

**SHIPLAKE MEMORIAL HALL &
INSTITUTE.**

**FORMATION OF MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEES**

**SUGGESTED VILLAGE COMMUNITY
COUNCIL**

A well-attended public meeting: was held in the Memorial Hall, Shiplake on Friday evening, for the purpose of appointing committees and considering how to make the best use of the hall and its institute. Mr. W. Cooling Lawrence occupied the chair at the outset and was supported by Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Mardon and Mr. F. Simpson.

MR. MARDON ELECTED FIRST PRESIDENT

The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, said he was sure it was the desire of all present that Mr. Mardon should be the first president of their Memorial Hall and Institute. In the past Mr. Mardon had done good, at the present time he was doing good, and in the future he would do good for those amongst whom he lived. Mr. Mardon had agreed, if it was their wish, to accept the presidency, and if elected, as he knew he would be, he would preside at that beautiful hall which, in his generosity, he had given to the parish - (applause). He, therefore, formally moved that Mr. Mardon be their first president. Mr. F. Simpson seconded and the motion was carried with acclamation.

VICE-PRESIDENTS.

Mr. Mardon, on taking the chair, was accorded a hearty welcome. He first thanked the meeting for electing him to the office and said he would do his best to fill it to their satisfaction during the ensuing year. He would commence his duties by making an apology. As president of the Flower Show he apologised for holding the meeting that evening, having forgotten that so many would be engaged in preparations for the show which was to be held on the morrow. With regard to vice-presidents, they had secured or hoped to secure the following gentlemen: Lord Wargrave, Sir Frederick Eley, Bart., Mr. W. Cooling Lawrence, Mr. E. S. Makower, Mr. D.W. Stobart, Mr. F. Simpson, Mr. Eric Mardon, Lord Phillimore and Quartermaster-General Sir Walter Campbell. Miss Henman, of Islip, had very kindly come over to tell them something of the working and the formation of Village Community Councils. It was thought that it would be an advantage to Shiplake if one

was formed there. They wanted to make that building a real living force in the parish and so conduct it that, in the words of Field-Marshal Sir William Robertson at the opening, nothing that was petty, or selfish, or mean, should be seen or heard within its walls, but that all should work harmoniously together for the benefit of the community as a whole. No more fitting memorial to the fallen could be found than that they should devote their lives and their services for those now living in the parish of Shiplake - (applause). There would be opportunities for all of them to work together, not only for the parish but for the country as a whole. These Community Councils to which he had referred were expressly for rural parishes and he believed one would be of benefit to Shiplake and an example to other parishes in the district. - (applause).

WHAT IS A RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL?

Miss Henman, at the request of the Chairman, gave a brief address on the aims, objects and working of a Rural Community Council. At the outset she explained that she was not the speaker they should have had. Miss Hadow, the secretary, from Oxford, was to have been present, but being unable to attend she had asked her to take her place, and she felt it was an opportunity which should not be allowed to slide. The village of Islip, from which she had come, was the second in the county to have a Community Council, although they had a population of only five hundred. She had not come so much as a speaker but as a target to answer any questions which they might put to her and which she would try to answer. At Wheatley, the home of Mr. Ashhurst, who was keenly interested in the movement, they also had a nourishing Community Council. First of all she must congratulate Shiplake upon possessing such a wonderful hall and buildings, the like of which she had never seen before - (applause). As regards Village Social Councils, they felt at Islip there was great need for something to be done, and she assured those present that they were very much alive. Although a small village, they had many societies and organisations, and concerts, dances and meetings became so frequent that there was constant-overlapping to the detriment of events arranged. Mr. Griffiths came over and explained to them the benefits of Rural Community Councils and after thinking the matter over something arose which led them to hold a meeting at which all sorts of

suggestions were made, one of which being that they should procure a recreation ground for the parish, but no agreement could be arrived at. An attempt to rush it on led to a poll of the parish when the project was defeated. Subsequently they formed a Rural Community Council and the first thing they did was to deal with the question of providing a recreation ground with happy results. In their Community Council they had two representatives from every organisation in the parish. They held an annual meeting at which their officers were elected. The delegates were responsible for letting their societies know what the Council was doing and they also informed the Council of any meetings or entertainments their particular society proposed holding. The Council then endeavoured to arrange matters so that there should be no clashing of events and thus the village worked harmoniously together. She would be pleased to answer any questions those present might put to her - (applause).

The Chairman said if they decided to form a Community Council at Shiplake Miss Hadow would be pleased to come over and give them an address on its actual working. Miss Henman had told them of the value such a Community Council was to her small community at Islip, and he thought they could do much more with their larger hall and population. They hoped, with the facilities they had, to secure an assured income and to develop largely when all the interests in the parish were represented in one united body – (applause).

Miss Henman replied to a few questions which were put to her and her remarks left a good impression as to the value of such Councils as she had advocated.

The Chairman proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Miss Henman for her attendance and address.

Mr. J. H. Stewart seconded and it was carried with acclamation, after which Miss Henman left for her long journey home.

Mr. Mardon, continuing to comment on the importance of village community councils, said the rural problem - the problem of creating conditions which would make life in the country at least as attractive as life in the towns - was one of such importance to the whole nation that the help was needed of everyone who was qualified by knowledge and experience to

contribute to its solution. Within and around the village there lived those who possessed in different forms and degrees the very knowledge and experience required for attacking the problem. If in each village an organisation existed which could bring together the farmer, the agricultural labourer, the landowner, the blacksmith, the village shopkeeper and all those who lived by the land to discuss their common difficulties and needs, a body of organised knowledge would be accumulated which was at present dissipated and largely inarticulate. The gradual weakening of traditional influences was not to be deplored if new sources of leadership could be discovered and a new sense of responsibility cultivated among those who had been inclined to look to a few leaders to shoulder their responsibilities for them. The creation of a kind of village moot in the form of a Village Community Council did, experience showed, provide a means of discovering ability in unexpected places, of bringing out latent powers of leadership and of creating an arena in which the inarticulate learnt to be articulate. It was in the opportunity which such a Council afforded for evoking the capacity for self-help and for cultivating among the village communities the power to work for the solution of their own problems that the strongest argument lay for the formation of Village Community Councils. The essence of a sound rural policy was, in fact, to realise the energy, initiative and knowledge which were to be found in the country districts and to provide means, organised and directed by country people themselves, whereby their full strength might be brought to bear on the problems and difficulties with which the rural community and indeed the whole nation was confronted at the present time - (applause).

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.

The meeting then continued with the business for which it was ostensibly called. Mr. Simpson said they had to start by electing a committee in accordance with the rules. That committee would be simply a committee of management to see that all subsidiary committees carried out their work. The rules had been carefully and legally drafted to apply to all similar institutions in the country and were quite definite. They could, however, be made a little elastic to meet local conditions. Seeing that three of their four Trustees would be away during the winter months they had thought it better to have a

committee of seven, as they wanted to get the greatest efficiency. The names he had to submit to the meeting were Mr. Burge, Mr. E. Doble, Mr. C. F. Harding, Mr. E. V. Robinson, Mrs. Stewart, the Rev. J. C. Thomas and Mr. Morley Wood. Mr. E. V. Robinson, of Barclay's Bank, Henley, had kindly consented to become honorary secretary and treasurer, and if he was only half as good as his predecessor (Mr. Walker) was in regard to the War Memorial Hospital, that hall was going to be a great success - (applause). The first duty of the committee would be to get down to business and draw up a schedule of charges for letting that building. Mr. Mardon had generously undertaken to relieve them of all responsibilities until the end of September – (applause) - therefore as soon as the committee could get to work there was no reason why they could not arrange things for the parish's benefit. The great thing was to keep the hall going.

The Committee, as suggested, was unanimously elected.

AN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Mr. Simpson said the second committee they were asked to elect was what would be known as the Executive Committee, whose duty it would be to take charge of the formation of the Social Club and Institute, and he begged to submit the names of Mr. G. H. Cheasley, Mr. C Day, Mr. E. A. Hobbs, Mr. A. Histed, Mr. C. Jones, Mr. A. Ly ford, Mr. Newbery, Mr. H. T. Simms and the Rev. J. C. Thomas.

Mr. Robinson seconded and it was carried.

A question was asked whether that committee would have power to add to their number.

Mr. Simpson replied in the affirmative, adding that it was only the nucleus of a committee to get the hall going and they wanted to get on it representatives of the various sports clubs and organisations in the parish.

The names of Mr. Tunstall and Mr. Hewlett (Football Club) and Mr. Sharp (British Legion Cricket Club) were added and Mr. Jones accepted the secretaryship *pro tem* of the committee.

CRITICISMS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Mr. Simpson emphasised the fact that the hall and institute were for the benefit of the community as a whole and not for any particular section, as a few people were inclined to think.

Everyone was welcome to the use and privileges of the place as a whole. They wanted an energetic entertainment committee and he saw no reason why they should not have a jolly good evening in that hall once a week. It had also been recommended that they should have a Women's Institute side of their work with which he was in perfect agreement. Women in the present day had a lot of interests and they should be encouraged to meet together, as well as their holding mixed gatherings - (applause).

Mr. Doble said he saw no reasons why the recreation ground adjoining the hall, comprising five acres, should not be used during the coming winter. They had had a good season for grass growing and he thought the ground would be available for football. With regard to a Women's Institute he was greatly in favour of it and he knew many who would join.

Mr. Mardon said he was glad that Mr. Simpson had emphasised the fact that the hall was for the use of the whole community and not for only a portion. He wanted to see it used by all to the greatest extent possible - (applause).

Mr. Beasley suggested that the two committees should hold an early meeting and then hold another public meeting at which their proposals could be put forward. He would like to know if there was to be a bowling green attached to the hall as well as tennis courts.

The Chairman said that was only a preliminary meeting. He thought Mr. Beasley's suggestion an admirable one and there was ample room for a bowling green. No doubt the committee would consider the matter.

Mr. Harding suggested that the Committee should consider facilities for forming a lending library which would be a valuable addition and be welcomed by a large section of the parishioners.

The Chairman said there was accommodation for a library and no doubt Mr. Harding, as one of the committee, would give them what information he had on the matter.

It was decided to have another public meeting on August 31st to hear the reports of the committees, and after a hearty vote of thanks had been accorded Mr. Mardon for presiding, on the initiative of Mr. Stewart, the meeting terminated.