

Notes from the Minutes of the Management Committee of the Village Institute, 1952 – 1972.

The Committee in January 1952 comprised Rev A.H.Watkins, Chair, Lady Margaret Nicholson, G.W.Atkinson (Trustees), Dr H.G.Clifford, B.M.Cross, H Goddard, H. Mauback. At the AGM in March 1952, Mr Cross and Mr Mauback resigned and Capt. W.F.Collyer and Mr W.Blackman were elected. Mr H.W.Wynn was Secretary.

In April 1952, Rev Watkins resigned (leaving district) and G.W.Atkinson took over the Chair on a temporary basis.

Rev. W.F.Garrod appointed Chairman in December 1952. Lady Nicholson retired as Trustee in July 1953, and her place was taken by Col. H.C.Swain.

February 1952 proposed that all organisations should be represented on the Management, who would elect one member for the Sub-committee ... and all pay a subscription.

April 23rd 1952. Rev Watkins suggested that Chairmen should in future be elected since 'it would be very embarrassing for a new Vicar to be given a task of which he knew nothing'.

Mr Collyer had been asked to form the Home Guard Company in the area and asked if the Institute would be available for training purposes.

Aug 1952. South Downs Bus Co requested information about times of dances held. Lady Margaret said the difficulties in asking the Rev Garrod to take the chairmanship of the first meeting 'were enormous' and G.W.Atkinson was asked to occupy the chair for a further three months.

Sept 1952. Dinner at which to present framed photograph to Rev Watkins.

Bus company willing to operate late service providing a minimum of 10/- in fares be guaranteed by organisers of the dances.

Dec 6th 1952. Rev Garrod is in the chair. Representatives of Pig, Cricket and Football Clubs present.

Feb 14th 1953 Balance stood at £154.5.4d. 'The meeting was called to enquire into allegations of gross behaviour on Caretaker's part with the New Forest Cinema Co and the Clerk of the local Parish Council. The Secretary, having read the Clerk's letter and given details of his conversation with the Cinema Managers and the Committee having discussed the matter very carefully, called in the Caretaker who denied the charges but as Dr Clifford and Mr Goddard were of the opinion that the persons concerned must have some ground for complaining, gave the Caretaker the Committee's views of the matter, also stating he must in future conduct his duties on a proper manner or more drastic measures would have to be taken.'

July 23rd 1953. 'The Caretaker having complained of the smell caused by pigs on the land adjoining the Institute, it was agreed that no action be taken; if further complaints were reported from users of the Hall, the Sanitary Authorities to be contacted.'

19th May 1954. 'Dr Clifford raised the point, why the Institute could not be handed over to the Parish Council, so do away with the Management Committee.'

23rd June 1954. The Sec stated he had interviewed Mr Gibson, the Secretary of the Hampshire Council of Social Services, who stated that as the Institute was now vested in the Charity Commissioner we could hand it over to no other body.

5th October 1954. Mr L. Blackman asked could the Entertainment Section of the B. Legion revert to Monday evenings permanently when the Cinema Shows cease...

March 25th 1955. AGM. Elected to the Committee, Mr. L. Blackman, Mrs Brown (Treasurer) Mr. J. Brown, Mrs Brook (Secretary). Rev Garrod retiring as Chairman, Mr Wynn as Secretary. Dr Clifford chairs subsequent meetings. Mr L.Blackman subsequently appointed Caretaker.

July 25th 1955. Mobile Cinema unit said it could only screen on Mondays. Not possible, so Sec asked to find if alternative mobile cinema unit could be approached. (Subsequently, the Brit Leg agreed to move to Fridays and cinema continued on Mondays. Later, report that a licence had been obtained for cinema. Still grumblings about film company dictating the evening

12th October 1956. Sec reported that plans to get someone to run a cinema show had fallen through. (Subsequently, with no cinema or old tyme dances, attempt to reduce annual fee to PRS. Subsequently agreed by PRS.)

20th March 1957. Balance stood at £14.2.4d. Rebuilding fund at £90.13.11d. School classes brought down on Monday afternoons for games &c in the Hall.

27th April 1957. AGM, Col Swayne has resigned as Trustee, Mrs Clubb agreed to become Trustee. T.Cole and L Cannings elected to Committee, Rev Garrod having resigned.

Increasing reports of dilapidated decoration and building, and shortage of funds. Approach to Parish Council for funds not successful. Approaches made for grants to County Education Office, Min of Ed, National Council of Social Services, R.D.C. Constant fund-raising events.

22nd April 1958. AGM Dr Clifford attempts to resign as Chairman (could not cope with all his activities and commitments). Persuaded to continue for another year. Mr. R. Paige, Mr Porch and Mr J Porter elected.

May 6th 1958. Mr Fairbanks, neighbour, had erected a glasshouse using Institute wall. Solicitors to be consulted.

2nd December 1958. £98.7.7d in general fund, £7.16.9d in re-building fund.

1958/9 Rev Lawry appears on Committee.

20th April 1959 AGM. Balance £205.14.0d. Chairman says that it had been a good year financially. Dr Clifford confirms resignation, G. Atkinson ditto as Trustee (Mr Caines in his place). Mr Brook takes Chair, along with Hon Sec. Rev Lawry becomes Vice Chair. Dr Moor appears to be a member.

May 3rd 1960. AGM. Rev Lawry chaired, at the request of Mr Brook. 'Mr Brook said that after such a perfect exhibition of chairmanship from the Vicar, it would be in the general interest for him to take over the chairman's duties. This was unanimously approved and after some cajoling, the Rev Lawry graciously consented. Mrs Porch joins Committee.

31st May 1960. The County Council was organising a mobile van library very shortly and the present arrangement was coming to an end. Mrs Clubb wondered what we ought to do with our own books.

April 20 1961. AGM. Balance sheet 3155.11.4d.

25th July 1961. RDC proposed using Institute Toilets as public conveniences for annual payment of £50 a year. Committee votes against the idea. "There was an increasing tendency for coach parties to come to the village, and might grow still worse if it was known that public conveniences were laid on."

Plaque proposed to Dr Clifford Memorial Trust for gift of 20 chairs. (Imitation phosphor bronze). Eventually Miss Henstock commissioned to inscribe it.

May 17th 1962 AGM. Balance in Bank £160.2.10d. Mrs Brown resigns as Treasurer, Mrs Reece Porter takes over.

Dec 6th 1962. Central Heating system ruined by heavy frosts. Estimated £200 to replace. (Eventually, £243, plus costs of removing old system.) 'Mr Fairbanks' overflow pipe drips on roof of our shed attached to his house in our yard.'

July 10th 1963. Balance in bank £130.00 County Education Officer had brought up subject of forming a Youth Club in village. Adult Management Committee needed, then apply for membership of County Youth Register. P.C. Scivier to be included (and volunteered to act as leader, with Mr Hiscock.) Later reported to be a success, meeting two nights a week; football team formed, practising on Tuesday evenings.

6th May 1964 AGM. Balance £90.9.4d. Re-building fund, £9.3.1d. 'After a brief outburst against the practice by Dr Moor, the committee was re-elected en bloc.' Mr Blackman great success as caretaker.

12th May 1965 AGM. Balance in bank, £10.9.10d. Dr Moor and Mr Ayling resigned/retired. Mr J Bury elected.

31st January 1966. A heated discussion with all the old arguments about whether to allow Football Practice TO continue. Damage to doors, light fittings, screens. Stronger supervision needed and use of a BALL SHOULD BE BANNED altogether!

Report on extensive damp in Caretaker's cottage, downstairs and up.

May 17th 1966. Caretaker had erected a rough garage for his car which did not comply with planning regulations. The Chairman mildly rebuked the Caretaker ...

15th June 1966. Mr Porter (neighbour to Institute) reported that he had had some trouble with young sailors trying to get into the Institute to play billiards. The matter had been dealt with by the Mercury authorities.

Throughout 1967, problems with Caretaker's cottage – upstairs room renewed by Canterbury's and decorated by Mr Blackman, but damp patches appeared. Caretaker using Library as bedroom, preventing its use as a Committee Room. Later, bulging wall deemed dangerous.

April 1967. Mr Standfield now a member, in place of Mrs Clubb who had died. Parish Council repeats request for Institute toilets to be used as public conveniences. (Liphook had agreed to this arrangement, and had now stopped it, due to vandalism.)

AGM. The Caretaker reported that the floor of the big hall was difficult to keep clean owing to its age and especially from the fish and chips and crisps brought in during Bingo ... Young mothers also complained about state of floor at Clinic. (Subsequently, two ladies hired to scrub the floor at a cost of 24/-.) Messrs Smiths Cleaning Agency hired at cost of £52 to treat the floor.

Mr Blackman resigned in 1967 and left the cottage, having been allocated a council house. Mr A.J. Sparrow subsequently appointed to the job. Caretaker's cottage extensively repaired, followed by request to Parish Council to help meet the costs.

(Mr Sparrow subsequently reprimanded for spending too much time on outside jobs, not enough on cleaning and maintenance of interior.)

May 6th 1968 AGM. Mr Goddard in Chair. Rev Lawry had now left the village. Goddard asked to continue as Chair for at least a year, 'irrespective of appointment of a vicar'. Mr. J. Berry appointed as Vice Chair. Cash in Bank £111.11.8d.

Lady Mackinlay's Bring and Buy Sale had contributed £42.8s to the Institute.

Freddie Standfield asked to review Constitution. (Subsequently, handed to solicitors Mackarness and Lunt.) Correspondence from Charity Commission indicated that all village organisations should be represented. (W.I. the only one not to be.)

Clara Fisher appears subsequently as member, and Vicar, Rev Smith.

May 1st 1969. F.G. Standfield writes to Committee (he was ill) suggesting that possibilities of building a new and up-to-date hall be seriously considered. He thought the present premises were shabby and dilapidated. (Decided to await results of negotiations with Charity Commission.

AGM. Rev R. Smith elected Chairman, H. Goddard Vice Chair. Cash in bank £86.2s.

Jan 27th 1970. Mrs Pamplin (daughter of Herbie Goddard) is now a member of the Committee.

Draft scheme received from Charity Commissioners; F. G. Standfield recommends acceptance. (Later became operative, with two small amendments suggested by F.G.S.)

April 28th 1970. Carbon Copy of Charity Commission scheme, including appointment of trustees, for East Meon Reading Room Library and Coffee House.

Three elected members plus one representative from each of the following organisations: Parochial Church Council, Parish Council, Branch of British Legion, Horticultural Society, Wives Club and Women's Institute.

The Schedule describes 'Land situate at East Meon ... having a frontage on the north to High Street of 75 feet or thereabouts with the halls and caretaker's cottage, thereon which property is ... comprised in the above-mentioned conveyance dated the 14th December 1887 and made between Henry Coles of the one part and the Reverend Charles Patten Good and two others ... the remaining part thereof comprised in a deed poll made the 9th March 1912 by the Rev Thomas Heywood Masters ... '

5th May 1970. AGM. Balance £119.5.0d.

Declaration of acceptance of new Constitution signed by Rev Rodney Smith, (Vicar and representative member), Mr. Blowers (elected member), C. Fisher (representative member), H.Pamplin (representative member), J. E. Porter (representative member), C.G.Brook (elected), I.W.J. Porter (elected) F.G.Standfield (representative member), H. Goddard (representative member), D.Berry (representative member), I. Cook (over '60s)

Dec 19th 1970. Rev Smith proposes to start a Youth Club in the hall.

11th March 1971 New Site. The Chairman said he had had a talk with Miss Blackman about her field in Workhouse Lane. She was contacting her brother about prices &c. As regards planning permission, Mr Standfield said that the Area Planning Officer had told him that we could apply again although planning permission had already been refused, and he had agreed that the site appeared the obvious and only new site for a hall.

3rd May 1971. Proposed by Mr Standfield that we should proceed on the following lines:

1. Write to the Charity Commissioners, putting them in the picture and enlisting their support.
2. Having obtained Miss Blackman's approval, apply for outline planning permission.
3. After outline planning permission has been obtained, start negotiations for sale with Miss Blackman. We would do this in conjunction with the Charity Commission.

Youth Club. Proposed that old youth club committee should get together and sanction payment of 2 months' rent out of the odd £50 remaining in the bank account.

Sponsored walk on behalf of building new hall raised £141.25. (Added to existing rebuilding fund at £104.30.)

Balance sheet stood at £168.24p. (Mile of pennies £31.00p).

May 13th 1971 Enquiries suggested that HCC Social Services would grant £50% of monies. H. Goddard suggested enquiries be made into alternative sites in case negotiations with Miss Blackman stalled.

Proposed to erect sign showing progress with fund-raising.

June 17th 1971 Charity Commission suggests that we should enlist the services of a local surveyor to guide us in our negotiations. L.R.Devnish F.F.S. had been contacted. 'the result was a long inconclusive letter from Mr Devenish in which he tried to sum up the situation. Main points:

1. The present hall is in disrepair and has come to the end of its useful life.
2. Re the proposed site in Miss Blackman's field, the planning authority had told him that we might not get planning permission unless the authorities were sure there was no alternative site. Mr Devenish thought that the site was suitable but rather far from the village and liable to objection from nearby residents.
3. He did not commit himself to a figure for Miss Blackman's site but thought that it might well contain a considerable 'hope value' for her.

Proposed to offer her £750 for $\frac{3}{4}$ acre.

July 22nd 1971 Miss Blackman rejected offer as nothing like adequate.

23rd September 1971 Nursery Class had now started and seemed to be going well. Planning application still under consideration. Miss Blackman was going to arrange for a valuer to advise her on price.

Oct 21st 1971 Mr Devenish reports that the Planning Authority was prepared to consider favourably the application to build a new hall on Miss Blackman's field, with the following provisos:

1. Adequate parking permission to immediate west of Hall with access via existing gate.
2. Satisfactory sound proofing with no doors or windows on eastern side.
3. An open amenity area, landscaped, between Hall and workhouse Lane, and a screen of trees behind the Hall on east side.
4. High standard of design and first class materials.

Miss Blackman had asked to see a copy of the Planning Permission when it came through.

Nov 18th 1971. Rebuilding fund stands at £416.95 and bank balance at £98.90d.

Rev Smith suggests access be arranged to the school so that the school could if necessary expand into the new hall for classes.

Nov 30th 1971 Mrs Mary More Gordon would hold theatre workshop for 2 hours on Saturday mornings.

Proposed to hold village fete in support of re-building fund.

February 17th 1972 Miss Blackman proposed to charge £2750 for the site., providing the Trustees would pay her conveyancing and estate agents's fees. Committee to go to Whiteheads for estimate of price. Also, look at possible site at Coppice Corner.

23rd March 1972. Whiteheads valued the land at £1,200 - £1,500 an acre. Instructed to negotiate with agents. No point in going ahead with Coppice Corner, on investigation, but Recreation Ground to be explored. (Chairman – Herbie Goddard - reported that situation with Oxenbourne Trust was complicated.)

April 24th 1972. Miss Blackman not responding. Decided to write to Chairman of Parish Council asking for approval for building on Recreation Ground.

Mrs Lettice Ross had agreed to take over Secretary in autumn. (The Vicar appears not to be attending meetings, and Herbie Goddard chairs them.)

AGM. Rebuilding fund stood at £630.98. ("Still a long way to go ...") Balance £148.78.

22nd May 1972 Cubitt & west had written to say that another agent had made a tentative offer of £2,750 plus fees on behalf of the V.H.Committee. Either Mr Devenish had gone too far or Cubitt & West had jumped to the wrong conclusion. Decided to await Miss Blackman's reaction. Mr Standfield pointed out that with the price of land and building increasing so fast, might be wise to close the matter up as soon as possible, since what we regard as very expensive now might well be a bargain in retrospect. Building on Cricket Field would be considered at next Parish Council meeting.

22nd June 1972. Wilson Atkinson present, representing Parish Council. Rebuilding fund at £948.98. Fete had made a profit of 3318.

Mr Standfield proposed that owing to rapidly rising cost of land, should offer £2,000 clear of expenses. HCC SS had written to say that allocations for village halls was being cut by 90%.

Wilson Atkinson had visited both sites with a Mr Mott, of Midhurst, who advised that they should check the deeds to make sure there are no restrictions on the present property, and also consult the planning authorities about permission to build on it.

Debate about the Recreation Ground, with the view that the planners would worry about access ... and sufficient room.

Worries about caretaker, and formal letter written to Mr Sparrow with list of complaints.

18th August 1972. Planners had visited present site and recommended getting first class architect to draw up plans. Intensive development of two-storied buildings and flats was the answer. Planners did not feel that recreation Ground was really practical – problems of access and exit, plus encroachment of cricket field. Decided to drop Recreation Ground idea. Decided to go ahead with negotiations with Miss Blackman, 32,750 max. Possibility of up to 75% grant from Education Department of HCC in 1973/4, dependent on help from Parish Council.

September 25th 1972. Rebuild fund at £979.48p, current account £163.02p. Chief Further Education Officer had met Mr Brook and Mrs Ross to enlarge on particulars for East Meon application. Parish Council had agreed in principle to give 12 ½% grant towards new hall, but needed to know the likely figure.

Miss Blackman sticking to £2,750 price and wanted 10% deposit. Mr Standfield reported that Charity Commissioners had said that detailed plans for hall and site plus development of old site must be procured before planning permission applied for, and architects' fees would have to be met by Management Committee.

Despite calculated risk of purchasing the site before planning permission obtained, Mr Standfield authorised to contact Miss Blackman's solicitors to say that Committee was prepared to sign a contract to purchase one acre of land at £2,750 plus Surveyors and Legal fees subject to planning permission and the shape of the land being settled.

New hall should seat 300, plus facilities for a variety of facilities. HCC SS to be approached for advice on architects. Mr Goddard, Mr Standfield and Mrs Ross to be responsible for arrangements to choose an architect.

Sept 29th 1972. Extraordinary meeting. To consider letter from Miss Blackman's solicitor, 27/9/72:

1. Miss Blackman had said that land value had risen since last January; she now requires £3,500 plus expenses.
2. Miss Blackman had heard rumours of the very high price likely to be realised when the existing Village Hall will be sold.
3. Her brother will agree with whatever her sister says and does.

Mr Goddard expressed his feelings over the fact that Miss Blackman had gazumped the Committee within 48 hours of the Committee's last meeting and 4 days after she had stuck to £2,750. Debate about reducing size of plot to 3/4s acre. Finally agreed to acquire the one acre plot without more ado and before the price was raised yet again.

23rd Oct 1972. Draft contract discussed (despite Miss Blackman thinking the price was too low ...). Clauses re access, fencing and planning permission added. Architect, Mr Sealy of Sawyer Partnership, Winchester, was asked to press on with plans for old and new sites so as to obtain planning permission. Mrs Ross to look at new Hall at Bramley, where use of new materials was a recommendation, brick walls and laminated wood ceiling trusses which need minimum maintenance. (After a visit, agreed to proceed with this concept, with the provisos of the need for a stage with a dressing/committee room and more storage space. Building fund stands at 31,031.34p.

Maintenance costs on existing building were driving current account into the red, and the hall would have to be closed in March 1973.

Mr Sparrow's Variety Show had raised £48.

Nov 27th 1972. Estimated costs , building ans site, £35,900 at 1972 prices.

County planners had visited existing site and recommended that site need not be set back so far from the road, and that the design be conservative. . Roofs should be tiled, walls white painted, windows paned as in Cross House, 6 to each window.

Newsletter would contain history of events, awaiting contract to be legally binding.

END OF MINUTES.