

OLD SCHOLARS' CLUB - HISTORY

The Club was formed in about 1928 for the physical, social and educational welfare of the old scholars of the Birchington Church of England Boys' School. It was formed by Mr Charles Laming, the then Headmaster of the School.

A piece of land on the east side of Park Lane, Birchington, was conveyed by Major Powell-Cotton of Quex Park, for £62 10s to the Trustees of the Club and on this land, the Old Scholars built their own Club House. They had professional help from a builder and other interested people in the building trade.

The Deeds of the property consist of :

- 9th October **1926** Contract between PHG Powell-Cotton Esq. and Rev. H.A. Serres and others.
- 25th October **1926** Conveyance by PHG Powell-Cotton Esq. and others to Rev. H.A. Serres and others.
- 31st October **1941** Declaration of Trust
Mr C. Laming, the Rev. N.M. Sharp and others
- 15th January **1942** Declaration of Trust written by Messrs Wilson and Toyne to Mr F.V. Barrow.

For some years the building was used by the old boys of the School and the Club was managed by a Committee of Management consisting of Mr Laming, and others, and also with elected old boys of the School. It was used mainly for recreational purposes, but occasional talks were given to the old boys on a variety of subjects, mainly concerned with widening their background knowledge and trade skills. Until 1936, the Club was under the direction of Charles Laming, its Founder. Owing to much depleted resources and the ever changing needs of the members, the Club almost ceased to exist at this time..

In 1937 and subsequent years, many efforts were made to re-establish the Club in accordance with its original traditions. Once again, however, owing to lack of members and increasing liabilities, the consequent financial position caused grave anxiety to the Committee of Management. At this point World War Two broke out.

During the War, it appears to have been used by the village for a number of different things, mainly social activities like whist drives and fundraising events for the war effort. Any money raised from the rent of the hut during this period went into general maintenance. At the end of the War it was badly in need of refurbishment, but in **1947** the Government compulsorily requisitioned it to be converted into a bungalow, as such accommodation was in very short supply. Mr Francis Rolfe drew up a "Short History of the Club" in February 1949, which is in the material held on the Club. The building was finally returned to the Trustees of the Management Committee in **1954**, after prolonged negotiation with Whitehall.

The Trustees asked advice from several sources as to what people thought should happen to the building. It was never intended to be a public hall

and although the old boys of the School no longer wanted the use of the building, the Trustees were in duty bound to use any money raised from it for the good of the youth of the village. They were advised by two different advisers to sell it as it stood in its bungalow condition, but the majority of the trustees eventually voted to return it to its hall status, as the Kent Education Authority and the Silver Band were both asking to rent it as a hut. After certain alterations were completed, the KEC pulled out of their request, but the Silver Band remained in the picture.

An Agreement was drawn up with them on a three year contract in **1955**, with them agreeing to pay £35 a year rent in four quarterly instalments of £8 15s to be paid on the four Quarter Days. They also agreed to pay the insurance on the building and give evidence of this to the Trustees each year, to pay the Rates and to maintain the condition of both the inside and outside of the building and its surroundings.

In **1969** Alfred Walker arranged for the Old Scholars' Club to be made a Registered Charity, with the Charity Commissioners taking over the responsibility as the Custodial Trustee of the Deeds.

The first Trustees to form the new Committee of Management when the Charity Commissioners took over were:-

Mr C. Maxted, the only original surviving Trustee

The Vicar and Churchwardens of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Birchington with Acol for the time being - these to be ex-officio

One Committee member to be appointed by Acol Parish Council

Two Committee members appointed by the Margate Borough Council, later the Thanet District Council

The appointed members were:-

Mr David Dallas

Mr Francis Rolfe (original Management Committee member)

Mr Jack Smith (original Management Committee member)

Mr Lester Barton (original Management Committee member)

Mr Alfred T. Walker

Mr R. Cobb, Treasurer (manager of Lloyd's Bank)

The appointed members were to hold office for 4 years.

Mr Maxted and any original members were to hold office for life or until such time as they decided to retire.

The official wording of the purpose of the Trust was:-

"The net income (after any expenses have been paid) shall be applied for any charitable purpose for the benefit of the youth of Birchington with Acol, under the age of 25, to promote their physical, social and educational welfare not provided out of the rates, taxes or other public funds."

MEETINGS - At least one Ordinary Meeting each year is to be held

CHAIRMAN - A chairman is to be appointed from one of those present at each Ordinary Meeting.

MEMBERS of the COMMITTEE - All persons appointed shall be competent persons residing in Birchington or Acol.

In late April **1973** Mr Dave Dallas asked if the Silver Band could **buy** the Old Scholars' Club hut. They were in the process of making the inside more convenient for their use at the time. The Trustees voted not to sell, as they still felt the hut might one day become the venue for a youth club in the village.

On 20th December 1975, when a renewal of the agreement was a few months away, the Silver Band members were reminded of their obligation and promise to maintain the outside of the property and surroundings as well as the inside. They again promised to do so, but appear to have failed to keep this promise. The contract continued to be renewed each three years and in **1976**, (29th September) when the next renewal was due, the rent was raised to £52 a year (again, to be paid quarterly). The money from this rent was to be used by the Trustees to give grants to Youth Clubs or youngsters in the village in need of help with apprenticeships, as advised by the Charity Commissioners. At this date, you could still buy text books for about £2 - £5 a time.

When Mr Bernard Perkins took over the job as Treasurer of the Silver Band in **1980**, he commented in a letter to the Trustees on the fact that his father and his uncles had helped in the original construction of the building back in 1926-7.

Unfortunately, the Management Committee were rather slack in their management of the Trust from this time onwards, and did not bother to raise the rent again in line with inflation, so quite soon, the rent meant they had almost no money to pay out in grants. Understandably, the Silver Band members were quite happy to continue paying just £52 per annum for sole use of the Old Scholars' Club building. It was a case of "Let sleeping dogs lie". What had originally been a fairly realistic sum in 1976 remained the same amount in 2004. In the ensuing years, members of the Committee died, but were not replaced.

Alfred Walker, who died in 1989, had arranged that when there was only one Trustee member left, the Old Scholars' Club Charity would be amalgamated with the Crispe Charity, as both charities provided for the same interests. In 2004, Bill Woodland, the penultimate Committee member died, leaving Stanley Reeves on his own. He immediately contacted Miss Jennie Burgess, the Clerk and Trustee of the Crispe Charity at this time, to arrange for the hand over of all the documentation concerning the Old Scholars' Club. The present Crispe Charity

Trustees were completely unaware of this arrangement until Mr Reeves letter arrived. The hand over was duly completed towards the end 2004.

For some strange reason Mr Perkins called their commitment their "peppercorn rent" in his letter of January 2005 - a term that had never been used in all the 50 years the Band were renting the hut. Where this idea came from is a mystery. It was a fairly realistic rent in its earliest days and should have been raised by increments at each renewal of the lease.

At this point, the Crispe Charity Trustees were advised that they must make better use of the facility they were now managing. The building was surveyed and advice was taken as to a realistic rent in 2005-6 for sole use of the building. The Silver Band members were informed of the situation. For some strange reason, Mr Perkins called their rent in January 2005 their "peppercorn rent" in his letter of that date - a term that had never been used in all the 50 years the Band were renting the hut. Where this idea came from is a mystery. It was a fairly realistic rent in its earliest days and should have been raised by increments at each renewal of the lease.

Matters are in the process of being determined. (Feb. 2006)