



Sunday School Memories

From the Abinger & Coldharbour Parish News archive 1998

Mrs. Padgham's reminiscences (Parish News December/January 1998) of the Bowls Pavilion Sunday School touch on the activities in this building. There was also a service for adults in the afternoon.



My grandfather laid out the bowling green in the late 1920s, and at first the small open shelter at the end served as a pavilion. I think that it was about 1932 that the larger pavilion was built, and from the

beginning it housed the Sunday services and the Band of Hope. My grandfather was an ardent teetotaler, and many of the village children "took the pledge", though most of them later fell by the wayside!

At the outbreak of the war the Abinger Common members of the Hammer Women's Institute found it difficult to travel to the Hammer for meetings, and the Abinger Common and Wotton WI was formed, and they met in the Pavilion. When the army descended on the Common my mother, who had in the First War run a Salvation Army canteen in London, immediately went into the Food Office in Dorking and demanded (and got) supplies for a canteen, and, with the help of local ladies, this served the soldiers until the army left.

Other war-time activities included the Pie Centre and Jam Centre. When British Restaurants were established to provide cheap, nutritious, unrationed meals, these were not accessible to rural communities, and meat pies were distributed to compensate. These had to be ordered in advance, and came from Telfer's in Fulham, and on Wednesday afternoons a crowd of women would eagerly await the arrival of the pie van. Jam Centres could obtain supplies of sugar to make jam from locally available fruit. The Pie helpers received a small recompense, but the Jam makers were not paid; a "perk", however, was the "scum" or froth that was skimmed from the jam before it was bottled. This was much sought after.

When these activities ceased the accumulated funds were used to provide the swings and see-saw on the Recreation Ground, and new curtains for the Institute (now the Evelyn Hall); and the surplus formed the endowment for the WI Denman Bursary, as most of the helpers were WI members. After the war the pavilion was home to the Scout Troop and Cub Pack, the Cubs run by Mrs. Moore.

Now it is merely my garden shed and workshop, and has recently had to have a new roof, as the corrugated iron had reached retirement age (about 65 years).

Terence O'Kelly, from Abinger & Coldharbour Parish News, February 1998