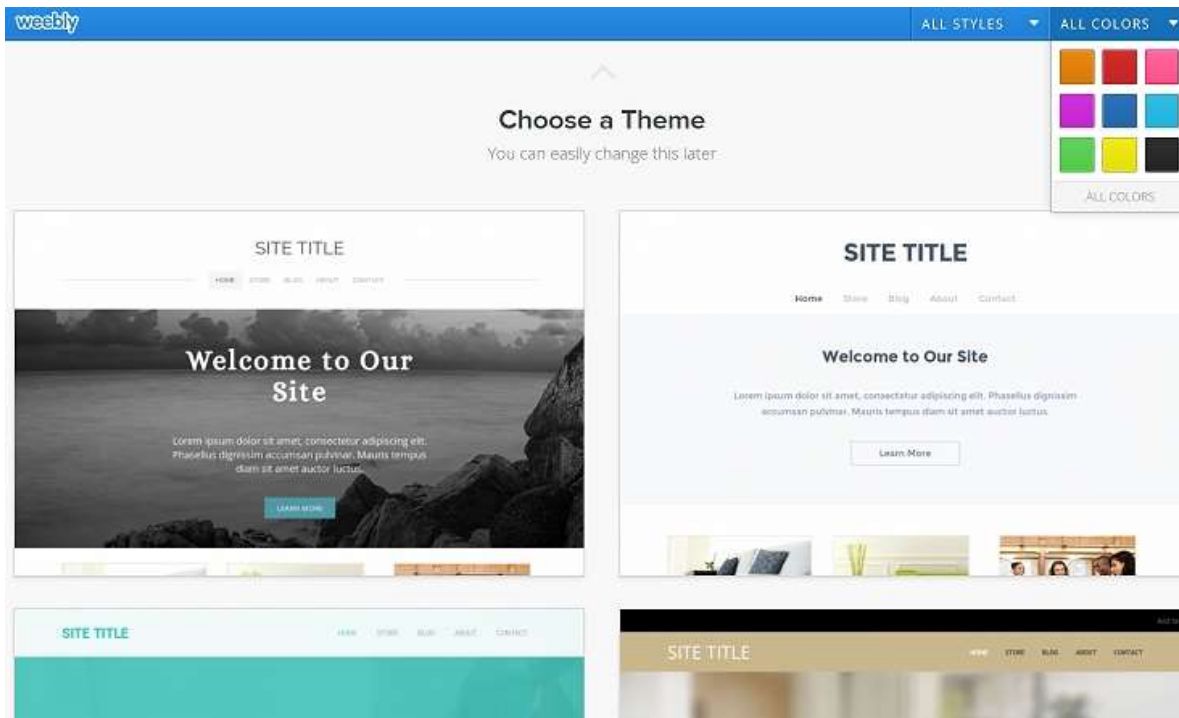

You may be faced with a choice to start ...

For our purposes we are interested in building a "**Site**".

Click that image.

Then you are faced with a choice of "themes" - which define how your website will look:

At the top right are two sets of drop-down lists. **All Colors** offers themes based on their colour scheme.

All Styles offers to show you the themes grouped by type:

Try looking at the various themes, but do not worry too much about which to choose at this stage.

One great advantage of Weebly is that you can change the theme very easily later on ... without losing any work you have done on pages already.

For this example we chose a green-based theme. We will later change the pictures so that it looks more like a movie-making site than a gardening one!

Click **Choose** and a pop-up box appears:

Choose A Website Domain (Address)

Be careful. The second option costs money ... so for now choose **Option A** - as shown below.

(Once the website is up and running, you may come back to this choice and pick a different option.)

The name you type here is what people will have to type into their web browsers to see the new club website.

The name is less important than it was a few years ago, because most people use Google to search for websites rather than typing in the full address. It is still sensible to pick a name which indicates what you do and where you meet.

If no one else has already chosen that name, the word "available" appears in green beside it. Keep it as short and write it in lower case letters, because some older web systems get fussy about capitals.

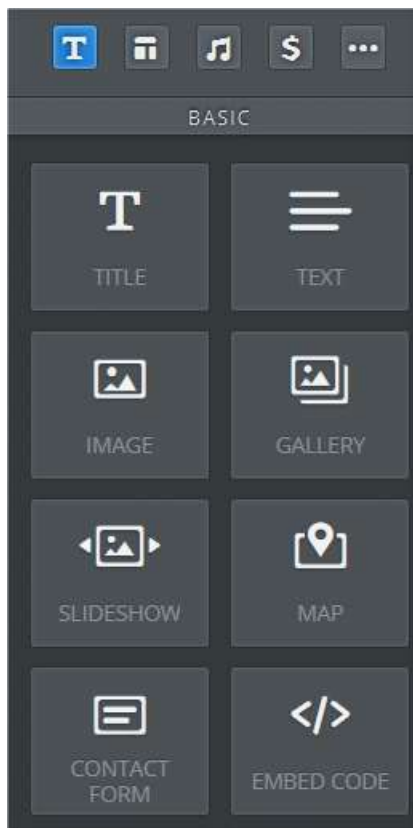When all is well, click "Continue" and we are off!

The First Page

Now it is time to make your first page. Breathe deeply and slowly.
The photo on the new page may be different when you start, depending what theme you chose - we will change it later anyway.

On the right is the start of your page. On the left is a set of tools. The ones near the top are the ones you will use most often:

Before you even consider the tools do what it says on the page and "Click to add headline". When you click the house on that line you can change the words to whatever you like. How about "Make movies with us!"

You can also click in the lines below to write a little about the club. How about: "Come and meet us - no matter whether you are just starting or are an expert film maker."

The button is really just a fancy way to link to other pages ... so let us leave that for now and return to it later.

The tools on the left are labelled "BASIC" and their names tell you what they can add to your page.

In each case place the mouse cursor over one of them, click-hold-and-drag that element onto the empty page space. Let go the mouse button to drop it into place.

Drag the "Title" element onto the page and it will appear with faint grey text saying "Click here to edit." It works just like the "Click to add headline." did.

The "Text" element works in exactly the same way except that its letters will be smaller than the ones in the title.

Other tools need a bit more information - for example the "Image" needs to know where to find the image you want. We will explore these in the next couple of pages.

More, More, More

The tabs at the top of the page let you choose what sort of work you want to do on the website.
Build - lets you add elements like title, text, images and so on to a page using the tools on the left.
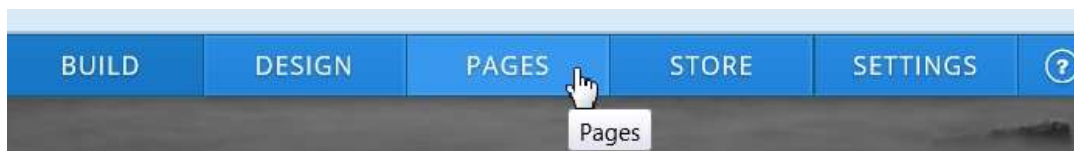**Design** - lets you change colour schemes and themes. You can have fun trying out these once we have more pages.
Pages - is where you add new pages and arrange them in sequence.
Store - allows you set up a page or two for selling goods, we will not look at this.
Settings - offers some specialised behind-the-scenes options that we will consider later.

We need a few more pages

Eventually your club website can grow to hundreds of pages, but to get started let's add one more. Click the **Pages** tab at the top.

That presents the "Manage Pages" tool:

The left column headed "Pages" lists the basic pages you might expect on any website: Home, About, Contact.

So far they are only empty pages.

On the right under "Edit Page" is the current name of the page selected on the left.

You can change the name if you wish - many people call it "Welcome".

The other options on the right may seem a little strange. We don't need to worry about them at this stage. Click the + **Add** button to add a new page.

Now you are offered a choice of page types. (*As you can see, when the cursor pauses over one of them you see an explanation of sorts!*)

For our purposes we will always use "Standard Page", so click that.

The new page has not got a proper name yet, so click in the **Page Name** box and change "Untitled" to "How to find us".

There is a choice of page layouts.

Tall Header - places a large picture at the top of the page. It seems a waste of space.
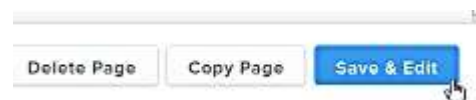**Short Header** - puts an attractive, smaller header on the page.
No Header - er, does what it says and gives you a totally blank page to start from.
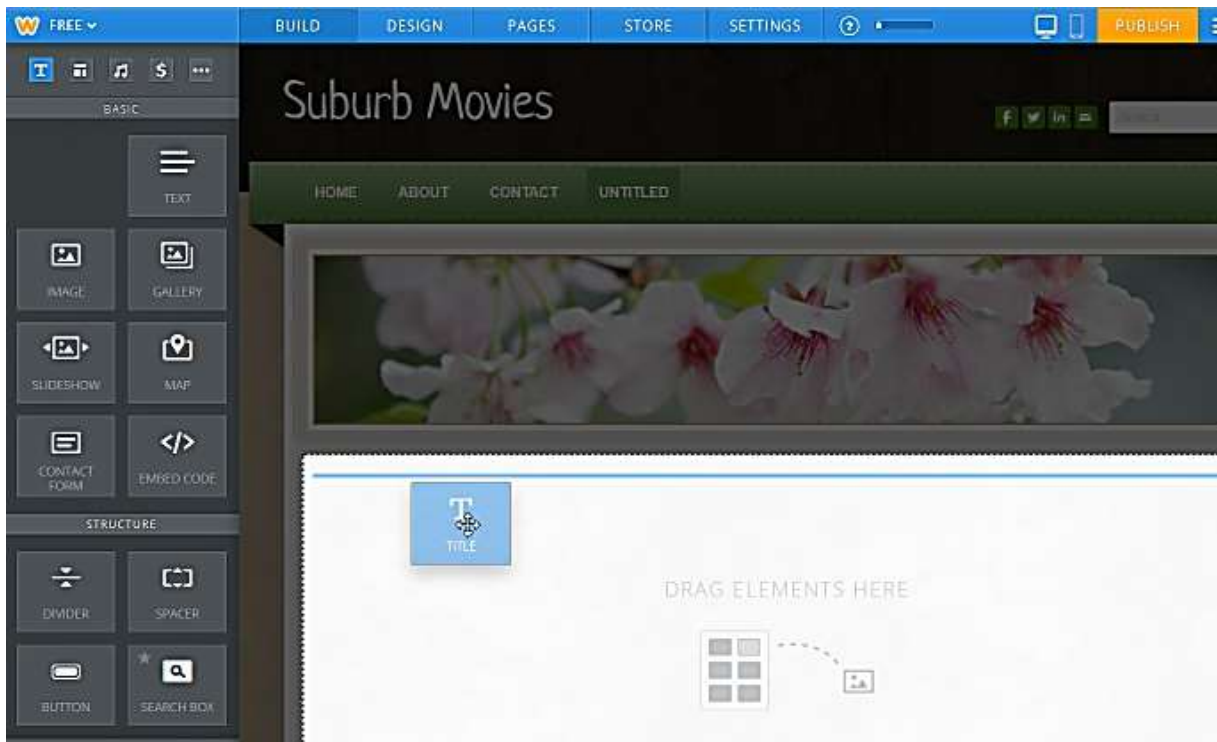**Landing Page** - is pretty much a copy of the basic Home Page. It is intended for cases when links from other places on the internet might want to get straight to part of the material on your website.
(*For example if your club offers to organise shows for clubs, care homes, etc. there might be lots of links from other websites for people who are not interested in joining or making movies but just in having a show. You could ask them to link to a Landing Page dedicated to your public shows.*)

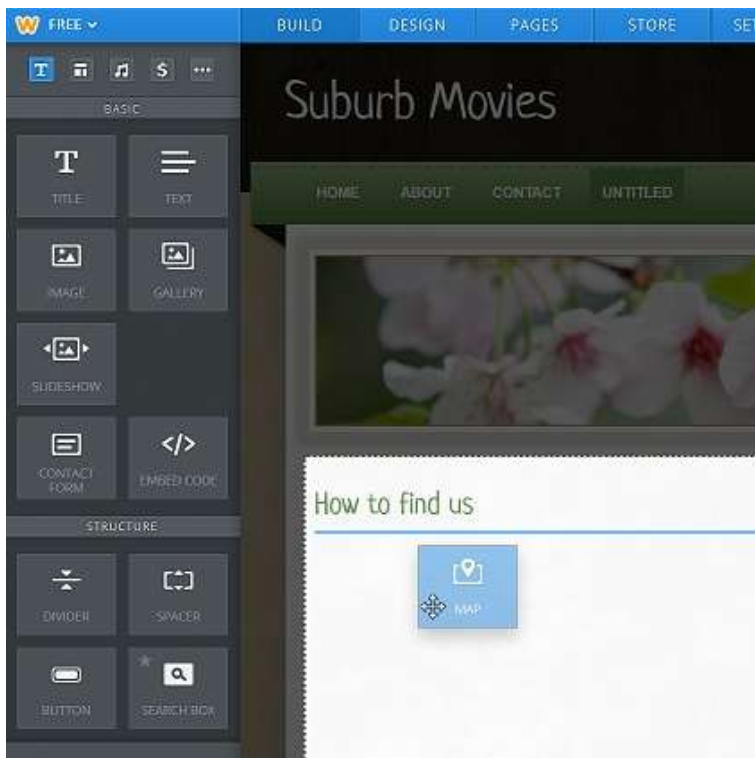Then click the big **Save & Edit** button at the bottom right of the screen.
As its name suggests this not only saves the name of your new page
(and if it had contents would save those too) ... but it also opens the page so that you can edit what is in there ...

Here we have started to add a Title element to the page by dragging it from the tool box on the left and dropping it onto an empty are of the page.

The blue line indicates where the new element will appear - in this case right under the header picture. (*The header is shaded while you drag-and-drop to indicate that you cannot drop anything on it*.)
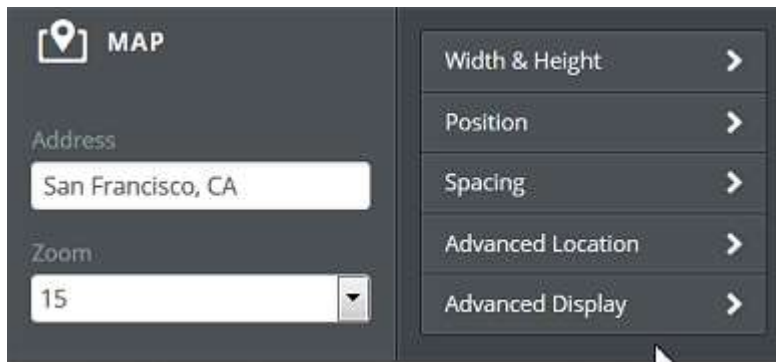
When the Title element is in place you click on it and type in the title you want. In this example I chose "How to find us."

Here the Title appears and I am dropping below it a Map element.

This will pop an interactive Google map on the page to show where your club meets.

Of course the map does not yet know where the club meets so it shows its default view of San Francisco.

Click on the map and this properties box pops up. You can use it to change the size and shape of the map - but the main point is you can type in to the "Address" field the address where the club meets.
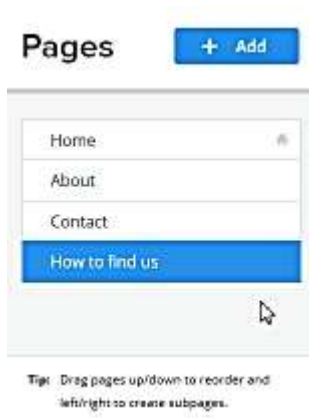
You can type in a British postcode or a full street address like "65 Church Lane, Ourtown, Lancs."

The "Zoom" lets you choose how close the map should be. 1 shows the whole world (!), while 17 is close enough to show individual buildings.

Click back on the map itself to see the changes.

When your website is live, visitors will be able to drag the map around and zoom in and out as they wish to find their best route to your venue.

You might then add some "Text" with the name and address of the venue, details of local parking and public transport.
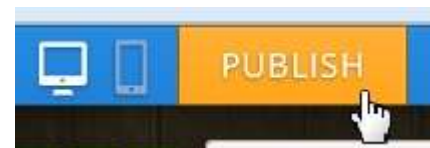
For now click on the **Pages** tab at the top and look at the list on the left:

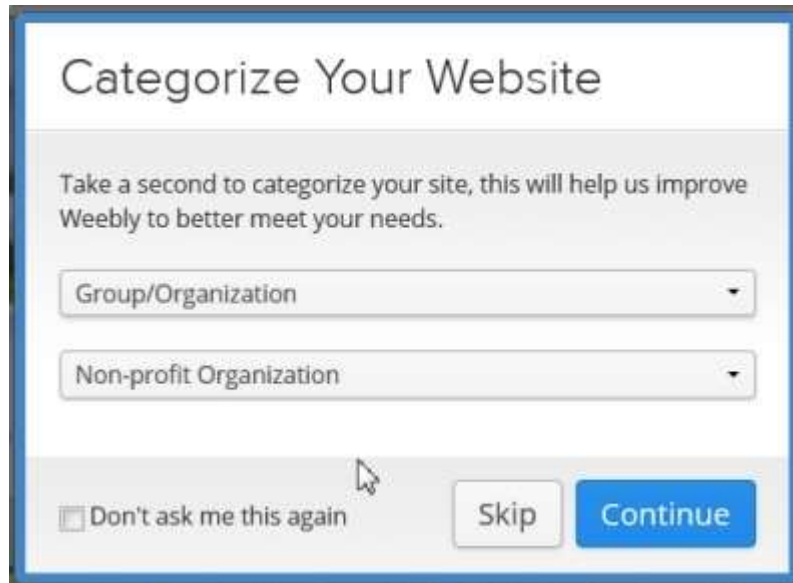Your new page has been added to the list.

Now we have to publish the pages

Even though there is almost no content on our pages yet, let's get these pages up on the web ...

Near the top right of the Weebly screen is a friendly orange button marked "**Publish**". Click on it.

You may see a pop-up message asking you to categorize your website.
Click the arrows on the boxes and lists of types appear. I suggest you choose these:

After a moment you see a new message:

Your web address will show the domain name you chose.

Yes, you have done it!

Click on the bold link. (In the illustration it is: **http://suburbmovies.weebly.com**) and your web browser will open a new window showing you your website!

At this stage I suggest you ignore the options to tell your friends about it through Facebook, Twitter or Email.

So far you have put up on the internet a website with almost empty pages. In the next step, we will change that by adding text and pictures.
Exciting? Perhaps.
Straightforward? Absolutely.

Picture and Words

You have created and put online on the web your new club website. Anyone, anywhere in the world, who knows the address can visit it. So we had better give them something valuable to see.
Right now, we have almost empty pages.

For this trial run do not spend too much time getting the perfect picture and words. That sort of fine-tuning comes a little later. Whatever you do now can (and probably should) be changed later ...

Editing online

If you are in the browser window showing your lovely, but almost empty new website, close that window and re-open the browser window on the Weebly editing pages.

If the "Congratulations" message is still there, click the X at its top right corner to make it disappear.

Don't worry if you shut down the Weebly window by mistake.

*Just type the Weebly address (www.weebly.com) into your web browser. The site will open. You may be asked to enter your **username** and **password** again.*

 Then you will see your website (or a list of websites if you have been making several!) and three buttons.

*Click the **Edit Site** button and you will see that all your work has been safely saved.*

Editing text and pages online sometimes feels like working through a layer of treacle. It takes a moment for your commands to be sent up to Weebly and then back down to your computer. Be patient and work at a gentle pace.

Editing Picture Elements

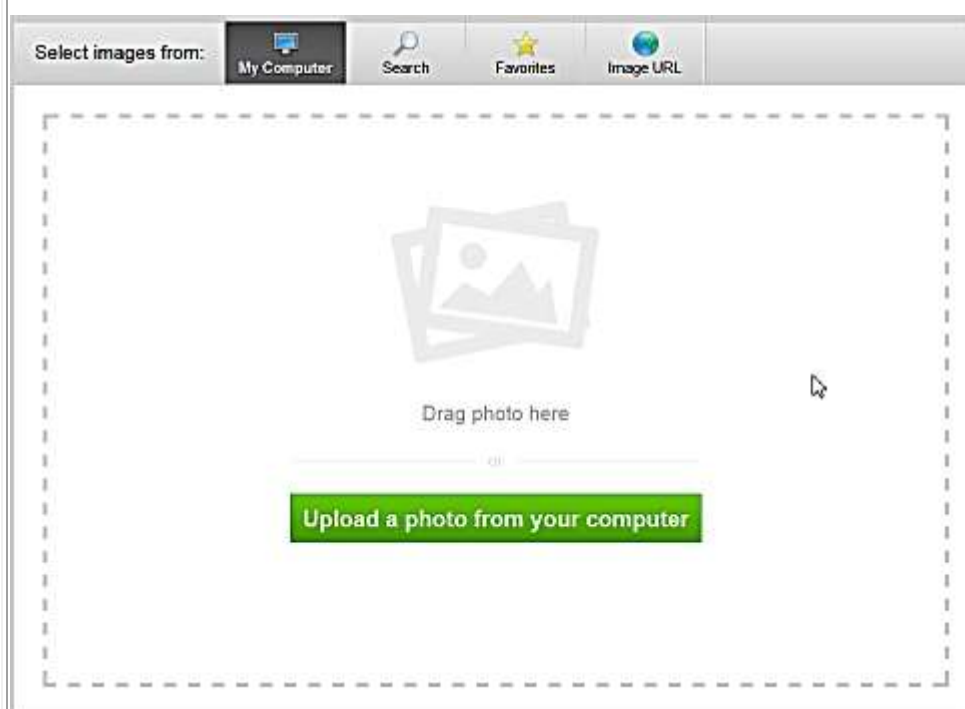Click on the Image tool then drag-and-drop it onto an empty area of screen.

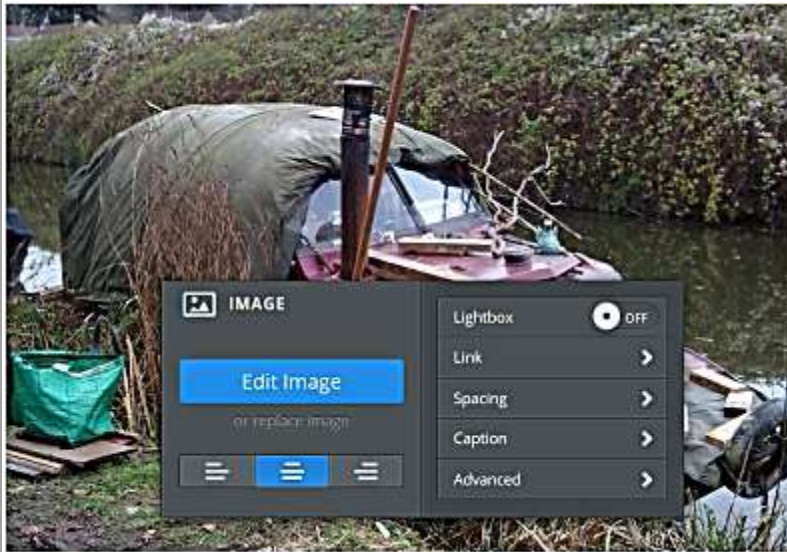Click on that "Upload Image" item and you get an interesting set of choices:

The tabs at the top of this box offer picture sources. The one you will probably use most is

MY COMPUTER

As illustrated that invites you to drag-and-drop a picture onto the box or to click the "Upload a photo from your computer" button, which lets you navigate to any photo on your computer and choose it. Weebly will adjust its size to fit the page.

When your picture appears you can leave it as it is or click on it to make a picture properties box appear:

Edit Image - opens the picture in a special screen with a toolbar (see below) which lets you crop bits of it and change its appearance.
or replace image - this easily missed link lets you replace the present image with another one.
(justify) - the three images mean put the image on the left, centre or right of the page.
Lightbox - turn it on and when website viewers click on the image a larger version of it will be displayed. This is useful when you only want modest sized pictures in the main page.
Link - lets you make the picture a link to another page on the website or to another place on the internet.
Spacing - lets you make subtle changes to the space around the image.
Caption - lets you put a simple caption under the picture.
Advanced - includes a way to put different borders round the image.
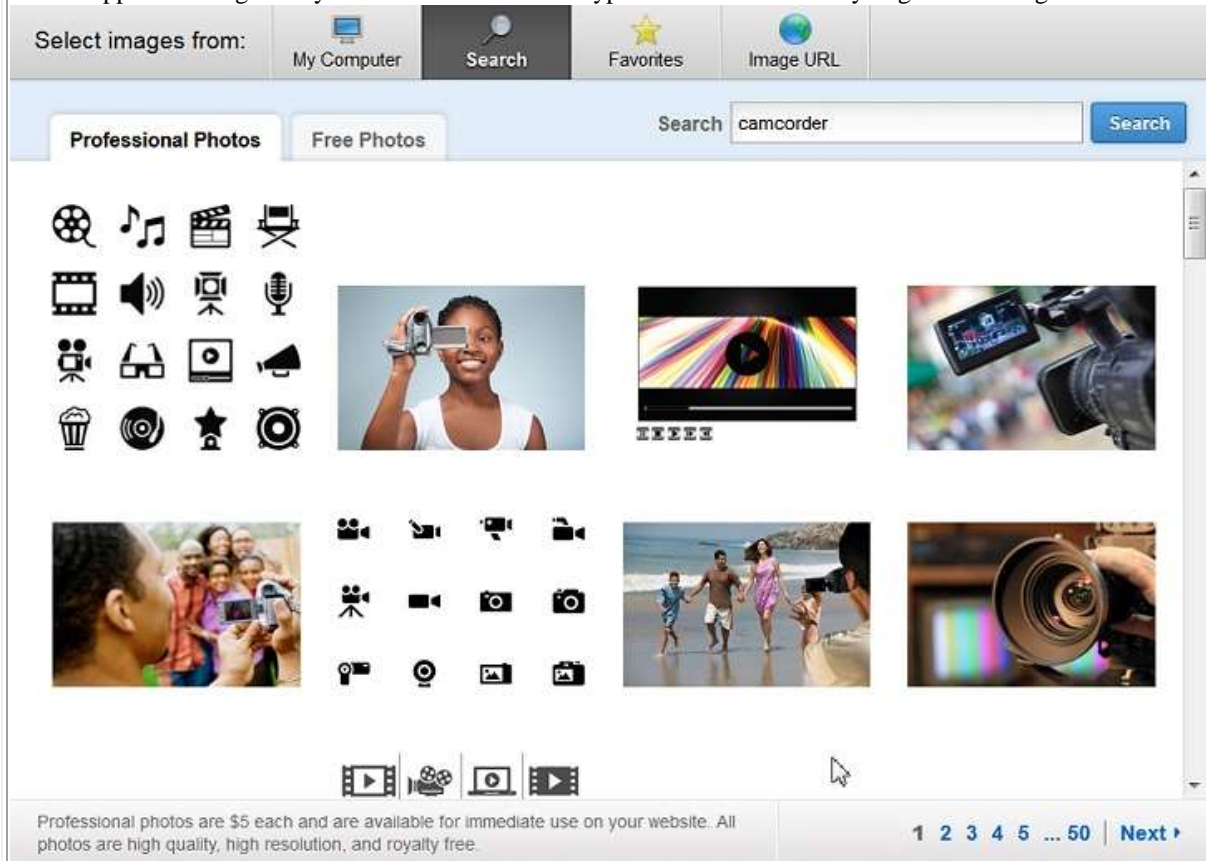

The Edit tools ... we will not go into details about these options ... have fun experimenting.

SEARCH

Weebly has provided access to a lot of images that you can use on your website. They are all royalty-free. Some are professional pictures for which you must pay a one-off fee of $5 each. Others are free. Many come from picture sites which require a specific credit to the picture's author ... Weebly adds the credit automatically.

A field appears asking what you want to search for ... type in "camcorder" and you get something like this:

Being mean I automatically click on the "Free Photos" tab and look through them. As you can see at the foot of the box there may be several sets of images to look at - keep clicking "Next".

When you click on a picture you are offered the chance to use it immediately or mark it as a favourite (see below).

FAVOURITES

After a while you may build a collection of images you like or want to use often. These are ones you have marked as favourites in the Search process.

IMAGE URL

This tab lets you import a picture from somewhere on the internet by entering an address.

When a picture is shown online you can usually right-click on it and choose to "View Image" which presents the picture on its own without all the text and other stuff round it. The picture's URL in then what you see in the browser address bar. You can copy it from there and paste it here.

Do be careful not to breach copyright. Most images online are NOT free to use. You can find some in places like Wikimedia Commons that you can use.

Note that the pictures on your website will be publicly visible on the internet, so do not break copyright and do choose an appropriate image. When you revise and improve the site later, you can have a set of specially prepared pictures ready. Weebly will adapt the width of the picture to suit the web page space you have given it, but it is sensible to choose a modestly sized image otherwise it takes a long time to send over the internet.

Editing Text Elements

Click on any text you put on a Weebly page - whether it is a title or paragraph text - and a **text toolbar** appears above it:

The first movie making group was formed in the 1960s mainly using 8mm cine film. The club had several By 1985 we settled in the Church Hall and have never looked back.

Drag the mouse over some words to select them, then click the toolbar buttons to:

- **B** make them **bold**
- **I** make them *italic*
- **U** <u>underline</u> them
- **+ / -** make the letters larger or smaller
- **A** choose a colour for them
- **(chain symbol)** make the words link to another web page
- then there are four justify (position) options - line the words up left. centre, right or "full", which means fitting exactly from one side of the space to the other.
- **(dots and lines symbol)** makes paragraphs into a list like this.
- **(numbers and lines symbol)** makes paragraphs into a numbered list.
- **Tx** undoes any changes and returns to the basic text style, colour and size.
- **Undo/redo arrows** help people like me who keep changing their mind !

Most of these will be familiar to anyone who has used a wordprocessor. The exception is the Link.

Highlight some words as we did above for "Church Hall" then click the link button and a panel pops up:

If you want to link to another website - in this case perhaps the Church Hall's own website - make sure that the radio-button left of the "Website URL" field is chosen, then type or paste the correct web address into it. This will usually start "http://www ..." Then click in the box just above it to put a tick in it. *Usually you want a link to another website to open in a new window, so that people can come back to your website easily.*

If you want to link to another page on this website - in this case perhaps the How To Find Us page - make sure the radio-button beside "Standard Page" is selected. You will be shown a list of the pages on the website so select the one you want.

If you want to link to a document or picture for people to download select the radio-button beside "File". You can then type or paste in the file's name or click an Upload button which appears and select a file on your computer.

If you want to mark the words as an email address - you might give the secretary's name as "Pat Smith", select the name and then choose to link it here. Use the radio-button to select "Email Address" and type or paste in the relevant email address.

Then click the **Save** button.

More, More, More

What about the "Coming Soon ..." Programme page?

After the Home page, this is the second most important page on a club website. You must try to think like someone who knows nothing about the club, and little about the hobby. Make sure this page tells them all they need to know. Here it is useful to create columns of text.
Here's how ...

Here we have created a new page and called in "Programme".
We dragged a Title element onto the page and typed in "What's happening next week."
We dragged an Image element onto the page and uploaded a photo.
Here is the clever part ...
The shot below shows what happened when we dragged a Text element onto the same line as the photo. You will see that the blue line showing where it will go has changed from horizontal to vertical. That means that when we drop the Text element it will be side-by-side with the picture:

The result is

Click on the space between the photo and text ... and a blue line will appear. You can drag that left or right to change the column size.

When you have added another couple of items you are starting to get an interesting looking page:

You can put several items side by side to make pages that seem to have three or four columns if you wish. There is more advice on what you should put on a Club Programme page in articles in Film & Video Maker magazine and on the IAC website. See "What should the content be?".

Forms, Emails, Maps & Videos

Contact page

The more ways you can give people to get in touch, the better the chance of catching new members. Here is a simple contact page which took less than a minute to assemble:

Using the technique shown in the previous lesson, this has three columns side-by-side.
Left column: a list of names, email addresses and telephone numbers. (The emails are links.)
Centre column: a free image from Weebly's collections and a text element with a few words and a link to the Programme Page.
Right column: a form element from the Weebly toolbar. Users can write in it and their message is sent to the club.

Forms

Drag the Contact Form element from the toolbar onto the page.

When the form is on the page, click once on it and some buttons appear above it.

- **View Entries** opens a new page to show you all the messages that have been sent through this forms system to you. (*Of course it will be empty to begin with.*)

- **Form Options** presents the **forms toolbar**

- **Save** shuts down the form controls leaving your form on the page.

Click **Form Options** and the **forms propery box** appears.

Form name lets you change the title of the form.

Email submissions to is where you type in the email address that you want messages to go to. *Weebly fills in automatically the email address you used to register with them, but you can change it. Here you see my email address as IAC Assistant Webmaster.*

Confirmation text is what people see on the page after they have sent their message. You can edit it to something friendlier or more appropriate.

Spacing & Advanced let you tweak a few more things. One you might consider is changing the name of the button on the form from "Submit" to "Send" which more people will understand.

Weebly's toolbar also offers a lot of options for designing or modifying forms, but we don't need those to get started.

Emails and Spam

Spam (unwanted advertising emails) is a plague. There are programs which scour the internet for any email address they can find and add it to lists for spammers to use.

Using a contact form (as above) stops those programs finding an email address. That is why we recommend you to use a form if you are at all worried about spam.

Having said that, most people have good spam filters, either applied automatically by their email service or that they have bought separately and have little trouble with spam.
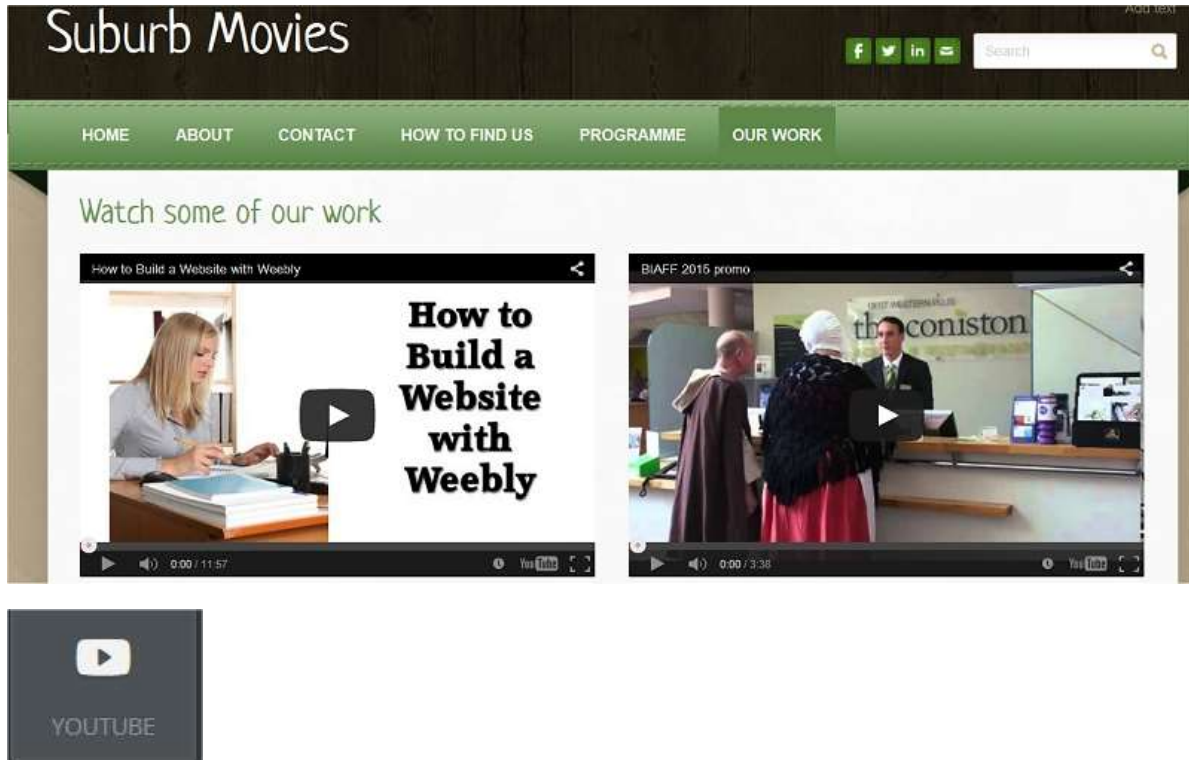
If you do want a club email address

Remember that even your rough website will be visible on the web.

You can get free email services from (among others) Google, Yahoo, Windows Live and GMX. Set up email with one of those and you can probably choose an email address like "midlands-movies@gmx.com"

You should share the username and password of this special email account with a few other club officers, so that if you are away, they can handle any enquiries. *Do not share your normal personal email sign-in details!*

"See our work ..." page/s

Weebly provides tools on the Toolbar to let you create a Gallery of pictures, but as a video club you really ought to have examples of work by the club and its members in the website:
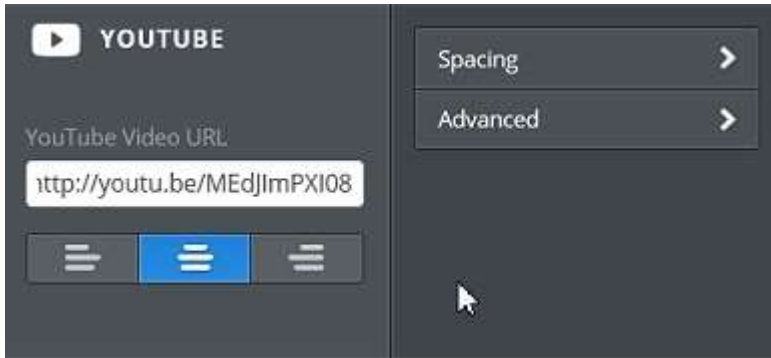

Scroll down the toolbar and you will find a YouTube element. You can drag this onto a page and have any YouTube video appear there.

You can also place these YouTube elements side-by-side just like Text and Image elements.

Here we have cheekily added one of the hundreds of videos about using Weebly that you can find online and the promotional film for BIAFF 2015.

You can put two more YouTube elements below these and so on ... but I do not recommend more than four on a page. For each video that you place on a page, the viewer's web browser has to go off to YouTube and find the relevant movie and send its starting image and controls to your page. That takes a small amount of time for each one. You can, of course use several pages to showcase your movies.

When you first drop the YouTube element on the page you will not see your own video, of course. Click on the display and the properties box appears.

Paste the YouTube address of your video into the space, then click one of the justify buttons to set the film left, centre or right of the screen. You can use the address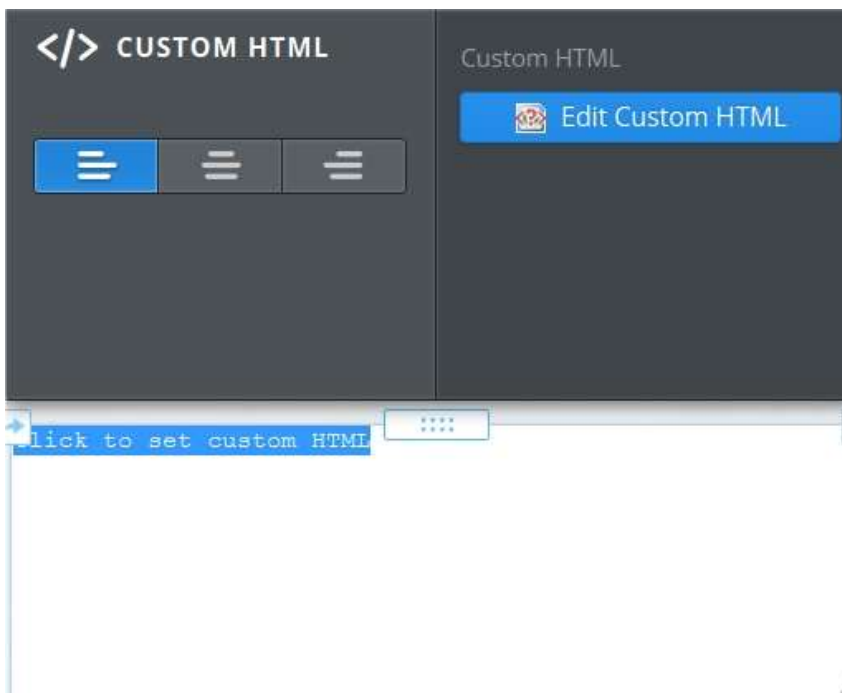 which appears in the address line of your browser when you are looking at your video, or the shorter one offered beneath the video under the Share options on the YouTube website.

Other Video Services

If your videos are on another video hosting service like Vimeo or DailyMotion, you will need to use a slightly different technique.

Drag the Embed Code element onto your page.

The left, centre and right justify buttons are probably familiar to you by now.

When you click the "Edit Custom HTML" the white panel below opens up.

In principle you can use this to type in all sorts of special codes if you know the HTML language in which websites are written. In practice its common use is for just what we want.

Into this box you paste a set of embed codes you have got from your video hosting website. You can also use this technique for YouTube but they waste effort when Weebly has a special tool for that.
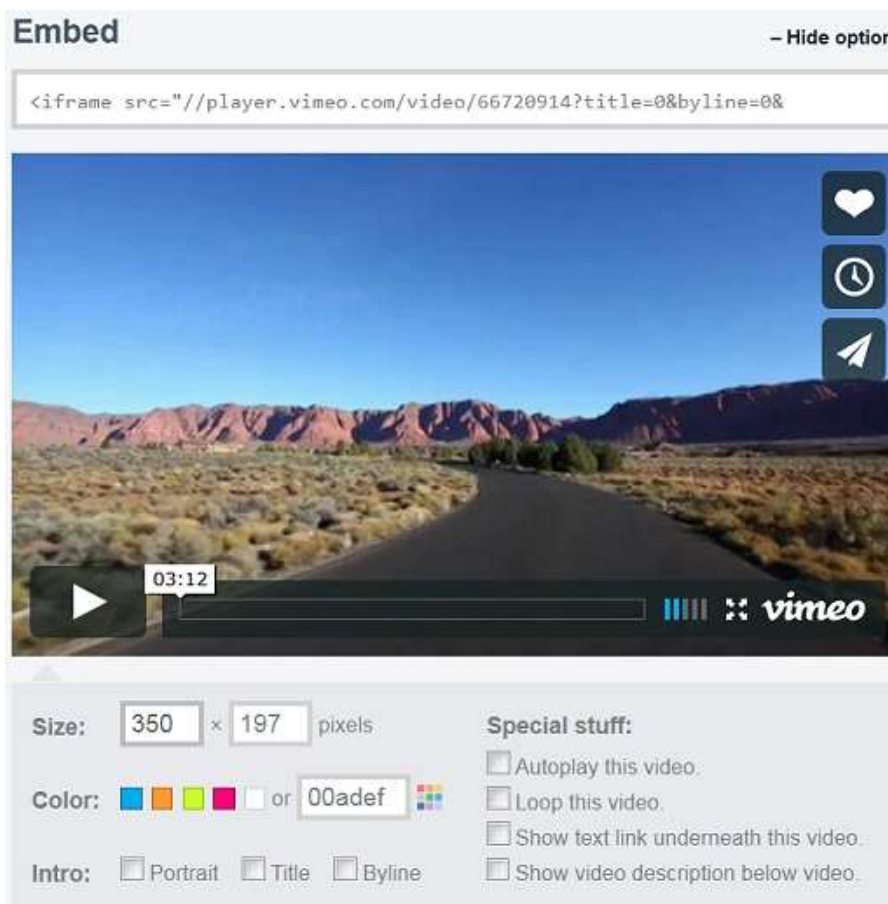
On most video hosting sites there are options for sharing the video. Usually one of the options is called embedding. That provides some code which you can copy and then paste in here.

The critical part is that you need to make sure the embed code will not try to make the video picture too wide. The default code the video hosts offer is often 650 pixels wide. On Weebly that is fine if you only have one video per row, but if you want two, you have to specify a maximum width of about 350 pixels.

On Vimeo click the icon near the top right of the video and a set of options appears. Notice that the last line says the video will be embedded at 640 pixels wide.

Look just above the Embed code and click the +Show options link.

You are shown the video as it will appear on your website.

The Size fields can be changed. The first is video width the second its height. Change the width and the height will automatically adjust to keep the aspect ratio correct.

You can experiment with other choices.

Just above the picture you see the code you need. Click in that field and it will all be selected. Copy it.

That is the code you paste into the Weebly Embed Code box.

Have a look at your website live

Click the friendly orange **Publish** button at the top right of the Weebly page. When the "Website Published" page appears, click the link and look at the website you have created. You are looking at it on the internet. You could turn off your computer and use someone else's to go to the address and see it. If you have access to a tablet or smartphone try using that to see it. (*Weebly automatically adjusts for the smaller screens of phones etc.*)

Now you really do deserve to congratulate yourself on the first draft of your club website.

Go back to Weebly, click the "Close" cross at the top right corner. When the start screen appears click "Logout". Go and have tea, coffee or something stronger if you wish.

Next time you ask your web browser to go to Weebly and you login, you will see the name of your website listed there along with three buttons. When you click **Edit** you can revise any aspect of your site.

To boldly go ...

This exercise has produced only the bare bones of a website. The next step is to have a long, hard think about what should be on it.

- Do not work alone. You are the webmaster and boss, but other people can bring useful insights and ideas to you.

- Read the articles on content, style, layout etc. listed below and readable on the IAC website.

  o **Is your club website a waste of space?** points out weaknesses in existing club websites

  o **What should the content be?** covers the tricky issue of what to put in

  o **Navigation** talks about menus and how to prioritise content

  o **Choosing the Right Words** - offers a little help with writing

  o **Pictures** deals with choosing, preparing and using images

  o **Colours** offers ideas on how to use colours to good effect

  o **Layout** discusses the look of your website

- Set about taking - or asking someone else to take - suitable still pictures.

- Consider commissioning (without a fee!) people to write about aspects of our hobby and about their own skills as movie makers, actors, writers, designers and so on.

- Explore all the other options Weebly offers and which we skated over here.