

The Village Hall - History

The present Embassy Club building was originally built in 1893. The executors of Joseph Smith's Will successfully applied for planning permission to extend their Bacon Curing business at Cummersdale. The building was used for bacon curing for several years but by 1923 the building had fallen into disrepair after the curing business had closed a few years previously.

About this time a group of ex-servicemen from Cummersdale applied and were given a grant of £14 from the United Services Fund for social facilities in the village. The Carlisle Journal gave an account of how the money was spent.

At a meeting following the grant it was decided to start a reading room with the money. The task had been carried out within a few weeks and a room was taken in what was part of the old Bacon curing factory. The new enterprise was so popular, that within a short time they found it necessary to extend. The loft above the reading room was chosen for the extension, with the use of an ordinary ladder for access. Finding that membership was increasing rapidly, it was decided to try and purchase the building with the right to extend and alter it.

This mammoth task was undertaken by the ex-servicemen of Cummersdale over a period of two and a half years. Over 6,700 hours of leisure time of the men were spent in improving their building. When they had finished the building contained 13 rooms, these consisted of a reading room, a dance hall with a small stage, a dining hall to seat 90 people, a cook-house and kitchen, a games room and a large billiards room containing a full size and a half size billiards tables, there was also a committee room and ladies and gents cloak-rooms. The Journal reported that not a halfpenny was spent on labour of any description.

The club was opened by Mr Edmund Stead, who commented that, only a short time ago villagers would remember that it was a tumble down old bacon curing factory inhabited only by bats, rats and the ghosts of pigs, and now it is a splendid hall with seating accommodation for 250 persons.

He suggested that the committee should next try for a Bowling Green. (Mr Stead's reference to the building being a tumble down bacon curing factory is rather odd because at that time the building had only been built 32 years previously). Echoes of his suggestion to try for a bowling green surfaced again in 1930 when the new "Spinners Arms" pub was being built.

The Cummersdale ex-servicemen's club put forward a signed petition to the State Management Scheme to consider the provision of a bowling green with the new pub. The Hall has been used for many village occasions apart from the ex-servicemen's uses, these include, Dances, Whist Drives, W.I. meetings, the Rifle club's annual dinner, scouts, and the Cummersdale youth club, and many other social events.

The late Mabel Renton, who lived at the head of Pump Lane in the village, once told me about the early dances they used to have in the Hall, these were held on a Saturday night, the music being provided by a Melodeon or a piano, the floor was sprinkled with a white powder to allow slip on the sandstone flagged floor! In more modern times of course the flagged floor has been replaced with a modern wooden dance floor. I'm sure many people will remember the 'Cummersdale Merry Neets' on new year's eve held in the Hall.

