



The Birchall Memorial Institute

1898 -1998



1. Introduction

The influence of the Birchall family on the village of Upton St Leonards during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of this century was considerable. Aspects of the life of John Dearman Birchall have been recorded in the "Diary of a Victorian Squire" and make fascinating reading.

The village itself has been the subject of historical studies by local people, and the Cricket Club celebrated its 75th Anniversary with an attractively produced history of the Club.

Nowhere, however, as far as I am aware, has any attempt been made to trace the history of the Birchall Memorial Institute from its inauguration in 1898. Yet this is an institution which for a century has been a focal point of much of the social life of the village, with a possibly unique family connection linking the Birchall family from its creation to this, its centenary year.

This short history is an attempt to rectify this omission. It is based on the Club's own records, which are, sadly, incomplete for certain years, those of the Birchall family (which were kindly made available to me), contemporary press reports, interviews with some long-serving members past and present and with Peter Birchall, and my own experiences derived from an association with the Institute over a third of a century.

Not surprisingly, many features of social and economic life in the village, as in the country as a whole, have changed since 1898, but there is a

continuous thread in the way in which the club has functioned over the years, and its relevance to everyday life is as strong now as in its formative years.



2. Origins

The Birchall family, with John Dearman's son Jack at its head, decided to build a village Institute as a memorial to John Dearman Birchall, who was born in Leeds in 1829, came to live at Bowden Hall in 1868, and died there in 1897.

On September 28th 1898 an inaugural meeting of parishioners was held in the village school, attended by 72 persons, and chaired by the Rector, the Rev. Canon Scobell. The proceedings were recorded at some length in the Gloucester Journal and because they throw light on the thoughts and attitudes of people in public life at the time are worth quoting in full:

"On Wednesday last September 25th a meeting of the Parishioners was held to inaugurate "The Birchall Institute", a large ornamental building intended for use as a Club House for the Civil Parish of Upton St Leonards and Prinknash. It combines a large assembly room, a reading room and a Custodian's Residence and is built by the family of the late J. Dearman Birchall as a memorial to their Father. The proceedings aroused much interest and the large schoolroom was well filled. By the request of the Committee the chair was taken by the Rector, Reverend Canon Scobell.

In his opening remarks Mr. Scobell said that the first and all-important part of Parochial life, was religious life. Without a true appreciation of this higher blessing all other works must fail, but there was another part of work which was of great value and that might be described as social.

It was to inaugurate a centre of social work that they came together that evening and to accept a munificent gift from the hands of the donors.

The Parish was to be congratulated on having a young squire who had the best interests of the Parish at heart. He added that the success and high toned elevating work of which this Institute was capable would depend on the people for whom it was built and especially on the Committee whom they had elected. It lay in their power by attention and attendance to promote the welfare and usefulness of the Institution.

The Hon. Secretary, Mr. Huggins, then read the rules from which it was seen that one great object of the Institute was a desire for the general improvement in the tone and happiness of the Parish by bringing all

classes together in friendly intercourse. Light refreshment and mineral waters with a limited supply of alcoholic drinks would be sold to the members. The Institute would be entirely closed on Sundays.

Mr. Job Morris, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, said that in framing the rules, the donor had left all details in the hands of the Committee, and that they were made on a broad basis, so as to admit of future development. He felt that although some danger might attend the admission of stimulants, if reasonably used would make for temperance.

Mr. Birchall described at length his motive and intention in giving the use of the Institute to the Parish. He desired to see all there on friendly and equal terms, he hoped that there might be many developments for good, and that all classes might reap the benefit. He thanked the Builder, Mr. Tombs, for the very satisfactory way he had carried out the work from the designs of Messrs. Waller and Son, Architects, and was glad it was done in the Parish. He then on behalf of the family offered "The Birchall Institute" as a memorial to his Father, to the Committee for the use of the Parish.

On the proposition of Mr. W. Smith, seconded by Mr. James Mills, the sincerest thanks of the parish were offered to the family of the late Mr. Birchall for their noble gift."

From diary entries of Jack Birchall it is clear that the questions of Sunday opening and the sale of liquor had been the subject of correspondence between the Rev. Scobell and himself and although Sunday opening was excluded and so incorporated in the Rules (this not to be changed until 1992), the sale of alcohol was permitted from the outset, not without misgivings being expressed from time to time. Another diary entry comments, "the meeting for inauguration of the Institute which was not quite finished was a great success. People most enthusiastic, Mr. Edwards and Neil very kindly came down and he spoke most flatteringly and undeservedly. Canon Scobell was in his happiest vein and put the serious side splendidly. Spoke at some length - with only moderate success - I am sick of explaining - Reynolds gave an excellent performance afterwards in which Reynolds, G. Hopkins, H. Newman and V Curey were conspicuous".

3. The Committee

From the outset the running of the Club was placed in the hands of a democratically elected Committee whose first meeting was held on October 1st 1898. The number of committee members and the method of elections and the duties and powers of the Management Committee have remained substantially the same up to the present day.

The names of the first committee members were:

- J. Dearman Birchall Chairman
- Job Morris Vice Chairman
- Henry Huggins Hon. Secretary

- William Keen
- Edmund Morris
- William Smith
- James Mills
- Henry Sconard
- Charles Harris
- Daniel Miles
- Richard Miles
- Job Gardner

The first Custodians appointed were:

Samuel Nicholls

Maria Nicholls

The opening date of October 24th was settled and the time 7.00 p.m., and a smoking concert arranged (one of many to follow in the ensuing years).

An offer of a course of Poultry lectures by the County Council from February 1899 was accepted (a small charge to be made for attendance).

The Institute was also to be made the headquarters of Upton Cricket Club and accepted an offer of a photograph from Upton CC of its members. Sporting activities of many kinds were to be a feature of the Club from its beginnings and although some, such as rifle shooting, have gone for good, there are continuous links with others through to the present day.

4. Opening Night

Members took possession of the Institute on October 24th 1898. There was a large attendance (about 72) at which in the unavoidable absence of the Birchall family, Mr. Job Morris, as Vice Chairman of the new Committee, presided.

The health of the donor was proposed and responded to in "a right hearty manner". Various other votes of thanks were passed, after which the evening was taken up with songs accompanied on the piano by Mr. W Apperley. The singing of the National Anthem brought the evening to a close. A report of the proceedings concluded by saying that the members separated feeling grateful to the donors for their noble gift. The donors had not only given the Institute but had also handsomely furnished it and supplied various games, and not unmindful of the intellectual improvement of members, had also given a well stocked library for their use.

5. Rules

It is not clear precisely when the first Rules were adopted but a framed copy now hung in the Club Snooker Room may well be the first to be

adopted. A printed edition, dated December 18th 1902, is much fuller and shows the Club registration under the Friendly Societies Act of 1896.

Since then there have been amendments from time to time, mainly of a minor nature but with a major revision in 1990 partly to take into account current administrative and legal requirements.

The first of the Rules stated the objects of the Institute as follows:

"To afford to its members the means of social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, mental, moral and physical improvement and the creation of a healthy tone amongst the members".

This was slightly amended to read "the means of social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, mental and moral improvement and rational recreation".

Despite all the social changes over the years it was felt in 1990 that these objects were still relevant to the life of the Club and thus remain as defined in 1902.

One rule which has changed, however, and is probably the best known to older members is one which limited the amount of alcohol to be served to members: two pints of beer or cider, or two glasses of spirits in anyone evening. One suspects that this rule was honoured in the breach as much as in its observance, especially when scrutinising consumption figures (always detailed in early Annual Reports) which sometimes showed a drop in membership but an increase in the sale of intoxicants.

Throughout the early, formative years of the Institute, emphasis was continually placed on the importance of religion, moral welfare, education, social activities and patriotism and, in the context of the period, equality.

These typical Victorian ethics have, in some instances at least, fallen out of favour and are not thought relevant today, but there was a sincere and often stated belief in the founders of the Club to improve the lives of all members of the village community through social intercourse and education. Although there was a degree of paternalism, typical of the era, in this, the Club was expected to run its affairs through a democratically elected Committee on a self-sufficient basis without any subsidies beyond the initial provision of the premises and its furnishings. So far as can be told from Club records, and despite lean years, it has indeed continued throughout its 100 years without subsidies or financial bequests.

The bulk of this historical review is necessarily mainly based on Committee records and in chronological order. Much of the business was repetitive and of limited interest except at the time when it was dealt with, but important decisions have been picked out and other matters such as price lists, wages paid and financial reports are selected to show how things have changed over the years.

1898/1899

After the initial Committee meetings others followed, usually monthly, with J.D. Birchall normally taking the Chair.

Initially, time was taken up in making arrangements for stocktaking, payment of accounts, management of a library, games and so on. A scale of payment for billiards was set at ½d per player for every 50 up and 1d for every 100.

The scheme of financial control and stocktaking was quite strict and with some revisions to meet modern requirements has remained so to this day. As a consequence and because of the diligence of successive Committees the Club has never been involved in any significant problems such as often-beset Clubs managed on a voluntary basis.

As early as January 1899 however, there was a stock deficiency, which the Custodian was asked to explain. The Minutes record that remarks made by him were considered uncomplimentary to Committee members and a written apology was demanded. Since none was forthcoming, notice to terminate his employment in March was given. A short term of office indeed!

Improving knowledge was a feature at this time and a lecture on Ancient Egypt (with diagrams) was given by a Mr. W. Bazeley. No record of members attending was given but it was probably many more than would now turn up for such a talk.

This event was followed in March by a number of other lectures, attended by 80 members (almost the full membership) and over 100 came to later lectures so there was obviously a thirst for knowledge as well as for "stimulants".

A new Custodian, a Mr. Barton, was appointed to start on April 1st.

By this time, certain members had been excluded from membership because of misconduct, usually because of intemperance.

The scale of operations is shown by a recorded deficiency of 10/2d in the stocktake. The Custodian offered an explanation but had to make good the deficiency in two installments.

The Institute at this time had a Band, which was suffering from a shortage of money by June 1899, but the problem was dealt with by a loan of £10 from the Chairman.

Even this early in the life of the Club there was a proposal for Sunday opening from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. This proposal was adjourned - an adjournment that lasted for over 90 years until the present Sunday opening was sanctioned by rule changes.

The first Annual Report covered 11 months trading and was presented on October 24th. It is a comprehensive document but, briefly, it traces the origins of the Institute and says that although there was confidence in its

success there were critics and all members felt that they were on trial. It states "the great question to be solved, once and for all, was, can you permit the purchase of stimulants in such a place without causing grave scandal and abuse?" It continues " ... the Institute has come through the first year a triumphant proof that the men of Upton can be trusted to know when they have had enough ... ".

The Report went on to comment on the many activities during the first eleven months.

1899/1900

The activities of the Institute embraced serious topics reflecting public attitudes to world events, which nowadays tend to fall outside the mainly social aspects of the Club. Thus, the Chairman gave a lantern lecture on the Transvaal War on October 31st 1899. A press cutting said that "the lecture showed clearly on what facts we base our claim to paramountcy, and disposed of the arguments of those who oppose the justice of the present war".

The Club Band performed during an interval.

During the year 1900, there were regular lectures on dairy work, butter making, and, for entertainment, frequent Smoking Concerts (then very popular), and dances. Whilst the smoking concerts were all-male affairs, obviously ladies attended the dances, so that the large room of the Institute must have frequently have been used by lady guests in much the same way as is the lounge now.

In March 1900 a flagstaff was erected, paid for by subscription among members and put in place by volunteer labour. An extract from the Gloucester Journal for 17 March 1900 shows the spirit of the times. (Appendix 1)

The original flagstaff has had to be replaced but the tradition of honouring the death of members by lowering the flag to half-mast continues and is probably unique, at least in this area.

1900

Patriotism was to the fore again when on May 19th 1900 members assembled to mark the relief of Mafeking, and headed by the Club Band, paraded through the village. On returning, Mr. Birchall provided a firework display, and the evening was spent at a Smoking Concert with patriotic songs.

The Secretary noted that a very enjoyable evening was spent and one may surmise that the consumption of "stimulants" contributed to this!

In the Annual Report presented by John Birchall he remarked that he hoped that "no member would lose sight of their great aims - moderation in drink, friendship between class and class and mutual help to lead better lives".

During the year the freehold of the land and buildings was vested in certain Trustees who "would hold the Institute for use of members so long as it is carried on in general accordance with the present rules".

In the event of closure, ownership would revert to the Rector and Churchwardens for the use of the Parish.

APPENDIX I

March 17. 1900.

The Flag Staff was erected.

*See Extract from Upton
Journal.*

**THE BIRCHALL MEMORIAL
INSTITUTE, UPTON.**

On Saturday last an event of some importance took place in connection with this flourishing institution. By subscriptions among the members and by volunteered labour, a flag-staff and Union Jack were inaugurated. A large number of members assembled to witness the ceremony, which enlisted much interest. After the singing of the National Anthem, Mr. Job Morris, Vice-Chairman of the Committee, addressed a few words to those present. He spoke of the honour it was to live under the British flag; it was the emblem of England's greatness and of liberty, and it reminded us of the unity of the Empire under the sway of her Majesty the Queen. (Cheers.) The Rector (Canon Scobell) endorsed heartily the Vice-Chairman's patriotic remarks, and pointed out that the Union Jack was a symbol of Great Britain, being composed of the flags representing the Crosses of St. George of England, of St. Andrew of Scotland, and St. Patrick of Ireland. St. Patrick's Day was a fitting day to hoist the flag, for it reminded them of the brave deeds of the Irish in South Africa, and of Lord Roberts, who was an Irishman, and the approaching visit of the Queen to the Sister Island. He also spoke of the day as that of St. Joseph of Arimathea, whose legendary thorn in full leaf and bud is in the Rectory garden. The proceedings concluded with the singing of "Rule Britannia."

Later in the evening the usual monthly smoking concert took place, the Institute band being in attendance, and proved quite a success.

1901

The patriotic nature of the period was reflected in a Club Resolution of February 1st 1901, following the death of Queen Victoria, which read as follows:

"The members of this Committee desire to express their respectful sympathy with the members of the Royal Family in their great sorrow through the death of the most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria and also place on record their sense of loss the nation has sustained by the removal of so wise and beloved a ruler".

More mundane matters occupied the Committee during the year, in particular a stock deficiency of £2.5.3d. A report states that "after considering all the possibilities it was suggested that the custodian has made mistakes and several measures were introduced to prevent a repetition". After taking account of an earlier surplus the custodian was required to pay the balance at the rate of 5/- per month (the annual salary at the time was £20!).

In July there was a discussion about the desirability of reducing the age of membership from 18 to 17. The matter was postponed until a future occasion.

The annual Report for 1901 stated that there were now 103 members (some having been expelled for non-payment of subscriptions). Of this total, 67 took part in the voting, a figure which is scarcely exceeded in current elections for committee membership despite a membership of over 600 - a rather sad reflection on the democratic process today.

It was reported that during the year there had been three dances (about 60 attending each time), eleven smoking concerts (about 70 at each) and three lectures.

Billiards was the most popular game. As an experiment (and after consulting the Inland Revenue) light refreshments had been sold to the public on afternoons. The net profit was only 8/- and the experiment was discontinued.

A subscription was got up amongst members to buy a wedding present for the Chairman and resulted in the purchase of a silver salver engraved with a picture of the Institute. This is now in the possession of Mr. David Wall who, having joined the Club in 1928, is the longest-serving member.

The finances of the Club were sound, with an increase in balances from £6.10.0d in 1899 to £19 in 1901, bearing in mind that Band instruments costing £10 had been bought during the year. Sales for the year totaled £156.19.11d. Conduct of members was said to have been good.

On November 20th, however, there was a detailed account of the actions of the custodian Steward who had been unable to perform his duties because of his state of intoxication and a proposal was made to end his employment. The Steward was contrite and offered to sign the pledge if allowed to stay in his post. After much discussion a vote was taken which

approved this course of action.

1902

A special General Meeting took place on May 2nd 1902 to consider a proposal to extend the large room and buy a new, full-size billiard table at a total cost of about £125. This was obviously too much for members to contemplate so the matter was "postponed until such time as they are in a better position to meet the cost".

By July 16th the Custodian had broken his pledge of abstinence and was accordingly given three months' notice. He did in fact resign, but the resignation was withdrawn in August. This withdrawal was accepted, but a proposal by the Chairman "that the petition lie on the table" was carried. A rather confusing position, but as the Committee went on to examine applications for the post, we must assume that they were buying a little time to avoid disruption of business.

In fact, on August 16th after receipt of 42 applications, a new Custodian, a Mr. Morgan, was appointed after a close vote in which a Mr. Cooper was the other short-listed candidate.

In the Annual Report, mention was made of the coronation of King Edward VII, which was celebrated by a tea for members and their "wives, when nearly 100 were present.

On a more sinister note, however, the Chairman said that "for the present the Institute and land would remain with him as opposed to an earlier intention to transfer the property to the Trustees. Two reasons were advanced - the first, not very plausible, that there were difficulties in drawing up a Trust Deed. The second was, to quote the report in full, more convincing:

"As far as the members are concerned they will be on exactly the same footing as before, and will continue to be so as long as the place is properly conducted. The future rests entirely with them, and if abuses are allowed to creep in, Mr. Birchall will have no option but to close the doors. Such a calamity is to be avoided at all costs, and it is earnestly hoped that the experience of the year may be taken as a warning, and that the Institute may long continue to flourish as a blessing to the Parish",

It is not clear what prompted such a dire warning but possibly the Custodian had not been the only person during the year to drink to excess.

1903

On January 1st 1903 the Committee considered misuse of the suggestions book by members who made objectionable remarks without adding their names. The remedy adopted was to place the book in the safekeeping of the Steward.

It is evident that the remarks were aimed mainly at Committee members and that then, as now, the efforts of committee men to run the Club for the benefit of members were not always appreciated!

Drunkenness and misbehaviour of certain members continued to be something of a problem and a Mr. Clissold was expelled for offences, which led to his being charged by the police, following a smoking concert.

The Steward was instructed to refuse late admissions and to close the Club promptly at 10.00 p.m.

A Mr Smith was also expelled for unseemly conduct and for remarking that he "didn't give a D ... for you (the Steward) or any of your B ... Committee men". It seems that although we tend to regard the Victorian/Edwardian period as one of disciplined and obedient citizens with good behaviour being the norm by comparison with today's more relaxed attitudes, not everyone conformed to this idealised mould.

The Annual Report showed membership at 107 (about average over the first five years). It also listed details of consumption of all drinks supplied over those years -- records were kept in meticulous detail - and showed concern that beer consumption had increased without a corresponding increase in membership. The explanation given was that there had been a large number of occasions when there had been entertainment; we may surmise that this was not the only reason.

The Rules were revised to comply with the requirements of the Licensing Act of 1902 and the Club became:

1. Registered under the Licensing Act 1902;
2. Affiliated with the Working Men's Clubs & Institutes Union;
3. Registered under the Friendly Society Acts.

Rather surprisingly in view of events during the year, the Chairman said that "the conduct of the general body of members had been excellent".

1904

January featured a lecture by the Rev Canon Bazeley on "Pompeii", illustrated by lanternslides, to which all except children under 15 were invited, with no charge for admission. About 75 attended the lecture, though there is no comment as to how well received the talk was. It was a busy month with an annual supper, two dances and two smoking concerts in addition to the lecture.

In February some doubt arose concerning the age of an applicant. The Committee decided to require production of a birth certificate. If, however, the certificate verified the claimed age, the Institute would reimburse the cost of the certificate.

The last Smoking Concert of the season was so successful as to warrant a small press report. The Brass Band under the leadership of Mr. G. Hopkins gave several selections during the evening. The orderly conduct of members received a special mention.

The Annual Report again contained a comment about rising beer consumption and the Chairman expressed the view that he would be very sorry to think that any member looked upon the Institute merely as a place "where he could get a drink".

In November there was a proposal to form a Rifle Club, which involved erecting a galvanised iron building at a cost of £30. This was approved and a subcommittee was appointed to deal with all necessary details.

The Rifle Club was to form an important part of the Institute's activities in the years ahead.

1905

The Rifle Range was officially opened on Saturday January 7th by General Sir William Gatacre at 7.00 p.m., following a meat tea provided from Club funds.

A very full report of the proceedings was published and it so well reflects the sentiments of the times that its reproduction here, as Appendix 2, is justified.

In September the Chairman sent a letter to the Editor of the local paper drawing attention to a public meeting to be held on September 26th to discuss the encouragement of shooting and the formation of rifle clubs in Gloucester and neighbouring parishes. This followed a "historic appeal" by Lord Roberts earlier in the year on the subject of rifle shooting as a national pursuit. This apparently asserted that if our soldiers had been better trained to shoot, many of the "unfortunate incidents" of the South African War and the campaign of 1880/81 would not have occurred.

Clearly, thoughts of another war must, by the tone of the letter and the attitude of the Chairman, have been in the forefront of their minds. A far cry from current attitudes towards the ownership and use of guns and

warlike preparations!

The Annual Report referred to the provision of the rifle range as the most important event of the year. It also said that the conduct of members had been above reproach with no single complaint during 1905. The Archdeacon of Gloucester was present at the Annual Meeting and moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman and officers of the Institute on the way they had carried out their duties.

FORMATION OF RIFLE CLUBS - 1905

(Letter from J.D. Birchall and
extract from Gloucester Journal)

MINIATURE RIFLE CLUBS.

Dear Sir,—May I be allowed to draw attention in your columns to a public meeting which is to be held at the Memorial Institute, Upton St. Leonards, on Tuesday, September 26th, at 8 p.m., to discuss the encouragement of shooting and the formation of rifle clubs in Gloucester and neighbouring parishes? Lord Roberts' eloquent appeal to the nation has found an echo in many minds; and it is in the hope that something will be done in this district to carry out the objects of that appeal that the above meeting has been called.

May we not look forward to the time when every village shall have its range as well as its cricket club and reading room, and when to be a good shot with a service rifle shall be regarded as an honour at any rate as great as that of having "a good average"? There may be many reasons which prevent a man joining the Volunteers or Militia, there can be very few which prevent his learning to shoot.

There are some who think that the encouragement of shooting will breed a love of war, and endanger the peace of our country; but surely the very best guarantee of peace—in that it would render an attack by a foreign Power so unprofitable—is the existence at home of a well disciplined, straight shooting, patriotic people!

Everyone who is in sympathy with the rifle club movement and realises the pressing importance of the problems involved, will be welcome at the meeting on Tuesday.

Thanking you in anticipation,

I beg to remain,

Your obedient Servant,

J. DEARMAN BIRCHALL.

September 19, 1905.

THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF RIFLE SHOOTING.

LORD ROBERTS' LETTER.

IMPORTANT MEETING AT UPTON ST. LEONARDS. *Sept. 26/10*

A public meeting was held at the Rifle Range at the Birchall Memorial Institute, Upton St. Leonards, on Tuesday night, for the purpose of discussing the formation of rifle clubs in Gloucester and the surrounding villages. The meeting had been summoned by Mr. J. Dearman Birchall at the Upton Institute for the reason that there is existing there one of the best equipped miniature ranges anywhere to be found in the country, and he considered that, in the first instance, practical demonstration to a comparatively small gathering on the lines suggested in Lord Roberts' now historic letter of June last would have more useful effect than speeches to a larger audience in the city of Gloucester, where they would be without the means of demonstrating. The attendance itself, however, was very encouraging, including as it did interested people from Gloucester and many of the surrounding places. Mr. J. D. Birchall, as chairman of the Upton St. Leonards Institute, presided, and immediately supporting him was the Archdeacon of Gloucester (the Ven. E. C. Scofield). Others present were: Mrs. Penrose-Thackwell, Miss Lloyd Baker (Hardwicke Court), Mrs. Vernon, Miss Birchall, Messrs. Job Morris (vice-chairman of the institute), H. Huggins, and A. C. Towneend (hon. secs.), A. H. Derrett, Gilbert E. V. Birchall, W. Longman, E. Merrett, R. Day, G. Smith, H. Browning, A. E. Scull, A. Shellsell, W. Mundy, A. H. Etheridge, S. Longman, H. G. Houlding, W. Cocks, L. Liddiatt, A. Hobson, W. J. Langstone, W. Smith, James Mills, W. G. Davis, W. Davis, T. Turner, A. W. Smith, T. Dyer, etc.

Mr. Birchall commenced by welcoming all those who had come there, some of them he knew from a considerable distance. He welcomed them on behalf of the Committee of the Institute, who, he said, had built and equipped that range at a cost of about £85 entirely out of their own savings. They welcomed them most heartily, and hoped that they would not be the last time when many of them would be seen there. On the 12th of June last, Mr. Birchall went on to say, one of the most momentous letters ever written to the papers appeared over the signature of Lord Roberts on the subject of the encouragement of rifle shooting as a national pursuit, and it was a direct result of that letter that that meeting had been called that night. Lord Roberts began by making a statement which, had it not come with his authority, would have been said to be simply an exaggeration, viz., that had our men been trained to shoot better, most of the unfortunate incidents which had to be deplored in connection with both the last war in South Africa and the campaign of 1880-81 would never have occurred. As he said, if any ordinary man had made that statement it would have been said to be a mere exaggeration, but coming from Lord Roberts, a man more respected and more honoured from a military point of view than any other living man, it must have attracted attention paid to it. The chairman quoted further from Lord Roberts' letter, where he commends the use of miniature ranges, and proceeding, he said he (Mr. Birchall) wanted to show that this movement in the direction of rifle clubs

was in no sense in opposition to the Volunteers, the Yeomanry, and the Militia. He knew that some Volunteers did not look upon the movement with great favour. His own opinion was that it would prove just the opposite to what they regarded it, that it was more likely to encourage people to join those forces than otherwise. The object of their meeting that night was to impress upon the neighbourhood, both through those who were there and through the Press, the importance of Lord Roberts' appeal being responded to. The chairman went on to give details with regard to the equipment and cost of miniature ranges, such as the one there, where the Lee-Netford service rifle was used with the Morris tube and Ian Hamilton safety equipment for returning targets to the firing point, which obviated the necessity of anyone going between the firing point and the targets. Their range, he explained, was made specially wide in order to admit of the latter arrangement, but without the Ian Hamilton equipment the cost of a covered range of from 50 to 60 feet long, built of corrugated iron, with accessories and two rifles, would not exceed £50. He hoped the formation of other clubs would result from their meeting, and he moved: "That those present at this meeting pledge themselves to do all that is in their power to encourage the promotion of rifle clubs in Gloucester and neighbourhood." The chairman added that pending the institution of other clubs—which they much desired, for the competition they would induce would in itself do much good—the members of the Upton St. Leonards Club would be glad to arrange for persons from other districts to have the use of their range on one night or so during the week.

Mr. Job Morris seconded the motion. The Chairman, he said, had spoken of the question from a national point of view, and in what he said he was sure he had the support of everyone present. He felt sure that it was of the greatest importance for the safety of this country that the people, and the youth especially, should learn the use of the rifle. The country was free from alarm at the present time. But difficulties arose, and things developed so fast in these latter days that though we might be safe to-day we might be in dire danger in the very near future. So it behoved all to be prepared for such an emergency should it arise. And here to a national duty they might couple a parochial pastime. He might go further than he had yet done, and say that they appealed to the school managers of the neighbouring villages to encourage the elder scholars to learn to shoot. He thought a little money laid out in that way would be money better spent than in providing schools for infants. (Laughter and hear, hear.)

In the course of a short discussion, Miss Lloyd Baker said Mr. Birchall had been describing to them an ideal range. At Hardwicke they shot in the parish school. (Hear, hear.) They had to pay a few pence per night for gas and light and so on, and they managed very well. (Hear, hear.) For a stop-but they had an old packing-case filled with earth—(laughter and hear, hear)—and it acted very well indeed. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was put to the meeting and unanimously carried.

The Chairman stated that since that meeting was announced he had heard of one or two likely clubs or ranges—one in the Haresfield neighbourhood, and one possibly in the Quedgeley neighbourhood. And then, of course, they had Miss Lloyd Baker at Hardwicke. She, he believed, was the pioneer of the thing in the neighbourhood, as she was the pioneer of all that was good. (Hear, hear.) So with one or two clubs in Gloucester, there was a prospect, he thought, of five or six in the neighbourhood, and if they could get this number as examples he thought the movement would spread. (Hear, hear.)

The Archdeacon of Gloucester moved the appointment of a small Committee, with power to add to their number, to carry out the objects of the foregoing resolution. In doing so he said he wished to propose really three resolutions. The first was that they thank the Chairman for arranging the meeting on his own birthday. They ought to wish him "many happy returns of the day," and he was sure they did so. (Hear, hear, and applause.) In the second place, three young men from Upton had that day enlisted, and he thought it would be only a graceful act on that occasion to wish them well and God's blessing in their new life. (Hear, hear.)

In the third place, he moved the resolution placed in his hands by the Chairman, for the appointment of a Committee. A short time ago, the Archdeacon said, he stood on the battlefield of Crecy, and he could not help feeling as he stood there that in those days Englishmen shot very straight. They fought against great odds with great valour, and their shooting must have been very straight. They had at Upton two yew trees in their churchyard. They knew the history of those two yew trees there, and of yew trees in the churchyards elsewhere. The object of planting these yew trees was that at all events there might be some bows ready to hand in the case of invasion. He believed that was the history of their two yews in Upton churchyard. The lesson of Lord Roberts' letter was that if we were not now efficient in shooting we ought to endeavour to become so as soon as possible. With regard to his resolution, everybody would feel that it naturally followed upon what they had already done. On the 12th October, in Gloucester, the Archdeacon concluded, there was to be a large mass meeting to consider national defence. He did not know particulars, but the meeting was being promoted, and some leading experts on this subject were to be among the speakers. Upton was taking the lead in promoting this movement for the establishment of rifle clubs, and he should like Upton to take the lead in promoting the success of this meeting in Gloucester.

This was seconded from the audience and also carried, and the following were elected as the first members: Miss Lloyd Baker (Hardwicke Court), Mrs. Penrose-Thackwell (Brookthorpe), Mr. J. D. Birchall, Mr. Job Morris, Colonel Little (Pitcomb), Mr. Vernon (Brookthorpe), Mr. Munday (Alington Club), Mr. W. Longman (Gloucester), and Mr. W. J. Langstone (Gloucester).

An offer of Mr. L. Liddiatt to take over a team to compete with the Upton Club was accepted, and the proceedings closed with hearty thanks to Mr. Birchall for calling the meeting and presiding.

1906

On Saturday evening, January 26th 1906, a presentation was made to John Dearman Birchall of a portrait which had been subscribed for by members of the Institute. The names of the 60 members who contributed are listed in the Minute Book.

The custody of the portrait (which hangs in what is now the snooker room) was committed to the Committee "to guard it and to hand it down to those who should succeed".

Mr. Birchall, in receiving the portrait, spoke of the part played by the Institute in village life and said that the most noticeable change which had come over the parish in the eight years was the growth of a kindlier

feeling between different classes. This, he claimed, was due to the Institute, where they could get to know one another, where all met on an equal footing.

For some reason membership fell from 113 to 92 in 1906 and with it consumption of beers and spirits. The Annual Report dealt once more with the Rifle Range for which no membership charge was, in future, to be made. The Committee commented that the range could not pay its way on this basis.

1906/07

To comply with the requirements of the Register of Friendly Societies, the financial year now had to end on December 3rd, instead of September 30th as hitherto. The Committee Report, therefore, covers 15 months. It noted that Mr. H. Huggins, who had been Secretary since the founding of the club, had been compelled to resign because of a serious illness.

Educational lectures were still a regular feature and apart from those directly concerned with the agricultural life of members, there was a lecture on the British Empire by a Mr. Hobbs, followed a week later by a lecture on Gloucester in History by John Birchall.

Attendances of 80 and 75 respectively were very good, bearing in mind the total membership stood at 92.

With a further emphasis on education, steps were taken to improve the contents and comfort of the reading room, which was a feature of the Institute since its inception.

Rifle Range activities continued to be given much attention and on November 19th a special meeting was held to consider a dispute, which had led to certain members refusing to fire, for reasons, which are rather obscure. The subject was closed after expressions of regret had been voiced.

Another special meeting was held on December 13th to deal with misconduct of two members at a smoking concert, resulting in suspensions of one and two weeks of those involved.

1908

A Special General Meeting was held on October 24 to consider erecting a building for use as a Billiard Room, and also the purchase of a full size table. Members present turned down the proposal for the building on the grounds of cost (it was to be between £100 and £150) but decided to purchase a table at a cost of £36, delivered.

Some addition to the smaller room was to be made to increase the comfort of members so as to allow the large room to be given up for billiards. The Annual Report stated that with proper care, the table would pay for itself in two years.

This table is still in use, and whilst over the years it has been recovered

and re-cushioned, and had minor modifications to bring it in line with current tournament standards, it is substantially unchanged from its being installed, and must be one of the oldest tables still in use. The current charge of 50p for around half-an-hour's play is sufficient to provide for regular recovering and maintenance.

Improving lectures continued on December 15 with John Birchall speaking on "The Roman Empire and the British Empire - a comparison" at which 60 people were present. Mr. Birchall's knowledge and interests appear to have been very diverse, and his lectures were usually well attended.

The Annual Report, as usual, gives full details of the finances of the Club (total income £247.13.8d, total expenditure £244.10.3d), its assets, membership numbers over the years and consumption of drinks.

1909

The first social event of the year, held on January 9, was a wives and children's tea party attended by 35 women, no less than 85 children and 10 helpers. The helpers would certainly have been needed to deal with such a large number, and since the large room now housed the billiard table it is difficult to know where and how the numbers were accommodated.

The first mention of a skittle alley was made in February but a suggestion for its provision was not entertained owing to expense, danger to the Rifle Range and the danger of betting.

Prices of tobacco and drinks had to be increased in May, but Woodbines stayed at 1d per packet. Prices for spirits were:

Whisky: 2 ½d per qtr. noggin

Brandy: 3d per qtr. noggin

Gin: 2 ½d per qtr. noggin

(or 1/8d, 2/- and 1/6 ½d per half pint, respectively)

The Steward had evidently allowed drinks "on tick" to certain members and had obviously been let down, because on August 10 the Steward promised not to trust anyone under any consideration in future.

The Annual Report for the year to 31 December 1909 gives, as usual, a great deal of detail about the Club, and someone must have kept records of all the various activities. As an example, there is a lengthy paragraph about the Rifle Range which states the number of shots fired (7930, plus 1000 at the Sneedhams Green Long Range).

Whilst the number of members, at 122, was the highest ever, the consumption of bottled beer shows a "remarkable" decrease of 75 dozen bottles, partly accounted for, it was thought, by the cold summer.

There had been a proposal for a Bowling Green at the AGM, but because of difficulties and expense, the idea was not pursued.

A report written by the Steward on April 8 dealing with disorderly conduct is worth reading in full.

The punishment awarded by the Committee was quite severe; 2 years' suspension for Henry Davies and 1 year for George Miles. Not for the first time, the Chairman subsequently threatened to dose the Institute as a Club if such incidents recurred.

The President

Vice president & Members
of General Committee

APPENDIX 3

Gentlemen it is with regret that I have to report for your information the disorderly Conduct of two members of the Institute viz George Miles and Henry Davies

About 9.30pm on Saturday, 3rd of April they came to the Institute both very much under the influence of drink Davies was quite drunk he staggered through the Hall to the large room and sat down Miles called for a pint of beer I said you have all ready had too much and I shall not serve Davies with any he then said Well let me have a pint and we will be thinking they would leave without any disturbance I supplied Miles with one pint of beer he drank himself and handed the pint to Davies who also drank and called for another pint I said I shall not serve either of you with any more Beer they both became very abusive and made use of disgusting language to Mr Morris the chairman for the evening he appealed to them to be quiet & orderly with out avail and the concert was broken up about 10pm through the disorderly conduct of these two members Davies when in the hall put himself in a fighting attitude and said if I talked of reporting him he would hash my face in the large

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Was closed by Mr Morris instructions and about 10 or 12 members that were in the small room quiet & orderly remained until 11pm it having been previously announced of an hours extension of time

I am Gentlemen

your obedient servant
Francis Robert Morgan

To

J. & Birchall Esq

1910

On Friday May 13 a Committee meeting was held at which the Chairman "drew attention to the great loss the Empire had sustained by the death of His Majesty King Edward the Seventh". The following Resolution was passed:

"We the Committee of this Institute on behalf of its Members desire to place on record our great sorrow at the death of His Majesty King Edward and deplore the great loss the whole Empire has sustained by this sad and unexpected event. We also desire to record our sincere sympathy with the widowed Queen Alexandra and all the members of the Royal Family in their great bereavement. "

The Band was evidently active at this time and asked for a photograph to be hung in the Institute, but it seems that no such photograph exists now.

In a colourful report to the Chairman the Steward complained about the conduct of a member, one Thomas Turner, who said to the Steward "You are treating me worse than a dog. I would like to give thee a Bloody Smack in the mouth if thee was outside (of the bar) I would do it".

Turner got away with a mere reprimand because of some conflicting evidence and possible provocation, on a split vote. The Chairman was most displeased at the failure of the Committee to support the Steward and wrote a lengthy letter to the Committee in which once again the threat of closure was raised. The letter, dated June 14, is significantly signed "J. Dearman Birchall- owner of the B.M.I."

Shortly afterwards the Steward retired after 8 years' service, and he and his wife were presented with a tea and coffee set and the thanks of members.

A Special General Meeting was called for 7.30 p.m. on November 5 to amend the rules. There was no mention of any bonfire night celebrations.

The Annual Report recorded a fall in beer consumption, this being noted with satisfaction as evidence that the Institute was not a mere "drinking club". The appointment of a new Steward - a Sergt Davis - was noted.

1911

A major social event in the year was a meat tea for members, wives and lady friends to celebrate the Coronation of King George V on Saturday June 24. 60 people attended and the tea was followed by dancing and a concert. A charge of 6d per head was made for the tea, on which a loss of £4.3.5d was made.

There were a number of debates on subjects of national rather than local interest on topics as varied as the National Insurance Bill, Nationalisation of the Railways and Votes for Women, attended by up to 100 people.

It is clear that the Institute, no doubt because of the Birchall influence, was a focal point for many aspects of life in the village, and members

were exposed to a much wider range of topics than would now be possible or acceptable.

1912

The debating fever continued into the New Year, with the subject being National Service. Though the Minutes record the fact that these debates took place, there, is, regrettably, no summary of the debate itself or the views expressed by those attending.

The finances of the Club were obviously under some strain at this time because a proposal was made to sell £30 worth of shares it held in the Sharpness Docks.

There was also a proposal to dispose of the Billiard Table because of insufficient interest. As further evidence of the severity of the financial problems, the salary of the Steward was reduced from 15/- to 10/- per week. Permission was, however, given to the Steward to take other outside work, though what work was available to make up the lost pay is not mentioned.

In fact, the Sharpness Docks shares were not sold because of their low price, and it was decided to retain the billiard table; the pay-cut, however, stood.

At this time the Secretary complained of non-attendance of Committee men without explanation, and on occasion there were not enough members for a quorum.

After its earlier success, it seems that around this period the Club's fortunes were at a rather low ebb.

1913

At the AGM held on January 25 the retirement of Mr Job Morris as Vice Chairman was recorded. He had filled the post for 14 years from the creation of the Club and frequently acted as Chairman in the absence of Mr Birchall.

A decline in sales attributed to the very wet summer was noted.

The Chairman again drew attention to the great principles for which they stood: recreation, education and moderation.

A reduction in membership age from 18 to 16 was again suggested and in fact this was approved at a subsequent committee meeting on January 25. This is still the position in current rules.

The Steward resigned with effect from April 1 because of his wife's continuing ill-health and for unspecified private reasons. With a reduced salary still effective, it can well be imagined that better remuneration was being sought elsewhere.

The post was advertised at a salary of £20 per annum; responsibilities to

include serving refreshments, including alcohol, cleaning the premises, keeping simple accounts and generally waiting upon the members. Clearly, value for money is not a new concept!

A Mr & Mrs Cook were appointed on March 25, but their term of office was brief and their resignation was accepted on April 12. The Committee refused any help with removal costs.

Another new Steward, a Mr. Bowers, was appointed on May 9.

It is not clear how the Club was lit in its early years, but a tender for the supply of an acetylene gas plant was accepted at a cost of £53.10.0d, to light the Institute and the Rifle Range.

Financial pressures must have continued because £60 worth of the Sharpness Docks stock was sold for £46.10.0d.

An unusual note in the minutes of October recorded the fact that a lecture on gardening took place with a comment that "the weather was fine, moonlight".

1914

The unfortunate run of Stewards continued, with the death of Mr. Bowers recorded in April. A petition to allow a Mrs Bowers to carry out the duties for a period was put before a special meeting on June 4 (special meetings were called with great frequency at this time); the Chairman said that the petition was out of order, but nevertheless allowed a debate. The voting was 20 to 21 against the proposition, with the Chairman probably using his casting vote.

Despite this, another proposal to allow Mrs Bowers to stay until September 29 was carried. Subsequent moves were made to rescind this decision and there was obviously a body of opinion, which was unhappy with a woman acting as Steward. The post was advertised in June and 75 applications were received. A Mr & Mrs Smith were appointed to the job.

In August a Minute excused all members who were called up from membership dues and this is the first reference to the impending Great War in any Minutes, which is rather surprising in view of the build-up of forces, the tensions in Europe and the patriotic nature of the Club at the time.

Of more immediate concern to most members was a decision to market a cheaper beer at 3d a pint, with cider at 2d a pint.

1915

By 1915 the War had obviously begun to intrude more and reference is made in the Minutes of January 23 to "a stirring speech made by the Chairman, in which he urged all members to help during these trying times".

He had by now been made a Captain in the Royal Gloucestershire

Yeomanry.

The Club had went into serious financial difficulties by the end of the year and a Special Meeting was called for January 8 1916 to consider closing the Institute; as a precautionary measure, the Steward was given a month's notice.

1916

At a Special meeting on January 8 it was reported that a deficit of £45 had been incurred, and that there was a weekly loss of 7/-. It was decided to pay no salary to the Steward and that he be released from attendance in daytime. The Steward (remarkably, it might be thought) accepted the situation and was warmly thanked.

Yet another Special Meeting held on January 15 recommended that the Club remain open subject to:

1. Members being asked to contribute towards the deficit;
2. No salary being paid to the Steward;
3. Mr W. Matthias being elected as Hon. Secretary.

These conditions were accepted with "considerable enthusiasm".

Despite this enthusiasm, the Club did in fact close on May 1 1917 and remained closed until September 27 1919. Regrettably, no records have survived for the period between February 1916 and 1920, so the effect of the later war years on the Club and its members is not documented.

Rather surprisingly there is no record in the Club of those members who served in the Forces in the Great War, nor any honours list of those who died or were wounded in the conflict.

From another source however, it is known that 47 members served during the war, and of these the following were killed in action or died of wounds:

A.P. Birchall, E. V Birchall, S. Millard, G. Avery, L. G. Churchill, W. Ireland,

E. Bailey, L.Hardy, H. Painter, R. Lloyd, E. J. Mills, H. Millard

Others who were discharged wounded were:

S. Smith, R. Harper, A. Ridler and F. Groves

1919

A copy of the Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 1919 has, however, survived, and it is from this that the dates of closure and re-opening are known.

The Report showed that there were at re-opening about 70 members, but this number increased sharply to 164 by the year-end, the largest in its history.

A new Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of (now) Major Birchall, and consisted of:

W. Matthias, John Millard, H. G. Moss, G. C. Townsend, E. Davis, F. Genge, C. Harris, J. H. Barnard, J.R. Jones, W. R. Smith, C. E. Ridler and, from November, A. H. Shewell and W. Avery.

The old rules remained in force, and a new Steward, Mr W. G. Middlecote, was appointed from September 22.

The Rifle Range remained closed, but entertainments in the form of dancing, whist drives and billiard matches had been successfully carried out.

The Chairman said "there is a fine determination to make the Institute not only an enjoyable meeting ground for all classes, but also a blessing to the Parish".

1921

Minute Books are again in existence from July 12 1921 and it was noted at that meeting that a large number of members were in arrears, because many were out of employment, this being one of many references to this problem which was to continue for some years.

The Licensing Act of 1921 came into force and the Committee proposed to apply to the Licensing Justices for the Club to open from 10.30 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. on Monday to Friday and for an extra hour on one in four Saturdays

Should other licensed premises be permitted to open all day Saturday, then the Club would seek to open the same hours. In fact, the extra Saturday hour was not permitted.

At this time electric lighting was supplied by the Village Hall under contract, and this was renewed at a price of 1/6d per unit. Presumably this service replaced the gas supply once the Village Hall, which was built in 1919, could provide the alternative means of lighting.

A letter was read from Major Birchall on November 22, in his absence, suggesting that he should retire as Chairman but would carry on as President if such an office were created. A rule change to permit this was agreed and the new office was created in 1922.

A Special Meeting on November 22 debated the cost of subscriptions, with an attempt to reduce the annual sum to 4/- as pre-war. It was however kept at 5/-.

1922

The new amended rules, which created the post of President were duly registered with the Friendly Societies.

There was a complaint to the Village Hall Committee that the electricity supply was unsatisfactory at times and the Club hoped for a permanent improvement.

There was also a problem with the water supply in the Stewards' kitchen, which was served by a pump. Samples were tasted by Messrs Millard and W Nicholls, who agreed to inspect the conditions outside the building so as to suggest a remedy.

The Annual Report, not printed separately from the Minutes for the first time, showed a reduction in turnover from £1011 to £903, this being regarded as a good result in view of the local unemployment and the consequent reduced spending powers of members.

After his 22 years as Chairman, Major Birchall was unanimously appointed to the new post of President and J. Millard became Chairman on 14 March.

The Club library, an important feature in its early years, was still in being.

There was an approach from the Painswick Institute wishing to sell, buy or exchange books' this was turned down with an expression of regret but without any reasons being given for so doing.

The Upton St Leonards Cricket Club still continued its association with the Club as is evidenced by an arrangement to hire an urn for 2/6d for the season.

The Committee was still exercised about the electricity supply (which was generated in what was then the engine house - now a store - in the Village Hall grounds) and sought a reduction in price because of a fall in petrol prices. In fact, the price was reduced by 1 ½d to 1/4 ½d per unit in July.

1923

At the Annual General Meeting held on February 24 the Hon. Secretary, Mr Matthias, was presented with a leather case to show appreciation of his work since first taking office in 1916. In gratefully accepting the gift, Mr Matthias said that he sometimes felt weary of the Secretarial work which kept him fully occupied and that the time would come when he would be forced to give up the office.

Weary or not, he continued as Secretary until 1936!

The skittle alley proposal was again given an ailing but in April it was decided all grounds of cost to take no action for the present.

There was, however, more enthusiasm at a hurriedly-convened Special Meeting when news was given that the Government in its Budget had reduced the tax on beer to 6d a pint. Despite a loss of £1.1.4d on stock held, it was unanimously resolved "in the best interests of the Club" to reduce prices forthwith.

Less good news followed in June, however, with news that Schedule "A" tax (a now discontinued tax on property) had gone up from £8.5.0d to £10.10.0d. It was agreed to make a formal protest to the Inspector of Taxes, but this cut no ice and after a meeting with the Tax Surveyor, the new impost was accepted.

An appeal from the Armistice Day Special Relief Fund was read in December but turned down, on the grounds that members had already subscribed in various (unspecified) ways.

1924

An enlarged and framed portrait of Job Morris, who had been Vice Chairman for many years, was viewed by the Committee, and a suitable place in the Billiard Room was chosen for its abode.

Attention was drawn to this recognition of his long service at the AGM, when probably for the first time he was unable to attend.

Inter-Club games were being restored following a gap in the war and immediate post-war years, and as an example, visits were exchanged with the Services Club, Westgate St, for contests at billiards, cards and table skittles. Light suppers were provided and at the B.M.I. a smoking concert concluded the evening. These perhaps minor events were each given publicity in the local newspaper.

A shove halfpenny slate was purchased in the spring to add to the already fairly extensive range of indoor games available at the Club. This slate is still in the bar, and was, until fairly recently, used regularly, but latterly has been out of favour as indeed have other games such as darts, probably because of the presence of television, which tends to discourage such games.

The Steward resigned on April 5. The Committee expressed unanimous regret and advertised for a new appointment at £30 per annum. There were 35 applications and, after a lengthy selection process, a Mr Cruse was appointed. He was a licensee, an ex-master of Westbury-on-Severn workhouse, an ex-soldier, aged 50, with a wife and three children. He came with excellent references,

Meanwhile there were words of appreciation for the retiring Steward, Mr Middlecote, and a collection of £4.4.0d enabled the purchase of a clock which was presented in June.

There was a lengthy debate about the Visitors Fee and the burden it imposed upon members. As a consequence it was reduced from 2d to 1d, subject to confirmation, at a Special Meeting and a Rule Amendment.

The Steward asked for his salary to be raised from £30 to £40, as had been paid to his predecessor, but the Committee thought that after only 6 months in the post, this was too much, especially as they had had to pay for some temporary help for a period. They did, however, grant an increase of £5.

1925

At the Annual Meeting on February 1 the President, Major Birchall M.P. (he had been elected for N.E. Leeds in 1918) spoke after being elected as President at what he thought might be his last opportunity to attend. No reason was given but it may have been because of his move from Upton St Leonards.

In his speech the President reiterated, at some length, the words used in his first Report in 1899, regarding the principles and objects of the Institute, which he still fervently believed in.

The finances of the Club were rather low, with a reduced turnover and a deficit on the year's working. This was undoubtedly caused by a fall in membership from 137 to 117, attributed to a continuing high level of unemployment.

The last meeting for the year for which a record exists is dated April 16. References were made on this occasion to smells emanating from the septic pit, which served the Club. Mr W. Nicholls, then Vice Chairman, thought that it was best left undisturbed, but that the outfall should be inspected regularly.

At this time evidently the Club was not served by mains water or sewers,

From this date in 1925 there are, regrettably, no records until November 1931.

1931

At a meeting on October 13 a letter from Lady Birchall was read, in which she stated her pleasure in a recent visit to the Institute and expressed herself favourably impressed by the condition of the premises under the present Steward and Stewardess (a Mr & Mrs Howe). She made some suggestions regarding the lettering over the door but said she would leave her ideas entirely to the Committee's judgment.

At this time tenders were received from Gloucester Corporation for the supply of electricity to replace that provided by the Village Hall (which was to be similarly supplied at the same time). A small sub-committee was empowered to approve the tender after expert advice was obtained.

The Librarian of the Women's Institute offered a box of books (lent by the Carnegie Trust) to encourage men in the parish to borrow books - the Institute being used as a medium for circulating the books. The Committee doubted if members would be sufficiently interested in home reading and the matter was (in the time-honoured words) "left on the table".

The question of a clean water supply raised many years earlier had evidently not yet been resolved, and it was suggested that a pump should be installed at the well in the Village Hall grounds, for each party's use, cost-sharing to be determined.

1932

A long-running dispute over the payment for National Insurance stamps for the Steward and his wife led to an Inspector interviewing the Steward's wife and determining that as it was a joint appointment the Club must pay from May 1, 1931 and stamps to the value of 1/1d weekly had to be accounted for.

A cheque for £1.19.0d was authorised on January 22 to meet the arrears.

There "was also a query as to what deductions were permissible from Mr Howe's salary, which resulted in a decision to deduct 2d per week.

The question of water supply rights, which had evidently been unresolved was settled by an acknowledgment by the Parish Council as Trustees of the Village Hall that the B.M.I. had the right to use water from the well.

At the Annual Meeting the death of a former Steward. Mr. F. Morgan, was reported. He had become a member after his departure and having retained his membership for 20 years.

The provision of a skittle alley was again raised but no progress had been made because of the heavy expenditure involved.

In May, however, it was decided to invite tenders for the installation of an alley. A Mr Blakemore was (it was reported) disinclined to quote because of his men having to travel (it is difficult to see what work he could get if travel was never involved!)

Mr W. Nicholls, Vice Chairman, thought that materials could be supplied for about £50 and that local carpenters might be employed, and it was agreed to approach Mr Blakemore on this basis.

There was much discussion about the possible supply of gas to the Steward's quarters. Some extra piping costing 16/9d had been installed at the request of the Stewardess, following a decision to have a supply provided and a cooker installed. The Committee refused to meet this extra cost, mainly because there had been no prior authority.

The Club had always been careful about spending money and its resources were, of course, limited; but around this time there did seem to be, to put it mildly, a very cautious approach to any expenditure.

Peter Birchall was married on June 8 and at short notice a subscription list was opened which permitted the purchase of a silver cigarette box, suitably engraved, to be made at a cost of £2, of which 15/6d was from gifts, and £1.4.6d from Club funds. Subscribers to the gift were invited to a party at Cotswold Farm at which Sir John and Lady Birchall were also present.

A tender for the Skittle Alley was at last accepted, at a price, complete, of

£68; the contractor being a Mr Toomey. The full specification appears in the Minute Book for August 6 1932.

The cost of skittle balls was 27/6d and the pins 18/6d. A charge for the alley was set at 8d per hour, 4d per half hour.

The Alley was officially opened on September 26 1932. The first three balls were bowled by the Chairman John Millard, followed by the Vice Chairman W. J. Nicholls and the Secretary W Matthias.

1933

The Annual Report for the year 1933 was fairly brief and much of it was devoted to remarks by the President, comparing the first report, and saying that when the Institute was founded as a licensed club there were many who predicted its failure. He stressed once more the theme of a democratic organisation where everyone had equal rights.

Reference was made to the death of W. Hooper aged 81, who was one of the foundation members of the Club.

During the year there was a proposal that Mr L. Stanbury, who was later to play an important role in the Club's affairs, should succeed W. Matthias as Secretary; but nothing came of this and Mr Matthias carried on for some years.

The Club Rules were being updated and there was an interchange of correspondence with the Registrar leading to lengthy delays; a situation, which was repeated in the 1980s when there were several frustrating years spent in detailed negotiations. Happily, a more business-like approach seems to have been adopted in recent years.

On a more domestic note, the Steward applied for the use of electric current for his wireless and this was granted, at a charge of 6d a month.

1934

Problems with the water supply continued and on July 10 the Steward reported that his stock of soft water had given out and that the well in the house only produced muddy and bad-smelling water, so that water had to be fetched from the shared well in the Village Hall grounds. Furthermore, the pump did not function properly. A proposed solution was to install a pump in the B.M.I. to move water from the Village Hall well.

One can imagine the reaction of the present Health & Safety Inspectors if food and drink were to be served in premises with such a dubious water supply!

At this stage, nobody seemed to consider the installation of a mains water system, though presumably by 1934 there must have been a supply in the village. Some move to modernisation was made, however, when after finding out that the Painswick Institute had a telephone callbox in their

building, for the use of members, it was agreed to make enquiries about a facility for the Club.

Sir John Birchall, on medical advice, did not attend the AGM on February 16, but was re-elected President.

The Annual Report referred to the popularity of the Skittle Alley, and the success of the Billiard Team which won the Shield for the Gloucester and District Competition.

There was, for the first time, a suggestion that snooker balls should be purchased to provide an alternative to billiards, which was still the more widely played game. It was said that playing snooker would improve players' potting skills at billiards!

A smoking concert - such events were still popular and a regular feature of the Club - followed the conclusion of the AGM.

A rather unusual item appeared in the April minutes, namely the sale of an old lavatory box to a Mrs Baker, for 10/-, whilst the corrugated iron screen which had been around the box was given to the Parish Council: a noble gift indeed! Presumably as a replacement for the lavatory box, an Elsan Closet was chosen (Model 44) at a cost of £3.18.6d to be fitted outside.

With no running water and such crude sanitary arrangements the environs of the Club must have been malodorous indeed in the early years.

Cost-consciousness still prevailed, and an attempt to buy second-hand snooker balls was made, but failed, and in July a new set was purchased for £5. Also in July, there was a report on the condition of the Skittle Alley; it seems that in hot weather the corrugated iron sheets had to be removed for ventilation but these had either disappeared or become unusable. It was decided therefore, to fit a door!

A modest surplus of funds allowed for the investment of £150 in the Cheltenham and Gloucester Building Society at 3% interest.

This being the year of the Silver Jubilee of King George V, it was decided to donate £5 towards the expenses of the Parish celebrations.

1936

The King was not to survive long after the Jubilee. An emergency meeting was held on Saturday January 25 on the occasion of the funeral of King George V and it was decided to close the whole of the premises on Tuesday 28th until 5.30 p.m. as a mark of respect and mourning.

A Schedule of Tariffs for electricity is inserted in the Minute Book, which shows some quite complex scales of charges. There was a maximum demand system based on hours of use, a sliding scale based on units consumed ranging from 2d to 6d per unit, separate charges for power for heating and cooking, a special rate for Late Hour Shop Window Lighting

and other schemes for bulk and large users. A cash discount of 2½% was given for prompt payment.

The President did attend the AGM, and spoke to express his concern at legislation before Parliament aimed at the control of Licensed Clubs, though it was not aimed at democratically elected clubs such as the Institute.

He suggested that members might wish for a change of Presidency but members expressed a wish to have a member of the Birchall family in the Presidential Chair for as long as possible.

A gold wristwatch was presented to Mr Matthias in recognition of 20 years' service as Hon. Secretary. John Millard retained the Chairmanship with W. Nicholls as Vice Chairman.

Mrs Howe, the Stewardess, died on November 15 and the Committee expressed their deepest sympathy for Mr Howe on his loss. Mrs Howe had evidently been greatly respected and appreciated by members and villagers generally, and a large number attended her funeral.

1937

The Annual Report shows membership at 141 - a small decrease on the previous year, Sales declined from £833 to £817 but there was sufficient money to place £50 in reserve funds and leave a surplus of £21.

Club teams excelled at Billiards and Mr W. N. L. Stanbury and Mr W. Howe captained two successful teams in the Gloucester and District League.

It is noticeable that by now there had been a shift away from the lectures on farming, educational talks, tea parties and smoking concerts which had featured in the earlier years, and there is much more emphasis on games such as billiards, snooker and skittles, and newly-introduced games such as darts and table tennis. The Minutes reflect this in their recording of mainly internal management affairs.

A further attempt was made to reduce subscriptions to 4/-, but a Special Meeting advised against this in November.

The proposal to install a telephone was again considered but the Post Office advised that there would be a delay of four months and in the meantime they were intending to place a box adjacent to the Post Office, for Parish use generally.

As a consequence, the Committee felt that the needs of the Club could be met without expense this way, and did not proceed with the installation.

As the Post Office was then in Painswick Road, it is difficult to see how much use this would be to the Institute.

To celebrate the Coronation of King George VI on May 12, the Club agreed to contribute £5 to help with a fireworks display organised by the Parish; sales on this day were a record, and the Steward was awarded £1 in recognition of extra work done.

1938

There was a change in the Secretarial arrangements when in February joint General Hon. Secretaries were appointed: Mr H. L. Stanbury and E. Millard. Mr Matthias, who had filled the post for many years, retained the post of Financial Hon. Secretary, which in due course has become that of Treasurer.

The Minutes, however, still in manuscript, are apparently in Mr Matthias' hand, and one must guess that despite protestations over the years about the burdens of office he was reluctant to let go all the reins.

The Steward, Mr Howe, resigned from April 30 and the post was advertised at a salary of £44 per annum. Despite this very modest remuneration there were 23 applicants, of whom 3 were interviewed and a Mr Nash appointed.

Complaints about bad behaviour had become infrequent by now, but the Committee had to deal with an alleged assault by Mr W. Poole (the Skittles team captain) on a Mr Carter, following a match with Matson. After hearing both parties it was felt that there was severe provocation so that punishment was restricted to a two-week suspension for Mr Poole and a reprimand for Mr Carter.

There was, it seems, still no mains water supply as a 200 gallon galvanised water tank was purchased to replace the existing wooden tank.

The Stove in the Billiard Room (removed in the 1960s when gas heating was installed) was to be supplied with coalite because of sparks caused by other fuels, despite the higher cost of 60/- per ton compared with coal at 44/- per ton.

1939

At the AGM a member asked that ladies might be allowed entry as visitors on occasion when parties of men were admitted. A ruling of the Committee was sought and duly given in April that "owing to the limited accommodation in the Institute, ladies be not admitted as visitors".

At this time the health of the President was giving cause for anxiety with heart trouble following an attack of pneumonia.

Mr W. J. Nicholls, who had been Vice Chairman for many years and continued in that office for many more, referred to the "fusion of young and old members of the Club as a social success which gave hope for the future ability of younger men to take their share of its control".

Remarkably, despite the fact that in September war had been declared against Germany, there is no reference in the Minutes to any aspect of war, except that in November there was a query as to whether cigarettes could be sent direct to members in the Services; and later a reference to a donation of £5 to a gift fund for Upton men serving in the Forces.

In December it was agreed to allow the Steward and his wife one afternoon's absence per week, provided there was a responsible person on the premises.

1940

The Annual Report for 1940 listed those members who had joined the Forces. They were:

Sam Sconard

M. Ballinger

M. Cripps

P. Cowland

L. Ireland

R. L. Jeffcut

Colin Rumsey

Donald Smith

John Windo

A. Jackson

Because the war was now making a greater impact on daily affairs, some of the games competitions were abandoned for the duration, but Billiards and Skittles leagues were still functioning as normal.

Life membership was awarded to Sir John Birchall (who was too ill to attend the AGM) and Mr E. Davis who were the only surviving foundation members of the Institute.

Mr L. Stanbury gave up Joint Secretaryship because of business commitments, and Mr J. S. Freckleton took over the work in tandem with Mr E. Millard, an arrangement that was to continue for 20 years.

In August, the Steward was awarded an increase in pay from £44 to £52 per annum, he having intimated (not surprisingly) that he could find more remunerative employment elsewhere.

1941

The news on January 6 of the President's death was received with great regret and many members attended the funeral at midday on Thursday January 6 at Upton Church.

A vote of sympathy was accorded to Lady Birchall and family, and the full text of this was printed in the Minute Book.

Death of Major Sir John D. Birchall
(6 January 1941)

It is with deep regret that the Committee have to conclude this Report by recording the death of their esteemed President, Major Sir John Dearman Birchall, who passed away on January 6th, 1941. After a long illness lasting over two years, the improvement during the past few months raised hopes of his sure if slow final recovery, and the news of his passing came as a shock to members. The largely attended funeral included many representing the Institute, and a message of sympathy was sent by the Committee to Lady Birchall and family. The Institute has therefore sustained the loss of its founder, and only a few older members can recall the Club's inception by the late Sir John in 1898, and its foundation on broad and tolerant lines as a Licensed Club. The framing of rules to place every member on an equality as regards subscription and in the control of its management was worked out with commendable forethought. The keen interest and practical work as Chairman of Committee exemplified by Sir John in his aptitude for detail was curtailed by his departure from the parish a few years ago, and by many public and parliamentary duties. Although these circumstances did not often permit him occupying the Presidential chair, he was continually in touch with the Club and watched its progress with care consistent with his office, and even during the fortnight previous to his decease, had correspondence on its affairs. The good name enjoyed by the Institute for a considerable radius, and the maintenance of its membership and prosperity is a proof of the foresight of its late founder. Members have cause to be grateful to his memory for the existence of an Institution not enjoyed by many parishes of equal size.

THE COMMITTEE.

The Home Guard kept watch over the coffin all night at Upton Church where the body rested before the funeral.

The proceedings of the Annual Meeting were overshadowed by the death of the Founder of the Institute in the previous month. The Chairman read a letter from Lady Birchall acknowledging the Club's letter of sympathy and expressing her hope that Peter Birchall could succeed his father as President. His election was, in fact, approved unanimously.

In his remarks the Chairman, John Millard, said that the Institute was probably the second of its kind in England and was copied as a model for similar clubs subsequently.

By now the influence of the war is increasingly evident and the Club offered

to provide shelter and sleeping accommodation if necessary, in the case of panic evacuation or casualties in the event of enemy action on a large scale.

The number of members in the Forces had now grown to 20 and included Captain P. D. Birchall, the new President.

The Committee was keen to safeguard the interests of its members in the vital question of drinks supplies, and on May 13 it was unanimously agreed to exhibit a notice in the following terms:

"Owing to the restricted supply of intoxicants being barely sufficient for members, the Club cannot undertake to serve parties as visitors".

This problem was exacerbated by the presence of large numbers of soldiers attending dances at the Village Hall. It was decided to admit members only, but to allow regular visitors on other nights to become temporary members who could then buy drinks.

Shortage of drink supplies led, in July, to a strict rationing of beer to two pints per man, plus, if available, one bottle of beer.

1942

Shortages of many different kinds of goods with the continuance of the war was evidenced not only by restrictions on beer supplies but also difficulties experienced in buying such diverse articles as soap and playing cards.

The President was unable to attend the AGM because of his military duties but sent a letter in which he wrote, "For these dark disastrous days manly comradeship plays an even more important part and Institutes such as ours will not, I know, fail to add its quota to the sum of human comradeship." In the Annual Report, the death of the Rev. Hughes was reported, as was the 25th year of service of Mr Matthias in office.

Further beef shortages led to a lengthy discussion, as there were complaints that members who could visit the Club at 5.30 had an advantage over those who worked late. It was therefore decided to open at 8.00 p.m. on weekdays and 7.00 p.m. on Saturdays for a trial period.

A contribution to the Parish Appeal Fund for Christmas gifts to men in the Forces was increased from £5.5.0d to £7.7.0d because of the greater number of villagers now serving.

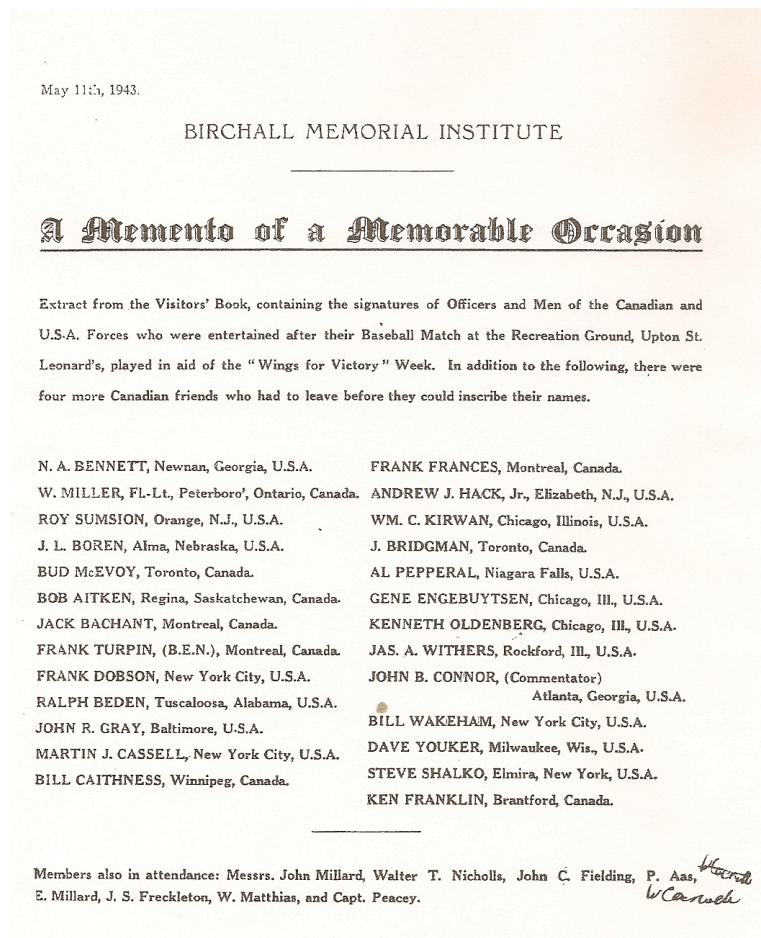
The Jeffcutts family's war service was the subject of a press report, when it was believed that Captain R. C. Jeffcutt had been killed and Trooper R. E. Jeffcutt severely wounded. A letter of sympathy was sent; at the next meeting it was learned that Capt Jeffcutt was a POW and R. E. Jeffcutt was, happily, on the mend.

1943

The President was fretting at delays in getting involved in action, and wrote in January: "this endless training and waiting makes us all anxious to be up and doing something more active. How I look forward to our first peacetime

Annual Meeting. What a reunion it will be!"

On May 11 a visit of officers and men of the Canadian and USA Forces was recorded in a printed leaflet.



In seconding the Annual Report at the AGM, the Vice Chairman, Mr W. Nicholls, said that various new ideas were in the air for post-war organisation of social life, especially in the country, and he ventured to think that the Institute as constituted could not be improved upon.

In another glimpse of wartime domestic problems, the Board of Trade, in response to an enquiry, wrote to say that they could not issue separate clothing coupons for non-domestic purposes such as wiping glasses, to licensed premises, unless tea refreshments were also served.

Water supply remained a problem and a proposed solution was to clean the well and cut 2 ft. off the supply pipe. A site meeting was arranged between the Chairman of the B.M.I. and the Chairman of the Village Hall (Mr W. Nicholls).

Problems also existed with the use of the skittle alley as a Home Guard firing range - the Committee being concerned about the possibility of accidents, and damage to the alley. Visions of Dad's Army conflicts are conjured up when reading the long Minute on this matter.

1944

The long-serving Mr Matthias attended a Committee meeting on January 11 after an illness and said that he would endeavour to carry on until after the AGM.

He did in fact retire then, on doctor's advice, after 28 years and in that time he had missed only one monthly meeting!

At the other end of the age range, P.H. Allen and W. Ramsey were both admitted as new members at age 17.

Whether coincidentally or not, the next Minute drew attention to the strict application of the licensing laws relating to persons under 18, and it was decided to issue a notice warning young members that they are debarred from buying intoxicating liquors until they reach the age of 18.

The Minutes for April 11 are, following the retirement of Mr Matthias, in a different handwriting for the first time in 28 years, Mr Bayliss now having taken on the task, which he in turn continued for 28 years. Few organisations can have enjoyed such periods of continuity!

The effects of war on the vital issue of beer supplies were felt in the large number of troops using the Club, leading to severe shortages. As a consequence, a letter was to be sent to the CO at Belmont Camp, asking him to support an application to the brewers, Flowers, for an increased allocation.

Meanwhile, no drinks were to be supplied to members of the Forces before 8.00 p.m., unless accompanied by a Club member. No increase in supplies was forthcoming.

A dispute over damage to the Skittle Alley when in use by the Home Guard rumbled on, with the Captain arguing that since the Alley had not been requisitioned, no payment could be made. In November, however, a settlement was reached when some repairs were paid for by the Home Guard.

1945

Despite the number of members now in the Forces (51, which was a high proportion of the total membership), the finances of the Club continued to be healthy, with a Reserve Fund now standing at £852.

It seems likely that the large influx of visiting soldiers and other guests, whilst straining beer supplies to the limit, contributed to the satisfactory financial position.

A presentation of £18.10.0d was made to Mr Matthias at the Annual Meeting, and in the next month a photograph to be hung in the Institute was commissioned.

With the end of the war in Europe, it might have been expected that there would be some recognition of the victory at the Club, but the only reference is a Minute on May 15, when Mr Freckleton drew attention to the fact that whilst everyone had two days' holiday to celebrate, the Steward had been

unable to take the holiday. As a result it was agreed to pay Mr Nash £2.2.0d in lieu of holiday.

A Returned Forces Fund existed at this time, which amounted to £14.9.0d, largely as a result of the raffle of a cake made and donated by Mrs Nash. The Committee agreed to make this up to £20.

The vexed question of a piped water supply resurfaced when a quotation was submitted by Gloucester Corporation in December. It was decided to leave the matter in abeyance until the spring.

1946

A Mr Carter raised the question of the Steward's salary in February, saying that increased membership and receipts since 1938 when Mr Nash was appointed justified a higher wage than the figure of £52 fixed at the time. After some discussion, which centred on the value of the free accommodation and services, it was agreed to double the salary to £104 per annum.

Major Peter Birchall was able to attend the AGM for the first time since his election as President. Another first was the attendance of Lady Birchall who addressed the meeting and thanked members for the welcome she had received.

A member, Mr M. Ballinger, asked for soft drinks to be made available, but the Secretary reminded him that on the last occasion when such drinks had been made available only one or two glasses had been sold.

Progress was evidently being made with a supply of piped water as the Committee was asked to sanction the provision of a bathroom in the Steward's quarters. A permit was required for the necessary lead piping.

Beef shortages were still a problem and when the British Legion wished to use the Skittle Alley only cider was likely to be available for them, despite appeals to the brewery for extra beer supplies. After a Special Meeting and approaches to two breweries by a sub-committee, some extra ale was obtained.

1947

In January the licence to carry out the laying of a main pipe for the supply of water was received, and the work at long last could be undertaken.

At the Annual Meeting, the death of Mr W. Matthias in the previous month was recognised by a minute's silence.

A suggestion was made that the Secretary should be elected directly by the members, instead of by the Committee, but on a vote this was rejected.

There was a comment that the Club did not provide sufficient attractions for younger members and that they did not in any event attend the AGM because they were held on Saturday evenings. Mr Pat Allen (one of the younger members) said that in his view the Club did its best with limited accommodation and that this was fully appreciated by the younger members.

There had, it seems, been a quota for members living outside the village of 10% of the total membership, and this having been reached in May, new applicants had to go on a rota.

Another bid by the Steward for an increase in salary was rewarded by an additional £52 per annum, taking it to £156 p.a. The justification was that with increased membership the job had become full rather than part time, but there are no figures to back up this argument and one suspects that large wage increases generally made it necessary to improve the Steward's remuneration to retain his services.

An interesting Minute in November refers to members tripping over footscrapers outside the door. Removal was suggested but the alternative of an outside light was adopted. Did they trip going in or coming out, one wonders?

1948

The effects of post-war shortages were still being felt and the President and Lady Birchall expressed regret that they could not attend the Annual Meeting because of petrol rationing.

There was also a shortage of crisps (the Club was allowed only 18 packets a week) so to avoid disputes; no purchases were made in 1948.

Similar difficulties arose with whisky, only 7 bottles being supplied during the year. These, it was said, were kept for those who were ill! This rather implausible explanation appeared to satisfy members.

The 50th Anniversary of the Institute was celebrated on Monday 25 October (the Club did not open on Sunday, the anniversary date) and a programme was arranged which included speeches at 7.30 p.m. in the Billiard Room, followed by light refreshments and a smoking concert with two or three artistes. The President and Lady Birchall were present.

A dispute with the Steward over the deduction of National Insurance contributions led to his refusing to accept his salary for a month. Members of the Committee felt, however, that it was a statutory duty for him to bear his employee's share, but suggested that the argument might be resolved by awarding an increase in salary; this was debated in October and on a casting vote it was agreed to pay a 10/- a week increase from 1 August.

1949

The year 1948 is the last complete year for which a hand written Minute Book exists, the last such Minutes relating to a Committee Meeting on 14 June 1949.

Regrettably, no Minutes can be found for the years 1949-1972 and although there is little doubt that proper records were kept they are, it seems, totally lost. This may well be due to a very casual attitude towards the maintenance of historic records over many years, which became very apparent when a cupboard in the men's bar and the broom cupboard were cleared some few years ago when minor building operations were carried out.

Fortunately, the documents, which have formed the basis for this study and also provided some interesting memorabilia for the Centenary Art & Crafts Show in May 1998, were rescued in the nick of time.

Also, fortunately, a member found a set of Committee Reports covering the blank years, so that an outline of the Club's affairs can be seen.

The 1949 Report records a membership of 270, but says that attendance at the AGM was poor, probably because no election was necessary on that occasion.

The implementation of the Catering Wages Act, which came into force on 1 August, meant that arrears of wages amounting to £100 had to be paid to the Steward, resulting in a very small surplus on the year's trading.

Billiards, Snooker and Skittles teams all had an encouraging season (but with only moderate success, it appears) whilst John Stanbury was congratulated on winning both the Club Billiards and Snooker handicaps - a record for one of his age and in his first full year of membership.

1950

The Annual Report contains little of special interest. A very small profit of £13 was made on turnover of over £3000 and the report stressed the need for greater support of the Institute to meet rising costs of overheads.

1951

A degree of apathy continued, with an absence of nominations for the Committee (retiring members being duly re-elected) and a poor attendance at the Annual Meeting.

The price of a pint of Flowers beer had been raised by ½d to 1/3 d per pint during the year, as it was feared that a 1d increase would lead to falling sales. The surplus on the year was only £8.

It was noted that after a lapse of 10 years the Sick and Dividend Club, which had been formed early in the century, had been revived with Mr R. Curtis as Secretary.

1952

Membership numbers declined somewhat to 239 compared with 255 in 1951. Turnover was slightly up, but a loss of £47 was incurred on the year, for which a statutory increase in the Steward's salary was partly blamed.

It is interesting to note in the Accounts that only 1d was received in Visitors' Fees and only 5d in the previous year. Evidently there was no strict enforcement of the rule about visitors.

1953

The Report for 1953 is in very similar vein to that of previous years and in the way of reports is fairly anodyne. Wilfred Nicholls, Vice Chairman, (he

held this office for over 30 years) commented on the finances as was usual, and said that with rising costs and lower income the problem of balancing the books could only be achieved with the fullest co-operation of members.

On the brighter side, the Sick and Dividend Club prospered and a dividend of 32/6d was paid to each member just prior to Christmas.

1954

Again very much a repetition of 1953, with a small loss on the accounts. There had, however, been expense in relaying the Skittle Alley, the cost of which was mitigated by much of the work being undertaken voluntarily by members.

There was, as in every year, a comment on the support given to games; notably billiards, snooker and skittles. A member, Mr W. Baker (Jun) was congratulated on winning the League Singles Championship for 1953/54.

1955

An important modification of the building was made when what was described as a Bar Screen was erected in the Reading Room, which replaced the former serving hatch in the hall and in effect created the present bar area.

The cost of this, £87, led to a loss on the year's working, and the usual statement was made urging members to support the Club, and saying that careful thought would have to be given to increasing revenue, by which was probably meant higher prices for drinks - something that was evidently not readily contemplated.

1956

Mr W. H. L. Stanbury, in seconding the adoption of the Annual Report, said that the membership Subscription, which had remained at 5/- for many years, might have to be increased. In fact there had always been a great reluctance to increase subscription rates over the years - an attitude which persists to the present day when the annual fee is probably the lowest in the area.

The death of Mr John Millard in September, after nearly 50 years' association with the Club, much of the time as Chairman, was the cause of deep regret. His passing left a gap, which it was said, would be hard to fill; but every wish for success was expressed for Mr Stanbury, who succeeded him.

1957

There was a sharp upturn in trade, with receipts exceeding £5000, over £1200 more than in 1956.

Whilst membership had increased to 269, the main reason for improved trading was said to be the appointment of Mr Curtis as Steward, on a full-time basis, to replace Mr Nash who had retired after 18 years.

Mr Curtis, who had done much to revive the Sick and Dividend Club as its Secretary, was said to "have done all he possibly can to further the interests of the Institute and its members. Our grateful thanks are certainly due to him, not only for this excellent result, but also for the manner in which he has looked after the premises".

1958

The Institute continued to thrive, with membership up to 282, and a healthy surplus on trading resulting from a record turnover.

Mr W. J. Nicholls congratulated members on the support given and added that in his view "there were very few Clubs in the Country which had the spirit prevailing in our Club".

The Report concluded on an unusually euphoric note, saying "members will realise that this report and statement of accounts is the best we have had".

1959

The year's outcome was once more very satisfactory and it was said (again) that it was the best financial report yet presented; An unusual feature was a reference to a Budget reduction in the price of beer - a rare event indeed!

Mr G. Bayliss was presented with a chiming clock and a fountain pen in appreciation of his 15 years of service as Financial Hon. Secretary.

1960

Foreshadowed in the Annual Report is the provision of a sewerage scheme for the village, which would then make possible the provision of modern toilet facilities at the Club. It seems almost incredible that such a scheme did not already exist and that the Club, and presumably many other premises in Upton, had to rely on primitive facilities as late as 1960.

The provision of a Car Park was also mooted and the Chairman, Mr Stanbury, said that expenditure on this and toilet facilities would seriously deplete the Reserve Fund, which stood at £900.

At long last a telephone had been installed and it was pointed out that although the cost of calls was met by users, the rental represented a significant overhead cost - a situation which is the same today.

The report dealt at length with the various team games in which members participated. Names of leading exponents keep appearing each year and notable successes on the part of E. Merchant, A. Jordan, R. Campbell and J. Stanbury are recorded.

1961

An event of major importance relating to the ownership of the Institute took place, and a full statement was included in the Annual Report at the request of Major Birchall, as follows:

"In February 1961 the Deed conveying the Birchall Memorial Institute from Lady Birchall and her son Major P. D. Birchall to its new owners was fully completed. The new owners will hold the property on trust as an Institute or Club for the benefit of the village.

Sir John had expressed the wish during his lifetime to hand over the property as a gift to local Trustees, and this had now been done. The Deed provides that the Parish Council, the Parochial Church Council, the Village Hall Committee, the Annual General Meeting of Institute members, and the Birchall family each appoint a Trustee.

This ends the first phase of the life of the Institute lasting from 1897 when it was built by the late Sir John Birchall in memory of his father John Dearman Birchall of Bowden Hall, until 1961.

It would be his wish, as it is also of his successors, that the Institute should continue to serve a useful purpose by helping to promote friendship and good will amongst the people of Upton St Leonards".

This form of Trusteeship continued until 1988, when to comply with current legislation the freehold ownership was placed in the hands of members and the 1961 Conveyance Trustees ceased to function.

1962

Major Birchall and Lady Birchall attended the Annual Meeting and, unusually, the President occupied the Chair; his purpose being principally to oversee the transfer of the Deeds of the Institute to the trustees appointed under the 1961 Conveyance.

Lady Birchall handed over the Deeds to Mr P. B. Nicholls, the Trustee representing the Parish Council.

During the year, application had to be made for Club Registration in accordance with the Licensing Act of 1961, but before this was granted certain requirements of the Chief Fire Officer had to be met.

These included an exit door in the Bar, an automatic fire alarm system in the Steward's quarters, new fire extinguishers and a number of other minor items, all at a total cost of £227.2.10d.

The death of Mr J. S. Freckleton was noted as a great loss, he having been Games Secretary for 25 years as well as acting as Assistant Secretary for many years. Mr C. H. Allen took over the combined duties of these posts.

In commenting on the accounts, which showed a profit of £538, the Committee drew attention to the cost of re-clothing the Billiard Table (£49.10) made necessary because of burns caused by members smoking while in play, although there was a rule banning this.

Over the years this problem had recurred, but there is now a total ban on smoking in the billiard room.

1963

Mr W. J. Nicholls was unable to attend the AGM because of illness and after 40 years as a member, during many of which he was Vice Chairman, he had decided not to seek re-election for that position. Mr E. Millard took over.

The improvements to the bar and toilets and modifications to the Skittle Alley were carried out during the year at a total cost of £1636.15.0d - a large sum when set against receipts of £8122. A part of this cost (£642) was met from the Reserve Fund by withdrawing Defence Bonds held by the Club.

1964

The number of members rose to a record 316, and the Chairman referred to an influx of new residents to the village (mainly the newly-developed St Leonard's Close and Six Acres) and the need to introduce them to the Institute.

Considerable success had been achieved from a weekly "Snowball" organised by Mr J. Merrett, who was thanked for excellent decorations he had provided at Christmas and for the great amount of work done by him during the year, behind the scenes.

An organisational change 'was made to ensure greater efficiency in running the Institute by creating four sub-committees to supervise Bar, Building and Fabric, Games, Subscriptions and Membership. The use of sub-committees has continued, as an essential feature of management, though the functions allocated have changed from time to time.

1965

In November the Institute suffered a great loss in the death of Lady Birchall, who with Sir John had been instrumental in providing both the Institute and the Village Hall. Lady Birchall always took a keen interest in the affairs of the Institute and indeed presided at the 50th Anniversary Celebrations. The Report placed on record sincere appreciation and gratitude for what she had done and meant to the Institute.

Reference was made to the provision of a car park, costing over £500, which was regarded as an absolute necessity to encourage members to use the Institute. The wisdom of this is demonstrated by the bar receipts, which increased by over £1000 in the year.

On a brief personal note, 1965 was the year when I came to live in Upton, and I had been here a very short time when I was introduced to the Club. For a third of a century that association has continued and reading the reports and Minutes strengthens my own recollections of events over these years and my affection for this very special institution.

1966

Much of the Annual Report is taken up with financial matters and cost of maintenance and improvements, notably, the car park, which had been completed, and a proposed new Skittle Alley, lounge and bar for which a plan-

ning application had been made.

It is particularly unfortunate that detailed Minutes have not survived because of the very significant decisions made during these years, which were to chart a new path in the history of the Club and which must have been the source of considerable discussion and possibly dissension.

Mr W. H. L. Stanbury, who had been Chairman for 10 years, gave up the post for personal reasons, but stayed on as a Committee member.

1967

The new lounge was opened at Christmas and such was the shortage of funds after completion of all the works that a Mr Drinkwater loaned the necessary furnishings to enable its use. The Club was to equip the lounge with its own furnishings as soon as funds permitted.

The building of this lounge, which has since been extended and improved several times, marked an important change in philosophy in that, for the first time, ladies were able to visit the Club on a regular basis as guests and contribute to its social life.

The rebuilding of the Skittle Alley was also accomplished and together these schemes cost around £4700, all met from the Reserve Fund and profits on the year's trading; quite a considerable achievement!

1968

Despite the efforts of the Club to improve its amenities, it appears that the Skittle Alley was very much under-used, with only one evening being taken up by League games.

The Committee also urged members to support the newly completed lounge (now furnished, at a cost of £300), and stressed the need for this support if the Institute was to pay its way.

Total Bar Receipts were down by £1400 compared with 1967 (on a total of around £9000) and with expenditure rising on overheads and the Reserve Fund now exhausted, it is clear that there was a well-founded anxiety over the Club's finances.

The 70th Anniversary of the Institute was used as an opportunity to hold the official opening of the lounge and skittle alley; a ceremony, which was very well attended.

1969

Some recovery in the financial position occurred in 1969, but this was in considerable measure as a result of there being substantial revenue from gaming machines. This is the first reference to the importance of this source of income, which continues to make it possible to maintain very favourable bar prices and help fund necessary improvements.

The Committee had hoped that by keeping retail prices low, an increase in

turnover would be achieved, in part by attracting more members to the Club. This was not the case, and the Report warned that "unless there is a marked increase in sales, the Committee will certainly have to give serious consideration to increasing retail prices to those normally charged at other establishments".

In December Mr J. D. Merrett, who had only recently taken on the Vice Chairmanship, died suddenly. In a relatively short time he had contributed much to the Club and the changes it had recently undergone. He was a helpful and popular man whose passing was greatly regretted.

The Annual Report also recorded the death of two members, Albert Broadstock and Leonard Millard, who had completed 50 years of continuous membership in 1969.

1970

There was a significant increase in membership to a new total of 473, and this helped to improve the finances to a tune of £723 profit - a welcome change after the dire warnings of the previous year.

Much of the Annual Report dwelt on games, and it was noted that for the first time it had not been possible to enter teams in the Gloucester Billiard and Snooker League since its formation.

On a happier note, the skittles alley was being put to more frequent use.

1971

Although the lounge bar had only recently been built, it had already proved to be too small to meet customers' needs. It was therefore enlarged and carpeted at a total cost of only £676 - a barely credible sum!

The Report commented "we now have a spacious and comfortable room of which the members can justly be proud". A big increase in bar takings was doubtless attributable in part to the success of this amenity.

Sadly, the President's wife died towards the end of the year and the Committee sent sincere condolences to the President on his bereavement.

1972

Even the Annual Report is missing and the only information available is a copy of the Accounts, which showed a reasonable surplus. Until 1971 the Report had been printed in the format adopted in the first year of the Club's existence: this evidently ceased in 1972.

1973

By September 1973 Minutes of Committee Meetings are available once more, giving an insight into decision making rather than having to rely on the somewhat skeletal information given in the Annual Reports.

The Reports themselves have also reappeared, though in a typed rather than

the traditional printed form used for over 70 years.

It being the 75th Anniversary year, strenuous efforts were made as part of the celebrations to involve more residents of the Parish in the Club's affairs. To this end, a circular letter was sent to all residents inviting them to an open evening with a reception at 8.00 p.m. and a short skittles match at 9.00 p.m. Four evenings were set-aside for each of four areas of the village.

Friday and Saturday evenings were devoted to members and their guests, with a special skittles game on Friday and a social evening on Saturday. Snacks and buffet food were provided free for these evenings.

The official celebrations took place on Monday, with the President and Mrs Birchall (Major Birchall had recently remarried) present, together with invited guests from local organisations (the list included the Abbott of Prinknash Abbey, though there is no record of whether or not he came).

As a result of all this activity, 40 new members were elected and the Committee regarded this as a successful outcome.

During the year the question of Sunday opening was again raised but a decision was deferred to consider staffing and other implications.

There was a notable retirement when after 28 years Mr W. Bayliss gave up the post of Secretary - only the third holder of this onerous office in the 75 years of the Club's existence.

Two deaths of long -serving members were recorded, one being Mr E. Millard, with 60 years' membership, and the other Mr W. J. Nicholls, whose involvement with the Club had extended over more than 50 years, many as Vice Chairman.

During the year negotiations took place with the Village Hall to purchase land at the rear of the Club for additional car parking, considerable foresight being shown by the Committee in this matter.

As a consequence of a fuel crisis (resulting from industrial disputes) in the winter, it was decided in December that all electric fires must be taken out of use and coal and log fires provided in the Bar. Outside lighting would be continued.

1974

For some inexplicable reason the Minutes for this year are missing from the binder which includes all other years 1973 to 1985. There is, however, an Annual Report, which yields essential facts.

The land purchase for car parking was still in progress with bureaucratic difficulties causing delay.

There was a reference to the length and difficulty of Committee meetings (which averaged 2 hours) and the complexities of the many problems, which had to be faced (Committee members rarely get much appreciation of their efforts!).

Following the 1973 AGM resolution, the Committee did agree to Sunday opening, but the Trustees would not give their approval so no further action could be taken.

Amongst other building improvements, gas central heating was installed in the Steward's quarters, which also heated the Bar.

1975

Although the question of Sunday opening appeared to have been dealt with in 1974, the Secretary received a letter in March 1975 from the President advising that the Trustees were unable to agree to support this proposal at the present time. The Minute went on to say "the Secretary was asked to acknowledge this and to ask Major Birchall's advice on the question of ultimate decisions and if he would be available to attend the next AGM".

It is probable that the Committee felt that the Management Committee should make a decision of this nature rather than the Trustees, whose duties related to land-holding rather than operational matters, though a rule change would be needed to permit Sunday opening in any event.

A regular feature of the Club at this time was a raffle (of a meat joint) run by Tug-o' - War team Club members, which made some of the proceeds available to a Senior Citizen's Outing. Mr M. Long advised that £100 was in hand as promised for this purpose.

A proposal was made that a charge for visitors should be re-introduced at the rate of 5p per visit and this was approved at the AGM held in the unusually late month of July

The Annual Report referred to the year having been a very difficult one but went into no detail.

One may guess at some administrative difficulties since in December the Treasurer said that for the first time he could say how much the Club had made and spent in the last month.

1976

The land acquisition negotiations for car parking were still dragging on after four years from the initial approach. It appears that some of the delay might have been caused by a hold-up with the Charity Commission.

Although for many years the Steward, Mr R. Curtis, had been complimented on his good work, not everyone was always satisfied, as a letter from Mr T. G. B. Moore in January demonstrated. He complained that the Steward had come into the lounge at 11.00 p.m. in an abrupt and sarcastic manner, which was turning trade away from the B.M.I (the Steward was obviously trying to get late drinkers home). Ben Moore, who was a well-known character at the Club, said of the Steward "If he would come in and speak in a polite way, as civility costs nothing"; he (the Steward) replied "you are all the bloody same" and there were other uncomplimentary remarks.

The Committee took the matter seriously, and carried out a number of interviews. The discussion centred on whether and when time was called, who was served drinks, and when and how the Steward and Bar staff had dealt with customers. They concluded that

there were faults on both sides, and that the rules of the Club must be adhered to, so as to avoid a repetition of the affair.

In March it was agreed, for the first time, to pay an honorarium to the Secretary and Treasurer, but a request by bar staff for a pay increase, there having been no change for three years, was turned down.

1976 saw the first year of the Centenary Year Chairman, Mr Mike Long, in that office after many years' involvement with the Club. In intervening years he has held Vice Chairmanship on many occasions.

1977

A rather cryptic Minute under Any Other Business in January referred to a question asked by the Treasurer as to the Committee's opinion on employing part-time staff, in the light of recent (unspecified) happenings. After a discussion, it was agreed that from January the bars would be staffed by voluntary Committee members.

The Steward was approaching retirement, but in February the Committee said it could not deal with the matter at the moment. Amongst other matters, there was obviously a problem finding accommodation to release the Steward's quarters for a new occupant.

By April the Steward was reported ill, and it was suggested that part-time staff should take over the duties. At a Special Meeting in June, retirement terms were agreed in recognition of Mr Curtis' 21 years service, although one member of the Committee was opposed to any settlement.

Around this time there was some dispute and, it seems probable, ill-feeling between certain members about the running of the raffle and the destination of the proceeds, culminating in the Tug-o-War Chairman withdrawing the team's involvement.

There were difficulties in manning the bars during the summer prior to the appointment of a new Steward and the problems that always come with voluntary manning.

Mr E. and Mrs S. Lee took over the Steward's duties in late summer and the first Report to Committee listed a number of defects in the flat and the bar which needed attention.

The annual Report recorded the completion of the land purchase for car parking, and the submission of a planning application for permission to extend the existing car park.

1978

The death of Mr W. Bayliss, a long-serving member and former Secretary for many years, was recorded in February, and Committee members stood in silence for a few moments as a mark of respect.

At the AGM held in May, a member asked if "A" members (those living outside the village) would continue to remain so permanently, thus being unable to vote or serve on the Committee. The Chairman (Mr W. H. L. Stanbury) said that this was the present position.

This had caused some resentment over the years, and at a later date the rules were to be changed to permit full membership after a three-year period. This satisfied the requirements of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, who also placed some Emits on the

number of such members as a proportion of the total membership.

More importantly, it enabled long-serving members who happened to live outside the parish boundaries to take an active part in the running of the Club.

At this stage, however, there was some resistance to any change, as was demonstrated at a Special Meeting held on 26 September to consider draft rule changes which had been in gestation for a considerable time.

Draft Rule 2 "that the Committee reserve the right to promote an "A" member to full membership" was approved by 6 members with 1 voting against and 4 abstentions. All other rule changes received unanimous approval.

1979

The financial accounts presented to the AGM in May 1979 showed a healthy position with a surplus on the year's trading of £3348 and a total surplus of £12891.

A profit on gaming machines of £3490 accounted for this, as the bar profits were lower than in 1978. Another factor was the small amount spent on the buildings and grounds in the year.

At the meeting the new rules were discussed and accepted, with minor alterations to Rules 2 and 5 suggested by Mr H. Beard, and an addition to Rule 16, relating to members' female guests in the lounge. On a proposition by Mr S. Chambers, seconded by Mr H. Beard, the rules 'were agreed unanimously.

Considerable effort had been put into drawing up these amended rules, which now required the approval of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, and one might have supposed that the whole process would shortly be completed. This was, however, far from being the case, and many years were to pass before the job was finished.

Indeed, in November the Friendly Societies sent a list of changes to the rules which caused the Committee to seek the help of a solicitor and necessitated consultations with the President.

The car park was completed, at a cost of £4415, and discussions took place with the Planning Officer about hedging and screening, and the provision of lighting.

1980

Around this time, whilst the Minutes of each meeting are in place they are, compared 'with earlier records, exiguous, and the Annual Report appears to have been delivered verbally by the Chairman (Mr W. H. L. Stanbury).

Because of the brevity of the Minutes, one has to read between the lines on occasions, to form a view as to what precisely was happening.

The Accounts submitted to the AGM were for 11 months only to 31 December, instead of 31 January as in earlier years, though no reason is given for the change. The AGM was also held much earlier (29 March) than in the recent past.

The recurring problem of the Club Rules appears in the item "Matters Arising" at the AGM, as the following Minute shows: "Further revision of the proposed Rules being

required by the President, an Extraordinary General Meeting to be called in October".

Meanwhile, the Club's solicitor was attempting to resolve with the President those clauses in the Rules to which he objected. There is, however, no record of the E.G.M. which was due to be held in October, so possibly this did not take place because of the uncertainty regarding the President's reservations.

Some discontent on the part of the Steward is evident when a dispute over his wages had to be referred to a Wages Inspector at Bristol for clarification. The matter was resolved in May but there were difficulties over a new working agreement, which rumbled on and may have led to his resignation in November. A new Steward, Mrs S. Ponting, was appointed on November 30.

1981

Problems over finalising the Rules loomed large this year and there was a good deal of correspondence between the Club's solicitor, Mr J. Cook, the Registrar of Friendly Societies and the President. A Special Meeting was held on 3rd March to make arrangements for the AGM and the Chairman agreed to approach the President to try to reach agreement on the new Rules.

The differences were, however, not resolved by the time the AGM took place, and indeed the final settling of the two main issues was not to be accomplished for some years yet.

There were two major difficulties. First, when the ownership of the Club was handed over by the Birchall family to what are termed the Conveyance Trustees in 1961, the intention was to leave ultimate control of the property in the hands of representatives of several village organisations.

Subsequent legislation made this situation untenable, since the Friendly Societies Act of 1974 required ownership to be vested in the members, and the Rules had to acknowledge this fact.

Secondly, and also connected with the control of the Institute, the concept of "A" membership was to retain control by members who were resident in the village. This effectively disenfranchised many members and the Friendly Societies Acts did not permit this unless strict limits were imposed on the proportion of such members to total membership.

Understandably, Major Birchall was not happy about the removal of the 1961 Trustees (or indeed the "A" membership problem) whilst the Committee was frustrated at its inability to get new Rules in place.

The Annual Report did touch on other subjects, and whilst less space is devoted to the activities of the various games involving the members, reference is made to the full use being made of the skittle alley and the cricket, football and tug-of-war teams get a honourable mention.

The Tug-of-War team was, for a number of years, a force to be reckoned with in the county and beyond, and some of the team were, and indeed still are, very active in the running of the Institute.

The Report also referred to the installation of gas central heating in the Bar, Billiard

Room, Lounge and Skittle Alley as being a great improvement on the mix of appliances previously in place.

A unanimous decision was made at the AGM to increase subscriptions to £1 (25p for pensioners) in 1982. Even at this new level, the amounts were derisory, bearing in mind that on the formation of the Club 4/- was the fee for all members.

To celebrate the Royal Wedding of Prince Charles and Diana, Mr M. Ponting formed a member's team to play the Upton Cricket Club on 29 July. The Club provided liquid refreshment, the Steward some sandwiches, and sponsorship was sought, the proceeds of which were to go to the Fund for Pensioners. Photographs of the teams taking part in this event are displayed in the Bar.

A major extension to the cellar was completed towards the end of the year, at a cost of £4617, the need for this reflecting a growth in trade over many years.

Mr J. Rumsey, who with his brother Mr C. Rumsey, had been involved with Club administration for many years and who had taken on the Secretaryship for a short period, died in 1981 and a letter of condolence was sent to his widow Mrs E. Rumsey.

1982

At the first meeting in 1982 a request for a television set to be installed during the World Cup was discussed but no decision taken. In pubs and bars since then, television geared particularly to football and many other sports has assumed greater importance. To meet customer demand, its provision is now almost universal, a situation which has enabled the programme providers to raise prices frequently and substantially.

A one-line statement at the Annual Meeting said that no progress had been achieved with the Friendly Societies over the Rules.

A possible extension to the lounge was discussed but the erection of a garage was considered to be a first priority. At subsequent meetings the feasibility of linking the two was considered, and Mr A. Luck was given the task of preparing working drawings. The project was delayed because of concern about finances and did not in fact come to fruition in 1982.

The Stewardess, Mrs S. Ponting, joined the Committee meeting in July on crutches, having sustained an accident while playing tennis. She was given wishes for a speedy recovery and evidently made sufficient progress to go on holiday that summer.

The Sex Discrimination Board received a complaint during the year and the Club forwarded all the information required to enable them to give their opinion to the complainant, who was invited to attend a meeting of the Committee. The matter was resolved satisfactorily to the Institute.

A relatively minor matter was reported in November when the Flag had been vandalised; there is a tendency to believe that such pointless acts of destruction have only recently intruded on village life, but such is not the case as there had been at least one earlier instance of damage to the flagpole. One of the more unusual, and appreciated, features of the Institute is the tradition of flying the flag at half-mast on the death of a member.

1983

Some concern was expressed at the Annual Meeting held on 5 March at the drop in profits revealed in the accounts, but as no copy of these accounts has been kept, it is not possible to know the exact situation. There was sufficient concern, however, to form a Financial Sub-Committee to check on the markup on goods sold.

Another measure, which was suggested and agreed at the meeting, was the introduction of a joining and re-joining fee of £5 in addition to the annual £1 subscription; this was not to extend to the over-65s.

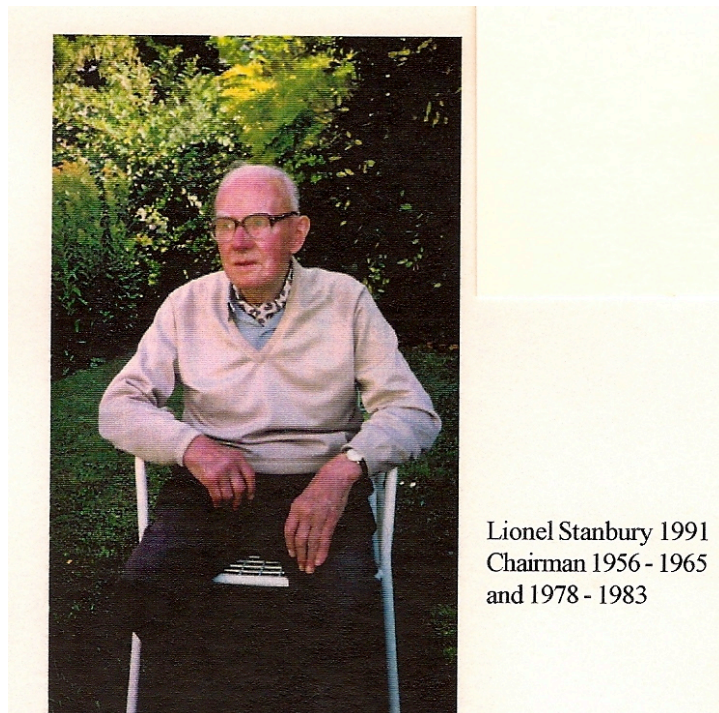
A doorkeeper was to be employed to ensure that non-members were refused entry other than as guests in accordance with the Rules.

The first Committee Meeting held only two days later decided on random checks being undertaken in preference to the appointment of a doorman.

This has been a vexed question for many years, and the so-called random checks were rarely if ever carried out. It has, however, often proved difficult to find a suitable doorman, a situation which in the past couple of years or so been rectified, to the general benefit of the Club. Currently Mr G. Jones maintains strict surveillance over entrants.

At the same meeting a proposal to elect men with 40 years' membership to Honorary status was deferred, and to be considered in November.

In November, Mr W.H.L. Stanbury resigned from the Chairmanship, for reasons stated in a letter, the contents of which are not known. His place was taken by the Vice Chairman, Mr R. Price, for the remainder of the year.



1984

Minutes of proceedings continue to be very brief during this period and there is some confusion over dates.

In March it was reported that building plans were causing problems and Mr A. Luck was given the task of sorting them out and obtaining prices for a lounge extension and garage, and renewal of the Skittle Alley roof.

A tender price of £16,410 was received, presumably to cover all the works, although this is not spelt out.

At the AGM on 5 May, a presentation was made to the former Chairman, Mr Stanbury, of a decanter and glasses. A bottle of brandy was included to ensure that the glasses would not remain unfilled.

Mr A. Luck became the new Chairman at the first Committee meeting after the AGM, at which it was agreed that in future elections candidates should exhibit photographs of themselves to accompany the nomination. They never have done!

The Steward submitted her resignation in June and a temporary manager, Mr R. Smith, was appointed for one month.

When applying for renewal of the Club licence, the Chairman was asked by the Licensing Justices for details of the procedure for promoting Associate Members to full status. The Committee agreed in August that the period for promotion should be three years, but at the discretion of the Committee. At the same time, it was decided that no more Associate Members should be admitted until further notice.

A new Steward, Mr W. Dobbs, took up his duties in August. Building work on the lounge extension was finished during the summer, and furnishings and curtains were installed in September.

Very surprisingly, a proposed trip to Wadsworth's Brewery in September had to be cancelled because of lack of support. In recent years the problem has been to limit the numbers who can visit the present supplier's (Bass) brewery when the annual invitation is extended, because of its great popularity, not entirely due to academic interest in the brewing processes.

1985

There is no reference to the date when the lounge extension was officially opened, but in January an invitation to villagers to come to an "Open Evening" was approved and in February the event was reported to have been a great success.

An "Entertainment Night" held in the lounge was also well supported.

At the AGM approval was given to an increase in the honoraria to be paid to the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary, recognising the importance of these offices and the difficulty, on several occasions, in finding someone able and willing to take on these jobs.

No progress had been made on finalising the Rules and discussion on this was deferred until Mr Cook, the Club's Solicitor, could be present. On July 8 the Committee was told

that there was still no sign of the problems being resolved.

On August 1, a Barbecue and Pig Roast was organised by Mr M. Long. This proved a resounding success and has been repeated each year subsequently, and is a favourite summer event in the village.

In October, Mr D. Ferraby, having taken over the Solicitor's duties, came to the meeting and explained where the Parish Boundary was, for the purpose of defining "A" membership. It is, in fact, that which existed in 1941 prior to later changes in the administrative area of Upton and its neighbouring local authorities.

1986

A popular game at the Institute was shove halfpenny and some of the regular players asked for a new board to replace the one that had been in use for many years.

Within a month of its installation there were complaints about the dimensions of the new one. After consulting the Secretary of the Shove Halfpenny League, the Committee was told that there was no standard size for a board, so to placate the members concerned, the old board was reinstated (it still resides in the Bar but is now rarely used).

The question of the parish boundaries was dealt with by the Club's Solicitor at the AGM and the meeting accepted that the boundaries relevant at the time of the 1941 Trust Deed should define the area for full membership, thus bringing many associate members into the category of full members and correcting the previous imbalance.

In this year I was elected to serve on the Committee, so that my knowledge of the Club's affairs hereafter does not depend solely on written records and observations as an ordinary member in earlier years.

There were problems in finding anyone willing to take on the post of Secretary and a first task was to find someone suitable; in a break from tradition, Mrs C. Ellson agreed to take on the job and she served the Committee efficiently for several years.

The other task which I undertook was to attempt to break the impasse over the Rules, which was now causing much concern, and also clearly to define the 1941 boundaries which were an essential part of the Rules.

At a meeting on May 12 a full report was presented which, following consultation with Mr Ferraby, our Solicitor, dealt exhaustively with land ownership, the Trust Deed, the boundary, possible amendments to draft Rules and ownership of the car park land.

These detailed administrative matters were important and took up a lot of Committee time, but meanwhile the Club was functioning satisfactorily with excellent financial results in 1985. Major and Mrs Birchall visited the Club on May 24, to see all the recent improvements on the same day that they attended the opening of the Village Hall extension.

Reverting to the problem of rules, land ownership and so on, the position was fully set out in Minute 106/86 of 14 July 1986 (Minutes were, for the first time, numbered, making reference much simpler). This is an important Minute and it spells out that the 1961 Trustees had no standing in the Club or its management and that no amended Rules had been registered since 1963; effectively, the Club had been operating without

valid Rules for over 20 years!

A new venture was planned as an experiment in September, when a Bingo session was to be introduced. The experiment had to be deferred until December, but was deemed a success. Currently bingo, under the direction of Mr R. Tranter, is an essential feature of the social life of the village, catering for people, often elderly, who want to enjoy an evening out close to their homes.

The Steward, Mr Dobbs, resigned in September and a temporary manager took over pending a new appointment.

The saga of rule changes and related matters continued, with a meeting with the President aimed at telling him of the legal position, and seeking his acceptance of necessary changes. This was followed by a Special General Meeting at which members approved new (revised) draft Rules.

In October a new appointment of Mr & Mrs Hibbard to the Stewardship was made.

1987

Sadly, Mr A. Luck who had, during and indeed before his Chairmanship, been energetic in bringing about many improvements to the Institute, died in February after a long illness. Mr M. Long (Vice Chairman) took over the duties for the remainder of the year.

At the first meeting after the AGM, Mr A. Martin was elected Chairman, with Mr Long remaining as Vice Chairman. Mr I. Crowe continued as Treasurer for a second year with some assistance being given on routine duties to enable this most important function to be carried out satisfactorily.

Following a suggestion made at the Annual Meeting, Mr Long proposed to introduce a raffle to be held each Friday evening with the object of assisting pensioners and local charities, at the discretion of the Committee.

This has been a regular and popular feature since then and has provided substantial monies for these projects, in particular funding a Christmas lunch and party for pensioners, which is widely appreciated.

The Club has also developed an enviable record in its help to a selected charity each year, financed from a number of sources and events, and yielding around £1000 each year.

Since being built, the Institute had never had a sign, other than the inscription over the front door, to indicate its identity; but in May it was decided that an external sign saying "B.M.I." was needed. This arose from an incident when a couple, shortly to be married, called at the side door fairly early one morning expecting to meet the Rector for a wedding rehearsal. The slightly ecclesiastical nature of the architecture had led them to suppose that this was the Rectory. They were greeted by the Steward, partly clothed, heavily tattooed and clearly not "of the cloth"; the new sign has prevented any further misunderstandings.

By June there was concern being expressed about the fall-off in trade and whilst the Committee agreed that more might be done to make the Club more attractive, it was felt that the Steward and Stewardess needed to provide a good service and welcoming atmosphere.

These concerns were even more evident 'when it was clear that members were "voting with their feet" and there was dissatisfaction with the service being given.

Matters came to a head fairly quickly and Mr Hibbard's resignation in October was accepted. Mr & Mrs Howard had meanwhile undertaken the duties on a temporary basis and were appointed with effect from November as full time Stewards.

So as to recover lost trade, a "Promotion Evening" was arranged in December, with free snacks and beer at half price. This was followed by a busy Christmas programme, which included a lunch for pensioners followed by entertainment, which brought many letters of appreciation.

1988

As a novel way of raising funds for the selected charity - in this case "Guide Dogs for the Blind" - the Steward suggested having a 24-hour indoor sports marathon, which he would organise. Many Club members took part in this enterprise (some, for example, throwing darts throughout the night), which received enthusiastic sponsorship.

In March all the 1961 Trustees had formally accepted the changes, which now resulted in the freehold ownership of the Institute passing to its members, through Financial Trustees appointed by the membership.

The first Committee meeting following the AGM was an important one for me, as the previous Chairman, Mr A. Martin ceased his membership of the Committee and I was elected to the post of Chairman.

I was very conscious of the onerous nature of this office and undertook the task with more than a little trepidation. The Institute is in its way a fairly substantial business relying on voluntary effort from Committee members for much of its success, and always having to try to satisfy its customers who demand a high level of service.

One relatively minor problem was solved at the April meeting concerning the snooker table. For years it had been alleged that the pockets were too tight (a problem which many players experience at any table!). To remove any cause for valid complaint in future, £500 was spent on maintenance and improvements to ensure that the table complied with full league standards.

Although of only minor interest in historical terms, it is instructive when perusing the Minutes to see the considerable volume of work, which had to be dealt with by Committee members.

At this time in particular, there was an almost endless stream of repair, maintenance and decorative matters to cope with. There was also a drainage problem, which was to cost a great deal of money to correct.

It was fortunate that Mr E. Goss, who was the leading member of the Building Sub-Committee at the time, was an expert in this field and was able to give sound advice and get the necessary work done.

For some time there had been dissatisfaction with the Club's main supplier of beers and it was decided, after discussions, to change to Bass who have remained the principal supplier of most drinks since then. Throughout its history, the Club has remained independent of any brewery, however, and this situation exists today.

A visit from an Environmental Health Inspector in October led to a requirement to deal with a number of items, some minor, some major, which cost in the region of £1600 and added still further to the work of the Building Sub-Committee.

The renewal of the Club's licence required the attendance of the Chairman in Court, when after a rather unexpected interrogation, the Justices required two changes to the draft Rules (these were still awaiting the approval of the Registrar from whom it was proving difficult to obtain any response).

1989

The £1000 required to train a Guide Dog was raised by January, and a cheque was presented at an informal ceremony when a local representative of the Association (himself blind) brought his guide dog, so that members could see the closeness of the partnership between dog and man.

In March, Mrs Ellson, who had given excellent service as Secretary, resigned because of her other commitments and the difficult task of finding a replacement began. For a second time a lady, Mrs L. Cook, was appointed since no member of the Committee was willing to serve.

It proved almost equally difficult to fill the post of Treasurer, but Mr A. Kennedy, with some reluctance, took on the job.

The death of Mr A. Paget who had made an important contribution to the Club in earlier years both as Chairman and Vice Chairman was reported with regret and a letter of condolence was sent to his widow, Mrs W. Paget.

With Bingo firmly established as a regular entertainment, the need for a modern electronic number selector to replace the old machine was recognised, and new equipment was bought. This also made life much easier on raffle and draw nights, removing the need for volunteers to tear and fold hundreds of tickets to place in the drum.

The cry of "Shake-em-up" when, as sometimes happened in the past, two consecutive numbers were drawn, now had no relevance, removing a little of the humour and (usually) good-natured banter previously enjoyed.

1990

Following years of difficult negotiations, almost interminable delays and a vast amount of paperwork and effort on the part of the Club's Solicitors, Chairmen past and present, the Club Rules were finally approved by the Registrar of Friendly Societies on 21 February.

They were put to the Annual Meeting on 7 April and approved unanimously. Printed booklets were distributed in September, with a message from the Chairman.

Getting to the end of this long road gave me some satisfaction as it seemed at many times as though it would never be reached. Prior to this, the Club had effectively operated without rules for several decades, as those printed in 1969 and in 1985 had no legal standing (life went on nevertheless and for daily practical purposes few members were aware of or cared about the legal niceties).

In the 92nd Annual Report the cost of works on drains and main services was shown as £12000, a substantial sum that reduced the year's surplus to a paltry £68.

Amongst other measures aimed at boosting the finances was a proposal to increase subscriptions from £1.00 to £2.00 for ordinary members and from 25p to £1.00 for pensioners. Joining fees were however to be reduced as an incentive for new members. The meeting gave its approval.

In April Mrs Cook gave up the Secretaryship, and a new member of the Committee, Mr D. Smart, took up the duties. The ladies had given their help at a critical time and their efforts were greatly appreciated, but the presence of a Committee member in this post was clearly desirable. Mr I. Crowe resumed the Treasurer's duties, which he continues to discharge.

By now the lounge was in need of a major refurbishment and Mr E. Goss and Mr D. Elison came forward with a scheme to include improved bar and wall lighting, new curtains and pictures and a high performance speaker system. The total estimated cost of £6444 was approved in July.

Work began promptly and was completed in time for an official opening and gala night on 13 October. As part of the scheme an artist member of the Club, Mr R. Tickner, painted and presented a watercolour of the Institute to be hung in the lounge, whilst Mrs R. Martin, wife of a member, Mr J. Martin made new curtains to match the general decor.

The official opening ceremony was carried out by the President, who was accompanied by Mrs Birchall, both of whom expressed their thanks for a very enjoyable evening.



Major P.D. Birchall (re-opening of the lounge 1990 - S. Gyles to left)

An album was purchased at this time to contain photographs of this event and other occasions suitable for inclusion in the archives of the Club. A permanent home has yet to be found for this, and indeed other valuable historical records.

1991

A feature, which had been lacking throughout the Club's history, was a Committee Room for members' meetings. Various rooms had been used, including the bar, the snooker room, the skittle alley and the lounge. They were unsatisfactory in many respects and in particular often lacked privacy. For a short period, meetings were held on

other premises, again with obvious drawbacks.

A scheme was devised to convert the unused front entrance hall into a committee room. The telephone, which had been installed there, (a most inconvenient place for users of the lounge and skittle alley) was re-sited in the rear entrance lobby, to everyone's advantage.

The Committee Room was officially opened on 2 September with the Chairman proposing a toast and Mr R. Tranter providing appropriate refreshment.

Meanwhile, the Entertainment Sub-Committee had a busy summer with a Karaoke Night in July, the popular Pig Roast in August and a Charity Race Night later that same month. These were followed in the autumn by a Quiz Night and another Karaoke session- some of these events raising substantial sums for the selected charity.

The pensioners' Christmas Lunch was now an established popular event; so popular, indeed, that strict rules of eligibility had to be drawn up to ensure that the scheme was not abused or embarrassment caused.

1992

Damage to Club property rarely occurred, but early in the year the snooker table was found to have been the subject of a mysterious attack which made substantial repairs necessary.

The opportunity was taken to re-cloth the table when making good the damage, the whole job costing over £1000. The culprit was never found.

Around the same time, a small number of younger members were reported as causing some trouble in the village and appropriate disciplinary action was taken. Happily, there has been no repeat of these problems.

The Annual Report referred to recent heavy expenditure on repairs and improvements, saying that the emphasis had now shifted to marketing and expanding the Club's activities. In listing some of these, the popularity of Quiz and Karaoke evenings organised by Mr E. Williams received special mention.

The President, Major P. D. Birchall, announced his intention to retire and at the A.G.M. Mr Piers Birchall was unanimously endorsed as his successor. Following the A.G.M., Mr D. Smart took over the Chairmanship.

A proposal put forward at the Annual Meeting to open the Club on Sunday lunchtimes was considered at a Committee meeting on 1 June when it was decided to refer to a Special General Meeting a recommendation that, for an experimental period of 6 months, the Club should open from 12.00 noon to 2.30 p.m. That meeting, held on 20 July, voted by a show of hands in favour of the experiment, which required an amendment to the Club Rules. These were duly approved and for the first time in its history trading took place on a Sunday during August. An extension of trading hours on Saturdays during the afternoon was also approved at this time.

Although no major building works were undertaken this year, an additional feature was added externally in the form of a patio wall, with flowerbeds, which at a cost of £1000 greatly enhanced the attractiveness of the patio area and led to its increased usage during the summer.



Following a well-patronised and enjoyable "Greek Evening" in July, organised by my wife, Pauline, the Stewardess Mrs E. Howard and myself, there were requests for an "Italian Evening" based on similar lines to be held in October.

Regrettably and inexplicably, all the planning having been done, including obtaining a travel voucher from Thomas Cook as a prize, the response was almost nil and the event had to be cancelled.

1993

The 95th Annual Report dealt at some length with the many changes, which had been instituted during the year, and the initiatives taken to make the Club as attractive as possible to its customers.

The Chairman emphasised the contribution made by the staff, full and part time, and the Committee members, in responding to these changes, in particular new opening hours. He commented that whilst constructive criticism was welcomed, it should be borne in mind that Committee men were volunteers committed to doing their best to ensure the Club's success,

Social activities and raffles resulted in £1000 being raised for Guide Dogs for the Blind (the second such contribution). The dog was given the name "Toby" and Bass donated a keg of "Toby" beer to mark the occasion.

The usual indoor games were supplemented by Rugby and Cricket matches during the summer. In each game the Chairman's Over 35s team got the better of the Under 35s, whether because of superior skills or fitness was a matter of debate thereafter.

During the year, negotiations took place with Bass, which resulted in improved terms being offered for beer supplies, which brought significant and continuing financial

benefit.

1994

For some time it had been recognised that improvements were needed in the men's bar and in January a consultant's report was presented which outlined a scheme to modernise the bar and associated fittings.

Quotes for the work were given at later meetings and a decision was made to go ahead with a scheme to cost no more than £6500. The new bar was fitted in June and greatly enhanced the appearance of the serving area.

An entirely new venture received Committee support when, following talks with several members who were artists, I thought it possible that an Art Show could be mounted with a sufficient number of good quality exhibits to attract the public to view it.

It was the intention to use the show, to be held in the Skittle Alley, to help raise money for the selected charity - in this case The Spring Centre - whilst bringing the Institute to the notice of Upton residents who might otherwise know little or nothing about it.

Had I been aware of the amount of effort involved in putting on this show, my enthusiasm might have been lessened, but in the event, and with good support especially from Mr E. Goss, Mr & Mrs P. Mantle, members of The Spring Centre Trust, as well as our Chairman and Committee members, and not least the artists, it turned out to be a great success.

Those who visited the show (and there were several hundreds) admired the quality of the entries. Donations from the artists and sales of raffle tickets and schedules raised over £250 for The Spring Centre.



The First Art Show - 1994 (L to R - Geoff. Chambers, Ray Tickner, Sue Mantle and Eric Goss)

Following the earlier decision to open the Club on Sunday lunchtimes, there were pressures to extend the facility by opening the lounge on Sunday evenings. Difficulties were raised about staffing and stock control, but in July the Committee decided in principle to introduce evening opening.

This probably brought to a head a number of issues, which had caused dissatisfaction with the Steward and Stewardess, and they left the service of the Club in August. For a short period Committee members managed the Club until the appointment of a new Steward, Mr K. Hyde, in September.

In the autumn an extensive programme of entertainment was provided including a Quiz Night and a Charity Race Night, live entertainment in the lounge, and as an experiment a concert given by a soprano, which although enjoyed by those present was, sadly, not well supported.

The Christmas programme included a draw, which had been expanded to include carol singing and a happy hour, to become a major attraction to customers.

All this took place despite the resignation of the Chairman in November. He had been most energetic during his service on the Committee and the Secretary was asked to place on record its gratitude for his hard work over four and a half years.

The Vice Chairman took the chair and saw the Club through a rather difficult time.

1995

The recently appointed Steward, Ken Hyde, made his first report to the January Committee meeting, which gave members an opportunity to congratulate him and his wife Pauline on the birth of a daughter on Christmas Day.

An occasion unlikely ever to be repeated took place on 21 January, when the National Lottery Draw was held in the Village Hall, and the Club lounge was used to interview previous winners and to provide a build-up to the Draw itself. Bondend Road was virtually taken over by the BBC and the quantity of lighting, cameras and other equipment installed in the lounge had to be seen to be believed. Members turned up in force, and a carnival atmosphere prevailed.

Anthea Turner was at the time the main presenter. The star of the show from the Club's point of view, however, was Keith Floyd, who, once the programme was ended, spent the rest of the evening enjoying every aspect of the Club (not least the refreshment available) and was exceedingly well-liked by all who met him. He said of the B.M.I. that it was everything a good Club should be.

The BBC engineering and other staff also enjoyed the facilities and in recognition made a generous collection for The Spring Centre, bringing the total donation to £1050, which the charity gratefully acknowledged.

In view of the success of the Art Exhibition in 1994, the event was repeated in May, this time to include a Crafts section. The total number of entries rose from just over 100 to 128, all from members and their partners.

The charity, on this occasion the Willow Trust, benefited to the tune of £260 from the show, and again a large number of visitors came and saw the excellent facilities, which the Institute offered, as well as enjoying the show.

Large numbers also attended the annual Pig Roast, which has become one of the most popular events in the village.

1996

Looking to the future, with the possibility of needing land for extensions or more car parking space, enquiries were made about Parochial Church Council and adjacent to the B.M.I., which, with the closure and relocation of the Junior School, might be surplus to requirements. Nothing came of this, however, since, for the time being at least, an alternative parochial use had been found for the land and buildings in question.

Arising from a Steward's Report that cars were, on occasion, driven at excessive speed to and from the premises, a traffic calming measure was introduced by installing a ramp in the drive, at a strategic point. Mr M. Barnfield arranged for its purchase and fitting, and although a little severe on car suspension, it has certainly done the job it was intended to do.

Comment was made at the March Committee meeting that, with the advent of the new Steward and the relaxed and friendly atmosphere enjoyed particularly by older members, lunchtime trading had shown a marked improvement.

A simple but important rule change received the approval of the Registrar of Friendly Societies in May, when the latest date for paying subscriptions was changed to January 31, from March 31. The lengthy period previously allowed had created unnecessary administrative effort and also tended to cause members to forget the renewal requirement altogether, with consequent discontent at having to re-join. The new arrangement, after the usual teething troubles, has proved to be beneficial.

An Arts and Crafts Exhibition was again presented in May, this time in aid of the Meningitis Trust. Interest shown by exhibitors was almost too great, and with a total of 167 entries the Skittle Alley was filled to capacity. A record £348 was raised for the Trust.

Despite unusually poor weather, the Pig Roast was again well patronised and thanks to Mr R. Moore and many other helpers are recorded in the Minutes.

The Christmas programme was now well established with a Senior Citizens Party, a Christmas Draw followed by carol singing, and live entertainment on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. The popularity of the Draw was such that it was possible to give over 100 prizes to a total value of £750, this being the whole of the value of draw entries, a feature which commends itself to the punters.

1997

With the Centenary Year approaching, the Committee continued with a programme aimed at bringing the whole of the premises and its surrounds into tip-top order, with complete exterior and interior decorating and refurbishment when necessary.

Much of this considerable undertaking fell to be organised by Mr D. Ellson. The biggest task of all was to reshape the lounge in such a way as to provide maximum space for customers with a modern bar area to replace the existing bar, which fell below current requirements.

The resulting imaginative scheme (which included much-improved access, toilet

facilities for ladies and some roofing work) was completed in July at a cost of around £38000. An Open Day was held on 16 August to display this fine facility now available to the village.

Whilst some additional work on ventilation and temperature control was found to be desirable, the lounge has proved increasingly popular and is a tremendous asset to the Institute.

Other Centenary-related matters were also in train and, chosen from a number of designs produced by Mr E. Williams, a club logo was adopted for use on all appropriate material.

At the same time Mr R. Moore, on his own initiative, arranged for 100 numbered Centenary Mugs to be specially made and inscribed, to be ready by January 1. Bass agreed to supply a Centenary Ale, from the same date.

Meanwhile a small sub-committee had been formed, its main purpose being to draw up a full centenary programme and arrange for this to be printed and available to all members and visitors to the Club.

An addition to clubs and teams operating under the umbrella of the B.M.I. was the Upton St Leonards Probus Club, formed in the autumn, and meeting on a fortnightly basis to hear talks on a great variety of topics.

Another, very different, activity, fishing, which had proved exceedingly popular, also became officially the B.M.I. Fishing Team. In each case, all participants are Club members, as is the case with skittles, football and other games, and the existence of these diverse groups accords very well with the objects of the Club set out in the preamble to the Rules.

1998

Further contributions by members to help in making the Institute interesting and attractive to users is evident in a group of photographs of the Club and other notable local scenes, which now grace the lounge foyer. These were selected from a number taken by members, who are also members of a local photographic society.

Also displayed in the foyer is a summarised Honours Board, showing the holders of the main offices of the Club over the past century. A good deal of research was needed to extract the necessary details, as, unusually for an organisation of this standing, no continuous record of service had ever been maintained. From 1998 onwards a traditional honours board will be displayed and updated annually.

The printed programme of events for the year (which has had to be modified a little to meet changed circumstances) showed the first event as a Feature Quiz. This was organised again by Mr E. Williams and as it fell on Valentine's Night provided an opportunity for appropriate prizes and decorations. Everyone who took part said how pleasant an occasion it had been.

An Easter draw, initiated by two members, Mr D. Gobey and Mr D. Murphy a year earlier, was made in April and continues to be a successful venture.

A Gala Bingo Night in July moved from its programmed date to a Sunday evening with music and other attractions, hosted by Mr R. Tranter, proved to be extremely popular.

Other events will take place throughout the year to maintain interest, culminating in the President's Centenary Evening on October 24.

After a year's break, the Arts and Crafts Show was re-introduced in May with an additional feature for the Centenary Year of a collection of Club memorabilia, which proved of considerable interest to many visitors.



As always, standards were high and amongst the craft section some of the woodwork and marquetry in particular was greatly admired.



Peter Ibbetson with woodcarvings of: Trout, Bosom Friends, Childs stool, Jacobean Bench stool, Chess Board, Parachute Regiment Badge, Otter and Pig.

Work on the Club building continued meanwhile with a complete redecoration of the men's bar and the pool and snooker rooms, the latter being carpeted for the first time in its history, a feature welcomed by the cleaning staff, as well as the players.

The costs of all the work carried out in 1997 were reflected in the accounts, which for the first time in many years showed a small deficit. Reserves had, however, been accumulated and with the strength of the current trading situation the Treasurer expressed confidence in the Club's financial position and its future.

With bar sales of over £116000 and membership of over 600, compared with £130 and 80 a century ago, there are obviously good grounds for such optimism.

Postscript

This was, in the introduction, described as a short history. It has turned out to be rather longer than originally intended. Even so there are omissions.

It has not been possible to name all those who, over the years, have contributed to the wellbeing of the Institute as Committee or ordinary members. Neither has it been feasible to refer individually to all the part time bar and cleaning staff: some of whom, like Janet Richings, Mary Groves and Pat Brown have served the Club for many years and others who have also maintained excellent relations with customers and helped to create the friendly atmosphere so important to a social Club.

Wives of members involved in Club affairs, not least my own, also deserve recognition for the help and support given in all manner of ways, often in times of difficulty and tension.

On the other side of the coin, there may be repetition of certain themes which, if time permitted for revision, would benefit from a lighter treatment. I have, however, done the best I could to give an accurate account of the main features of a hundred years of history and I hope that it will stir some memories and provide an insight into those early years beyond the reach of memories.

Geoff. Chambers

August 1998

