

A Little Bit of Village Hall History

Anyone who has read the inscription on the side of the Village Hall will know that it was built by Woodland Collieries Company Ltd in 1891 as 'assembly and reading rooms'.



But did you know what happened after that ?

Woodland Collieries Company was liquidated in 1915 and the village's pits went through various new owners over the succeeding years. The pits were busy until around 1923, then began a long decline. The last underground coal in Woodland itself was worked in 1931 - though nearby pits (Copley, Crake Scar and so on) and drift mines continued to be worked for a few years after.

After some to-ing and fro-ing, ownership of the Village Hall was eventually transferred to a charity in October 1931. Soon after (June 1932), a charity was also set up to manage the village recreation ground.

The village recreation ground is not the children's playground you can see at the roadside now, but the large area (4 acres) of flat land at the bottom of the slope on which the children's playground stands, which used - until the 1960s - to have a football pitch and a tennis court on it. Until the charity was established, the

land belonged (surprise surprise) to Lord Barnard and appears to have been sold or gifted to the charity at that time. In 1981 the two charities were combined into the current 'Woodland Village Hall and Recreation Ground Charity'. The 'recreation ground' has been rented out for many years to a local farmer for a nominal sum.

In 1931, the Village Hall didn't have the side extension that now houses the snooker room and kitchen. This was added at some point afterwards. As part of the renovations and redevelopment of the hall in Spring 2022 the snooker table was removed and converted into a bar. (Strenuous attempts were made to re-establish the snooker club which used to run here, without success.)

There were specific provisions laid down for how the charity should be run. Among these is the requirement for committee members (none of whom shall have been declared bankrupt !) to be appointed, three from the Parish Councils and six from various local organisations, most of which no longer exist:

- The Local Education Authority
- St Mary's Church
- Woodland Agricultural Society
- Woodland Gardening Club
- Woodland Homing Pigeon Society
- Woodland Methodist Chapel

In 2023 the charity's Governing Document was completely overhauled. Many of the original provisions have gone by the board now, but the Village Hall is still run by a committee, currently of 9 people. Committee meetings are held as required, every one or two months and an AGM is held annually. The committee can also call on a group of volunteers who contribute their time to help keep the village hall running smoothly.

BA: 08/01/24