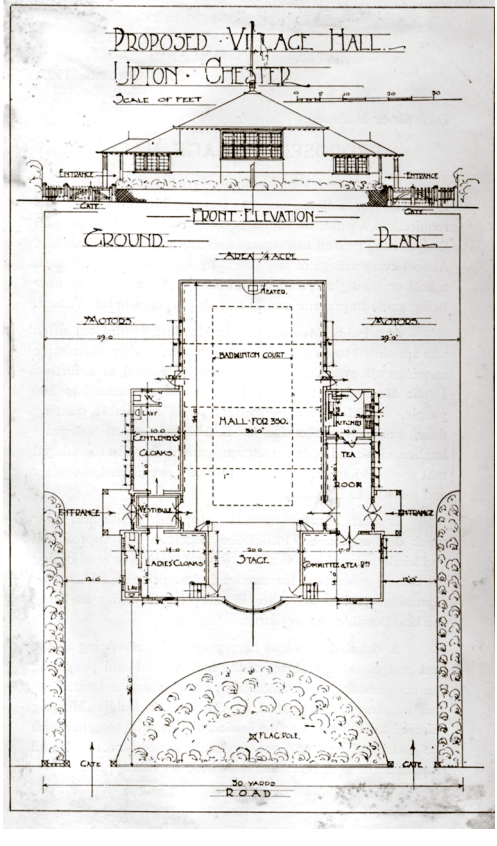
Chapter 12
Village Hall

A public meeting was called in the village school in May 1924 to address the need for a village community centre. Four and a half years later – on 8th Dec 1928 our hall was officially opened by Lady Grosvenor with virtually all of the costs met.

The Men's Institute (see page 89) was seen by some as serving this purpose with various plans of the Heath locality identifying it as 'Village Hall'. Also the village school – St.Mary's – had long served as a community centre for Upton but now the village expansion was rendering the school unsuitable and Headteacher Frank Hewitt was pushing for purpose-built premises. Other communities in the Chester area had their community centres and these had been visited by some of Upton's dignatories. 60 people attended this May 1924 public meeting in the school and a committee was appointed to make things happen.



Chairman H Beresford Jones
Hon.Sec. F Hewitt
Treasurer W Clayton

Committee Sir John Frost;
Mr.& Mrs Andrews Crompton;
Miss Clark Lloyd
Messrs Len Wright and R Ithell.

By October 1924 they had a report which was circulated and locally displayed calling for a public meeting to discuss. The report covered the purchase of the site; the plan of the proposed hall and the approximate cost. It stated that a hall was needed '*to meet the present day advancement of corporate life'* and also that ' *the latest methods of comfort and convenience was an essential'* and '*building on the best possible convenient site which would for all times provide a living representation of the present generation's effort to raise the status of the district and provide a centre for the uplifting of our younger generation'.*

A piece of land was identified '*to permit of posterity enlarging the building'* – this was ¼ acre adjacent to the St.Mary's school owned by Philip Grey Egerton who was known to have a soft spot for Upton. Records are quiet for 1925 and 1926 but perhaps much was happening behind the scenes. The only significant record is that in June 1926 a Garden Fete was held in the grounds of Upton Lawn – courtesy of Sir John & Lady Frost – which raised £138/2/6d for the building fund whose appointed trustees were H Beresford Jones; W Clayton & Mrs A Crompton.

By 1927 the project was underway. Sir Philip Egerton Grey had offered the land for the modest sum of £20 provided legal and boundary fencing costs were met. Formal plans were submitted in October 1927 by architect George Hutchins (tel Chester 26) with total project cost estimates of around £1900. At that time (October 1927) the fund held £407 plus promises of a further £300. An unidentified sporting friend of the village (believed to have been cricket captain Len Wright) had also promised £10 for every £100 raised before Christmas that year. There was now strong support across the village and a determination to raise funds before Christmas. The committee was much enlarged – adding H Griffiths; G Mason; Rev Sparling; Nield; Paterson; Haselden; K Tyrer; W Gray; Hylton Stewart; T Hinde; Brickland; H Cheers; Kinsey; Ingle; H Whaley; Garner; Hibbert and the Misses Newport & Wilson. By 25th October 1927 the shortfall was down to £800 and by 30th November to just over £600. Local joiner H Griffiths had donated a notice board.

1928 and building is underway

By June 1928, there were four firm builders' quotations. The fund stood at £1415 but with building quotations above the original estimate there was a shortfall of over £500. Builders offered reductions by using corrugated roofing rather than Brown Brindled asbestos tiles or using ordinary brick – interior whitewashed – rather than Brunner Mond brick. The committee strongly supported the project going ahead with the original specification. An entertainment sub-committee was formed and in July 1928 a major community-wide appeal was launched. The siting of the village hall required a footpath diversion and this was duly approved on the 2nd July 1928. On 27th July Rev Sparling cut the first sod in a launch ceremony with Sir John Frost and other committee members joined by the architect G Hutchins and contractor A Shepherd.



UPTON,
24th July, 1928.

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

UPTON VILLAGE HALL.

Opposite you will find a list of the subscribers to the fund for building the Village Hall with the amount raised to date which it is hoped will be of interest to you.

You will notice that the fund now amounts to the sum of £1382-8-1, and although this is short of the amount that will be required to complete the scheme, exclusive of the furnishing, by about £450, it has been decided to proceed with the erection of the Hall at once. The lowest tender amounting to £1690, has been accepted, and the work has been put in hand.

To mark the commencement of such an important undertaking, the Vicar of Upton, the Rev. Wilfred Sparling M.A., has been asked to inaugurate the work by cutting the first sod on the site and he has kindly consented to do so.

This ceremony will take place on Friday, the 27th day of July, at 6-30 p.m., on the site adjoining the Village Schools, and the Committee has much pleasure in giving you a cordial invitation to be present on that occasion in order that you may give your support at the outset of the scheme.

As the amount still to be raised (£450) is still very considerable the Committee, while thanking those who have given so generously, appeals to all for help in obtaining further subscriptions from their friends or from anyone whom they think might be persuaded to help so good a cause, as they feel sure there must still be many whom they have not been able to reach.

Subscriptions may be paid to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Wm. Clayton, either at the District Bank Chester or "Hill Crest" Upton, or the Hon. Secretary, Mr. F. Hewitt at the School House or any member of the Committee and will be duly acknowledged with thanks.

May we also take this opportunity of asking all those friends who have already kindly promised donations to pay them to the Hon. Treasurer as soon as possible as now the building has been put in hand the money will be required.

Signed, on behalf of the Committee,

H. BERESFORD JONES, J.P., *Chairman*
A. CROMPTON, *Vice-Chairman.*
W. CLAYTON, *Hon. Treasurer.*
F. HEWITT, *Hon. Secretary.*

Committee:

Mr. J. Brickland
Miss S. M. Clark-Lloyd
Mr. H. Cheers.
Mrs. W. Clayton
Mr. H. E Crane
Mrs. A. Crompton
Mr. J. D. Dutton
Sir J. M. Frost, J.P.
Mr. E. Garner
Mr. W. Gray
Mr. H. Griffiths
Mr. J. H. Haselden
Mr. F. Hibbert
Mr. T. Hinde
Mr. J. Ingle
Mr. R. Ithell
Mr. E. Twist Jones
Mr. T. Kinsey
Mrs. G. Mason
Mr. F. Morris
Mrs. C. Newport
Mr. C. Nield
Mr. G. Paterson
Rev. W. Sparling, M.A.
Mr. E. Hylton Stewart
Mr. K. Tyrer
Mr. H. Whaley
Miss M. Wilson
Mr. L. Wright
Mr. W. Young

List of Donations towards the Upton Village Hall.

	£	s	d
Sir J. M. Frost, J.P.	100	0	0
Mr. H. Beresford-Jones, J.P. ...	100	0	0
Mr. A. Crompton, J P.	100	0	0
Mrs. A. Crompton	100	0	0
Mrs. A. Tyrer	100	0	0
"A Sporting Gentleman"	60	0	0
Mr. G. Darsie	50	0	0
His Grace the Duke of Westminster	20	0	0
Mr. J. Soutter Clayton	20	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Patterson	20	0	0
Miss S. M. Clark-Lloyd	20	0	0
Mr. C. Nield	15	0	0
The Birkenhead Brewery Co., (per Mr. Harry Williams)... ...	10	10	0
Messrs. E. Dean & Sons, Ltd. ...	10	10	0
Rev. W. Sparling, M.A.	10	0	0
Mr. W. Clayton	10	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. E. Garner	10	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. K. V. Trubshaw ...	10	0	0
Miss M. Wilson	10	0	0
Mr. Beavan...	5	5	0
Mr. J. D. Dutton	5	5	0
Sir Chas. Cayzer, Bart., M.P. ...	5	0	0
Mr. A. K. Tyrer	5	0	0
Mrs. A. K. Tyrer	5	0	0
Mrs. W. Clayton	5	0	0
Mr. W. Brickland	5	0	0
Mr. J. Brickland	5	0	0
~~Mr. T. Hinde~~ 24/4/30 Not Received ~~5~~	~~5~~	~~0~~	~~0~~
Mr. F. Hibbert	5	0	0
Mr. F. Hewitt	5	0	0
Mr. J. H. Haselden	5	0	0
Mrs. S. Haselden	5	0	0
Mr. W. Young	5	0	0
Mrs. J. Schofield	5	0	0
Mr. J. Lightfoot	5	0	0
Mrs. J. Lightfoot	5	0	0
Mr. W. Gray	5	0	0
Mr. C. A. Earle	5	0	0
Messrs. Dicksons (Nurseries) Ltd.	5	0	0
Mrs. C. Pearson	5	0	0
The Misses Egginton	4	0	0
Mr. C. Newport	3	3	0
Mr. and Mrs. J. T. D. Darbishire	3	3	0
Mr. J. W. R. Crompton	3	0	0

	£	s	d
Mrs. A. J. Baker	2	10	0
Miss I. Jones	2	10	0
Mr. E. Hylton Stewart	2	2	0
Mr. T. Gibbons Frost	2	2	0
Mr. and Mrs. S. Martyn	2	2	0
Mr. A. B. Coleman	2	2	0
Mr. J. Joseph	2	2	0
~~Mr. R. Ithell~~ Not Received 24/4/30	~~2~~	~~2~~	~~0~~
Mr. and Mrs. Woolliscroft	2	2	0
Col. R. A. F. Hobbs, ...	2	0	0
Mr. T. Burgess	2	0	0
Mrs. Parry, Mrs. M. Parry and Miss G. Parry...	1	10	0
Capt. E. Hylton Gardner	1	1	0
Mr. C. Blandford	1	1	0
Mr. F. H. Garland,..	1	1	0
Mr. H. T. G. Edmonds	1	1	0
Mr. F. Morris	1	1	0
Mr. E. Twist Jones	1	1	0
Mrs. G. Mason	1	1	0
Mrs. B. Newport	1	1	0
~~Miss E. Ithell~~ Not Received 24/4/30	~~1~~	~~1~~	~~0~~
Miss N. Darlington	1	1	0
Mr. S. Oldham	1	0	0
Mr. J. McKay	1	0	0
Mr. W. Partington	1	0	0
Mr. J. Saunders	1	0	0
Mr. J. Grayson	1	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Slack	1	0	0
Mr. H. Griffiths	0	10	6
Mr. T. Kinsey	0	10	6
Mr. J. Ingle	0	10	6
Mr. E. Branson	0	10	6
Mr. W. Corfe	0	10	6
Mr. J. S. Buxton	0	10	6
Mr. F. Hinde	0	10	6
Mr. E. Burgess	0	10	6
Mr. R. Smethurst	0	10	6
Mrs. J. E. Duff	0	10	6
Mrs. W. Phillpot	0	10	6
Mrs. and Mr. P. Snelson	0	10	6
Mr. and Mrs. E. Hughes	0	10	0
Mr. H. Whaley	0	10	0
Mr. P. Wall	0	5	0
"A Friend" (Per Mrs. J. Schofield)	0	5	0

	£	s	d
Part Proceeds, Fete, Upton Lawn, 1926	138	2	6
Raised by Lady Frost—Tombola and Sale of old Silver	79	5	6
Raised by Mrs. H. Beresford-Jones—Pantomine, 1927 and sale of photographs, May Day Festival 1927 ..	26	2	10
Raised by Mesdames W. Clayton & Grimes—Dance ...	10	1	0
Raised by Mrs. T. Hinde—Dance	6	11	6
Raised by Mrs. E. Stacey—Home made shawl, ...	6	6	0
Raised by Upton Heath Women's Institute ...	69	5	1
Raised by Upton Women Unionist's Association ...	51	7	0
Raised by Upton-by-Chester Cricket Club	7	0	0
War Stock dividends and Bank Interest	44	0	8
Total to date ...	£1,382	8	1

There was a clear determination that the full community should contribute and the following appeal was put out showing donations to date.

The 'Declaration of Trust' to the 3 trustees is dated 23rd August 1928 and states the plot as 1200sq yds. With the building underway and further funds needed, a major social fund-raising event was held on Wednesday 19th September 1928 – a Gypsy Fair held in the grounds of Upton Lawn.



The 1928 Gypsy Fair

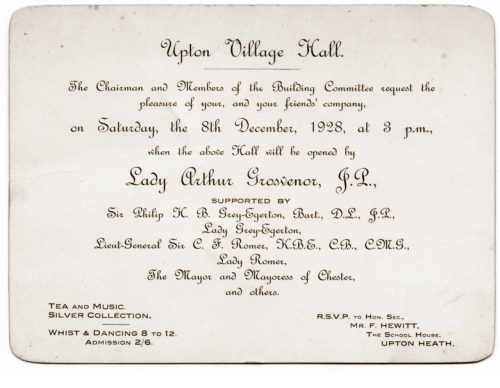
Frank Hewitt surrounded by –

His wife and the Mrs Ingle, Newport, Moore, Williams, Branson, Hinde, Gray & Horswill. Also the Misses Wilson, Griffiths, Smethurst, N&K Jones, Parry Mousedale Evans & Hinde.

The village hall was completed before the Official Opening Day but this allowed a major Chrysanthemum Show to be staged 'in the new Village Hall' on Tuesday 27th November. The event raised £338/19/0d for the building fund. Admission was 1/-d before 4.30pm and 6d from 4.30pm until 7.30pm.

The Official Opening Ceremony – 8th December 1928

This was a formal orchestrated ceremony with Lady Arthur Grosvenor unlocking the doors as an official opening. Although many dignitaries had sent their apologies nevertheless the event was attended by key civic, church and military names accompanying the committee. The vicar – the Rev. Wilfred Sparling – spoke from his long experience of the village saying that "*such a building was most desirable and would be chiefly used for recreation and amusement – they should remember that these things, if not taken to excess, were good for them spiritually as well as bodily*"



Upton Village Hall.

The Chairman and Members of the Building Committee request the pleasure of your, and your friends' company,

on Saturday, the 8th December, 1928, at 3 p.m.,

when the above Hall will be opened by

Lady Arthur Grosvenor, J.P.,

SUPPORTED BY

Sir Philip H. B. Grey-Egerton, Bart., D.L., J.P.,
Lady Grey-Egerton,
Lieut-General Sir C. F. Romer, K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G.,
Lady Romer,
The Mayor and Mayoress of Chester,
and others.

TEA AND MUSIC.
SILVER COLLECTION.

WHIST & DANCING 8 TO 12.
ADMISSION 2/6.

R.S.V.P. TO HON. SEC.,
MR. F. HEWITT,
THE SCHOOL HOUSE,
UPTON HEATH.

With a further £100 from Mr Tyrer only the final 10% of the total cost was now outstanding. The full Board of Management stood at 40 members involving most of Upton's wealthy but also drawing on the community as a whole. The ceremony was followed with entertainment by a

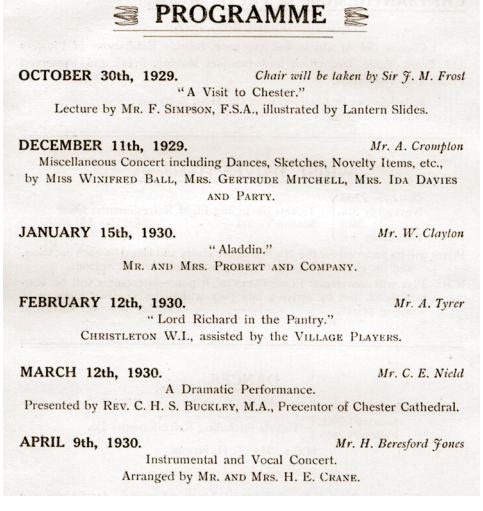
whist drive and a dance led by the Carlton Band. Local resident Frank Whaley recalls his part in the entertainment as a small boy and Frank was also a star guest during the Hall's 75th anniversary celebrations in December 2003.

Besides the donations, nearly half the cost was raised by events from cricket competitions to fetes, dances, sales and money raised by various groups. One major group was the Women's Institute, seen here outside the hall shortly after it opened.



Events in the early days of the Village Hall

In these days the Hall was claimed to have capacity for 400 and it is understood to have had electric lighting from day one. The stage was a key part of these early days with concerts and dance bands. The committee minutes archived with the CRO not only cover the management of the hall but are a good scrapbook of the various programmes – some of which have been reproduced here. Worthy of note is the frequency of dances where a Crosville Bus had been arranged to leave the Hall at 2 a.m. returning to Chester via Newton.



PROGRAMME

OCTOBER 30th, 1929. *Chair will be taken by Sir J. M. Frost*
"A Visit to Chester."
Lecture by MR. F. SIMPSON, F.S.A., illustrated by Lantern Slides.

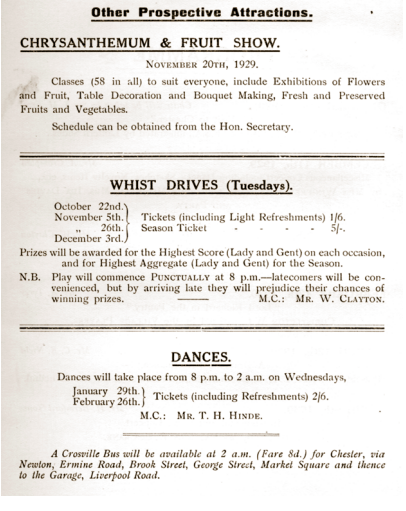
DECEMBER 11th, 1929. *Mr. A. Crompton*
Miscellaneous Concert including Dances, Sketches, Novelty Items, etc., by MISS WINIFRED BALL, MRS. GERTRUDE MITCHELL, MRS. IDA DAVIES AND PARTY.

JANUARY 15th, 1930. *Mr. W. Clayton*
"Aladdin."
MR. AND MRS. PROBERT AND COMPANY.

FEBRUARY 12th, 1930. *Mr. A. Tyrer*
"Lord Richard in the Pantry."
CHRISTLETON W.I., assisted by the VILLAGE PLAYERS.

MARCH 12th, 1930. *Mr. C. E. Nield*
A Dramatic Performance.
Presented by REV. C. H. S. BUCKLEY, M.A., Precentor of Chester Cathedral.

APRIL 9th, 1930. *Mr. H. Beresford Jones*
Instrumental and Vocal Concert.
Arranged by MR. AND MRS. H. E. CRANE.



Other Prospective Attractions.

CHRYSANTHEMUM & FRUIT SHOW.

NOVEMBER 20TH, 1929.

Classes (58 in all) to suit everyone, include Exhibitions of Flowers and Fruit, Table Decoration and Bouquet Making, Fresh and Preserved Fruits and Vegetables.

Schedule can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary.

WHIST DRIVES (Tuesdays).

October 22nd.
November 5th.
" 26th.
December 3rd.
Tickets (including Light Refreshments) 1/6.
Season Ticket - - - - - 5/-.

Prizes will be awarded for the Highest Score (Lady and Gent) on each occasion, and for Highest Aggregate (Lady and Gent) for the Season.

N.B. Play will commence PUNCTUALLY at 8 p.m.—latecomers will be convenienced, but by arriving late they will prejudice their chances of winning prizes.

M.C.: MR. W. CLAYTON.

DANCES.

Dances will take place from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. on Wednesdays,
January 29th.
February 26th.
Tickets (including Refreshments) 2/6.

M.C.: MR. T. H. HINDE.

A Crosville Bus will be available at 2 a.m. (Fare 8d.) for Chester, via Newton, Ermine Road, Brook Street, George Street, Market Square and thence to the Garage, Liverpool Road.

THE VILLAGE HALL, UPTON. -:::- WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9th, 1930.

POPULAR CONCERT

PROGRAMME

PART 1.

1 Overture ... "Raymond" ... ... *Thomas*
THE ORCHESTRA.

2 Song ... "Love the Jester" ... *Montague Phillips*
MISS IVY KEITH-HILL.

3 'Cello Solo ... (*a*) Nocturne ... ... *Trowell*
(*b*) Orientale ... ... *Cui*
MR. S. ENNION.

4 Song ... "Fisher Lad" ... *Maud Crafke Day*
MISS EVELYN KEITH-HILL.

5 Selection ... "Spring Song" ... *Mendelssohn*
Intermezzo ... "Billet-doux" *Werner*
THE ORCHESTRA.

6 Song ... "Romance from L'Eliser d'Amore" ... *Donizetti*
MR. HOWEL DAVIES, L.R.A.M.

7 Duett ... "Still as the Night" ... *Carl Bohm*
MISSES IVY AND EVELYN KEITH-HILL.

8 Selections ... "Dance of Spirits" } ... *Gluck*
"Easter Melody" }
... ... "Czardas" ... ... *Michaels*
THE ORCHESTRA.

INTERVAL.

PART 2.

9 Three Dances ... "Henry VIII" ... ... *German*
THE ORCHESTRA.

10 Song ... "Love, the Vagrant" ... ... *Bizet*
MISS EVELYN KEITH-HILL.

11 Violin Solo ... "Romance and Bolero" ... *Dancla*
MR. A. J. ARMSTRONG, F.C.V.

12 Song ... "Love, could I only tell thee" ... *Capel*
MR. HOWEL DAVIES, L.R.A.M.

13 Concert Waltz ... "Liebstraume" ... ... *Ertl*
THE ORCHESTRA.

14 Song ... ... "Villanelli" ... *Eva dell Acqua*
MISS IVY KEITH-HILL.

15 March ... "Old Comrades" ... ... *Teike*
THE ORCHESTRA.

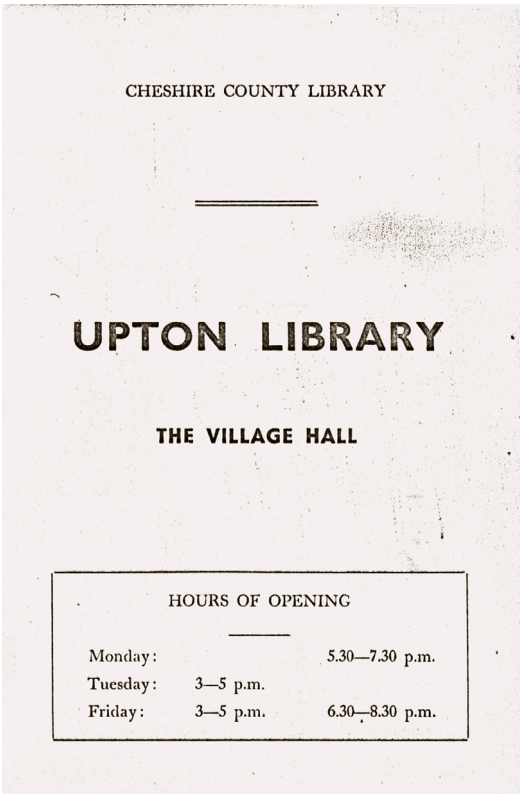
GOD SAVE THE KING.

Leader of Orchestra: MR. A. J. ARMSTRONG, F.C.V.
Accompanist: MRS. R. L. LLOYD, A.R.C.M.
Conductor: MR. H. E. CRANE.

W. F. Healey, Printer, Chester.

The Village Hall as stand-in for other facilities

During WW2, the Hall was used as both store and workshop by day and to entertain the troops by evening. With the post-war boom in community growth the Village Hall was called on to provide many services which subsequently acquired their own premises. The building was effectively 'squared off' adding rooms that significantly increased the storage and allowed for modernisation of the heating via a boiler room.



CHESHIRE COUNTY LIBRARY

UPTON LIBRARY

THE VILLAGE HALL

HOURS OF OPENING

Monday:		5.30—7.30 p.m.
Tuesday:	3—5 p.m.	
Friday:	3—5 p.m.	6.30—8.30 p.m.

Those born during the post-war period would have been weighed regularly in the Baby Clinic in the days before the Weston Grove Clinic was built in 1969. Similarly the Upton branch of the County Library was built on Wealstone Lane in 1969. Prior to that it was housed in the Hall and apparently run, in the early days, by the W.I.

With St.Mary's school next door, the Hall served as their main hall for gymnastics as well as concerts and health screening.

Roman Catholic Mass was held regularly before St. Columbas was built in the mid-1960s. They had a regular attendance of around 50 each week with a priest attending from St.Werburgs and Eddy Edison as an altar boy.

The mid-1960s was again the period when Upton's youth acquired their own premises. Before the Church Hall was built the Village Hall was their only venue which they used for their many and varied events. This photograph from the early 1960s shows Gail Davidson and Eileen Keen serving refreshments after a dance event.



Private functions have also been held over the years – this 1934 event is believed to have been the first wedding reception.



The happy couple were Gertrude Mary Cooper and Edward Ken Davies.

Management & upkeep of the Hall

The Hall is managed by a set of Trustees, drawn from the community, who follow a policy of regular maintenance and refurbishment while retaining the period look. After the wartime period, however, the Hall was in a poor condition with complaints being made to the Parish Council. A new maple flooring replaced the pine floor, damaged after years of military boots. The solid fuel heating was replaced with oil. One reminiscence recalls the post-war refurbishment with the community doing the painting – ladies on the lower levels and men on the upper.

The 1955 extension had been dedicated to the memory of Martha Wilson who was chairman 1936 – 1945. Under Nancy Turton's chairmanship in the early 1980s, the frequently leaking roof was reslated after fund raising events and with community sponsoring of £1 a slate. For the last 15 years Norman Draper has been responsible for the building and has carried out a number of refurbishment projects including heating modernisation, kitchen upgrades and a major reorganisation of the toilet facilities, keeping the building up to date and catering for the disabled.

While many members of the community have served the Hall for a few years, others have helped and supported for many decades. The photo below marks the retirement of J W (Bill) Roberts after some 30 years of service as Secretary. Bill is seen receiving an envelope from Miss Hoole. Chairwoman Molly Bradbury and Treasurer Brian Constable can be seen between them. Also shown - progressing up the stairs – Leo Jackson; Kay Joseph; Alan Bisson; Doris Pearce; Shiela Garston; Nancy Turton; Gwen Griffiths; Mary Thompson; Biddy Barnett From far right progressing inwards - Hughie Pratt; Frank Hewitt; John Ross; Les Vincent; Joan Jones.



By 2000 there was concern that the Monica Sparling garden in front of the Hall had been left to get into a poor state. It was refurbished in the autumn of 2001. Secretary Geoff Newton located the great grandchildren of Rev. Wilfred Sparling, inviting them to a rededication of the garden set for 13th July 2002. The day was a success with a choir from Upton Manor school and a tableau history performed by the Upton Brownies.

The 75th Anniversary celebrations on 7th December 2003, saw the public launch of a major refurbishment project to further local pride in the facility for the early 21st century. To be completed by the 80th Anniversary, the project has been named Project 4-SCORE. Plans have been displayed in the hall and fundraising is well underway.