

The sale of the village in 1919 would appear to have been the catalyst for the Rector to set about leaving a lasting memorial to his work in the parish which, judging by the church records available spanned forty six years, with the last wedding officiated by the Rector being that of Owen Charles Hind to Nancy Brown in September 1922. During his incumbency of the living from the diocese it was obvious to the Rector that there was no dedicated meeting place available for the villagers and, short of using a spare barn on one of the farms, the Railway Tavern in Water Street, or the Reading Room that had been constructed down the lane by number three Church Street, no Village Hall or dedicated meeting place was available or envisaged for the community. The Reverend now employed his negotiating skills to the full as he needed a site for a hall that was central in the village and therefore useful to the majority of his flock. The land that was viewed as being suitable for his purpose was in the ownership of Mr Tommy Emberlin and abutted a pig orchard which had been purchased by Mr T. Moore at the "Somerton Estate" sale. The Rector secured the land required from Mr Emberlin and raised funds for the construction of a simple wooden building, raised on brick pillars with a shared outside chemical bucket toilet. Restrictions as to its use were placed on it by a governing body which was largely the Parochial Church Council, but no matter how this body was made up and viewed it could have been the Parish Council, the Village Club council, the Cricket Club council or any other parish body as they were largely all the same people only wearing a different "hat". The caretaker of the hall was to be the same lady who had performed the duty of church cleaner, namely Granny Baylis, followed by Aunt Jenny and, for almost forty years, by Aunt Vi, known to most villagers as Miss Plumb.

Shortly after the hall had been constructed Mr Moore was approached and subsequently gave a small parcel of ground to the village in the north corner of his pig orchard and the reading room was dismantled from its site in Church Street, moved, and reconstructed on this land adjacent to the village hall on the south side. It was a separate building, joined to the hall by a corrugated tin roof with a door at either end. This enclosed passageway was used as storage for many years for various bits and pieces of hall equipment such as the stage. It was subsequently removed and the land used to construct the kitchen area of the hall which was in place until demolition last year. Many photographs exist that show the varied functions that took place in the building over the years from celebrations of wars ending to weddings, birthdays, clubs and society's functions, and social events too numerous to mention.

The older villagers would always reminisce about the good that the Rev. Barnes had done for the village, the care that he showed for his flock, and the legacy he had left for them all to enjoy in the shape of a village meeting place.

JOHN WEBB.
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