

Ewelme Institutions of the Past

Ewelme News, Oct-Nov 2016

The demise of a long-established village institution is a matter of regret, and remaining Elm Club members were sad to attend the very last meeting on October 13th 2016. This will be one day short of 57 years from the inaugural committee meeting held on the 14th October 1959, with Mrs Nowell Smith as Chair and 8 others serving. The purpose of the Club was '*to provide recreation to help towards the wellbeing of Ewelme parishioners over the age of 60*'. The committee agreed on an annual membership fee of 1/-, and the Reading Room would be booked for alternate Thursdays, 2.30 to 4.30 pm, for one year, with ½ yearly payments of 10/- per session in advance. Miss Machin, as Catering Officer, would collect the 6d payment for teas.

The Minute Book records fortnightly committee meetings, initially reporting jigsaws and board games being bought and speakers organised. Particularly favoured were those with slides or cine film, and practical demonstrations. (A dog obedience demonstration was given by Mrs Allwright!) In addition, first year's activities included Bingo, a Jumble Sale, a Sale of Work and an Exhibition of personal photographs. The Christmas of 1959 was celebrated with a party, and cards and a small present (not exceeding 2/6d) were sent to all members - paid for by the committee members! Sick members (including non-members living in Ewelme) received flowers (for ladies), the men had tobacco! The unnamed pantomime in Oxford was on 25th January 1960 with 30 members paying 6/- for ticket and coach fare. Two holiday jaunts were planned for May 1960 for a week in Paignton and another in Eastbourne at £6 per head - to include transport. Herbie Winfield organised a Mystery Coach Tour in July. (The 1959/60 Minutes do not record the number of members, but there were 50 registered in 1961).

The Elm Club contributed three significant historical social documents to the village. Two, officially called Local Memories Books, hold recollections from members from the early part of the century to 1961, illustrated with photographs. A 'Silver Jubilee Scrapbook 1952-1977' won the 'Age Concern Oxfordshire Handicrafts Exhibition Autumn 1977' for 'Best Scrap Book'.

Until 1910, when the Reading Room was built, the church and the downstairs classroom at the school were the hubs for the meagre village entertainments and events. Gradually, organisations sprang up, and particularly after the Second World War many social, fund raising and sports clubs were thriving - with large memberships. Into the 1980s and 1990s, old copies of the Ewelme News confirm village life revolving around many communal organisations that are sadly now defunct.

Reports were regularly made by the drama group the Ewelme Players (established in 1980), NEW, (Nineties Ewelme Women), ELLS (Ewelme & Local Ladies), BAPS, and the Shepherds Hut Amateur Golf Society. More distantly – the Sunday Club, the Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies, the Youth Club, Women's Institute, and the Women's Fellowship (which replaced the Mothers Union).

However, communities evolve, and in 21st Century Ewelme social life no longer centres so prominently on local organisations. Increased mobility, and entertainment available in the home, indicates the needs of the over 60's for regular contact and '*recreation*' is lessening, and on October 13th, the Elm Club joined the other village institutions that are now part of Ewelme's history.

Ewelme Village Archive