

# VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS

## The Reading Room, The Rifle Range and The Village Hall

### *Tape 1 -*

**The Old Reading Room and Rifle Range** – boys took it over as a Young Mans Club.

### *Tape 2 -*

**Reading Room** - Council meetings and Whist Drives in the Old Reading Room.

### *Tape 3 -*

**The Old Reading Room** - used for meetings, Whist Drives, Beetle Drives and concerts.

### *Tape 6 -*

**The Old Reading Room** - had a visiting library which came in boxes. A British Restaurant was run there – a hot meal for 1 shilling. Mrs Smith and Mrs Strickland helped run it.

### *Tape 9 -*

**Reading Room** – Catherine Emma Hampden got up the money to build it with Miss Maxwell of Saffron House, and the Misses Quins of Manor House, as a men-only place.

### *Tape 10 -*

**Reading Room** - Mrs Strickland held Whist Drives in the Reading Room on Tuesdays, the money raised was used for an outing to Whipsnade Zoo and similar places. She lived in a cottage now called Cherry Cottage. It was often used by the WI in the 1940's – thinks that the WI was one of the original ones in the country, run by Miss Quinn.

### *Tape 14 -*

**Reading Room** - Trustees of the Reading Room decided that they had had enough so a management committee was formed. Barrie and Brian Lee were on the committee. They smoothed the floor and built cupboards which are still there. It was used for the local societies. There was a history exhibition in the mid-late 1960's and the chalice from the church had to be guarded.

### *Tape 16 -*

**The Old Reading Room** was the only real community place. Her mother used to caretake it and it had a kitchen attached and the fire had to be lit. It was well used as it was also a library. Started for men who came back from World War I.

**Rifle Range** - The village hall was a rifle range and an ARP base, used for rifle practise.

**British Restaurant** – held in the rifle range. Open most days. Her mother helped there, lunches provided. Made from pooled wartime rations.

### *Tape 19 -*

**Rifle Range** - built before the Reading Room. A German, Mr Schunck probably interred after the war built and looked after it. After the war it went to rack and ruin. Mr Harwood broke into Rifle Range to start men's club including boys'. Billiards, darts organised by the older men, started about 1933/34.

**Reading Room** - built just before WW I organised by Mr Bidlake and Mr Maxwell.

### *Tape 22 -*

**Reading Room** - Her mother partly ran the library in the Reading Room, which came up from Oxford, and the books were changed regularly. As a family they read a lot.

### *Tape 23 -*

**Reading Room** - He used the Reading Room. Used to hold Whist Drives etc.

### *Tape 26 -*

**Toilet Saga** - Between the Rifle Range and the Reading Room were toilets and the organisations who used both facilities were reluctant to clean the toilets. They became a mess. Used by the coach tours - Ewelme was on the London/Stratford route. The coaches stopped coming and toilets were incorporated in the new Village Hall.

### *Tape 27 -*

**Reading Room** - Remembers a mini-circus with a lion in a cage. A man came who used to perform tricks with animals. Lived near Oakley Woods. Trained animals for TV. Laid a dog on a table and pretended to saw it in half - pulled out a string of sausages.

### *Tape 28 -*

**Rifle Range** - was knocked down. There was considerable controversy about the rebuilding of the new village hall. There were 2 or 3 reasons for these disagreements. People thought to rebuild on the existing site was a mistake because of limited parking. Sites mooted where the old gym in Green Lane, the other side of the road to the existing site, or on the carpark near Cow Common. It split the village and Richard chaired a meeting in the Reading Room at the suggestion of Moira Calvert. The hall was packed full of people who were for and against. To add to it all there was conflict with the people who were building it. The Trust was approached to provide parking for the hall in the Manor grounds if it were built in the centre of the village where it is now. That, obviously, did not come about. Also, Judy feels the hall should have a thatched roof.

### *Tape 33*

**Rifle Range** - When did the Rifle Range cease to be used as a rifle range. Soon after the First War?

Yes - but the rifles were still there for some time. Bert Billings was in charge, Herbie Winfield. I think someone shot them out in the trees here. The Manor ladies reported them to the police and they came and took the rifles over to Watlington police station.

### *Tape 41-*

**Reading Room** - my father used to go there and play Whist - no ladies allowed.

### *Interview 46 -*

**Lions in the Reading Room.** I remember as a young lad a very small Circus coming to the village with live lions. Part of the Reading Room was divided by a cage-like barrier with the small audience packed into the remaining area. The lions entered from cages positioned adjacent to what was the Rifle Range and the ringmaster was dressed like a cowboy - I believe he called himself Custer or something like that. This is a very distant memory and I would invite older villagers to confirm.

[1/10/1981 newspaper article in Elm Club scrapbook. The opening of the new Ewelme village hall had a special meaning for Mrs Lizzie Winfield. At 89 she is the oldest resident and was asked to perform the official opening. When the village hall was built just before the First World War, she would not have been allowed into it as it was an all male preserve. In later years women were allowed in the village hall but their role was confined to domestic tasks. The new hall took nearly ten years to plan and cost £52,600, of which nearly £40,000 came from grants from central and local government. All 11 of the village's organisations plan to use it.]