

The acquisition of Spondon Old Hall

Soon after the end of the Second World War, a "Village Hall and Playing Fields War Memorial Committee" was formed. It is not clear whether this was a formal sub-committee of the Parish Council but there were certainly updates reported at every Council meeting.

In 1951, there was a brief discussion of the possibility of acquiring a "temporary" Village Hall using a loan of £2500 and a £1000 grant from the Ministry of Education, but nothing seems to have come of this. This is possibly because later that year (at an "emergency meeting" of the Council on 30th July) it was reported that a meeting with Mrs Coleman at Spondon Old Hall and '*...they were favourably impressed with the possibility of this property being used for Community Centre.*' And possibility of purchase was '*...desirable- carried unanimously....accept the figure of £5000 as a maximum purchase price.*'

Things moved fast with a meeting on 17th September which accepted a District Valuer figure of £3850, with a loan of £4200 being sought from the Public Works Loan Board, implying a rate levy of 1d. Possibly prematurely, a few days later the purchase was agreed of '*...4 pictures at £5, one armchair at £1, one safe at £1, Encyclopaedia Britannica and stand at £4 and games table at £5.*' Later, in March 1952, it was agreed to purchase a table for the new Council Chamber from Boden's Market Ltd at a cost of £10 plus a fee of £4.17.0 for "planing and polishing" suggesting it was second-hand. Later, a further fee of £1.12.0 was paid to Boden's for assembly.

At a meeting on 30th January 1952, the actual loan agreed was £3545 over 30 years for purchase of the property and £655 over 60 years for purchase of land. It is difficult to get an accurate estimate of the equivalent price today but it is likely to be £3m-£5m. On 30th April 1952, the Council held its first meeting in Spondon Old Hall, now the Village Hall.

Dialogue soon turned to the official opening. Originally, the local MP was to be asked to officially open the Hall, with Mrs Drury-Lowe in support but as she was not available, Colonel Lilly would be asked. He was actually promoted to officially open the Hall on 13th September when the MP, in turn, was also not available.

For some time, the Hall was only used for the Parish Council but after complaints from local organisations a meeting was arranged on 25th August, where hire rates were agreed. These were £10s for large rooms, 7/6 for small rooms for any function. In addition, meetings attracted a lower charge of 5s and 4s. The whole building could be hired for social functions at 25s for large room, 7/6 for any other room. But it was noted that 'no more than 15 couples should dance at one time on floor of upper room'. Perhaps this was the first signs of structural troubles in the building as it was soon after this that there were reports of a leaking roof.

All was not "sweetness and light", however, and there was an acrimonious Parish Meeting on 7th July where Mr Wilshire, President of the Community Circle pointed out that this group had been raising money for a Village Hall since 1946 and had raised £1300 to date. The fact that Mr Wilshire had just been voted off the Parish Council was, I am sure, entirely coincidental.

The Community Circle seems to have had lofty ambitions, as soon after its start, it was advertising classes in association with University College Nottingham at Springfield School (Derby Telegraph 1st October 1946). On Thursday evenings,

lectures were on psychology, while on Fridays, there were lectures on Local Government by the deputy Town Clerk. In fact, in 1949, they fielded three candidates for Shardlow Rural Council, beating three Labour nominees.

During this period, there were sporadic negotiations to acquire some land for a further park, but it is not clear where this was. The greater part of Gravel Pit Lane had acquired in 1920 for housing with a smaller addition in 1966. The recreation ground in South Avenue was donated to the village as a war memorial. Eventually, the 1950's negotiations foundered as a reasonable price could not be agreed.

Given recent events, it is worth noting that at the Parish Council meeting on 25th March 1952, a letter was read from the County Librarian advising that facilities at the former Chapel (presumably the one on Chapel Street) were under review from time to time and outlined policy for a permanent library in the parish. The Clerk was asked to send a plan of the Hall site in an attempt to get a new Library in the grounds. After many delays in 1956, (and one suspects in some despair) the Parish Council '*...offered room 7 for temporary use as a library*'.

Parish Council minutes; Clerk to the Council Eileen Armett