

Grayshott Village Hall & Institute

During the early years, meetings and social gatherings took place in the Iron Room, a gift from Miss James in 1889, which was situated in Stoney Bottom and the school room, but as the population of Grayshott increased it became apparent that these venues were inadequate for the purpose. It was therefore proposed that the village should have a Village Hall and in June 1900 an announcement was made in the Parish Magazine that an offer of £500 had been received on the condition that a suitable site was acquired and the balance of the required funds, estimated to be in the region of £2000, raised.

A meeting was held on July 18th 1900 to discuss plans for the establishment of a Village Hall and Club Room for Grayshott and its neighbourhood. It was originally planned to hold the meeting in the Iron Room but, due to the intense heat of the day, it was adjourned to "*a shady glade in the fir woods of Mrs Anderson Wells*". The meeting was attended by in excess of thirty people. Mr Marshall Bulley took the Chair and explained the scope of the proposal--*to combine a good hall, for lectures and public entertainment, with a club room, reading room, billiard rooms etc.* and Trustees and a working Committee were appointed. The Trustees were Mr Samuel Marshall Bulley, of Westdown, Hindhead, Mr John Macmillan, of Bramshott Chase (who was to become Bishop of Guildford), Mr Alexander Ingham Whitaker, of Grayshott Hall and Mr Aneurin Williams, of Wheelside, Hindhead, plus representatives from Hampshire County Council. An appeal for donations was made and by September a further £143.8s had been raised in addition to the initial £500.

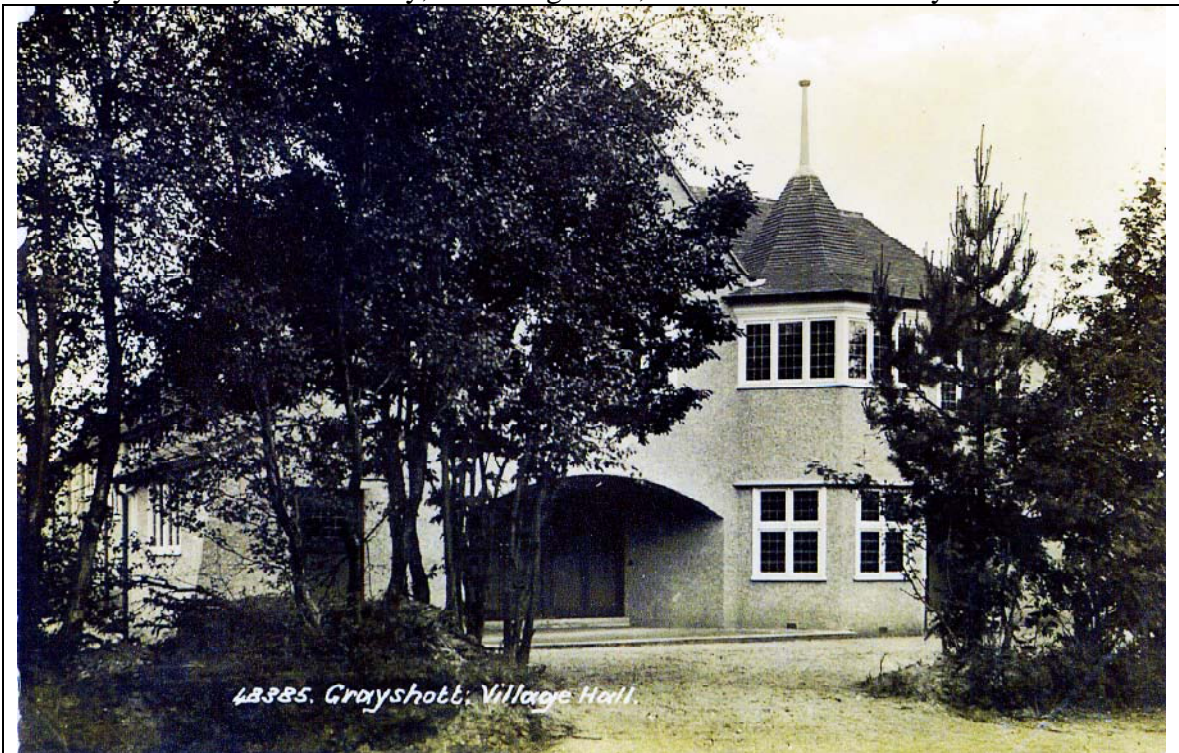
A Trust Deed dated 14th February 1901 was prepared providing that the Institute was "*for material improvement social intercourse and amusement mental and moral culture literary pursuits and physical training and for such general public or philanthropic objects as the Trustee may from time to time approve*" it went on to say "*no person to be excluded on the grounds of class, party, sex or creed*". A restrictive covenant included in the land conveyance stated that that "*no public house, beer shop or tavern may be erected, nor any band practice take place on the premises*". At this time, Grayshott was not a separate parish and the terms of the Trust Deed stated that the hall was for the use of the inhabitants of the Parishes of Headley, Bramshott, Shottermill, Frensham and Thursley "*as can reasonably be construed as being in the neighbourhood of the district called Hindhead and its immediate neighbourhood*". It was therefore announced that the hall was to be known as "The Grayshott and Hindhead Institute and Village Hall". A letter was prepared by the Committee giving full details of the overall proposal for the project and distributed throughout the area. It was also stated at this time that some £800 had now been received overall, in addition to the gift of the land, but that the latest estimated cost of the project had now risen to £3500.

In January 1901, it was announced that a conveyance of land given by Mrs Plimpton-Smith in memory of her brother Dr. Felix Plimpton, had been completed and a further area of land for the project had been purchased from Mrs Plimpton-Smith for £100. A Conveyance dated 14th February 1901 conveys a piece of land, situated on the corner of Boundary Road and Headley Road, from Mrs Constance Eliza Smith--widow, to the

Trustees of the Village Hall and Institute. An Indenture dated 20th January 1903 records the purchase of the said land, at a cost of £592. (This land had originally been the subject of a conveyance from H.J. Blake to a C.D. Alexander on 1st June 1883 and from Laura Somers to John Allen on 20th August 1890).

By the autumn of 1901, work had commenced on the laying of the foundations on the site although the funding was not yet fully in place. A letter from Mr Marshall Bulley was published in the Parish Magazine stating that the Committee *“were seeking to secure a large list of small donations from the readers. Mrs Lyndon, Treasurer, would receive the donations direct on behalf of the Committee, alternatively, it is suggested that in November, small amounts of monies could also be given to the ladies who distributed the Magazine and they would pass them on to the Treasurer”*. As a result, numerous donations were received in amounts from 6d to £15 with additional funds being received as a result of fund raising events.

By May 1902, the current Village Hall, excluding the Library building, a later addition in 1906, designed by architects Read & MacDonald and built by local builders Chapman, Lowry and Puttick, whose tender for the work was £3430, was complete. A notice was published in the Parish Magazine that there was to be an official opening ceremony in the evening of Thursday 23rd May 1902 and it was planned for there to be entertainment by the Grayshott Dramatic Society, the String Band, and the Choral Society.

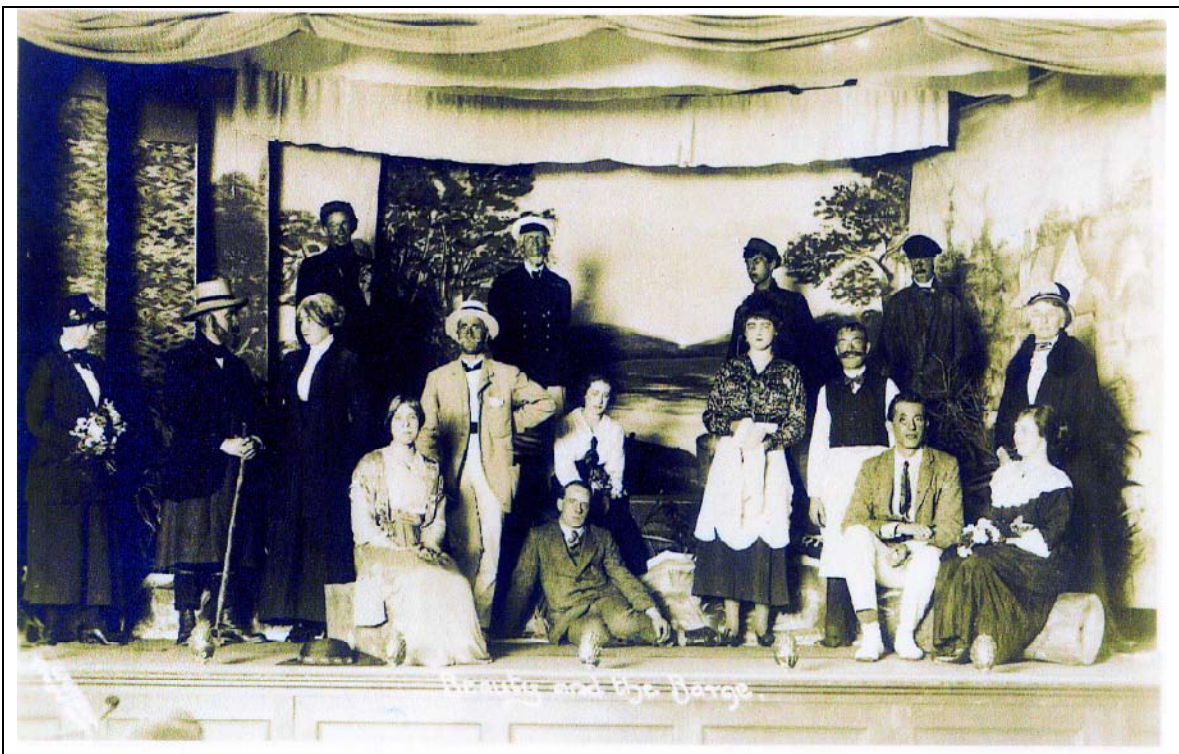


1902. Grayshott Village Hall.

The Grayshott and Hindhead Institute and Village Hall C.1902

The Hall, often known as the Institute, was soon put to good use. A public meeting was held in early June to consider a “memorial of peace” following the end of the Boer War, an entertaining evening put on by children to a packed Hall on 13th June and the village

Flower Show held on 23rd July. In September 1902 an announcement was made to the effect that the autumn and winter Technical classes would be held in the Technical Room of the Village Hall, subjects to be included were Woodcarving at a fee of two shillings for twenty-four lessons, Horticulture at a fee of one shilling for five or six lessons and Nursing for Women. In October it was announced that the Village Hall Men's Club would commence with thirty-nine members. By this time, plans were in place to use the Institute for Technical classes, Gymnasium classes, Musical drill, Choral Society, Orchestral Society and various Lectures. In November the Hall was full to overflowing when a party from Miss Weston's "Sailors Rest," Portsmouth, presented an evening with "*The Bluejackets in the Fo'cle*", with total ticket sales amounting to £17. With all this activity the Institute soon became the centre for many organisations of the village, as well as the offices of the recently formed Parish Council.



Performance of *Beauty and the Barge* ?Grayshott Dramatic Society c.1920s

A Committee had been formed to organise the village celebrations to mark the coronation of Edward VII on 26th June 1902. At the final meeting of the Committee held in the Iron Room on 11th July, it was agreed to donate a sum of money from the closing excess of funds to buy a clock for the Lecture Room of the new Village Hall.

In February 1903 a Library was opened in the main building with 600 books, opening times being on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings. Books were free to annual subscribers and at a charge of one penny per volume to all others. The Parish Magazine of December 1903 listed many of the books available from the library at the time and by 1907 it is recorded that the library, run by Mrs Marshall Bulley, contained some 1100 books.

Many well attended lectures on a wide range of subjects were held in the Hall, given by both local people and guest speakers from further afield, such as Apsley Cherry-Garrard who was a member of Scott's team on the fateful South Pole expedition of 1912. He gave a lecture in the Hall on 5th February 1914. Many of these lectures were illustrated with the use of a borrowed limelight lantern or oil lantern. In January 1904, it was suggested that an electric lantern be purchased for the Hall at an estimated cost of £30-£40 including a screen. The first lecture using the new lantern was on 7th October 1904.

It is not clear where the bulk of the money came from to build the Hall but once it was completed, it was the intention that all ongoing costs be financed by receipts from lettings. The accounts for the year to 31st August 1904 showed a total income of £141.8s.3d. equivalent today to some £12300 (today the current figure is in the region of £38,000). Receipts for 1903/4 included:-

Men's Club £40, Concerts & Entertainments £31.2s.9d, Schools £ 27.12s, Technical Room £10.5s and income from Village Dances, Dramatic, Orchestral & Choral Societies, Society of Artists and the Library £6.

Expenditure for 1903/4 amounted to £132.2s.7d including:-

Wages £39.4s.6d., Coals £27.3s.3d, Electric Light £45.0s.8d. and Repairs £8.3s.1d. By the end of August 1905, income from the Library alone amounted to £59.8s.10d against expenditure of £56.5s.5d on books, magazines and shelving.

In November 1905, the Chairman of the Trustees, Mr Marshall Bulley, included a short report with the Accounts. In it he stated that the Institute was "*in fair working order and it is very seldom that the hall is not used for one purpose or another, and it is not infrequent for every room in the building to be occupied on the same night*". He went on to mention the numerous village organisations which had used the hall and that it had now reached the stage of being self supporting and for the first time it had been possible to lay a small balance aside. He completed his Report stating that "*the work carried on favourably affects the welfare and happiness of the village which is the end and object held in view*".

By the spring of 1906, the usage of the Institute was at such a high level that consideration was given to the building of a small hall on the side of the existing building. It was estimated that the cost for this would be in the region of £500. Mr and Mrs Marshall Bulley offered £400 on the condition that the remaining £100 be raised by the community and this was quickly achieved, with a total sum of £137. 8s 0d. being received. Mr Falconer MacDonald was appointed Architect and Chapman Lowry & Puttick were again appointed builders. The work began in July on what was to become known as the Small Hall, later to become the existing Library building.

In April 1907, the Trustees wrote to Grayshott Parish Council proposing that ownership of the Institute, including the library of some 1100 books, be passed over to the Parish

providing the Council continued to run it on the terms of the existing Trust Deed. At this time the land, buildings, furniture and fittings were valued at £5531. This offer was unanimously accepted at a Council meeting on 3rd May and at the Annual Parish Meeting on 14th May. The Conveyance was signed on 20th August 1907 and a Management Committee was appointed consisting of the then Parish Councillors, together with a representative each from the Higher Education Committee, the Entertainment Committee, The Friendly Society and two members of the Village Hall Men's Club. Mr Alexander Ingham Whitaker was elected Chairman and Miss Dora Hetch was appointed Secretary.

The Trustees held the first "Annual Meeting" on 26th September 1907 at which it was confirmed a bank account had been established with the Capital & Counties Bank, Haslemere. The Parish Council Meeting on 15th October 1907 recorded that the Recreation Committee had passed over the ownership of the Lantern and gymnasium apparatus and other equipment to the Hall. It was also confirmed that the Institute was insured with Lloyds at the rate of 2s.6d. per cent with buildings insured for £4500 and Furniture & Fittings, including the caretakers furniture, at £500.

At the Annual Parish Meeting on 17th March 1908, the Chairman, Mr Whitaker confirmed that the assets had been duly transferred free from all costs and that the aim was to continue to let the halls out at as low rent as possible. The scale of charges for use of the Hall was 2s.6d. for evening meetings of Societies and Committees and 1s 6d. for afternoon meetings-"with fire". The price for private village dances was one and a half guineas. It was further agreed "*that smoking be allowed occasionally in the halls, special permission to be given by the Secretary*". In the year ending 31st August 1908, income from rental of the halls and equipment amounted to £176.12s.7d. against an overall expenditure of £175. 4s.3d.

Fire Service

In 1908, Mr Whitaker reported that "*a suitable Fire Station*" had been erected on the property. It was also agreed that one fireman in uniform should be admitted free of charge to any public entertainment held at the Institute. The Grayshott & Hindhead Fire Brigade, now the Grayshott Fire Brigade, had been formed in 1906 and the wooden station building was erected on the frontage of Headley Road, in front of the Small Hall. A small extension was added to the east of this building in 1929. In 1960, the area used by the Bowling Club was sold for £950 to the Hampshire Fire Brigade in order for a new station to be built to replace the existing wooden building. In January 1971, an additional small area of land behind the Fire Station was sold to the Fire Service for £150.

Tennis Courts-Bowling Green

A large area of lawn bordered Boundary Road when the property was initially developed and this was later used as tennis courts. In April 1908, the Committee agreed hire charges of 3d per person per hour and 3d for racket hire. The Grayshott Tennis Club was officially formed in November 1911. A second tennis court was added in 1912 and the

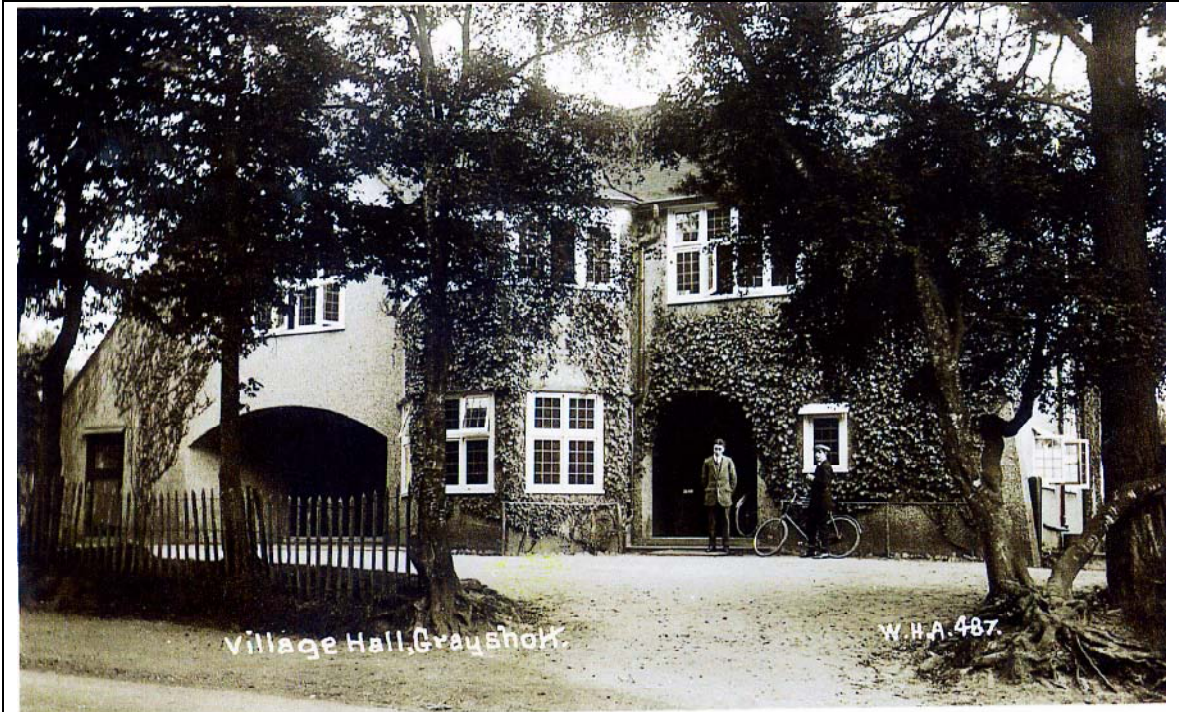
courts were enclosed with a 5ft high wire netting fence. By 1923, it was agreed that a new site be sought where hard courts could be built. Initially it was proposed to use part of Phillips Green for four hard courts, subject to Parish Council permission, but this proposal was dropped and new courts built on the present site by the recreation ground. In 1925, it was agreed to cease use of the courts on the Village Hall site and in 1926 the courts were converted to a bowling green for hire by the Bowling Club at the rate of £5 p.a. for five years. The Club continued to be based here until the site was sold in 1960, as mentioned above.

Commemorative Tablets

At a meeting of the Trustees in January 1910, it was recorded that a letter had been received from Mrs Marshall Bulley in which she suggested the placing of commemorative tablets in the large Hall. The proposal was agreed by the Trustees and the first such tablet, to an approved design, was erected in memory of Mr Samuel Marshall Bulley. In 1957, the tablets were removed from the Hall and refurbished before being re-hung in their present site in the vestibule. Today, there are seventeen such tablets including those in memory of Miss Catherine I'Anson, Miss James, Rev. James Jeakes, Dr. Charles Lyndon and Mr Alexander Ingham Whitaker.

In January 1911, Dr Lyndon wrote to the Council offering to provide and erect a wooden room, with corrugated roof on a brick foundation to the rear of the premises to be used as a storeroom. The offer was duly accepted and the building completed.

In March 1912, the Men's Club applied for permission to sell beer on the premises. In the original conveyance of the land, a covenant provided that no alcoholic sales were permitted up until 14th January 1911 and only after such date with permission of the Trustees. A resolution of the Parish Council duly granted permission provided that it was only consumed within the Clubroom. The Management Committee set the rules to state *"that not more than two pints be supplied to any one member during one evening and that no beer be sold before 6pm and after 10pm"*, later amended to include *"before 1pm on Saturdays"*. Also *"that no beer be sold to members under the age of eighteen and that no beer be taken out of the Club Room"*.



Grayshott and Hindhead Institute and Village Hall c.1911/1914

Billeting of Troops

At the Parish Council meeting of 20th October 1914, mention was made of the possible billeting of troops in the Institute and use of the Institute as a Recreation Room for the soldiers of the proposed Bramshott Camp. It was agreed that Mr. Wray make the best possible arrangement with the authorities. The 7th King's Royal Rifles Brigade, succeeded by the 8th Battalion Rifle Brigade, moved into the Hall on 12th November 1914. In the event only the large hall and the library were used for actual billeting. At the Parish Meeting of 19th January 1915, Mr Wray reported to the council that all parts of the Institute with the exception of the caretakers accommodation had been let at the rate of 9d. per head per night and that £197 had been received in the first nine weeks. Tents had been erected on the tennis courts and it was confirmed that compensation would be sought for any damage caused. The troops finally vacated the premises on 9th April 1915 by which time a total of £444.8s.3d. rental had been received. The use of the hall as a Recreation Room had lasted for only five days prior to the troops moving in, but continued once again after they left. In June 1917, it was agreed that the troops be given permission to use the tennis courts.

In April 1928, the Management Committee requested that the Parish Council hold the Securities in the Trust as an Endowment Fund, the dividends of which were to be paid to the Committee's account as part of its annual income. These Securities comprised of £400 of five percent Debenture Stock of Haslemere & District Gas Company and £20 five & three-quarters percent West Australian Stock. A Resolution to this effect was passed at the Parish Council Meeting on 17th April 1928.

Change of Name

At a meeting of the Management Committee on 11th December 1936, it was agreed that the present name of the Grayshott & Hindhead Institute and Village Hall was both cumbersome and misleading, particularly since Hindhead had had its own Village Hall for some years. It was therefore agreed to change the name to The Grayshott Village Hall. A request was sent to the Parish Council and a Resolution passed by the Council to amend the name. Such request being accepted, a Resolution was passed to this effect at a Parish Council Meeting on 12th January 1937.

Library

It was decided in December 1939 to close the Library and the Committee placed on record its appreciation of the service rendered by Mrs Marshall Bulley, to the village of Grayshott during the many years she so unselfishly and efficiently, carried on the Library. The Minutes also recorded that the Committee was "*fully aware that her decision to close the library was entirely due to the fact that, during the last year or two, in the changing world, the library was used by very few of those for whose use it was founded*". In May 1954, the Hampshire County Library confirmed that they would open a library in the hall, at a rental of £13 per annum, for one hour per week. This arrangement appears to have continued for a number of years until notice was given by the County in 1965 confirming that a mobile library would take over the library duties for the village. In 1972, the situation of raising additional funds for the operation of the Hall was helped by the letting, on an initial 7 year lease at £400 per annum, of the Small Hall to the Hampshire County Library, which also resulted in the added benefit to the village of a permanent library being established.

In 1943, the Committee agreed that the Small Hall should be made available, during the winter months, to the Home Guard for Drill practice. The Small Hall was also made available to members of H.M. Forces as a Reading and Writing room.

Grayshott School

Following the second world war, somewhere around 1946/7, a tenancy was taken by the Education Authorities for the Technical Room to be used as an overflow for pupils from Grayshott school. This was intended to be a temporary arrangement but continued for many years. It was not until May 1962 that the Management Committee took the decision to serve notice of termination of the arrangement to the Authority. Originally it was intended for the school to vacate at the end of summer term of that year, the reasons being given that the cloakrooms were in a shocking state, urgent needs of floor repair and danger to the children resulting from the building work for the new Firestation, the adjacent car parking area being the only play area for the children. In the event, the school vacated the premises in May 1963.

In October 1963, St Luke's Parochial Church Council, seeking a suitable venue for a Church Room, took an annual tenancy of the Technical Room at the rate of £70 per annum. They continued the tenancy until January 1968 after which, the Management Committee changed the name of the room to the Common Room.

A reference in the Minutes of the Management Committee of December 1951 refers to old papers recently found in the attic. These included "old music scores" which were sent to Churchers College, Petersfield and it was agreed that the other papers could be sent for salvage. Reference was also made to pictures donated by Mrs Ashley-Clark which, it was confirmed were in safe custody. There is no description as to what the pictures were.

For a number of years, the Management Committee was always hard put to make ends meet, mainly due to the high maintenance costs of the property although the financial problems were alleviated to some degree by the receipt of grants. The problems were also helped by an increase in income from improved lettings, which had been achieved by the formation of a Social Committee. In January 1957, it had been reported that, based on the prior three to four years, an additional £200-£250 was required per annum to meet ongoing costs. A meeting was therefore held between the Management and Social committees and representatives of local organisations. Consideration was given to leasing the Small Hall to the Fire Service on a full repairing lease for five years at £250 p.a. However, by this time the Hampshire Fire Service were indicating that they were not prepared to continue the Grayshott Fire Service without new premises and equipment. This eventually resulted in the Parish Council entering into negotiations with the Service for the sale of land as noted above. The conveyance of this land was completed in 1960, the sale proceeds being invested for the benefit of the Hall.

In December 1962, an application was made for the Village Hall to be registered as a Charity under the Charities Act of 1962 and the registration was formalised in April 1963.

In October 1967, the Management Committee was restructured in order to meet the statutory requirements of the Department of Education and the County Council which stated that a minimum of six representatives from local organisations which used the hall should serve on the committee. Meeting these requirements enabled the Committee to obtain grants to install central heating.

On the 30th September 1971, the Men's Club was formally wound up and what is now the Small Hall and the Reading Room, now part of the kitchens, were vacated. It was estimated that this would result in a minimum loss of £150 pa. It was reported in October 1972 that alterations to the Men's Club and Reading rooms were complete and that the present Small Hall and the new kitchens were fully operational.

In July 1980, Mrs Nancy Littlejohn and Mr F. Len H. Harris both retired from the Committee. Mr Harris had served on the committee for some forty-three years, having joined in 1937, ten of which were as Chairman. Mrs Littlejohn had served for twenty-five years, twenty-two as Chairman. A farewell party was held to mark the occasion, attended by members of the Management Committee, Parish Councillors and representatives of local organisations. A cheque and an inscribed tray depicting village activities associated with the village hall, were presented to each in recognition of their long service. The Parish Council office is now named the Nancy Littlejohn Room.

In early 2000, a Friends of Grayshott Village Hall scheme was established to raise money for the specific purpose of keeping the Hall in good decorative order. This on-going scheme has proved to be a success and is now made up of both individual and corporate members.

Centenary



On 23rd May 2002, a commemorative plaque on the front of the Hall was unveiled by Maj. Jeremy Whitaker to mark the centenary of the opening of the Village Hall in 1902.

In September an “Evening of Entertainment” to celebrate the centenary was held, at which the Grayshott Stagers and the Grayshott School provided entertainment.

In April 2002, the Grayshott Village Archive was formed to mark the centenary of both the Village Hall and the Parish Council and

Much hard and unselfish work by the various Management Committees, which have served over so many years, has gone into the running of the Village Hall to ensure it is fully maintained, meets current legislative requirements and achieves high utilisation. Today, the Grayshott Village Hall, under the watchful eye of the current Management Committee, continues to operate as a centre for many village activities, as was first envisaged at the beginning of the last century and explained by Mr Marshall Bulley to those who attended the public meeting on that hot summers day of 18th July 1900.

*Brian Tapp
Grayshott Village Archive*

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*Grayshott Village Hall web-site:
www.grayshottvillagehall.co.uk*