

Baughurst Parish Council

Heath End Village Hall – A History

Introduction

In 2013 Stan Terrett (a long serving councillor of Baughurst Parish Council) published his book "Baughurst..a history" which provided some fascinating insights into Baughurst and the people who lived here up until the around 1940s. In the Newsletter we wanted to pay tribute to this fine work and the earlier "Memories of Baughurst" – a collection of reminiscences – by extracting stories about places and people of Baughurst for you. These stories are amplified on the Baughurst Parish Council web site.

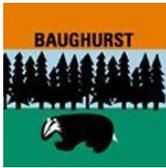
Early 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century, meetings in Baughurst used to take place in the school as it was the only place large enough. However, this venue had its drawbacks - e.g., being very small and, as it was controlled by the Rector and the School Governors, the type of activity was restricted.

Nationally, the need for better rural facilities had been recognised and the first few Village Halls started to appear in the 1910's but it was not until around 1920 that the National Council for Social Service (NCSS) took up the cause, especially with the needs and expectations of returning servicemen. They issued a bulletin in 1921, 'Better Living in Rural Areas', which highlighted village life still being based on the feudal system.

This did not go down well with the gentry and clergy but, with a rising popular demand for better rural leisure provision, the NCSS issued a model trust deed, with trustees coming from local voluntary organisations. They also gave loans of a sixth of the building cost and grants of another sixth. With local donations, in remembrance of war casualties, there was a rapid rise in the number of Village Halls built.

In Baughurst, 1¼ acres of land situated between Heath End Road and Bishopswood Lane, was bought in 1920 by the owner of Heath End House, William McConnel, in memory of his son who had been killed in the 1914-1918 war. He donated most of this land for a village hall and set up Heath End Village Rooms Limited (HEVR Ltd). Those villagers living within the Ecclesiastical Parish of Baughurst were invited to become shareholders of this



Baughurst Parish Council

trust and from 1920 there were 200 shares sold at 2/6d. This £25 paid for an elm clad hall which was completed in 1922 and funds were raised for the upkeep of the hall by fetes, etc. and regular users of the hall included the Scout Troop, the County Library and, from 1934, the Girl Guides.



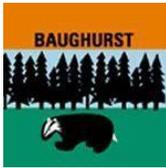
The Village Hall in 1922

1930 and 1940

The hall was enlarged in 1932 with £240 donated by Mrs Bramwell of Newbies, Brimpton Road. She was the wife of the Rev. Ernest Bramwell, a past Rural Dean and, later, Chairman of the Baughurst Parish Council.

In October 1937, the remaining piece of McConnell's land was sold to HEVR Ltd for £25 to build a boys' clubroom - a Boys' Club and a Football Club having been formed. The Boys Clubroom was built in 1938 at a cost of £198 and was leased to a newly formed Heath End Village Club. Also, in that year, a second-hand electric plant giving 120 volts DC was installed to replace the old acetylene generator.

In 1941 HEVRT Ltd was wound up and a new trusteeship formed - Heath End Village Rooms Trust. The land and buildings were given to the parish to



Baughurst Parish Council

ensure continuity of ownership in the hands of local trustees, in the hope that management by the parish would create more interest in the hall.

Committee members were selected from the Baughurst Parish Council, Baughurst Parochial Parish Council, the Baughurst Methodist Church, Baughurst Mothers Union, Tadley & District Branch of the British Legion, Heath End Village Club, one member from the south of the Parish and two from the north of the Parish.

During the 1939-1945 war the hall was used variously by the Home Guard, the U.S. Air Force (from Aldermaston Airfield), etc. and the Boy's Club was used in 1944 as a factory by an Outwork Unit to pack tools and equipment for the war effort. Intoxicating drink was barred in the hall except for weddings and other similar occasions, however, this resolution was altered to give leave to the U.S. authorities to bring liquor into the hall when there was a dance, provided there was a responsible officer in charge.

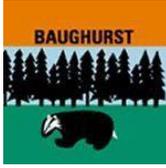
Arrival of the AWRE

With the arrival of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in 1952 there were changes - electricity was laid on and the old generator was scrapped. Also, the use of the hall was restricted by the Superintendent of Police whilst the rougher types of Irish labourers were still being employed in building by the Ministry of Supply's Aldermaston Atomic Centre.

On the day of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in 1953, the Hall was decorated beautifully by the Women's Institute and, as only a few had one, a television set was set up so that everyone in the village could see the ceremony.

The hall's green was used in 1958 as a sports ground for the new Hurst School as their site was not yet available. The events must have been curtailed as there is not much room for a 440-yard lap or the 100-yard dash. In that year the Committee decided that the Trust Deeds needed to be revised to reflect the recent rise in population (it quadrupled in the years 1951 to 1961). The main change was an increase in the number of organisations represented on the committee, for example the AWRE Residents Association, Guides, Scouts and the Women's Institute.

The Scouts and the Guides were given exclusive use of the Boy's Clubroom from 1st January 1964. The green was being used for week-end scout camps and they were allowed to erect goalposts.



Baughurst Parish Council

A New Hall

The committee decided in 1985 that, as the building was very old and that maintenance costs were getting ever higher, a new hall was needed. Many fund-raising activities were held to raise the money required – local companies were contacted, councils approached and families 'bought a brick' to have their name on fixed to the wall of the new hall. Eventually £150,000 was raised and the new hall was opened in October 1988 by the Duchess of Wellington, who had once lived in Heath End House (the site where Sheridan Close, etc. was built). Similarly, the Scout Den (the old Boy's Clubroom) was replaced in 1994.



The Boy's Club, later to become the Scout Den