

A HUNDRED YEARS WITH A VILLAGE HALL

Before 1924, village events such as concerts, talks and meetings usually took place in 'the schoolroom'.

For example, the local paper reported in December 1891 that the first of 'the usual series of concerts in the schoolroom' had occurred. In March 1892 the first lesson in 'a school of cookery' was given there. In November 1893 a 'ventriloquial entertainment' was held. In January 1903 there was a dance in the schoolroom with 'about 50 present'. Later that month there was a series of lectures on agricultural topics. A 'temperance meeting' was held in November 1904 (the Rector was a keen supporter of temperance). A similar range of events continued, including a 'patriotic entertainment' in December 1914. In May 1923 there was a whist drive and dance in the schoolroom, though the paper records fewer events there in the 1920s.

Then in February 1924 we learn that the new Village Hall has been completed and is ready for use. The land next to the Bell Inn was owned by the Cox family, who agreed to let the village build a hall there and pay just a 'peppercorn' rent of £1 a year. There was an official opening later that month and the cost of the hall was said to be about £235. The photo below shows the wooden building, though this view dates from the early 1990s.



All the events were held in the new hall from then on, the first recorded in the paper being a 'Children's treat' in early March. Dances were a regular feature. Photographic evidence of this wooden building in the early years is sparse, but there are one or two examples, shown below.

There was a period during the early 1930s when amateur dramatic performances were happening very frequently – sometimes three on successive months. This photo shows a play called 'The Jacobite'. The small stage does not seem to have presented too much of a problem. The second photo is of a Pierrot Show from 1931.



The plays did not continue after the mid-30s but all the other events meetings carried on in the hall – dances, whist drives (many of them at this period), meetings of the newly-formed W.I., as well as the Annual Parish Meeting. These events continued through the war. In October 1944 there was a Home Guard supper in the hall. Many events raised funds for wartime good causes. The German band from the nearby prisoner-of-war camp sometimes came to play for dances in 1946 and 1947.

For the first decades of the hall, photos of the interior are hard to come by, apart from the ones of a performance on stage. However, as time moved on, more people had cameras and so there are some from the later period which give an idea. The photo below is from 1952 and shows the hall splendidly laid out for a very big birthday party meal.



The interior can be seen more clearly in this photo of the children's party for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977.

In the 1980s and early 1990s regular Christmas entertainments made good use of the stage.



This sketch was part of the 1986 Christmas Revue. Another village enterprise that used the village hall was Age Concern. Meals and outings were arranged for older residents of Farndon and surrounding villages for over 25 years.

In 1992 the clock on the front of the hall was stolen.



Clock watchers

THIEVES have wrenched an historic clock from a village hall wall.

The two foot wide clock was stolen from East Farndon over the weekend. Police believe the thieves used a ladder to reach it.



The facilities for preparing and serving refreshments and cleaning up afterwards, seen here with volunteer helpers at a social event, gradually came to be seen as not fully up to modern standards. Also, if the hall was to be hired by outside organisations, always a useful source of income, a more attractive and up-to-date venue was needed. The Cox family were no longer in the village and the land on which the hall stood was now owned by the Cox Trustees. The village then began a very considerable fund-raising campaign, first, to buy the hall and land outright and then to build a new hall. All this was successfully achieved and the new hall was opened in 1994.

Hall is bought
JUBILANT East Farndon residents are celebrating after raising cash to buy their village hall and its site.
Now they are to embark on a series of money-spinning events to erect a new replacement building.



The old hall being demolished in 1993.

Farndon's new hall opened in 1994 and has been used intensively ever since, both by the village and by outside organisations.



The new hall, photographed in 2003. Below are two photos of events from the first few years of its existence.



Here the helpers involved in Age Concern receive awards for 25 years of commitment to the charity (now Age UK).

Below is a photo from an exhibition in 2001, arranged by the Parish Council, to stimulate interest in the Council's work and the village's future.



In 2014, Harborough fm used the hall to record a programme about the village, interviewing a number of its inhabitants.

Below is a photo of an exhibition in 2018 commemorating the centenary of the end of the first world war.



This was the scene in the hall for a Coronation lunch in May 2023.

The hall continues to play an indispensable role in village life.

Alan Langley
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