

VILLAGE ECHOES

VILLAGE HALL REVISITED

Anybody who has used Goudhurst Village Hall recently would have been confronted by a dramatic series of photographs showing the serious problems now affecting the building. The Hall Committee have launched an appeal for funds to rectify these. The total to secure the roof first is around £200,000 with further work to be carried out as funds permit. ***Details to contribute are below.***

It is worth repeating some of the article we published in Village Echoes in March 2008 when we outlined the original appeal to build a Village Hall.



The Village Hall in 1953 decorated for the late Queen Elizabeth's Coronation

The first meeting was held in February 1902 to inform villagers about the proposal in general and that negotiations were underway to purchase a piece of land opposite The Plain on which to build the hall. Architects' plans had also been produced by a Mr Lucas and a model prepared by a local man Mr A Barry, which were on display. The estimated building cost at that time was £1,100. At the second meeting, in September the same year, subscribers were informed that the original negotiation for the desired plot of land had fallen through but that General Alfred FitzHugh, who lived at Grove Place, had generously offered a plot of land, which could be purchased for the sum of £25. This duly happened and Davis and Leaney, the local building firm, were given the contract to build the Parish Hall (to give it its correct name).

By 1st August 1903 subscribers had contributed just over £1,195 to the general building fund whilst a further £181 had been donated to a separate "Billiard Bay" fund. Other money had been promised towards the expenses of the "Reading Rooms" in the first year (£75) and a separate "Ladies Reading

Room” if sufficient funds could be obtained – at this date only £12.12s had been donated for this purpose, with no contributions from men.

Unfortunately for the fund raisers, an account of the finances dated 3rd September 1903, shows that the building costs were more than the £1,195 and eventually escalated to around £3,000. More funds were raised, including from Chairman of the Trustees Sir Charles Jessel who had offered a guarantee on the Bank for £500 and to supply the billiard table and necessary accessories. The Hall was opened later that year from when it has been in constant use from a huge variety of local groups and gatherings.

A newspaper cutting from August 2003, at the time of its centenary, lists many appeals over the years for improvements and general maintenance. This could be expected from any building of this age but especially one that was listed in 1989 as being Grade II for being of special architectural or historic interest.

For the record, the ladies did not actually get a separate Reading Room but according to the byelaws of the “Goudhurst Hall and Reading Rooms Association”, they were allowed the use of the Hall on Fridays from 2.30 pm onwards despite the fact that hall was open to members from 10 am until 10pm daily.

To make a donation , visit their Crowdfunder website page:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/goudhurst-village-hall-1193584> or contact the Treasurer gph treasurer@outlook.com (07518 894,915)

Goudhurst & Kilndown Local History Society