

Lyddington Reading Room.
Information from the account books and minute books.

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It is not known when the Reading Room as a society was set up, but account books exist covering the years 1882-1939, and minute books for 1901-1949. This note provides details of the operation of the society as indicated in these books. After the last date in the minute books, when the society was wound up, there are a few references to the Reading Room as a building in the Parish Council minutes. These are reproduced at the end of this note.

Account Books 1882-1939

Membership.

Originally there were three classes of member, annual subscribers, quarterly subscribers, and monthly subscribers. In 1882, the monthly subscribers paid 8d per month, and the quarterly subscribers 1s 6d per quarter. However the subscription paid by the annual subscribers varied, being generally 5s, although one member paid 15s. The following year and for some years thereafter the subscriptions became 6d per month or 1s 6d per quarter or 5s per year. Later, in 1893, the quarterly membership was dropped, and after 1935 there were only annual subscriptions.

A list of the members in 1882 is given in Appendix 1. For names of the members in other years please consult the account books.

An interesting feature of the monthly membership is that many did not subscribe during the summer.

During the period 1882-1939 the total number of members was generally in the range 20-40, although there were low points of 15 in 1909 and 1924, and the membership fell to 11 in 1916. The membership was not recorded in 1916 or 1917. In 1939 there is an entry for 'evacuees'.

Receipts and Donations.

In addition to the membership subscriptions, the Reading Room received a number of other receipts. Some were profits from concerts, dances, jumble sales, and whist drives. There was also income from the use of lamps, (presumably these were oil lamps which were borrowed by members), and hiring out of chairs, tables, crockery, and the piano. The newspapers were sold when they became out of date, mainly in bulk, but the Illustrated London News, Daily Mail, and Daily Chronicle were often sold to named individuals as a yearly or half yearly batch.

Over the years the Room was hired out to various organisations and activities including the Friendly Society, the Liberal Association, the Conservatives, the Labour party, the Minstrels, mothers' meetings, a bazaar, bible class, dancing class, Lyddington Benefit Club, choir supper, the Labourers Union, the Wesleyans,

Lyddington Parish Council, a magic lantern entertainment, pig club suppers, a smoking concert, cooking classes, Chapel (entertainments, teas, and sales), drilling (1918), Womens Union, Farmers Union, library, Womens Institute, Old Folks, tennis club, inquests (1931, 1934), cricket club, jumble sales, polling station, children's tea, and a dance for gifts for soldiers (1939). Many entries refer to hire of 'the Games Room' and it seems likely that there were separate rooms for reading and for games.

In the 1920s and 30s there was a great deal of whist played in the Reading Room. The various whist drives referred in the receipts are :- tennis whist, cricket whist, chapel whist, WI whist, Coronation whist, choir whist, Conservative whist, whist for the blind, infirmary whist, scout whist, 6d whist, Red Cross whist, whist for soldiers (1939).

An interesting feature is the income from the sale of pictures in the years 1887-1890. An item recording the sale of pictures appears once in 1887, 6 times in 1888 and once in each of the other years. As can be seen from the payments below, in 1882 the Reading Room purchased 'wire for hanging pictures', which suggests there had been a donation of pictures at that time and by 1887 it was decided to sell some or all of them.

In 1932 the Reading Room invested in 4½ % bonds and the interest appears in the receipts.

Payments

The payments account shows that in 1882 the newspapers were supplied by Mr J Hawthorn, and are listed as 'Standard, Daily News, and Stamford Mercury'. Mrs Manton was paid for 'carriage of papers' until 1904 after which Mrs Muggleton took over until 1908. There is then no payment for paper delivery until 1916 when Mr Wells started delivering. The next year he appears to have taken over the supply of papers from J Hawthorn as well as carrying out the delivery.

Mrs Hinch was the cleaner and caretaker in 1882 and she continued until 1911 when she was succeeded by Mrs Wadland. She gave up the position in 1935 and Mr H Muggleton was appointed as caretaker in her place. Later caretakers were Mrs G W Clarke (1941) and Mrs A Gamston (1946).

Everard & Ellis supplied the coal in the early years. Later, other suppliers are recorded including Mr Burdett, Mr Bradshaw, and Mr Blankley. Other early payments were for oil, wick etc. (Mr Cheatle, Mr Beadle), and for firewood (Mr Jeffs, Mr Beadle). There is an item for 'cues, cement and tips' suggesting the society had a billiard table. In 1882 wire was purchased for hanging pictures. In 1887 the first subscription was made to the Welland Valley Whist League and these subscriptions continued until 1914.

In 1905 a piano was bought from Mr Denning for £16 10s 0d

In 1907 an air rifle (£2.8s.3d) and target were purchased.

From 1909 to 1923 there was a regular payment for 'lamp glasses' to a Mr Nichols and in an isolated payment in 1927 this is combined with payment for oil and wicks. [It is not clear what these glasses were, why so many were needed, and why there was no purchase of such glasses outside this period; electric lighting was installed in 1934.]

In 1927 J Clark was paid to solder 2 lamps and in 1928 he soldered 3 lamps.

In 1925 there is payment for a billiard table costing £5 5s 0d. In view of the purchase of cues etc. in 1883 this could have been a replacement.

As regards the papers available in the Reading Room, it can be seen from the accounts that in addition to the Illustrated London News, the Daily Mail, the Daily Chronicle, the Standard, the Daily News, and the Stamford Mercury, other magazines and papers were added from time to time. These included John Bull, Titbits, Everybody's Weekly, the Sketch, and the Leicester Mercury. Some were no doubt deleted from the list.

Minute Books 1901-1949

The Rules of the Reading Room appeared on a loose sheet inserted in one of the minute books. These Rules are reproduced as Appendix 2. They are not dated.

The many events referred to in the section on Receipts and Donations above are also noted in the Minute Books but are not repeated here except where they give an interesting insight into the operation of the Reading Room.

30th January 1901: At the AGM it was proposed by Mr T Beadle and seconded by Mr J E Marvin that Mr Wright be President. Mr J Clarke was elected Treasurer and Mr J H Colwell Secretary. Messrs Jones, Goodwin, Marvin, and Tyler were elected to the committee. The minutes were signed by Mr F K Wright as Chairman. [For details of the officers and committee members appointed at subsequent AGMs please consult the minute books]

14th January 1902: It was agreed to let the two rooms to Mr Taylor for a dance. [It seems likely that the two rooms were a games room and a reading room.]

27th January 1902: It was decided that the issues of the Illustrated London News, the Standard, and the Daily Mail for the year 1902 would be sold to members. The question of having a dance was discussed and Mr Clarke was requested to endeavour to obtain a piano in the village. [In 1905 a piano was purchased, see account books above]

1st February 1902: It was decided to arrange the dance, Mr Rowley of Uppingham to provide the music and Mr Sharman offered the use of his piano.

A gift of 9 books for the use of members had been received from Mr Adcock of Leicester.

13th January 1905: It was decided to arrange an Entertainment in February. At subsequent meetings it was recorded that this was to be a combined Concert and Dance, and that no card playing would be allowed. What was later referred to as the Social Evening appears to have been a success, making a profit of £14 16s for the Room. Those who had assisted by 'gifts of refreshments, songs, and by playing for dancing' were thanked by the committee.

1st April 1905: A box of books from Rev Hugh Bryan had been received, being 37 volumes of The Church of England Magazine. He was thanked by the committee.

24th August 1905: The committee agreed to purchase a 10ft x 3ft bagatelle table from a society in Uppingham.

9th October 1905: The committee decided to buy a piano from Mr Denning of Stamford, the purchase to be undertaken by Rev Edmonds and Dr Pink.

3rd September 1907: It was resolved that an air gun be obtained for the use of members, and that the large bagatelle table (which was difficult to move), should be sold.

14th January 1908: The committee resolved that paraffin for the lamps should be obtained in rotation from the three village dealers, these being Mr Beadle, Mr Tyler, and Mr Cheatle. The committee also decided that when the air gun fund, [presumably consisting of income from charges for the use of the gun], reached 25s a slot machine for pellets should be obtained.

26th May 1911: The Rev C E Danby had written to the committee expressing his intention to convey the Reading Room buildings to the Parish Council, to be held in trust for the village. Some suggestions and questions from members regarding the terms of the conveyance were to be put to Rev Danby. [See entry for 6th August 1926]

29th December 1911: Certain younger members were to be cautioned as to their conduct. Should any further misconduct take place the offenders would be struck off the list of members without further warning.

18th December 1914: It was decided that a whist drive would be held to raise funds for the local Belgian Refugee Fund.

20th January 1917: A memorandum by the secretary records that as practically all the members were away on military duty an informal meeting was held by Messrs J E Marvin, J Clarke and W H Jeffs who agreed it was useless to call the usual General Meeting and that the Room should continue at a reduced expenditure. [However, it seems from the next entry that it became necessary to close the Room for a time].

29th August 1919: It was decided to re-open the Reading Room on October 1st.

18th April 1923: The ex-service men of the village were hoping to have a lending library and wished to know if it could be kept in the Reading Room. The committee agreed to the request.

21st March 1925: The surfaces of two tables had been damaged as a result of having been used for supports to a platform at Bedehouse Hall concerts.

6th August 1926: The committee were informed by the Parish Council that Rev Danby proposed conveying the Reading Room and Games Room to the Council for the benefit of the village. The committee agreed to carry on the Rooms as in the past subject to the Trust conditions that had been laid before them. The Trust conditions, [which are entered in the minute book after the entry for the meeting of 20th November], include the following restrictions:- no religious services to be held, no intoxicants to be consumed, no opening on Sundays, Christmas Day or Good Friday, the Parish Council to have no power to interfere with the management provided the club is conducted in accordance with the rules of the club.

20th November 1926: A billiard table had been purchased for £5 5s.

23rd February 1931: An incident had occurred in the Games Room. A clock used to time billiard games was damaged and rendered useless. It was ascertained by the committee that the damage was done by Mr Lorrimer Petch. Mr Petch admitted breaking the clock but refused to replace it or repair it. He was therefore told he would cease to be a member. At this point the door of the Room was locked by someone outside and the key taken away, the committee finally opening it by 'unscrewing the staple of the lock with a pocket knife'. The committee were unable to find out who had locked them in.

27th February 1931: The committee had received a letter from nine members, (D W Petch, G H Petch, R G Welch, L T Petch, C Brown, F Wright, S Wright, E Dumford, & G Woods), saying they regarded the expulsion of Mr Petch for a trivial offence [see previous entry] to be 'silly and childlike' and threatening to resign if Mr Petch were not reinstated. The committee were not prepared to reconsider their decision and accepted the resignation of the above members.

3rd October 1933: Certain members who had left the Room in February 1931 had applied for readmission. It was decided that they could be readmitted, except for Mr L Petch.

22nd August 1934: Tenders for the provision of electric light were accepted.

7th September 1939: The ARP [Air Raid Precautions] wardens present at the meeting, Messrs J H Colwell, Rev I C Jones, & A W Clarke, reported that it was probable that the Rooms would be required as a First Aid Post and that they were meeting Major Joyce to inspect the Rooms.

11th September 1939: The ARP wardens reported that Major Joyce had inspected the Games Room and that it would be needed as a First Aid Post. However, the Room could continue to be used as usual provided it was available for ARP use whenever an air raid warning was in operation. The meeting then discussed allowing the use of the Rooms to 'some thirty evacuees now living in the village'. It was decided they could be accepted as members provided the Masters would be responsible for collecting the subscriptions and that a Master should be present each evening.

7th November 1939: Some chairs in the Games Room had been deliberately broken. No information could be obtained as to who was responsible.

11th January 1940: Mr W H Jeffs declined to carry on the combined offices of Secretary and Treasurer as he was not satisfied with the conduct of certain members.

A Note appears in the minute book listing some items deposited in Barclays Bank Uppingham. These included a 4½% conversion stock certificate, a workmen's compensation policy, and the Trust conditions under which the Reading Room was run by the committee.

15th February 1940: It was decided to sell the air rifle during the interval of a whist drive. Mr Grantham was to be asked if he would put it on view in his shop window. Mr C Hinch offered to 'get a couple of rabbits' as a prize for the whist drive.

27th May 1940: The disposal of the books belonging to the late Ex Servicemens Library was discussed. It was agreed to retain 40-50 for the Reading Room use, Miss Brookes to have 2-3 dozen for the Rutland Community Council, and the remainder to go to Cottesmore. It was agreed to draw in cash the 4½% conversion bonds and put it in the Post Office.

11th June 1941: A piano had been purchased for £12 10s.

8th November 1943: It was agreed that the committee should be mixed. Miss Knox and Mrs Woods were added to the committee.

17th November 1947: It was agreed that an air rifle should be purchased as soon as funds permitted. The Lyddington Football Club would be allowed to use the little room as a changing room for visiting teams.

1st December 1947: It was agreed that boxing should be allowed. Members to supply their own gloves.

16th December 1947: Rules were drawn up for the air rifle range.

16th September 1948: The secretary indicated he did not wish to carry on. No replacement secretary could be found and it was decided that if no more interest was shown by members by the end of the year the Reading Room should be handed over to the Lyddington Parish Council.

30th November 1948: The committee inspected the Games Room and it was then decided that in view of the wanton destruction and to save further damage the Reading Room should be closed, except for hire, until a General Meeting had been held. Furthermore, the Parish Council would be informed that the Reading Room would probably be transferred to them in 1st January 1949.

30th December 1948: It was agreed that the committee should cease to function and as in the wording of the Agreement the Reading Room should revert to the Parish

Council. A further meeting would be held to consider the disposal of the furniture, games equipment etc.

6th January 1949: It was carried unanimously that the Reading Room Club with all assets should be transferred to the control of the Lyddington Parish Council with the proviso that everything on the premises should be left there as far as possible and the funds be earmarked for use in connection with the Reading Room premises. The main contents of the Reading Room were listed as follows:-

3 tables, 3 trestles and 1 board, piano, billiard table and accessories, stove, 41 chairs, clock, dart board, set of dominoes, 12 packs of playing cards, set of draughts, 27 card tables, 32 cups, 49 saucers, 25 plates, 37 spoons, skittle alley and skittles.

Parish Council Minutes

21st May 1958: It was decided to start a youth club in the Reading Room, with a minimum age of 14, the club to be open 2 nights a week.

9th April 1979: The Reading Room was invested in the Official Custodian of Charity Lands.

25th June 1979: The Parish Council decided to sell the Reading Room, the proceeds to be used to purchase a playing field.

6th March 1980: An offer for the purchase of the Reading Room was accepted

12th May 1980: The contract for the sale of the Reading Room was signed.

Appendix 1.

RULES OF THE LIDDINGTON READING ROOM.



1.—That the Institution be called “The Liddington Reading Room.”

2.—That the Reading Room be supplied with such daily and weekly Newspapers as shall be determined upon by the Committee.

3.—That the following games be provided: Chess, Draughts, Dominoes, and Bagatelle.

4.—That the Reading Room be open every day from 3 P.M. to 10 P.M., and the Games Room from 5 P.M. to 10 P.M., with the exception of Sunday.

5.—That all parishioners above the age of 15 may become Members by payment in advance of eightpence a month, or one shilling and sixpence a quarter, or five shillings a year, and that all subscriptions be paid within seven days of the day the same may become due, and in case any Member's subscription shall be in arrear beyond that time, such Member's name shall be struck off the list, and his Membership be considered as having ceased.

6.—That members be allowed to introduce friends not being parishioners for the evening on payment of one penny for every such admission.

7.—That a general meeting of the Members be called annually in the month of September, to choose a President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and four other Members who shall constitute the Committee, three of such Members of the Committee to be a quorum, and that in the event of a vacancy through death or resignation, the Committee have power to fill up the same.

8.—That it shall be the duty of the Treasurer to take charge of the payments of the Members, to make the necessary disbursements in accordance with the directions of the Committee, and to present a statement of accounts at the general annual meeting.

9.—That a person who is not a Member of the Society, be appointed annually by the Committee to audit the Accounts of the Society for the year, the same when audited and laid before the general meeting to be printed and one copy thereof given to each Member of the Society.

10.—That it shall be the duty of the Secretary to call all meetings, whether of the Committee or of the Members, to keep a minute book of the proceedings, and to conduct any correspondence.

11.—That the meetings of the Committee be called by note or circular addressed to each Member, and that general meetings of the members be summoned by notices posted in the Rooms.

12.—That smoking be allowed in the Rooms.

13.—That no betting or playing for money be allowed in the Rooms.

14.—That no profane or improper language be allowed in the Rooms.

15.—That reasonable order be kept in the Rooms, that Members of the Committee be empowered to interfere in any case of disorder or misbehaviour, and that it is particularly requested that their authority should be respected.

16.—That all Members be requested to protect the property of the Society from ill usage, not to interfere with the lights and fires, and to return Chessmen Draughtsmen, Dominoes, &c., to their respective drawers and boxes if not handed over to other players, and any one occasioning any loss or damage to the same shall make good such damage to the satisfaction of the Committee.

17.—That the Committee have power for any reasonable cause both to refuse their sanction to the admission of new members, and to strike out existing Members from the list, the same to be decided by a resolution of the Committee.

18.—That no Member continue to use a Newspaper beyond ten minutes after another member has asked for the use of it.

19.—That the Committee have power to lend the Rooms for the purpose of Concerts, Lectures, Meetings, &c., but in no case to be so used without the consent of the Committee having been first obtained.

20.—That the Committee meet once a quarter, the time of such meeting and the mode of convening the same to be fixed by themselves.

21.—That the Committee have power to make new rules or to alter existing rules, due notice being given to the Secretary, and notice given by him to each member of the Committee.

Appendix 2.

Lyddington Reading Room Members in 1882

Beadle, Henry
Beadle, James
Brewster, James
Brown, G R
Bryan, A
Cheatle, George
Clarke, Charles
Clarke, Henry
Clarke, P J
Clements, R W
Colwell, J T
Colwell, T C W
Dunford, S
Eaton, George
Frisby, Charles
Frith, Rev R W
Hawthorn, Rev R
Hinch, W H
Jeffs, R
Manton, R S
Marvin, Edward
Middleton, I
Sharpe, Charles
Smith, J
Smith, William
Watkins, Alfred
Watkins, John
Webster, A
Webster, Joseph
Webster, S
Wright, K