

## The Village Hall (and Church Institute)

*This is a report based on entries from the Minutes Books of the Management Committees of the Institute and subsequently the Village Hall, chronicling the history of the original 'Reading Room, Library and Coffee House' and its eventual demolition and sale to enable a new Village Hall to be built.*

In 'The Year of Jubilee of Queen Victoria', 1887, a site 'of land and dwelling house', opposite what is now East Meon Stores, was conveyed by its owner Henry Coles to Reverend Charles Patten Good and two others, Jane Barnard and Benjamin Aylwin. These were the first Trustees of what was to be the 'East Meon Reading Room, Library and Coffee House' Charity, otherwise known as the Church Institute<sup>1</sup>. It was a condition of its foundation that the Vicar be one of the Trustees; in fact, until after World War II, the Vicar was always the Chairman of the Management Committee.



The building, as can be seen, was of rickety construction, with corrugated iron roofing and, for the most part, walls. The state of the structure was to be a constant worry and expense for future committees.

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<sup>1</sup> When the 'scheme', i.e. constitution, was amended in 1971, reference was made to '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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> March 1912 by the Rev Thomas Heywood Masters ...

Alongside the Institute was a caretaker's cottage. The caretaker, sometimes a role performed by a married couple, was responsible not only for the cleaning but also the supervision of events in the Institute. The state of the cottage was also a regular concern for the Committee.



As can be seen from the full title, still preserved on this plaque in the foyer of today's Village Hall, the Institute was an important hub for the social life of the village. In the days before radio, still less television, existed, and when most villagers never travelled beyond the parish boundary, the Institute had a games room with billiards table, a stage where plays and concerts were produced, a large room where dances were held every week, as well as the library, reading and coffee rooms. A rifle range was soon added (where Park Vista now stands), which appears to have been managed by the owners of Bereleigh. (In 1929, Major Nicholson 'gave permission for chairs to be stored in rifle range'. He handed over management of rifle range for a rent of 5/- a year.)



*The rifle range can be seen in this photograph taken in 1905, the long roofline just beyond the The George.*

There were numerous social groups in East Meon, all of whom used the Institute in one way or another. Representatives of these groups attended the Management Committee meetings (and when the Charity was formed after WWII, became ex officio members of the Committee.) There are references in the minutes to the Women's Institute holding cookery demonstrations; the British Legion having regular dances. There was an active Literary Society, and amateur dramatics (January 1931: 'Mr Talbot Ponsonby was to give a play in aid of Institute funds. Drama licence to be taken out for one month.')

There was an active Sports Committee and Youth Clubs came and went (the committee even approved holes in the floor to allow the erection of a boxing ring). East Meon National School used the Institute as an overflow space.

Arthur Warren, the proprietor of Warren's haberdasher's shop and grocery at what is now The Tudor House, ran a glee club at his house but used the Institute to hold concerts.

In 1932 it was decided to amalgamate the Institute Library with the branch of the County Library established at the School. Mr Escombe and Miss Manning to be librarians. This continued until 1960 when the minutes record that 'The County Council was organising a mobile van library very shortly and the present arrangement was coming to an end.' Subsequently, the space was used to accommodate the Caretaker whilst the Cottage was being repaired.

There was no mains electricity until 1938, when the Southern Utility Company connected the Institute to its mains. The Committee reluctantly accepted the usefulness of installing footlights on the stage as well ('some kind of contraption for that service'). And the night-soil man emptied the toilets until the 1950s.

### *Wartime*

We don't have minutes for the Institute in World War I, but in the Second World War it provided an invaluable resource and focus for village loyalty. In February 1941 Special meeting to discuss urgent matter of letting the Hall for Dances and Billeting of Troops. The idea of billeting was rejected because the Institute didn't have adequate 'conveniences'. During the war, lunches were laid on for the school children.

Dances provided regular entertainment for troops, and for the sailors who were posted to the new Signals School, HMS Mercury, at Leydene. (Until well into the 1950s, the South Downs Bus Company ran a bus service which enabled the sailors to return to Mercury after the dances (11.15pm on Saturdays).



In March 1939, it was noted that the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) had used the large room 15 times (for a reduced hire fee of 2/6d.) The Auxiliary Fire Brigade (above) and the Home Guard drilled at the Institute. In January 1942, it was agreed to let the Large Room, again for a reduced fee of 2/6d – plus 2/6d for the services of the caretaker – for an event in aid of the Russian Red Cross.

In January 1942, it was agreed that the Library Room be used during ‘War Weapons Week’, for the sale of War Savings Certificate and the same year saw the Institute hold a ‘Warship Week’, fund-raising for the Navy; films were screened courtesy of the Ministry of Information – probably documentaries of an overtly propaganda nature. Later the same year, this became a regular event; after the war, 16 mill. movies were shown every month, first by the South Downs Cinema Company, and then by New Forest Films, charging the companies a fee for hiring the all (35/- a night, in 1947). In 1955, the Management Committee was unable to stomach the company’s insistence on showing films on a Monday, which clashed with British Legion bookings. They looked for another mobile film unit but were unable to find one, and the practice ceased ... until Moviola arrived in East Meon in 2006.

### **Maintaining the Institute**

The Committee was now discussing regularly the declining state of both buildings, Institute and Caretaker’s Cottage, and the drain on financial resources was increasingly severe. In 1943 it was proposed that the hall be re-built as a War Memorial, and a re-building fund was established with a payment of £50. (An architect had been consulted, and had suggested ‘a large hall to seat 150, billiard room, kitchen, cloak and dressing rooms, also bowling green and tennis court’.)

In May 1944 it was reported that: 'The Vicar has spoken to Captain Candy Cooper, Chairman of the Rural District Council, who had suggested that a site might be obtained in the meadow in the centre of the village which it was agreed would be an ideal spot'. The reference to the 'centre of the village' might be to Glenthorne Meadow, opposite Glenthorne House, which at that stage was an open field with cattle from Coles' dairy (then in Glenthorne House's outbuildings) grazing on it.

By October 1947, the Committee had evidently given up hope of raising enough money to consider building a new hall. A General Public Meeting was held at which a resolution was proposed "Do you wish the money collected for a new Village hall to be used for the improvement of the present building?" It was overwhelmingly accepted, the Yes votes numbering 34 the Noes, 8. From then until May 1969, the Committee struggled on, wrestling with the increasing costs of maintaining an ageing building. For instance, in December 1962, with just £160 in the bank, the minutes report 'Central Heating system ruined by heavy frosts. Estimated £200 to replace.' (In the event, it cost £243, plus the costs of removing old system.)



*Children dancing outside the Institute, celebrating the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II*

## New blood

In 1969, Herbie Goddard was temporarily in the chair (replaced for a while by Rev Rodney Smith, who then stood down marking the end of Vicars automatically holding the post). Herbie Goddard ran a garage and petrol pumps in the yard of Glenthorne House; he was also Chairman of the Parish Council.



*Herbie Goddard, affectionately known as 'The Mayor of East Meon'.*

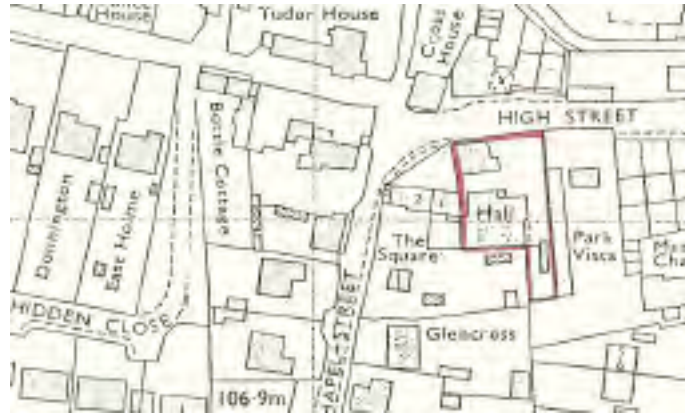


*F.G. Standfield, author of 'A History of East Meon'*

Freddie Standfield, a solicitor, was also on the committee. These two were to oversee a remarkable campaign to sell off the old Institute and, partly through the proceeds of the sale, fund the purchase of a different site and build a new Village Hall. It was to be a roller-coaster journey, with the heat of the action in 1973 when inflation was running at 3% a month at one point, and public funds were dramatically withdrawn.

A minute for May 1969 relates that F.G. Standfield had written to the 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. This proposal was accepted, and the fun began.

The first step was to secure permission from the Charity Commissioners, which involved a new 'scheme', i.e. constitution, which included the appointment of trustees for East Meon Reading Room Library and Coffee House (as the charity was still titled). The new scheme granted permission to sell the old site in order to raise funds for a new hall.



*The site of the old Institute and Cottage*

### New site

The first (and eventual) site selected was on the south side of Workhouse Lane, on Kews Meadow. In March 1971, the Chairman (at this point, the Vicar, Rev Rodney Smith) said he had had a talk with Miss Ruth Blackman about her field in Workhouse Lane. She was contacting her brother about prices &c.

From the same meeting: '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.'

Fundraising started. A sponsored walk raised £141.25. (This was added to existing rebuilding fund at £104.30, whilst the overall balance sheet stood at a mere £168.24p.) A 'Mile of Pennies' was laid down the High Street, inviting both pedestrians and passing motorists to add their coppers; it raised £31.00p. There was a long way to go.

In June that year, it was recorded that 'The 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.

It was proposed to offer her £750 for  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre.'. Miss Blackman rejected it as 'nothing like enough'.

In October, 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 space 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.

In November, the Rebuilding Fund stood at £416.95 and the Bank Balance at £98.90d.

In February, it was recorded that '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.' The Committee was staring down the barrel of what they took to be the unreasonable price demanded by Miss Blackman, and began frantically to look for alternative sites. The most likely appeared to be the Recreation Ground (where the cricket pitch is located). This, however, was rejected by the Planners, who decreed that they did not feel that Recreation Ground was really practical – problems of access and exit, plus encroachment of cricket field<sup>2</sup>.

The next significant step in buying the site is recorded in the minutes of a meeting the following September: 'Decided to go ahead with negotiations with Miss Blackman, £2,750 max.'

'Sept 29<sup>th</sup> 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.'

At this meeting, it was finally agreed to acquire the one acre plot without more ado and before the price was raised yet again. At an October meeting, a draft contract discussed (despite Miss Blackman thinking the price was too low ...). Clauses re access, fencing and planning permission were added.

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<sup>2</sup> There were also likely to be problems with the Oxenbourne Trust, which had a controlling interest in the Recreation Ground.

Time had been lost, the price of the land had escalated, and the country was entering a period of raging inflation. The estimated cost of the new Hall had started at £25,000 and had risen, first, to £30,000 and now to £38,897<sup>3</sup>. Intensive fund-raising had raised £1,871.78. It was now essential to secure a good price for the site of the Institute and Cottage. The value was now estimated at £20,000.

In June 1973, the Secretary to the Committee (and the final key member of the troika driving the project), Mrs Lettice Ross, reported that planning permission has been granted for three dwellings on site of Institute, vacant possession of Caretaker's Office had been obtained, that Charity Commissioners' order for sale of site was soon to be completed, and that planning permission for new village hall received on 8<sup>th</sup> June 'with conditions for landscaping and access'.

In September the old site was at last auctioned. The minutes record: 'Reserve price of £18,000 not reached at auction of site, but Robert McKay Developments of Godalming offered this sum the next day<sup>4</sup>. Great relief to have reached the reserve price in an uncertain market ...'

So, with the price of the original site now in the bank, along with almost £2,000 raised by the community, almost £19,000 still needed to be raised, and the public grant-awarding bodies were not proving to be as forthcoming as had been hoped.

### **Financing the new Hall.**

From the first, the Committee had the nightmare task of juggling the need to build a new Hall as quickly as possible (the Institute was closed in 1973) whilst being realistic about having the funds to pay for it. In September 1972 the Charity Commissioners had stipulated that detailed plans for hall and site plus development of the old site must be procured before planning permission applied for, and architects' fees would have to be met by Management Committee.

As late as August 1973, one of the potential funders, the Continuing Education Department of Hampshire County Council, had warned the Committee that "commencing building (or signing contract) would seriously disbar grant for Phase I and seriously affect application for Phase II<sup>5</sup>."

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<sup>3</sup> This figure, see below, was the estimate submitted by Moulds, the eventual builders.

<sup>4</sup> The site was developed as the three houses, including Ottery, next to Park Vista (which is on the site of the old rifle range).

<sup>5</sup> Part of the Social Services department of the HCC. The CED, as will be seen, was itself having to balance the County Council's capacity to grant a fund against the national Department of Education and Science's ability to make the money available. In the event, they were not able to commit their money until 1974 when, as will also be seen, the building was already complete!

Three public sources of funding presented themselves. In descending order of size of potential grant, the first was the Social Services Department of the County Council [HCC] which was responsible for the health of village halls under its Community heading.

The second was the District Council, then Petersfield Rural District Council, later to become East Hants District Council<sup>6</sup>. Third came the Parish Council. The three were inter-dependent. A letter of May 1971 speculates that the Department of Education<sup>7</sup> might be prepared to offer up to one-third of costs 'if a similar amount is contributed by local authorities-. The District Council indicated that it would be willing to grant half the amount provided by County Council, provided Parish Council will make a similar grant. Shepherding all three bodies into the pen at a time of national economic crisis and rampant inflation was to prove a nightmare.

Extracts from correspondence and records of site visits and negotiations will all three are included in the 'Grant Applications' document which is attached as a PDF to [the Village Hall section of the digital archive, click here](#). This report contains a summary of the highlights (or lowlights) of the grant application process.

In May 1971 a first approach was made to Hampshire Social Services, and it was reported that 'Enquiries suggested that HCC Social Services would grant 50% of monies.' This proved, as later emerged (see above) to be optimistic and the timescale unimaginably protracted ...

In June 1972 HCC had written to say that allocations for village halls were being cut by 90%.

In July that year, Mrs Ross corresponded with the County Education Officer concerning an application for a Further Education capital grant 'in respect of a new hall at an estimated cost of £25,000'. He responded that this would not be available in 1972/3 but would be considered in 1973/4. The application would be included in list to be submitted to Department of Education and Science.

In October, Lettice Ross was deputed to visit a new Village Hall at Bramley, near Basingstoke, 'where use of new materials was a recommendation, brick walls and laminated wood ceiling trusses which need minimum maintenance. (It was subsequently agreed to proceed with this concept, with the provisos of the need for a stage with a dressing/committee room and more storage space. An architect, Mr Sealy of the Sawyer Partnership in Winchester, was commissioned to produce plans which could be submitted for planning consent.

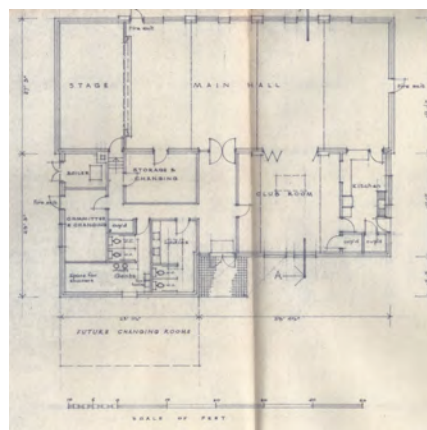
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<sup>6</sup> The RDC had responsibility under the 'Physical training and Recreation Act, 1937. Grants for Youth Service, Community Centres and Village Hall'.

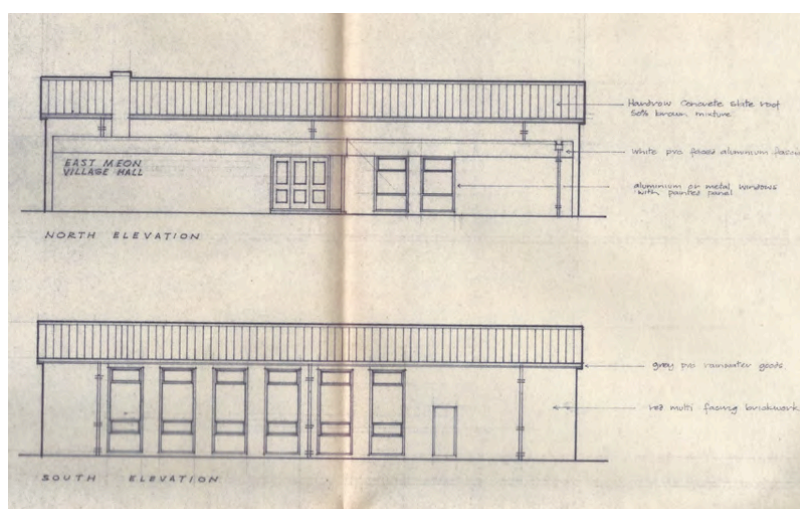
<sup>7</sup> See footnote 4, the DES controlled the CED/HCC purse-strings!



Architect's drawing of first design



Floor plan January 1973



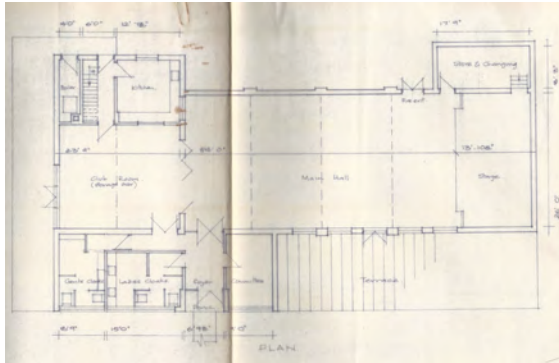
Elevations, January 1973

In February 1973, an Open Meeting was held, addressed by Mr Emery of HCC Social Services and by the Architect. No minutes have survived, but the HCC must have given sufficient encouragement for a firm decision to be taken that the old site should be sold and the money used for the new Hall. The Institute was closed in March.

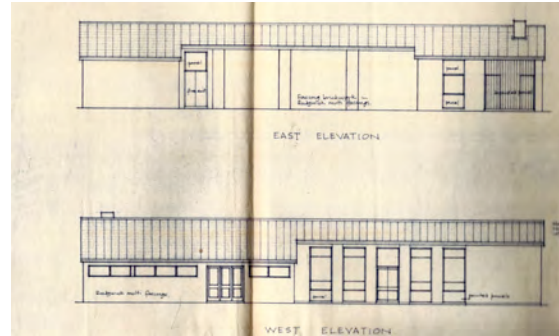
In March 1973, the Petersfield RDC informed Mrs Ross that East Meon was on their recommended list for 1973/4 and that grant aid will be assessed when the monies realised from the sale of the present hall are taken into account. At this stage, the Parish Council had agreed in principle to put up 12.5% of the overall cost, and that it would write to the Hampshire Education Committee in support of the application. A later letter from Lettice Ross thanks the Parish Council for its unanimous vote to grant £3,000.

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, the County Education Officer wrote to inform that East Meon has not been successful ... only 6 out of 18 applicant villages had received grants. In June, Lettice Ross wrote again, asking to receive application form for 1974/5. It later reported its reasons for the rejection:

1. East Meon had not qualified for priority in 1973/4 because budget was inadequate and our ability to meet the commitment of building was doubted.
2. Govt policy on hall grants was expected to reduce from 50% grants to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> grant, to be matched by 1/3<sup>rd</sup> raised by the community and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> from minor authorities.
3. No allowance would be made for inflation after July.
4. It was repeated that commencing building (or signing contract) would seriously disbar grant for Phase I and seriously affect application for Phase II.



Revised floor plan, April 1973, scaled down. The Committee Room was later to be removed, and the two cloakrooms placed on opposite sides of the foyer.



Revised elevations, April 1973, reflecting the Planning Officer's stipulation that there be no windows on the east side of the building.

It was at this point that Freddie Standfield approached Lynton, later Sir Lynton, White who lived in Oxenbourne House ; he had been an architect and was now a County Councillor. He persuaded White to offer a guaranteed loan of £22,000, free of interest. There was to be no surety beyond Freddie's word that he believed the loan would not have to be called in.

This appears to have cleared bureaucratic objections to proceeding with the building. In November, Lettice Ross notes ... 'Permission to build has to be obtained from Central Government, Department of Education and Science, and not the County. Lynton White had been to see the County to press the case. East Meon was now third on the list of priority villages for 1974/5. Lynton White advised to take the risk of signing the contract.'

The total costs of building were now estimated at £42,790.

Meanwhile, the Committee had been inviting tenders from building firms. The first three companies whom it approached had declined the invitation to submit proposals. In November, the second round of invitations had produced tenders from another three. The Petersfield firm, Moulds, was now included, and submitted the lowest price: £38,897. Moulds was to be invited. This was to be a fixed-price contract, but materials and sub-contractors' costs were still subject to inflation which was running at 3% a month at that point.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, a letter was received from Mr Charles of HCC giving permission for work to be started, stating that 'this does not commit the DoE and HCC to provide a grant specifically for the project'.

In December, Freddie Standfield approached other potential benefactors, asking if they would reduce the potential burden which Lynton White had shouldered, by each guaranteeing £2,000. Eight did so - W. Douglas Home, Captain F. Tyrwhitt Drake, Mr M Tyrwhitt Drake, Mr A Gill, Mr & Mrs Stan Smith, Mr. D. Ryder, Mr F. Standfield, Mr H Goddard – and Lynton White remained the underwriter of the balance.

In March 1974, Herbie Goddard and Freddie Standfield approached Lynton White and with his permission, it was agreed that building should go ahead, despite the lack of any commitment by the County Council or DES. At this point it was decided also to approach the Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust in the hope of a grant.

March 1974, Lettice Ross wrote to a Mr Trower at the Eleanor Countess Peel Trust, giving a graphic summary of the situation. 'At this date we have no village hall, the new site is all that is vested in them.' 'In May of this year we hope to apply further to the D.E.S. and in the late summer to the C.E.D. again for their grant aid for 1975/6 after its suspension for 1974/5.' 'The village has been fortunate in being able to procure several guarantors for some of the cost of building the new hall without which, and the sale of the old hall, no building could have been started.' In July she was able to write thanking the Trust for its donation of £500.

In April, Lettice Ross wrote to Petersfield RDC thanking it for the promise of a grant within the maximum of £6,000, £3,000 in 1974/5, £3,000 in 1975/6. Everything now depended on the County/DES coming up with the largest tranche. The Parish Council was paying in tranches of £1,500.

A new Treasurer had been elected to the Management Committee, a Mr Franklin who, surprisingly, lived on Hayling Island. He appears to have improved the Committee's presentation of financial figures. On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1974. V.W.Emery, Rural Officer, Hampshire Council of Community Service, writes to Lettice Ross. 'I am very impressed with your fundraising record and should like to congratulate your Hon. Treasurer on the excellent manner in which the accounts are presented.' He had received a note from the National Council of Social Services '... cuts have been made in the total amount of money available'. 'DES have now announced their programme for the above financial year ... the total figure (available for all grants) of £39,500 represents only a 50%, which would have to be supported by local authorities.'

This would mean that only three applications for grants could be met out of

In June 1974, the Committee received another letter from HCC informing it that 'Although HCC have not felt able to make provision in their estimates ... they will offer a grant on behalf of the Dept of Education and Science at twice that offered by your Local District and/or Parish Council' ... based on a cost of £40,457, and balance sheet of £21,850, grant not to exceed £9,600. In September Lettice Ross

wrote to the DES thanking for cheque for £2,400, the first of four equal payments<sup>8</sup>. 'The Hall is now well on the way to completion ...'.

Grants would now total over £22,000, and the sale of the old site had raised £18,000. Community fundraising had, of course, continued throughout the whole period, with the May Fetes raising as much as £600, Sponsored Walks, Barbeques in the Tosdevine Barn, and at the George, cold platter suppers in people's homes. Donations came from Liphook Young Conservatives and Waterlooville bikers. We don't have a final figure for the sum of monies raised in the community; the condition that it should have matched the £9,600 granted by the DES, still less the £12,000 from the RDC and Parish Council cannot possibly have been met, but the sum must have approached £3,000.

On January 25<sup>th</sup> 1975, the Village Hall opened, still in debt, though the Committee was able to repay the guarantors part of the loans on which the project had depended. The Parish Council made an extra payment of £500<sup>9</sup>. In September a further £2,400 was repaid to the guarantors, after the DES had made its final payment. Their courage had been repaid and they were not out of pocket.

### Postscript

In 1998, the Village Hall had to apply for a Lottery Grant of £103.75p, for repairs and improvements to the building. The planners in 1973 had insisted that the roof had been built with heavy concrete tiles instead of lighter aluminium ones, while it was necessary to make up for savings made in the original building by upgrading the heating plant, sound-proofing, temperature control, toilet facilities and improving the kitchen.

### For further study

[In the Village Hall section](#) of the digital archive, there are notes taken from the minutes of the respective periods, which provide more information than is contained in this report.

Two appendices are attached to this document, the first is the transcript of a speech made by Freddie Standfield at the celebrations in 1995 of the twentieth year of the Hall, in which he himself tells the story which is reported here. The second is a more detailed Timeline of events covered here.

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<sup>8</sup> Though the final payment by the DES only amounted to £6,157

<sup>9</sup> The Parish Council raised its money by increasing the Precept, i.e. the money paid by residents as part of their taxes.

## **Appendix 1. Description by Freddie Standfield of events leading up to the opening of the Village Hall.**

*This is the script of a speech which Freddie gave to those who attended the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the opening of the Village hall.*

The original East Meon Village Hall was built in 1881, sited opposite what is now the Spar Shop. It was constructed of timber and corrugated iron, was at first named 'East Meon Reading Room, Library and Coffee Room' and later known as 'The Village Institute', or just 'The Institute'. Space for car parking was non-existent, for cars had not been invented; and so called 'toilet facilities' were outside and non-existent.

Yet the Institute was well loved. When I joined the Management Committee, the then Vicar, Rodney Smith, was Chairman, and John and Pam Sparrow, living in the adjacent 'Caretaker's Cottage' were the caretaker. Committee meetings were held in their cottage.

Then, in 1968, the late Herbie Goddard, already Parish Council Chairman, succeeded the Vicar as Village Hall Chairman. Berbie was a wonderful man – 'Mr East Meon', and referred to, behind his back, as 'The Mayor'. I believe his election as chairman was the best thing that ever happened to the old Hall.

However, in 1968 I was horrified at the great cost of maintaining the building. The corrugated iron was rusty and the timber constantly needed repairs or replacement – I suspect it suffered from dry rot, deathwatch beetle, and every other disease. As fast as funds were raised for improvements, money disappeared into a bottomless pit for repairs.

Then, in the early 1970s, I had what proved to be an unusual stroke of luck, in the shape of a dose of influenza, which prevented my attending a Committee Meeting. By the day of the meeting, though unfit to venture out, my brain felt clear, and I saw, as from a distance, that the only sensible future option was to have a new hall, largely financed by demolition of the old hall and cottage, and sale of the site for housing development.

So, with a shaky hand, I wrote to Herbie on these lines, suggesting that he should read my letter at the meeting. He did, and – surprise, surprise – the reaction was favourable.

Thereafter, every possible new hall site was considered, including the site where we are tonight. Outline planning consent was obtained, and a purchase price negotiated with the landowners. But we faced two major problems: first, Workhouse Lane residents were understandably apprehensive of noise and disturbance late at night. And secondly, rampaging inflation then running at the rate of something like 20% per annum.

Public meetings were held in the hope of reassuring Workhouse Lane and other nearby residents, designing the new hall without windows to the east and southern sides, and by setting it well back from the road.

As for the size and design of a new hall, we obtained details of the other halls recently built in Hampshire, and Committee Members drove round inspecting them. A new hall at Bramley, near Basingstoke, seemed ideal and an architect was engaged to design our new hall, incorporating the main Bramley features. Then, as we were new to inviting tenders from builders, there came an unfortunate diversion in the shape of an alternative proposal for the hall to be sited in the Recreation Ground.

This was an unsound idea for a number of reasons, but it found much support, and, though causing six months' delay, increased the estimated cost of building by something like £2,000. And, if that were not bad enough, the cost of the land here was also increased!

We have forgotten what hyper inflation was like. At 20% per annum, the cost of a new building would increase from, say, £40,000 to £48,000 in a year. So, when the Village was feverishly engaged in every form of fund-raising, we were not merely running to remain stationary, but even going into reverse!

Though we had an idea of the sum likely to come from the sale of the old hall site and had been promised grants by various bodies, including our Parish Council, we felt we dare not sign a building contract until we were certain the cost would be available.

The situation was desperate. So I suggested to Herbie that I should approach Sir Lynton White (then Mr Lynton White), always a generous village benefactor, so see if he would be prepared to guarantee a personal loan of £20,000 free of any interest if and when needed, without any security but merely upon my personal assurance that it would be repaid within two years. He asked no questions, and immediately agreed. At that time, £20,000 was the equivalent of at least £50,000 today – perhaps more – and his reaction was typical of his great generosity and trust. The vital part he played was unknown to most people at the time, and may be largely unknown today.

We were able to sign a contract at once, the sale of the old hall and cottage was put in hand, Messrs Moulds were awarded the building contract, and work commenced, in a sea of mud! Fittingly, Sir Lynton laid the foundation stone.

The village was inevitably without a hall for quite a while - it may have been for at least a year, and our Committee Meetings were held in the comfort of Herbie's house.

I have almost completed this reminiscence, but must refer to two important matters.

First, all members of the Hall Committee pulled together in whipping up support. It would be invidious to name any one as being particularly praiseworthy, though I know Mrs Lettice Ross, the Secretary, worked herself to the point of exhaustion. Others included three stalwart ladies who are still around, and seem

ageless, namely Ivy Cook, Iris Porter and Cath Barrow. And these names these names are not by any means exhaustive. And that wonderful lady, Mrs Dorcas Simpson, was the queen of all fund raisers.

My final revelation is that, shortly after Lynton White had made it possible to start building, it was decided, with Herbie's agreement, to try to spread the risk of the final £20,000 guarantee, by replacing it with a total of ten separate £2,000 guarantees by ten individuals. So I approached local residents with that object in mind, and all agreed without hesitation, leaving Lynton to carry a risk of £2,000 instead of £20,000. I was not surprised, but, looking back, it was rather remarkable. The end of that part of the story was that no guarantor lost any money.

Finally, I have not intended to exaggerate the importance of my part in events that are now local history. Herbie Goddard was the dynamic leader, co-ordinator and inspiration and, at the time, I told him that the new hall would be his memorial. It was, and is.

## Appendix 2.

### Timeline of events, taken from extracts from Minutes of the Management Committees of the Institute and Village Hall.

Date	Record of event
14 <sup>th</sup> December 1887	<p>Indenture of Conveyance 'of land and dwelling house' by Trustees, to be used as 'East Meon Reading Room, Library and Coffee House', a Charity, made between Henry Coles of the one part and the Reverend Charles Patten Good and two others ... Conditions included Vicar being one of the Trustees, Jane Barnard and Benjamin Aylwin as Trustees.</p> <p>Foundation commemorated as 'Year of Jubilee of Queen Victoria', 1887.</p> <p>A rifle range was at some stage erected on the site of what is now Park Vista.</p>
	No Minutes until 1928.
April 1929	Major Nicholson 'gave permission for chairs to be stored in rifle range'. He handed over management of rifle range for a rent of 5/- a year.
December 1934	Decided to amalgamate the Village Library, started in 1897, with the branch of the County Library established at the School. Mr Escombe and Miss Manning to be librarians.
Jan 1938	Messrs Southers and Wallace estimate for installing wiring from the company's mains, £11.15s. Southern Utility Co charge of £3.9.0d to erect overhead service was accepted. Estimate requested for footlights on the stage ('some kind of contraption for that service').
Feb 1941	Special meeting to discuss urgent matter of letting the Hall for Dances and Billeting of Troops.
Oct 1941	Public meeting to propose Social Club. Vicar made speech. Agreed to establish mixed club for benefit of village. Subscription 5/- a year.
Feb/March 1942	Warship Week to be held ... 28 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 6 <sup>th</sup> March, Film Programme'. (regular films shows started in October).
Oct/Nov 1943	Proposal to re-build the Institute as a War Memorial.

	Chairman (vicar) proposes that a re-building fund be established. £50 transferred to open a deposit account.
May 1944	Vicar has spoken to Captain Candy Cooper, Chairman of the Rural District Council, who had suggested that a 'site might be obtained in the meadow in the centre of the village' which it was agreed would be an ideal spot. (Glenthorne Meadow? Then a green space.)
Oct 1947.	General Public Meeting. Resolution "Do you wish the money collected for a new Village hall to be used for the improvement of the present building?" Yes 34 No 8.
Feb 1953	'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 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.
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.)
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.
May 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.
April 1970	New Charity Commission scheme, including appointment of trustees, for East Meon Reading Room Library and Coffee House. This in effect grants permission to sell the old site in order to raise funds for a new hall.

March 1971	<p>New Site. The Chairman said he had had a talk with Miss Ruth Blackman about her field in Workhouse Lane. She was contacting her brother about prices &amp;c.</p> <p>Fund-raising starts.</p>
May 1971	<p>Enquiries suggested that HCC Social Services would grant 50% of monies.</p>
June 1971	<p>Surveyor appointed, Mr Devenish. who 'tried to sum up the situation':</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The present hall is in disrepair and has come to the end of its useful life.</li> <li>5. 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.</li> <li>6. 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.</li> </ol>
July 1971	<p>Miss Blackman rejected offer of £750 for 3/4s of an acre as nothing like adequate.</p>
Oct 1971	<p>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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Adequate parking space to immediate west of Hall with access via existing gate.</li> <li>6. Satisfactory sound proofing with no doors or windows on eastern side.</li> <li>7. An open amenity area, landscaped, between Hall and workhouse Lane, and a screen of trees behind the Hall on east side.</li> <li>8. High standard of design and first class materials.</li> </ol>
Nov 1971	<p>Rebuilding fund stands at £416.95 and bank balance at £98.90d.</p>
February 1972	<p>Miss Blackman proposed to charge £2750 for the site., providing the Trustees would pay her conveyancing and estate</p>

	agents' fees. Committee to go to Whiteheads for estimate of price. Also, look at possible site at Coppice Corner.
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.
June 1972	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 were being cut by 90%.
July 1972.	Correspondence with County Education Officer concerning application for Further Education capital grant 'in respect of a new hall at an estimated cost of £25,000'. (Later, £30,000). Not 1972/3 but would be considered in 1973/4. The application would be included in list to be submitted to Department of Education and Science.
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.
Sept 1972	Decided to go ahead with negotiations with Miss Blackman, £2,750 max. Possibility of up to 75% grant from Education Department of HCC in 1973/4, dependent on help from Parish Council.  Sept 29 <sup>th</sup> 1972. Extraordinary meeting to consider letter from Miss Blackman's solicitor, 27/9/72:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Miss Blackman had said that land value had risen since last January; she now requires £3,500 plus expenses.</li> <li>5. Miss Blackman had heard rumours of the very high price likely to be realised when the existing Village Hall will be sold.</li> <li>6. Her brother will agree with whatever her sister says and does.</li> </ol> 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.
Oct 1972	Draft contract discussed (despite Miss Blackman thinking the price was too low ...). Clauses re access, fencing and planning permission added.

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Jan 1973	<p>Three letters from Lettice Ross, Secretary to Village Hall, to Petesfield Rural District Council containing information. Letter March 1973 informing that East Meon is on their recommended list for 1973/4 and that grant aid will be assessed when the monies realised from the sale of the present hall are taken into consideration.</p> <p>Letter of application, to Parish Council, followed by request for some more details and then by agreement to provide 12.5% of costs.</p> <p><i>n.b. inflation in 1973 running at 3% a month.</i></p>
Feb. 1973.	<p>Planners considering plans for three houses on old site instead of four. Rebuilding fund stood at £1092.6p.</p>
April 1973	<p>Letter to inform that East Meon has not been successful ... only 6 out of 18 applicant villages had received grants.</p>
May 1973.	<p>Grant Aid application would enable Committee to build the main part of the new hall without waiting for grant aid, to help counteract inflation. The building would be phased.</p> <p>Planners insist no windows on east side of hall. New plans to go to May planning meeting. An Open Meeting was planned to close the Old Hall, July 9<sup>th</sup>. Fete planned for May for fund raising.</p> <p>Fire Officer had reported that the old hall presented very considerable fire risks. Should be scrapped as soon as possible!</p> <p>Plans to be put out to tender by three building firms..</p> <p>Cost of acquiring the land now £3,600 in all. Miss Blackman to be asked to allow delay in payment until money available (bridging loan, loan from Charity Commissioners or mortgage).</p>
June 1973	<p>Letter from Lettice Ross to County Education Committee asking to receive application form for 1974/5. She informs that planning permission has been granted for three dwellings on site of Institute, vacant possession of Caretaker's Office has been obtained, Charity Commissioners' order for sale of site</p>

	<p>will be completed, planning permission for new village hall received on 8<sup>th</sup> June 'with conditions for landscaping and access'.</p> <p>Planners required detailed plans. Horticultural Society to suggest trees and shrubs.</p> <p>Village Hall Chairman (Herbie Goddard was also chair of the Parish Council) reported that PC could assist by making a direct grant. Amount to be decided. RDC would make a grant if the County Education Department did.</p> <p>Revised value for site of Institute now £20,000. Contract for new hall site now agreed with Miss Blackman, to be signed on September 14<sup>th</sup> with four weeks' payment terms. Rebuilding fund now £1,871.78.</p>
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July 1973	<p>Letter informing that 'the starting of your project without permission from the Authority without prejudice would disbar the project from being considered for grant aid'.</p> <p>Charity Commission. 4<sup>th</sup> July 1973, Scheme providing permission to proceed with sale of buildings specified in the schedule (i.e. Institute and Cottage). Cash flow projections included. (notes: Increase of cost of Stage I to about £44,000 due to inflation currently running at about 3% a month. Education grant 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of construction costs as at July 1973. Local Government grant ditto.)</p>
August 1973	<p>Letter from Lettice Ross to Mr Charles of CED, thanking him for 'coming to see us'. Mr Charles had informed that East Meon had not qualified for priority in 1973/4 because budget was inadequate and our ability to meet the commitment of building was doubted.</p> <p>Govt policy on hall grants expected to reduce from 50% grants to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> grant. 1/3<sup>rd</sup> raised, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> from minor authorities.</p> <p>No allowance would be made for inflation after July.</p> <p>Repeated that commencing building (or signing contract) would seriously disbar grant for Phase I and seriously affect application for Phase II. We would know in October.</p> <p>Total costs of Phase I now £30,240. Whole building £42,790.</p>
September 1973	<p>Reserve price of £18,000 not reached at auction of site, but Robert McKay Developments of Godalming offered this sum the next day. 'Great relief to have reached the reserve price in an uncertain market ...</p>

October 1973	<p>Purchase money had been received, £500 being made available for purchase of land. "Thus the completion of the purchase of 1 acre of land was now a fact and the Trustees were the proud owners thereof."</p> <p>Mr Charles had visited; no date was known when permission to build would be given, nor specification of grant aid before January 1974. Committee asked if they would be satisfied with a grant of approx £16,500.</p>
November 1973	<p>Tenders received ... Moulds now included, with lowest price £38,897 for whole, £33,064.00 for Phase I. Moulds to be invited.</p> <p>Mr Lynton White, as County Councillor, was approached for help. He had gained cooperation in approaching Dept of Ed and Science for their urgent decision on approval for EM to start building "without prejudice to their Grant Aid Application."</p> <p>Profit from Then and Now exhibition £134.56.</p>
December 1973	<p>Letter from Mr Charles giving permission for work to be started, but that this does not commit the DoE and HCC to provide a grant specifically for the project.</p>
	<p>Extraordinary meeting. Mr Lynton White had been coopted onto the Donations and Loans Committee. He had agreed to guarantee maximum sum of £22,000, free of interest. Mr Standfield suggested other potential guarantors be approached to reduce responsibility on LW.</p>
Jan 1974	<p>Chairman said that Parish Council had decided that 12.5% of grant should be set aside for new hall. If County Council grant was cut, PC could still make contribution.</p>
March 1974	<p>Extraordinary Meeting. Grant Aid from Hampshire County 'extremely precarious and then suspended'. Major Rigby of District Council and Major Rose of both District and County had been approached. EHDC might consider grant of £6,000 provided Parish Council gave £3,000.</p> <p>Parish Council had agreed to donate £3,000. Chairman and Mr Standfield had met Lynton White, and with his approval it had been decided to go ahead with both phases. Costs of cloakroom had been increased. Foundation stone to be laid in Mid-April. Dowager Countess Peel Trust to be approached. Accounts of old hall now closed.</p> <p>March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1974. Letter to Parish Council thanking for 'unanimous decision to grant £3,000 in grant aid ...</p>

April 1974	<p data-bbox="480 197 1289 302">EHDC will give grant, maximum £6,000, dependent on DES decision. Funds stand at £9,847.38p. Sponsored walk had raised £159.59.</p> <p data-bbox="480 336 1276 409">Letter to RDC thanking for promise of a grant within the maximum of £6,000, £3,000 in 1974/5, £3,000 in 1975/6.</p>
May 1974.	<p data-bbox="480 439 1329 808">V.W.Emery, Rural Officer, Hampshire Council of Community Service writes to Lettice Ross. 'I am very impressed with your fundraising record and should like to congratulate your Hon. Treasurer on the excellent manner in which the accounts are presented.' Had received note from national Council of Social Services ... cuts have been made in the total amount of money available'. 16<sup>th</sup> May. 'DES have now announced their programme for the above financial year ... £39,500 is a 50% grant, to be supported by local authorities. Asks for latest financial costing.</p> <p data-bbox="480 842 1353 1211">Letter to Emery on 19th setting out financial figures. Balance £13,211.21, Donations £24.60, Sponsored Walk £259.20, Dance 383.10d, total £13,955.67. Payments Building Costs £5,750, plus equipment &amp;c, total £5,809. Balance £8,146.46d. Up-to-date building costs – Fixed price contract with Moulds of £38,897, as at Dec 1973 when contract was signed. (Note that sub-contracting is not at a fixed price – 2.5% a month will be added for sub-contracting and materials ... estimated addition of £1,560. 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1973. Letter from F.G.Standfield to Lettice Ross setting out inflation estimated.</p> <p data-bbox="480 1245 1342 1496">Dowager Countess Peel Trust would place application before committee. DES grant aid for Hampshire £39,500 – HCCS asking for up-to-date information about building costs. Parish Council had paid cheque of £1,500. Spring fete had raised £557.63p. Treasurer reported that they might run out of funds in September; Mr Standfield to approach those who had offered loans?</p>
June 1974	<p data-bbox="480 1532 1294 1606">No news from Peel Trust or County Council. Building three weeks behind. £1,344.35p raised since Easter.</p> <p data-bbox="480 1639 1329 1744">June 1973, HCCS Newsletter lists East Meon Village Hall third in its list of approved schemes, at total cost £36,000. 'Only top three schemes can be grant-aided this year'</p> <p data-bbox="480 1778 1350 1883">District Council will be willing to grant half the amount provided by County Council, provided Parish Council will make a similar grant.</p> <p data-bbox="480 1917 1286 1946">Letter to Parish Council acknowledging cheque for £1,500.</p>

June 1974	<p>No news from Peel Trust or County Council. Building three weeks behind. £1,344.35p raised since Easter.</p> <p>June 1973, HCCS Newsletter lists East Meon Village Hall third in its list of approved schemes, at total cost £36,000. 'Only top three schemes can be grant-aided this year'</p> <p>District Council will be willing to grant half the amount provided by County Council, provided Parish Council will make a similar grant.</p> <p>Letter to Parish Council acknowledging cheque for £1,500.</p>
July 1974	<p>Peel Trust had sent cheque for £500. Letter from HCC informing that 'Although HCC have not felt able to make provision in their estimates ... they will offer grant on behalf of the Dept of Education and Science at twice that offered by your Local District and/or Parish Council'.,,, based on cost of £40,457, and balance sheet of £21,850, grant not to exceed £9,600. Conditions listed.</p> <p>Roofing about to start. New plan for stage two coming soon. Final contribution of Fete £628.26. Current a/c £92.03, deposit account £8,664.</p>
Sept 1974	<p>Following assurances from Parish and District Councils, and County Architect having declared that 40% of building work complete, DES had been informed and cheque for £2,048 had arrived. 'Meaningless figure' since it did not represent 40% of £9,600 grant!</p> <p>Building behind schedule – Moulds threatened with penalty clause. Mr Caesar of Moulds promised it would be on time.</p> <p>Liphook Young Conservatives had donated. £22,000 paid out to date, accounts totalled £4,194.86. If interim payment from DES came in time, no need to alert guarantors..</p> <p>Letter to DES thanking for cheque for £2,400. 'The Hall is now well on the way to completion ...'</p>
Oct 1974	<p>Glazing complete, electrician half-way through. External and heating works at a standstill, no plumbing to date and doors not in place. Letter to Moulds expressing dissatisfaction. 2½ weeks behind in first month!</p> <p>DES cheque had been received. Treasurer predicted deficit of £7,355 by end of January 1975, plus architect's fees. Overdraft could not be achieved without Charity Commissioners' approval. Guarantors would be approached.</p>

Nov 1974	<p>Current a/c £77, deposit £1,887. Payments from DES not until next financial year, only £600 due from EHDC. Final 50% Of District and Parish Councils not due until 1975/6. Decided to write protest letter to Mr Fryer of County Education Department.</p> <p>F.G.Standfield reported that seven other guarantors had agreed to shoulder Lynton White's load. Mr White was now providing £2,000 (Others: W.Douglas Home, Captain F.Tyrwhitt Drake, Mr M Tyrwhitt Drake, Mr A Gill, Mr &amp; Mrs Stan Smith, D.Ryder, Mr F.G.Standfield, Mr H Goddard.)</p>
Jan 1975	Jan 24 <sup>th</sup> 1975 Village Hall now open and running, but still in debt.
April 1975.	<p>C,E.D. to increase grant offer by £1,000. Architects' fees came to £700.</p> <p>Letter to Parish Council, thanking for cheque of £1,500.. "The committee cannot be grateful enough for the Parish Council's help and support ... has been their mainstay ..."</p>
June 1975	Final grant of £6,157 from DES. Fund-raising continued.
October 1975	A further £2,400 repaid to guarantors. Parish Council donated a further £500.
Jan 1976.	Final payments made to guarantors.