

The Long Journey to the New Beaconsfield Hall **or - A Dream Come True**

ON 24th AUGUST 1959 Mrs. Haynes, Chairman of the Parish Council, called a parish meeting and introduced Mr. Dudley Hopkins, Chairman of the Village Hall Management Committee. He outlined to a meeting of 67 parishioners the choice of undertaking extensive alterations to the Village Hall, namely building on a kitchen extension, adding a stage, closing in the balcony and adding new lavatories, all at a cost of £2,000.

Alternatively, he said it seemed possible that a new hall could be built on the Recreation Field for approximately £6,000. The meeting decided that the proposed plan to alter the existing hall should continue and only nine people voted in favour of further investigating the possibility of building a new hall.

At the Annual Parish Meeting in 1974 Mr Bob Barrett spoke of an approach that had been made to him as Chairman of two committees (Parish Hall and Recreation Field) with the offer of a pavilion. The donor had said he would cover the cost other than grants and his proposals had been put to the two committees which had supported it and asked for approval of the Parish Council. This scheme did not proceed for a variety of reasons.

In 1981, the Football Club offered to build changing rooms for its teams, but again this did not happen.

In 1986 the Parish Council drove around the village in a VW camper van on a tour of inspection. While in Meadow Lane the van stopped by the gateway to the Recreation Field and the Councillors discussed the possibility that one day a village hall could rise on the land between the tennis courts and the football pitch.

As the cost of upkeep of the existing village hall rose so the discussion became more realistic. The concept would have progressed much faster but for the totally unexpected and tragic death of Terry Souch, the Parish Council Chairman.

A new chairman has to tread carefully, and it wasn't until 1993 that various architects were approached, and Roger Tamplin was appointed. The fee structure to the architect was based on minimal costs for first drawings to enable the Parish Council to get only as far as planning permission, in case the scheme foundered as so many had before.

The Parish Council then circulated a comprehensive letter to every resident with an outline drawing and invitation to a public meeting.

At that stage the Parish Council had no idea whether a new village hall would receive acclaim or disapproval.

The response to the scheme was overwhelmingly in favour.

At a public meeting held on 30 November 1993, one hundred residents attended (with 23 apologies all expressing support for the proposed Hall). At the end of the meeting 92 voted in favour, six voted against with two abstentions.

It was decided to proceed, but very soon the Parish Council euphoria was punctured when the District Council said it would only give grants if the new Hall was built by an independent management committee and not by a Parish Council. It felt like giving one's baby away to foster parents.

As events turned out, how wise of the District Council. John Hartley became Chairman of the Management Committee and driving force, most ably abetted by Margaret. As a team they worked so hard, showed such leadership and inspired such loyalty that a group of volunteers emerged to sit on an ever increasing number of committees.

This was quite apart from the myriad of people who also helped. Hardly a person in Shipton has not contributed in some way. It is however important to mention just a few of those who also made outstanding contributions.

Shipton was amazingly fortunate that such skilled and dedicated people were available at just the right time. Frank Ware not only raised a phenomenal sum with the weekly draw but was also the Treasurer and negotiator with the Charity Commissioners.

Tom Jourdan chaired the Building Sub-committee and then became the Supervisor Supremo of the actual building, managing not only to keep on the builders' backs but to keep them on their toes at one and the same time. With two such valiant caretakers for these vital tasks, the rest of us could relax and concentrate on other matters.

Roger Tamplin, the Architect must be congratulated for his ingenuity and patience in dealing with so many diverse views and committees. But we must not forget Don and Rosemary Salter. They not only had the less glamorous job of keeping the old hall together during the last few years but Don was also responsible for producing all the newsletters for the new hall. (Don and Rosemary, don't you dare leave this bit out).

It is invidious to pick out just a few names but this is a short article not a book. When one of the first meetings was called in January 1994 nobody who was involved realised how much their lives would be changed with many thousands of hours spent at Coldstone Farm at meetings. The memorial to all those who contributed with money, time, or advice, is on the land between the tennis courts and the football pitch.

Now the New Beaconsfield Hall is built, the Chair of the Executive Committee responsible for the day to day running has been filled by the "fantastic" Gordon Halliday and, as they say, the rest is in the future.