

THE JUBILEE HALL MALPAS 1887-1987



30p

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by

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GOLDEN JUBILEE

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CELEBRATIONS AND A NEW MEETING PLACE FOR MALPAS

Mr SANDBACH, who was then called upon, proposed that the auspicious event be celebrated by the erection of a Town Hall, to be called the 'Victoria Jubilee Hall' He did not know the requirements of Malpas, not having been long amongst them, but whatever was done he hoped it would be something permanent to be handed down to their children in future years.

Mr HUXLEY was asked to give his opinion as to the cost, and said presuming they should decide upon a Public Room with an Institute, speaking at random, he thought it would cost about £600 As to the success of the undertaking he did not think it had ever been tested in Malpas by any properly organised effort. Speaking of the temperance meetings in the Congregational Schoolroom if they had anywhere else to hold their meetings upon neutral ground where Church people and Dissenters could meet it would be very much better.

So wrote the correspondent to the 'Whitchurch Herald' for February 5th 1887 when reporting a public meeting held in the Infant Schoolroom at Malpas, to discuss ways in which the town might celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. After the long period she had spent in mourning following the death of her beloved Prince Albert, there had been a great sense of relief and a new wave of patriotism throughout the nation as the Queen again began to take an interest in public affairs.



Until this time Malpas had lacked a 'neutral' meeting place of any size and most events had taken place in the Infant Schoolroom (the annexe to the present Alport Primary School) or in the old Grammar School, which closed in the early years of this century. The main room of the Grammar School was a timber building in Church Street, demolished a few years ago to make way for a modern house. Despite this lack of meeting places Malpas had quite a lively social scene, particularly so far as the gentry and middle classes were concerned, even before the erection of the Jubilee Hall. The local paper reports the Infant Schoolroom as being the venue for regular concerts organised by 'Professor' Henry Edwardes (the church organist), temperance meetings, missionary meetings, dances in aid of such organisations as the Cricket Club and Men's Institute, political meetings and public meetings in general, including the meeting quoted at the top of this page.

Samuel Sandbach had recently come to live at Cherry Hill,

Chorlton, and quickly became involved in Malpas affairs. He appears to have moved from the Handley area, where his name can still be seen on the old village school as its benefactor in 1841. His proposal for a public hall was taken up with enthusiasm and the 'Herald' for the following week quotes a circular to be distributed around the area:

"Queen's Jubilee 1887: The necessity of a Public Room for the town and neighbourhood of Malpas having long been felt, it was decided to endeavour to supply the want by the erection of a Jubilee Hall, combined with the Institute, to celebrate the 50th year of Her Majesty's reign. At a meeting held to take steps to carry out the object, the Marquis of Cholmondeley offered to give the site for the building in the High-street of Malpas, and a Committee was appointed to collect the necessary funds for its erection, and also provide for suitable rejoicings on the 20th June."

A correspondent in the same issue of the 'Herald', who signed himself 'Theophilus', remarked that "Neutral ground is much needed where respectable people of all creeds and classes of society can meet together in unity on one common platform for any good object"

By May 14th the newspaper was able to report that a sub-committee had met to approve plans drawn up by a local architect, Walter Webb of Whitchurch, and that these plans were on view at the shop of Mr Callcott, clock and watch maker, in the High Street (now the Nationwide Building Society). The estimated cost for building the hall was around £900 but by the end of May only £550 had been raised. However it was decided to appeal for a further £100 from the public and to raise the balance by means of a mortgage on the freehold. Tenders were invited and in August the local builder, Thomas Huxley, was contracted to start building operations on the basis of his tender of £985.

The work was overseen by a committee consisting of Mr St John Charlton (agent to the Marquis of Cholmondeley); Dr Christopher Jordison (one of the two local doctors), Mr Joseph Lewis (who had recently built himself 'The Beeches' and provided the money for building the present Alport School - his memorial is in the Jubilee Hall), Mr Henry Barnes (one of the Malpas veterinary surgeons), Samuel Sandbach and Arthur Callcott.

Little is then reported about the project in the local press until on August 11th 1888 the 'Chester Chronicle' carried a two column report on the opening of the Jubilee Hall. And what an opening! No mere cutting of a tape and turning of a key for Malpas folk!

The actual ceremony was performed on Tuesday August 7th 1888 by the Marchioness of Cholmondeley who declared open the new building, described by the 'Chronicle' reporter as "a handsome and cheerful looking structure, which does high credit to the good taste and common sense of the Malpas people. It is constructed in the old English half-timbered style, fine brick being largely employed, and giving the hall a very handsome and substantial appearance The entrance is by a quaint and pleasantly designed porch of oak"



The opening was immediately followed by a Bazaar which lasted for two days! The 'Chronicle' report continues "It was a happy idea to construct the bazaar in the form of a Cheshire timbered village, with open fronted shops. The canopy above each stall was painted in imitation of timbered work, with plaster between and occasional patches of brickwork showing All this, combined with the pretty costumes of the lady stallholders, who were dressed in old English costumes made up a bazaar interior prettier than any we have seen for some time." The lady stallholders included such notable local personalities as Lady Cholmondeley, Mrs St John Charlton, the Hon Mrs Edward Kenyon of Macefen Hall, the Hon Mrs W E Kenyon, Mrs Samuel Sandbach and Mrs Rasbotham of Ebnal. A special attraction in one of the downstairs rooms was a tenor presenting a non-stop recital of excerpts from Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy Operas. The operas were just being written and in the same year the famous D'Oyly Carte company gave a performance of 'The Mikado' in Whitchurch.

The first meeting recorded in the Jubilee Hall minute books is for October 29th 1888 when the Committee of Management was appointed, comprising Henry Barnes, Arthur Callcott, St John Charlton, Rev Charles Wolley-Dod (Edge Hall), Robert Howard (Broughton Hall), Thomas Huxley, Christopher Jordison, Evan Langley (a farmer from Bickley), Joseph Lewis, George Morgan (draper and grocer) and Samuel Sandbach.

It was only five years previously, in 1883, that the Malpas Social Club and Institute had been formed as a working men's club, largely through the efforts of Matthew Henry Danily, headmaster of the Grammar School. It incorporated the old Malpas Reading Room, which had been housed in a building near the church. The first premises occupied by the new Institute were those now occupied by Lloyds Bank in Church Street. Formerly they had been a lodging house owned by Hugh McCaffrey. The new Institute included general meeting and refreshment rooms, a reading room stocked with a wide range of newspapers and periodicals, a room for small games such as chess and draughts, and a bagatelle room. The refreshments were "strictly on the temperance principle"! At the rear of the building was a quoiting ground - quoits appears to have occupied the space in

the local sporting scene now filled by crown green bowls.

Once the Jubilee Hall was opened, arrangements were made for the Institute to occupy the ground floor, at a nominal rent. The three rooms were set up as a Reading Room, a Billiard Room and a Games Room (the present numbers 1, 2 and 3 rooms respectively).

In the following year the whole of the property was placed in the hands of Trustees "to be held by them in trust for the benefit of the inhabitants of Malpas and the neighbourhood, to be used by them for public purposes - but never to be used as a Political Club nor as a licensed Public House"

So at last Malpas had a public meeting place worthy of its population. A residential caretaker, John Williams, was appointed and activities in the hall began to flourish. The first meeting reported in the newspaper was at the end of September 1888 when under the chairmanship of Henry Edwardes about thirty people attended to discuss the formation of the town's first Choral Society. Henry was appointed as conductor, Miss Leah Brittain (who lived in the High Street) as pianist and Arthur Callcott, a keen violinist, as 'leader of the band'. Practices were soon under way on Monday nights, resulting in a first concert at Christmas in the same year, when a choir of eighty voices sang the cantata 'Nativity' together with a programme of secular music. Accompaniment was provided by Miss Brittain and an orchestra of four violins and a cello.



Another committee was formed to run 'Cinderella' dances (i.e. finish by midnight!) on Wednesdays and these proved to be a very popular feature, continuing well into the present century. Other organisations had dances too, among these being the Conservative Primrose League's New Year Ball in 1889, described by the local paper as being "uncomfortably full" with about two hundred present.

Other entertainment was provided by visiting groups of entertainers, such as a minstrel troupe from Wrexham - "the entertainment was not a very satisfactory one either for entertainers or for those who were entertained" - and a Christy Minstrel troupe from Chester.

'Tea meetings' of all types were very popular at the time, especially among the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists. Previously their tea meetings had been held in tents. While the 'Prims' still kept to their tent on the Well Meadow, in 1889 the Wesleyans decided to move into the more weatherproof surroundings of the Jubilee Hall. The annual tea meetings with accompanying processions, hymn singing at the Cross and services in chapel were highlights of the Methodist year.

Tea in a different context, followed by an entertainment, was provided by Thomas Huxley (builder of the hall) and his wife for all the widows and widowers of Malpas, in the October following the opening, and in the New Year a tea and entertainment was provided for the 'servant classes'.

1889 was a significant year on the political scene at both county and national levels. It was the year in which elections were held for the first County Councils, at the end of January. The successful candidate for the Malpas Division was Thomas Parker, a farmer from Churton, who was brother to Malpas doctor Robert Parker. His opponents were Samuel Sandbach and John Leche (Carden Hall). Thomas Parker held his main election meeting in the Jubilee Hall as did Mr Tomkinson, the Liberal candidate for the General Election held towards the end of the year.



In 1882 there had been an attempt to form a Malpas Mutual Improvement Society, meeting in the Congregational Church schoolroom. 'Mutual Improvement Societies' were part of the movement to provide informal adult education in the villages, forerunners of the evening classes that we now enjoy at the Bishop Heber High School by courtesy of the Cheshire Education Department and Liverpool University. The programmes of such societies consisted mainly of lectures and debates, on a wide range of topics. The 1882 Society seems not to have flourished, perhaps because it was not on 'neutral' ground, but the re-founding of the Society in the Jubilee Hall in 1889 seems to have been much more successful. After a well attended inaugural meeting, at which "Mr Thomas gave a Welsh song, Mr Callcott gave a performance on the violin, Mr Wright on the violoncello, and Miss Dutton on the harmonium". the Society met for weekly lectures on such subjects as 'Salt', 'The Power of Music', 'Vegetable Parasites', 'The Progress of Electrical Discovery' and 'Beekeeping'. Certainly it seems to have catered for a wide variety of interests!

During the next year St John Ambulance classes were formed under the instruction of Dr Gwynn of Whitchurch. These were very popular, with thirty seven ladies and twenty seven gentlemen attending the classes.

Before the formation of the Parish Council in 1893 the affairs of the town had been looked after by the Vestry Meeting, which had responsibility for such matters as water supply, street lighting, maintenance of parish roads and some poor relief. The Vestry which, as its name implies, met originally in the church vestry, was the last vestige of the control over secular matters which had been exercised by the churchwardens since ancient times.



The Society met for weekly Lectures

Most of their powers were taken over by the new Parish Councils but the Vestry Minute Book dating from 1831, which is kept in the Record Office at Chester Town Hall, makes fascinating reading. Once the Jubilee Hall had opened the Vestry moved in and held its first meeting there in September 1888.

The Malpas Fire Brigade had come into being in 1830, when two engines were purchased from a London manufacturer and brought by canal to Wheelock, near Sandbach, from where they were transported by road to Malpas. They were the responsibility of the Malpas churchwardens, who kept one of the engines in Malpas and one at Broxton in an attempt to provide cover for the whole parish. Although the engines did provide some sort of cover for over fifty years, by 1890 grave doubts were being cast upon the ability of both the engines and the churchwardens to provide an efficient service. The Jubilee Hall committee had granted permission in 1892 for the Town Fire Hose to be stored in a cupboard in the Reading Room and for a pulley to be fixed at the back of the hall for drying the hose after use. After the Parish Council, formed in 1893, had bought a horse-drawn 'Speedwell Hand

Pump' they successfully applied to the Jubilee Hall committee in 1897 for permission to build a shed for the engine at the rear of the hall and to erect a turret with a fire bell on the hall itself.

DEATH OF THE OLD QUEEN AND BIRTH OF THE NEW CENTURY

And so within ten years of the initial meeting at which its erection had been proposed the Jubilee Hall was well established as a focus for the community, providing the stimulus for the initiation of many new societies and activities in the town. The history of the hall is, in many ways, a reflection of the history during the last century of Malpas itself.

In January 1901 the old Queen died, greatly mourned by the nation and remembered through the many memorials that had been erected to commemorate her Jubilees in 1887 and 1897. We read that during 1901 the Jubilee Hall provided its annual tea for the aged, under the supervision of the Marchioness of Cholmondeley, Lady Lettice Cholmondeley and Lady Margaret Ormsby-Gore (of 'The Lodge'), hosted a farewell gathering for George Chesworth and Arthur Caldecott, who were off to fight with the Cheshire Yeomanry against the Boers in South Africa, acted as the venue for the inaugural meeting of the Malpas and District Agricultural Society and continued to provide a meeting place for the Oddfellows. The Oddfellows were one of the Friendly Societies which flourished in the town during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the four being the Loyal Clutton Lodge of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, the Crown Lodge of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows, the Malpas United Friendly Society (the 'Rose Club') and the Malpas Female Friendly Society. Each of the societies held an annual gathering with processions, church services, dinners and dances. Such Friendly Societies, offering a form of low cost personal insurance and sickness benefit for working people, flourished after the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which threatened the Union Workhouse at Whitchurch to those who fell on hard times. The Loyal Clutton Lodge of Oddfellows is still active in the town, still meets at the Jubilee Hall and still provides substantial benefits to its members.

One of the few organisations at this time which catered for the younger members of the community was the Band of Hope, a temperance organisation of which the prime aim was to persuade people to 'sign the pledge' against strong drink. The Band of Hope offered a varied programme of activities and each year put on a public entertainment in aid of funds. My late neighbour, Miss 'Lottie' Fewtrell, clearly remembered performing in 'Hansel and Gretel' in 1906, under the patronage of the Greenshields family of 'The Beeches' - so vivid were her memories of her Malpas childhood that she remembered the script right into old age!

The mobilisation which had taken place in support of the Boer War campaign led to a new awareness of the need to provide some sort of training for volunteers in preparation for future emergencies. In 1907 permission was given to the Social Club and Institute to use the ground at the back of the Jubilee Hall and the large upper room for the purpose of fixing up miniature rifle ranges "on the understanding that no damage is done to the

property"! In April 1914 the Whitchurch Herald reports the presentation of prizes at the Malpas Rifle Range, adding that "shooting would be valuable to them in the defence of England". Only four months later many local men "saw the proclamation posted up at the post office doors, and without a word they jumped on their cycles and left to fight for King and country" (Cheshire Observer 8 August 1914). The War Memorial in Saint Oswald's churchyard bears witness to the slaughter and sacrifice that followed.

With so many men gone to fight in France there was much to be done at home to support the war effort. The Jubilee Hall was requisitioned for "infantry drill twice a week and indoor musketry practice one night" while the ladies organised Red Cross nursing classes and a sewing circle to provide comforts for the soldiers. The nursing training was shortly to be put to good use after a well attended meeting at the Jubilee Hall in October, to consider the provision to be made for Belgian refugees who would be coming to Malpas. Various people offered accommodation and events such as whist drives were held to raise funds to support the refugees. By December the home of Mrs Ethelston in Church Street, The Bolling, had been converted into a Red Cross hospital, staffed by local ladies as VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) nurses. Following this the Whitchurch Herald regularly printed lists of fruit, vegetables and dairy products donated to both The Bolling and to a similar hospital set up at Higginsfield House in Cholmondeley.

Everyone seemed to be caught up in the initial turmoil of war and the recruiting drive. At the Cinderella dances, now organised by the Malpas postmen, the Excelsior Band played 'Your King and Country needs You'; Mr Danily's Brotherhood raised funds for the war effort; there were overtones of 'Dig for Victory' when the County Council sponsored a Jubilee Hall lecture on 'The Cultivation of Potatoes'; the Wesleyans held a patriotic concert; the Rector gave a magic lantern lecture in the Hall on 'How Germany makes War'; the Whitchurch Male Voice Choir gave a concert to raise funds for the Red Cross hospital; and "Mr F Hinton and Mr David Adams sent a consignment of rabbits to the Cheshires at Eaton"! By April 1915 the recruiting drive was well under way and Boer War veteran Lord Arthur Grosvenor addressed a meeting in the Jubilee Hall, after which a local Volunteer Corps was formed.

In June adverts appeared for a showing in the hall of 'Remarkable Animated Pictures - Subjects: Dramatic, Comic, Travel and the War'. Cinema had arrived in Malpas!

BETWEEN THE WARS

As the nation started to pick up the pieces after the Great War and to come to terms with the loss of so many of its menfolk, the town of Malpas saw a gradual blossoming of new activities. In the early 1920s the Women's Institute was formed and applied for the use of a room in the Jubilee Hall. One of the early initiatives of the W.I. was the organisation of adult evening classes, Craftwork classes were directed by Miss Hesketh while classes in academic subjects, including mathematics and English, were tutored by local schoolteachers. About the same time the

Social Club and Institute replaced the old rifle range at the rear of the hall with a hut, purchased from the army camp which had been set up on Prees Heath during the war, and fitted this out as a billiard room. Later in the decade the Alport School, at that time still an 'all-age' school, applied to use No 3 room for weekly cookery classes. 1927 saw the formation of the Malpas Operatic Society which gave local people the chance to take part particularly in Gilbert and Sullivan operas. The Society, which continued in various forms until 1951, was instrumental in introducing the new phenomenon of electric light to the Jubilee Hall, supplied by the North Wales Power Company, although it was not until 1931 that the hall was wired throughout.

Another local organisation which is still going strong is the Young Farmers' Club, which applied for the use of the hut at the rear of the hall in 1933. The County Council's Clinic and Welfare Centre was introduced to No 3 room in 1937 and this is a feature which still has survived until this year as the weekly baby clinic, shortly to be transferred to the new Malpas surgery.

Alongside all this there was the regular round of dances, whist drives, dinners, private parties, celebrations for Royal events and many other activities. Malpas continued its existence as a quiet Cheshire country town until 1939, when the world was at war once more.

SCHOOLBOYS, AEROPLANE PARTS AND MUNITIONS!

By early 1940 the Jubilee Hall was doubling up as a public meeting place at night and during the day as a school for the pupils of Sefton Park Junior Boys School from Liverpool. The school was evacuated to Malpas at the outbreak of war and for a time shared the Alport School with the regular pupils, on a 'box and cox' system. Later they moved into the Jubilee Hall, "two classes upstairs, two down and one in an outside building". There must have been consternation among members of the committee in November 1940 when it was reported that "Messrs Vickers-Armstrong had inspected the hall with a view to requisitioning it as a store for aeroplane parts". Emergency plans were drawn up to store furniture, etc., in the Rectory and the Bolling stables but in fact the requisition never happened. The schoolboys had started to return to Liverpool since the city did not appear to be in such danger as originally feared. Many were to return to Malpas when the blitz finally got under way. In 1943 the Women's Voluntary Service was granted the use of the (wooden) hut at the rear of the hall for making munitions - what would our modern Health and Safety Executive make of that! Towards the end of the war the committee granted an application by the Army Cadets for the use of the hut for training purposes.

RETURN TO NORMAL - THE POST WAR YEARS

Although the Jubilee Hall had been used before as a cinema, the entertainment scene really warmed up after the war when two separate applications were approved for showing films, on Tuesdays and on Thursdays. More new societies were formed, among

them a branch of the Royal Air Force Association and an Amateur Dramatic Society. An imaginative programme of evening classes was introduced under the auspices of the Malpas Evening Institute presided over by the late Herbert Yates, then headmaster of the Alport School.

In 1953 Malpas in common with every other community in the United Kingdom celebrated the Coronation of our present Queen. On Coronation Day itself the Jubilee Hall was the setting for a tea party that "had to be seen to be believed" for all the children in the area, each of whom was presented with a souvenir mug and a tin of chocolate. Television sets, for few were to be found in private homes, were installed in both the Jubilee and Parish Halls, and "both halls were practically full from 9.00 a.m. to late afternoon". How well I remember watching that historic outside broadcast on a tiny nine inch screen!

Although the hall was never designed for very active sports, 1954 saw the introduction of badminton with the subsequent formation of both the Malpas and Arthurson Badminton Clubs. Most of the activity has since transferred to the more appropriate facilities at the Bishop Heber High School. Another facility now removed to the school but housed for many years from 1959 in the old Jubilee Hall Reading Room was the Malpas Library, run on a voluntary basis with books supplied by the County Library. In 1962 the minute book records an application for use of a room by the 'Flower Committee', the first mention of the now flourishing Malpas Flower Club which celebrates its Silver Jubilee with the Flower Festival this year.

There are signs of the changing tastes in entertainment among the younger members of the community during the early years of the 'Beatles era' in 1966 when a petition from local residents was presented to the committee, complaining about "the level of noise from the amplifiers". However it must not be forgotten that from before the second world war an alternative had been provided by the Malpas Old Time Dancing Association, still going strong, and that more recent years have seen both English and Scottish traditional dancing in the hall.

In the early 1970s it became obvious that the hall was desperately in need of major renovations and so a number of fund raising events were organised, including the well remembered 'Hollies Hoe-Downs' held at the Hollies Farm. After renovations the hall attracted even more bookings, to such an extent that in 1974 the Secretary complained that he was having great difficulty in accommodating everyone who wanted a booking! In a report to the committee he listed the regular users: Library, Clinic, Registrar, Bingo, Whist Club, Royal Observer Corps, Old Time Dancing, Horticultural Society, Golden Link, Young Farmers, Oddfellows, Masons, Flower Club, Parish Council, Parochial Church Council, afternoon Badminton and two evening Badminton clubs. In addition there was heavy weekend use for special events put on by such organisations as the National Farmers' Union, the Mothers' Union, the Church, the Pony Club, the Hunt Supporters, the Earth Stoppers and the Malpas and District Sports Club.

Since then the hall has acquired other regular users including the Hampton Thursday Club, the Field Club and, most recently, the Day Care Centre. The Day Centre uses the hall three days a week

to provide a meeting place and luncheon club for elderly residents in the area who might otherwise not get out at all.

In 1979 the Malpas Social Club and Institute finally severed its historic links with the Jubilee Hall, when it joined with the Malpas Bowling Club to form the Malpas Bowling Club and Social Institute. The amalgamated organisations opened their own new clubhouse by the Castle Hill bowling green in February 1980.

INTO A SECOND CENTURY

And so we come to 1987, one hundred years after Samuel Sandbach stood up at that meeting to suggest that "something permanent be handed down" in celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. I am sure that all would agree that a public hall was a wise choice to commemorate the event. The Victoria Jubilee Hall has added so much to the life of the town over the past century and is the focus for so many present day activities that Malpas without its 'Town Hall' would be hard to imagine.

However, there is one aspect of the hall's history to which I have hardly referred but a very important aspect nevertheless. Throughout its existence its affairs have been managed by a voluntary elected committee. Over the years many members of this committee have given long service and worked very hard to make sure that the Jubilee Hall is always available, that it is efficiently managed and that it is kept in good repair. The meetings of the committee do not hit the headlines and many users of the hall probably do not even know of the committee's existence, yet without them there would be no Jubilee Hall today. From the first meeting in 1888 under the chairmanship of St John Charlton to the present committee under its long serving chairman Norman Craddock they have provided a valuable service to Malpas - this short history is a small tribute to that service.

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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