
The village hall - "The Hut"

This building had been used since just after the First World War having been acquired from some government body, after seeing service at Gypsy Bottom, I believe by the "Timber Corps", it was now administered by a committee. The building consisted of a large room with a timber stage that could be dismantled and easily moved. There was a second small room where food could be prepared and a toilet.

The whole building was heated by a temperamental coke-burning stove but, apart from the school which could be used on odd occasions, that was all the village had so the best possible use was made of it.

Over the years all kind of functions had been held there from wedding receptions to children's tea parties, and during the war things hotted up as the various organisations laid on whist drives and beetle drives. It was used by the Home Guard. We tried to run a kind of youth club but as so often happens, the adults formed most of the committee, and instead of guiding us, tended to run it in their own way. For whatever reason it didn't survive for long.

Probably it's finest hour came during the wartime functions. They would mostly be well attended particularly the dances after the pub either ran out of beer or closed for the night. Now would come the really "athletic dancers" and the tempo would soon increase. This in turn could cause a new problem. dust storms. The hut had a double floor and over it's many years much dust had accumulated between them. With the increase in violence that these people brought, then this dust would rise. Add to this the uncertainty of the stove which would smoke, particularly each time the door was opened and shut, you then had the basic requirement for a good evenings entertainment.

I think anyone ever complained, it was all part of the fun and nothing was going to be allowed to spoil it. At one time there had been a billiard table, but that was long past use by the time I was old enough to be interested in the game. Like many of the others of my age group, the Army was able to complete our education in this respect.

There was a piano, but I believe it took the local Ashendon dance band to get it to really perform up to standard. I don't suppose it was ever tuned but it didn't matter too much for the kind of tunes that were hammered out on it, "give me five minutes more" and "she'll be coming round the mountain", seem to stick in my mind the most. One other popular instrument much used at these functions was the musical saw.

While these dances were going on we would either be banned or not interested, so would have to look for something else to do.

After watching the arrival of the dancers we might turn our hand to a bit of bat catching.