

ASHFORD ROAD, CANTERBURY
AND ITS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

***OR FROM THE ASHFORD ROAD SOCIAL CLUB TO
THE ASHFORD ROAD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION:***

AN INTRODUCTORY HISTORY

BY

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ASHFORD ROAD AND ITS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: FROM ARSC TO ARCA: AN INTRODUCTORY HISTORY.

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Introduction: One of the things which has most marked the recent history of Thanington is its proliferation of community organizations, all with their own buildings. These include St Faiths/Hilltop, the Jubilee Hall and the Thanington Resource Centre. However, probably the earliest of these is what is now the Ashford Road Community Association. Although this is a relatively recent creation, dating from 1990 and its hall from 2000, ARCA has its roots in the Ashford Road Social Club which was one of two community ventures in the parish to emerge at the end of the war. What follows is an attempt, made as part of a larger study of Thanington and its history, to tell the story of how the residents of one part of Thanington created a community organization of their own and endowed it with buildings which became a major social resource, initially for the immediate neighbourhood, and later for all Canterbury and its environs.

Doing this is not without its problems. To begin with, the major sources available are the Minute and Account books of the two bodies. However, these are not always complete. The minutes are sometimes quite brief and often rather formal and stylized. Thus, at Annual General Meetings, the Secretaries for years seems to have said the same thing. Moreover, the minutes are prone to evoke problems one month, only to pass them over in silence in succeeding months. Moreover, the minutes give most attention to details of fêtes and events rather than to things of greater interest to the historian.

Furthermore, the evidence of the accounts papers does not always fully accord with the minutes. Nor are the latter complete. So the basic narrative which the two sources offer has had to be checked against the memories of some of those involved in the associations. Unfortunately, none of the founders are now alive so there are questions about the very early days which are hard to answer. And, of course, people's memories are neither complete nor wholly in agreement. Hence what emerges can only be an approximate story. So, if anyone can provide further information, it will be greatly appreciated.

What we find is that the history of the two organizations is very much tied up with the way society in general, whether local or national, has changed over the years. Indeed, as time went on, the Club came to fill new roles as people developed other opportunities, interests and life styles than those available in the immediate post war years. As society became more mobile, more prosperous, more demanding and more outward looking, the Club's own initial offerings no longer proved as attractive as it had originally done. Notably people had far less access to cars in the 1940s than they have since enjoyed. At the same time, new organizations and interests, themselves the product of this changing society, began to find the Club House a convenient venue for their own activities. This meant that the Club took on a new, quasi-commercial, role but without always meaning or wishing to do so. So there was a disconnect between the Club's initial structures and the situation in which it found itself, eventually forcing itself to reform as ARCA.

Partly because of this evolution, the Club's history has gone through five distinct phases. From 1945 to 1955 its founding years were very local. In fact, the impulse to create the ARSC developed in an area which was nowhere near as built up as is now the case, which is why it is necessary to start with a few words about the local setting. Then, in a second phase, it settled down into a kind of cosy normality between 1956 and 1976. Unfortunately, it then entered a third and difficult phase. In fact, keeping the Club going became an increasing problem in the late 1970s by when the original buildings were also approaching the end of their life and the original local enthusiasm and volunteers had long since gone. And, from the beginning, it was dependent on the efforts of the few. This was despite the continuing public demand for the facilities provided by the Club House. Increasingly people seem to have regarded the Club as a service rather than an expression of their community.

So, in a short but dramatic fourth phase between 1987 and 1990, formal enquiries into the status and prospects of ARSC were made. And, in the end, it was decided to take advantage of changes in the law and transform the Club into a Community Association. Even so, it still took a herculean effort to raise the money need to rebuild the hall in a more permanent and up to date style. This fifth phase ran throughout the 1990s and opened the way to a new future. Nonetheless, it was achieved , and ARCA carries on,

albeit filling different roles from that those envisaged and needed in 1945. However, it has inherited both many of the achievements, and some of the problems of ARSC.

The Setting: Looking at maps of the time we get the impression that Thanington was then still a rather rural place. Thanington Road was not wholly built up on either side. To the north the only building before the 1970s was the old Rectory meaning that the string of houses between the graveyard and the recreation ground did not exist, let alone the Court Farm development. Thanington Court farm seemed to be flourishing then, as was Hollow Lane Farm. Tonford and Howfield Farms were also still going enterprises. And there were allotments behind and beyond the Recreation Ground. In 1968 moreover, part of the land next to the Stour was described as a piggery.

To the south the houses were more spaced out than they are now. Those opposite the Church were known as the Mount Pleasant estate. Near to Wincheap there were also allotments on both sides of the road, the Council estate not having got much further than Athelstan, St Nicholas and Windsor Roads. There were still open fields to the rear of both St Nicholas Road and Strangers Lane. The School Cottages still stood on the Thanington Road. And, of course, Cockering Road still ran into Wincheap, the A2 By Pass not being built until some 20 years later. Moreover, Wincheap was still crossed by the Elham Valley viaduct while there was less development than now opposite the Hop Poles. . Hollow Lane was also more open, with a Mission Hall the only building on the western side of the road beyond the terrace houses.

Where Ashford Road was concerned, there was no gap next to the Church on the northern side as Grays Way had not then been thought of any more than had Manor Close. However, the vicarage and the Post Office were there. But there were orchards behind them. Tonford Lane was also much less built up than now and led into the Hambrook Marshes. To the south the first group of houses was known as the Orchard Estate and many of the houses round about seem to have had only names and not numbers. There were also allotments between the back of Strangers Close and the back of St Nicholas Road, along with a poultry farm and Kent Farmers' Transport depot. In all, come 1950, there were 40 houses on the north side of Ashford Road, 20 on the southern side and 40 in Bramley Avenue. Tonford only mustered 20 homes. So there were many

gaps along most of the roads in question.

All together one gets the feeling that much of northern Thanington was actually camped out in the countryside rather than being a fully developed part of Canterbury. Not only were there far fewer houses than now but they only rarely formed coherent agglomerations. Moreover, residents would not have had all that easy access to the City centre. This probably helps to explain why there was such a desire after the war to develop the local community spirit engendered by the euphoria arising from the end of the war.

The Founding of the Ashford Road Social Club 1945-1955: The idea of setting up a Social Club emerged as a result of post war celebrations. On VE day George and Marjorie Prebble held a tea and dance in the field opposite numbers 21 and 22 Tonford Lane which was very well received. This was reinforced by an al fresco VJ meal in August, organized by the Elvidge family who lived on the south side of Ashford Road, next to what was to become the home of Charles Day, one time Chairman of the Parish Council. We are fortunate to have photographs of the two celebrations. which occur on the following page.

Elvidge himself was a bus inspector and she a cub leader. And it was then that people decided that they wanted to build on the community spirit shown during the festivities. How this actually happened we do not know. The photos alas give no hint of how people were thinking. What we do know is that an ad hoc meeting was held in the Church Vestry in September 1945. Unfortunately we do not have any records of this or of what the Club did in its first few months of existence. No doubt it appointed officers and started to arrange events but probably somewhat informally. However, it seems to have held an Annual General Meeting in February 1946.

The Club began to take on a physical shape that summer. In July the Club decided to borrow money to buy a hut available next day, provided it did not cost more than £150. Founder members seem to have put up the cash (in interest free loans ranging from £2. 10s od to £10). They were repaid in instalments in autumn 1948, summer 1949 and, finally, in autumn 1950.



1 VJ Day street party off
Ashford Road



2 Children's' table at the Tonford
Lane VE day street party

The initial purchase was duly achieved, planning permission obtained on 19 July 1946 (subject to conditions about access from the main road) and the members duly demolished and erected the hut themselves, led by Bill Bradshaw and Wally Griffiths, both of whom worked in the building trade. Nonetheless the hut blew down at once stage in the process. The 1 1/4 plot on which it was erected had been leased to the Club and its officers by H.W.Ashenden of Cockerling Farm from 1 July 1946, although the formal agreement was not signed until 26 September in that year. This gave permission for the installation of a recreational building to which services might be connected at the Club's expense, provided that there was no subletting and that no activities held which caused 'discomfort' to the landlord. Ashenden also accorded the Club an option to buy the land at a later stage, at a price of £200.

By the time the formal minutes start, on 12 August 1946, plans were being urgently discussed and progress was being made in putting the building up. In fact there was a good deal of planning, little of which is recorded in the Minutes. The formal opening, by the then Mayor of Canterbury, was on the afternoon of 7 December 1946. How this went we do not know. However, we do know that, over the next few years, there was much activity in fitting out and improving the initial hut, members providing a piano and fire extinguishers while lights on the approach were also being requested. Heating and sanitation were other regular topics of discussion. And, during the summers of 1947 and 1948, the exterior was repainted. Then, in the following year, some £20 was spent on installing a stage.

The Club itself was run in a very formal way. Early on it drafted a complex set of Rules, probably drafted by a special Rules subcommittee. Members were entitled to demand a copy at cost price. And all notices were to be delivered to members' last known address. The Rules set out the objects of the Club as 'promoting lawful sports and games, and fostering 'good relations between persons having access to the Club'. Two themes stand out in this. One was the appreciation of the individuality of the three roads which shows up in the carefully weighted representation they were each given. They were seen as the basic constituencies of the Club. The other was the sense that the aim

of the Club was to give special rights and privileges to local residents, to the exclusion of others. Hence even the Church Choir was denied the right to use the Club House because it was 'not one of us'.

The Rules also provided for the dissolution of the Club which could happen if three quarters of members signed up to an act of dissolution. And, in November 1946, there were 110 members. 48 of these lived on Ashford Road, 30 on Bramley Avenue, 20 on Tonford Lane - which probably meant that a very high percentage of the population were then members - and the rest from beyond the strict bounds of the Club's homeland. These included 4 from Wincheap, 3 from nearby roads, 2 from elsewhere in Canterbury and even two from Ramsgate as Annex One shows.

Senior Membership was, in fact, open to all residents over 18 living in Ashford Road, Bramley Avenue and Tonford Lane. There was also a Junior section for those aged between 12 and 18. Annual subscriptions were initially set at 2 shillings for the first and one shilling for the second. Thereafter they would be set by the Annual General Meeting. In 1948 the AGM defeated a proposal to increase subs in February 1948. This was to be the start of a process by which subscriptions came to be an ever diminishing proportion of Club income helping to move it away from the initial aims of the founders. Nonetheless, the Rules made it clear that failure to pay on time would mean exclusion from meetings and, if the Committee so decided, from the Club and its activities.

Moreover, all applications had to be approved by the Committee which would refund the subscriptions of unsuccessful applicants. In practice the Committee expected that new members should be sponsored rather than simply applying. And it sometimes voted formally on applications. Equally, any 'wilful' non-conformity with the Rules or behaviour 'prejudicial to the reputation or interests of the Club' would entitle a duly publicised meeting of the Committee to exclude the offender or ask for their resignation. Although any such offender had to have the right to plead their case before the Committee, this suggests that a very high premium was placed on membership. Belonging to the Club was seen as a great privilege and a symbol of full membership of a real community. Hence it was surrounded with unusual sanctions. And these were enforced. Thus in November 1947 a meeting was held to interview a misbehaving member. Residence in

the area was initially insisted on but, that same month, it was decided to let people who left the area to stay on as members.

The main decision making body of the Club was the AGM which had to meet no later than 28 February, normally in the Club House and certainly never outside the Parish of St Nicholas. The quorum for normal business was five although changes in the Rules and the removal of officers required 20 members. Failure to attain a quorum would lead to the meeting being postponed for a week. If a quorum was not then obtained, those who attended could take decisions anyway. Voting would normally be by show of hands though a poll (or secret ballot) could be requested. Members in arrears on their subs could not vote.

Between AGMs, the Club's affairs were in the hands of a Committee consisting of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and twelve other members. Six of the latter had to be from the Ashford Road and three each from Bramley Avenue. And, again, nobody in arrears with their subs were eligible. In August 1946 the members were F. Bradley, Bill Bradshaw, D. Bridge (who worked at Hopper's bakery in Wincheap), W. Brockshaw, G. Burroughs, D. Maple, C. Newman, Millie Pilcher, R. Swain and Dick Swain with George White in the Chair. All members of the Committee were elected by the AGM and served, nominally, for a year. The Committee also had complicated standing orders of its own, annexed to the general rules, and including standing orders for debates. This formality and restrictiveness was probably a fair reflection of much thinking at the time.

As to the officers the roles of the Chairman and his deputy were very imperfectly described. However, the Chairman had a casting vote, On the other hand the Treasurer was subject to strict rules about what he could do with Club funds and could only make payments if other members approved. Equally the Secretary was required to work within tight limits under the supervision of the Committee. The latter had a quorum of five and had full power to act in the name of the Club. It was also required to inspect the books, arrange for audit and had circumscribed powers to invest its monies, which were limited to land or the public funds. Considerable assiduity seems to have been expected, thus in 1948 White, then Vice Chairman, was publically censured for poor attendance. By February 1953 this was formalized to that any member who missed three consecutive

meetings was to be suspended. There were also rewards for being on the Committee which held a separate dinner from that of the Club as a whole. All this shows that the ARSC echoed the somewhat enclosed and detached nature of the area as well as the social mores of the times.

The Committee structure seemed to have posed problems in the early days. Sub-committees proliferated but their status was uncertain. Thus the General Purposes Committee complained that it was powerless and lacked guidance as to its tasks. So, in March 1948, a decision was taken to have only one committee, which was soon given the name of the Management Committee. This was to endure for many years. However sub committees still seem to have emerged thereafter from time to time as and when needed.

Nonetheless, overall the Club itself seems to have prospered in those first years. 90 people attended the 1947 AGM when Clough replaced White as Chairman, to be followed by F.S. Ingram, an Insurance salesman/ accountant of Bramley Avenue, a year later. Mrs Doris Maple was elected Secretary, soon succeeded by R Swain and then Mr Harris, while Burroughs continued as Treasurer. Membership was then about 40, 21 from Bramley Avenue, 12 from Ashford Road and 3 from Tonford Lane. This was a considerable drop on the initial numbers. Indeed in March 1949 a list of 55 past members could be produced. Participation, moreover, was not always satisfactory. Thus a Keep Fit class had to be ended because of lack of support, something which was also visible at the Produce Show and the Dancing practice. So in October 1947, March 1948 and again in December that year, membership drives were undertaken. And, as already noted, the Committee agreed to let members who left the district remain on the membership roll. This reflected a need for opening up. Such lack of support was one of a number of problems which showed themselves early on and were to continue.

These did not stop the Committee agreeing and, from April 1949 in response to an entry in the recently established Suggestion book, publicizing, through a regular Bulletin (250 copies of which were produced, printed for the Club by KCC), a monthly programme of events. This must have more or less saturated the area so that everybody was aware of what was going on at the Club. Events included Dancing practice, whist

drives, parties and a Junior Club. We are lucky enough to have a photograph of some of the regulars waiting for a dance evening, in front of the regular band of those years. Older members also had a regular Club Night specifically to allow members to socialize. However, this was suspended for a while because of the noise made by members on leaving. The fact that a piano was purchased may have affected this. Parties, fetes, rummage sales, ladies' socials, quizzes, spelling bees and produce shows were also regular occurrences. Complicated arrangements for stewarding such events were often made.

Fêtes were particularly important in the life of the Club. That in 1950, which was opened by local landowner John Baker White, included fancy dress parades (one of which - from the 1950s - is also pictured below, a tug of war, a treasure hunt, pony rides and a selection of stalls. The 1957 event raised £103 and, after paying for prizes, printing and transport, made a profit of £78 whereas in 1952 the figure had only been £3.16s 1d. Programmes, Produce, Toys and Refreshments were the best earners. The Committee was always giving its mind to new activities. But, though these included table tennis, netball and cricket, tennis was turned down as too costly. Outside trips, such as to Snowdown Colliery, the Thanet coast and the theatre in Chatham, were also regular events, as was the Annual Dinner. Despite this, there was a call for a 'brighter programme' at the 1949 AGM suggesting that social change began very early after the war so that the original 'offer' was no longer as popular as it had been.

From March 1947 thought was also given to setting up a branch of the Womens' Institute in order to organize 'something for the womenfolk'. So the Secretary wrote to the National Federation to see if a branch could be formed. Although the latter was initially doubtful because Thanington was so close to the city, it allowed an exploratory meeting to be held on 31 May 1948. It was then persuaded by evident local enthusiasm to accept a new branch. Hence the Thanington WI was set up in July 1948. It was to play a major role in the life of the Club over the years, renting it more than any other organization. Indeed in March 1949 it was invited to take over the Library. By 1951 it was contributing £4.12s 6d annually in rent.



3 ARSC regulars in the 1950s with Cecil Stockbridge and his band behind them, prior to one of the regular dances



4 Fancy Dress competition in the 1950s, including children who grew up to be involved in ASRC affairs.

Similarly, other institutions, like the Brownies, Kent Library, the Marriage Guidance Council and the Ministry of Food, were sometimes allowed to rent the Club House. This was because its main purpose then was to provide for the people of its 'homeland'. Hence, the Committee adopted a very cautious attitude to such uses. It turned down the Canterbury Motoring Club and, in July 1949, the Thanington Club, a potential but passing rival. It also had grave doubts about allowing the building to be used for political meetings of a Sunday School, though it seems to have given way on the latter.

In any case, there was clearly enough going on to require more space. Hence, in May 1950, a new Nissen Hut was purchased for £105 from the Ministry of Works site at Brook House in Ash as an extension and replacement, while some of the existing premises were disposed of. This new hut too was (presumably) put up by members as an appeal was made for volunteers to help once a Building Licence had been granted on 19 October 1950. A Special General Meeting approved this on 12 June 1950 after which plans were displayed in the Club House. These were approved by another Special General Meeting on 22 July 1950. However, there seems to have been some delay in the actual delivery of the hut, which was still being described as 'expected' in March 1951.

This time the money involved seems to have been advanced by an overdraft which Ashenden and Edward Lilywhite, another local farmer and pillar of the Church, were asked to guarantee to the tune of £150 each. In 1951 the Club also had to apply for a three month overdraft of £78 from Lloyds, guaranteed by three members. Conversely, in February 1953 a motion to borrow £125 to complete the new Club House was rejected. The Committee then decided to try and finish it themselves rather than using outsiders. So members knocked up a linking section themselves which was used as a kitchen. Committee members also seem to have been responsible for doing day to day repairs themselves.

One reason why the Club felt able to embark on new expenditure was that the initial loans had, by then, been paid off. The 21 members who, along with others, had advanced £108 had received £70 by February 1949. The remainder was to be repaid in the autumn of 1950. A Savings (or Thrift) Club was set up in December 1949, presumably with

a view to helping with forthcoming capital expenditures. But by early 1953 a lack of enthusiasm was noted and it was wound up in March of that year, by when it had only £14 to its credit.

Nevertheless, finance remained a sensitive issue, and there was always a corporate sigh of relief when the Club finished the year with money in hand. Indeed such was the sensitivity of money matters that a member resigned from the Committee in November 1953 after arguments about the disposal of the £20 surplus from the Coronation celebrations, something organized in conjunction with the Civil Parish Council. Moreover, another motion to increase subscriptions, which ran at only 5 shillings a year, was again rejected by a General Meeting. The amounts of money, counted down to farthings, were very small and it is hard now to appreciate how significant they were then. However, in February 1953 the Club raised 10 guineas for the Mayor's Flood Relief Fund which was an unusual, and generous, outward looking venture.

Official accounts records only start in 1949 when the Club had £33.10s od cash in hand at the start of the financial year. The detailed annual figures, which show fluctuating successes but no losses, were as follows:

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
1950-51	465 -12-4 ½	457 -9-1	8 -3- 31/2
1951-52	382-7-0	362-7-6	19 -11 -6
1952-53	332-13-2	322-14-8	9 - 18 -6
1953-54	333-13-5	329-2-1	4 - 11 - 4
1954-55	535-19-2	510-10-9	25-8-5
1955-56	323-12-11	320-13-0	2- 19 -11

These global figures derive from an uncomplicated pattern of income and expenditure. The vast majority of Club revenue was generated by a combination of Whist Drives and

the sale of refreshments. Subscriptions remained an important but anything but dominating element. On the expenditure side, there seems to have been no allowance for electricity or phone. Repairs were the major outgoings, along with printing. Drinks were bought directly from firms like Whiteways and Cantrell & Cochrane. To take 1950-51 as an example the figures, which exclude fête income (which was accounted for separately, were as follows.

Income		Expenditure	
Social Events	32-11-5 ½	Social Events	60- 6- 3
Entrance & Subs	26-18-3	Rent & Rates	9- 6- 5
Donations	24- 0- 0	Repairs	57-17- 3
Refreshments Juniors	6-18- 3	Printing	39- 2- 2 1/2
Refreshments Senior	22-12- 5 ½	Food & Drink	55-13- 1 ½
Whist Drives	86- 2- 4	Petty Cash	15- 0- 0
Whist Drive Refreshments	50-15-8 ½	Cleaning	13- 0- 0
Dancing	14-19- 2	Bank Charges	2- 1- 0

However, as can be seen, the installation of the new hut was a lengthy business as it was still not available in March 1951 and, though it must have arrived soon afterwards, work on it was obviously still going on two years later. Volunteers to help finish it were invited in March 1953. It was claimed that 12 people working once a week would finish it in two months, ready for the Coronation celebrations. This suggests that, even at this early stage, the Club was being carried by a relatively few people.

Then, in early 1954, Ashenden offered to sell the land surrounding the Club House for £ 800 providing he could retain rights of access. Luckily for ARSC this was soon reduced to the original price of £200. Recognizing this as a good investment, the Committee decided to set aside monies from the existing Ground Purchase Fund to do this and soon after decided to devote half the refreshment takings to the Fund. The Coronation surplus was finally added to the Fund and so in late 1954, a £50 deposit was paid. With a 4.5% loan of £170 from a member, a Miss Florence Edith Pine of Bramley

Avenue (and her sister), the purchase was completed in early 1955, the loan being repaid by quarterly installments of £14.3.4 so that it was all paid off by 1956.

Around that time the Committee also found itself having to try and persuade members who wished to resign, for health and other reasons, from doing so. It also decided that there had to be a limit of Honorary members amongst its numbers. The 1956 AGM saw the officers who wanted to resign being pressed to stay on while there were not enough volunteers to man the committee. Membership was also a problem with only 30 attending the 1954 AGM and a letter twice being sent to all new residents to the area inviting them to join.

Nonetheless, the Club was by then firmly established. At times its membership had reached 133 and it was maintaining an active, if traditional programme. It retained much of the conservative and territorial style favoured by the founders. These show up in the very formal minutes. Perhaps more importantly, it had renewed its premises and bought the surrounding land. Owning its own site was to serve the Club well in later years.

Moreover, the Club had established its finances on an even keel. This included absorbing what was, for the times, considerable capital expenditure and even redeeming the tithes liable on the land. This it did in February 1956 when a final payment of 11 guineas was made. Overall this surprising echo of a very bygone age cost the Club nearly £61, a considerable sum for the times. However, the times were a changing and the next few years were to see a gradual evolution away from the initial impulse, in line with the move to an 'affluent society'.

Normalization and Tacit Reorientation: 1956-1976: The next twenty years were to see the Club continue along the same road, but with less enthusiasm and commitment. It devoted itself to maintaining what had been achieved in the post war years rather than embarking on radical new moves. Financially it generally just about kept its head above water though ideas of selling off parts of the land often surfaced. Moreover, the Club increasingly became a provider of facilities for Canterbury organizations as well as a private services Club, although its Youth Club did partly maintain the old ideas. This also

provided it with new financial possibilities which were greatly needed given the saga of difficulties over heating, troubles with the younger members and, especially, the roof. At the same time the Club also ran into a series of new problems while its role shifted imperceptibly and the old enthusiasm further diminished. Hence, by the later 1970s, the idea of giving up the effort began to emerge.

Interestingly, at the 1957 AGM, Bill Bradshaw, the last remaining founder member on the Committee, retired as chairman urging others to come forward and take on the burden of providing services to the neighbourhood. So a page was turned and a new team led the Club into the new era. Bradshaw, in fact, was replaced as Chairman by Tony Edwards (the bailiff of a farm at Bigberry) with Donald Pearson as his deputy. Stanley Alfred Corbett continued as Secretary and the Rev Arthur Stevens as Treasurer. Corbett had previously been ARSC's auditor and had been involved in the early days. There was also, eventually, a full committee. At that stage there were 71 members: 28 from Ashford Road, 23 from Bramley Avenue, and 9 from Tonford. There were also 11 Honorary members as Annex Two shows. By then these were a smaller percentage of the population than had been the case a decade earlier.

1956 had been a quiet year although this may be a reflection of the fact that the minutes then became much shorter and more formal than previously. However, in early 1957, it was realized that the roof had to be replaced. Unfortunately, the Ground Improvement Fund, which had been created to cater for such emergencies, contained only a little over £21 then, although the Committee agreed the sale of a small plot of land to a Mr Stewart for £35 in summer 1957. He wanted it to enlarge his garden. Another plot was also sold to Fred Hill in September 1959 for £35. However, in July 1960 an application to buy a piece of the ground to build a house was turned down. Nonetheless, the Committee decided itself to seek planning permission and then give members first refusal for development. Bridge-Blean Rural District Council's refusal to grant permission meant that the idea came to nothing. This did not stop a further application, this time for three dwellings, being made in October 1963, again unsuccessfully. In other words, the Club faced new financial uncertainties.

In early 1960 the Committee decided that members would be allowed to

permanently allowed to park their vehicles on the Club ground for 10/- a month or £5 per year. However, many members refused to pay the required sums, because they felt that the Club was getting the benefit of their (free) labour and materials when carrying out repairs. They felt, in line with the founding ethos, that this was their right as members of the Club. So, when a friend of a member asked to park his caravan, he was allowed to do so on payment of £15 per year. Eventually, in February 1960, the Ground Fund monies were transferred to a General Improvement Fund.

As well as dealing with this kind of capital project (and launching a Club magazine in July 1957), the Committee also had to cope with regular problems about maintaining the site, notably where gates and pathways were concerned. More worryingly heating the hut became an ongoing problem, almost as troublesome as the roof. Thus in February 1956 it was agreed to spend £100 on improving it whenever funds became available. Then, in April 1958, responding to a complaint by a member, the Committee agreed to look again at the idea of electric, as opposed to coke, heating. And, in October of that year, the Committee agreed to seek a bank loan to buy electric heaters. Originally it had been intended to buy them from Bligh Brothers but Arthur Rye, a committee member and himself an electrician, persuaded them to give him the contract which he then proved slow to fulfil, completion still being promised in November 1959. Draughts through the door were also a problem.

The Committee continued the tradition of being conservative over whom it allowed to rent the hall, turning down an April 1958 request to allow it to be used for local league table tennis. And in June 1959 the Committee decided it wanted check bookings more closely. Then, in November 1959, when a member asked if he could run dinner dances, it decided that the Club House could not be let out for the purposes of making private profit, showing that the foundational views of the Club's role were still well entrenched.

At the 1959 AGM, attended by 30 people, Edwards stood down as Chairman, allowing Bradshaw to return for a year. A new Treasurer was also elected in the person of Frank Herbert Haynes, a surveyor who had been involved in the first purchases. . In 1960, when attendance fell to 23 much to the officers' public regret, nobody stood for Secretary

and Treasurer so that the incumbents, both of whom had wanted to step down, were forced to carry on. However, a Mr Hammersley was elected Chairman. He proved an authoritative leader, leading Bradshaw to resign in protest. In response Hammersley both denied some of Bradshaw's claimed achievements and said that the latter had never treated him, Hammersley, warmly. Moreover, he believed that, under the old order, the Club had been stagnating. Not until the 1961 AGM was Stan Corbett able to give up the Secretaryship after 11 years in office, replaced by a Mr Jacob. Hammersley also then stepped down in favour of Tony Edwards, claiming that the Club was both active and a success. In fact its activities had extended to Beetle Drives, fireworks displays and cinema shows.

However, at this time, the Committee was also having considerable difficulty with its younger members. There had been clashes with the leader of the Junior Girls section, while the male section seems to have been closed in August 1960. Its remaining funds of £32 were transferred to the senior Club. The girls' section then had to be closed in its turn in February 1961 because too few were attending. However, by then a proper Youth Club had emerged but this too caused problems and it was suspended in summer 1961 (over Bradshaw's objections) due to a lack of supervisors.

As TOC H agree to provide supervisors the new Youth Club seems to have reopened that September. Certainly 64 new members were then enrolled and there were intensive negotiations between the Management Committee and the new YC Committee and its leader, Bernard Potter. As well as getting a 5 shillings weekly rent for its Friday evening meetings, the Management Committee sought to exercise tight control over the Youth Club. It wanted to approve the Youth Club's activities, its subscriptions and its finances in general. Moreover, it insisted on the name Ashford Road being used rather than the 'Thanington Youth Club' which the young people wanted believing that this title better reflected their origins. This suggests a further clash between the foundational ideal of a reserved Club and newer, wider approaches, reflecting social change. Similarly, the Committee also rejected the idea of affiliation to the national youth body because this would cost the Club its freedom (and therefore the Management Committee's ability to control it).

On the other hand it ran a canteen for the young people and provided dart boards and a table tennis table. However, it refused a request to install towels in the ladies loos as these had been put down the pan, along with hats. Similarly it rejected a request to redecorate because Youth Club members drew on the walls and threw darts at them. None of this prevented the Youth Club attracting a membership of 120, some 80 of whom regularly attended the Friday evening meetings.

At the same time, the 1962 AGM could only attract 16 members, and even this derisory figure was said to have been the largest for several years. Hence, nobody offered to replace the Treasurer who wished to retire and leave the district, while the Committee failed to get a full compliment. It was only in June that someone agreed to step into the breach pro tem. It took until the next AGM in 1963 that permanent replacements were elected. There was even a context for Chairman. Not surprisingly the Chair had said the previous year that the senior section needed to improve. Even finding people to present prizes at fêtes and other events was becoming harder. The Committee had also had to agree to new talks with the Youth Club about helping with decoration in April 1962. The WI offered to step in if the Youth Club did not actually come forward.

In fact things were continuing to go badly on the youth front. So, at the 1963 AGM the merits of keeping it going were canvassed, especially since it was recognized that the Junior section was virtually closed, though this seems to have left the Youth Club with some 70 members. So it was decided not to close it there and then. In fact the Management Committee agreed to hold a monthly Youth Social on Saturdays. But with the former having to investigate insurance cover after damage at the Youth Club, caused it was said by outsiders, on 18 May 1963 an Emergency Management Committee meeting reluctantly again agreed to suspend the Youth Club, as 'it was getting a bad name in the neighbourhood.'

This, it was noted, would leave a gap in revenue which would have to be filled., especially as subscriptions were a declining source of revenue. This shows up clearly in the following specimen annual accounts for the time. The decline probably helps to explain

	1961	1970		1961	1970
Income			Expenditure		
Subscriptions	13- 1- 0	11- 1- 6	Electricity & fuel	42-16- 6	61-16- 2
Whist Drives	46- 5- 4	246- 4-11	Refreshments	44-11- 4	13- 3- 6
Beetle Drives	7- 6- 9		Stationery	3-15- 6	17- 5- 5
Cribbage		30-12- 8			
Lettings	46- 4- 0	114- 7- 6	Rates	19-19- 9	24-14- 7
Use of Grounds	15-15- 0	15- 2- 0	Cleaning	25- 7- 0	46-19- 7
Junior Club	50- 5- 7		Youth Club	21-17- 0	
Junior Refreshments	48-13- 1		Repairs	7- 4- 0	170-13- 5
Social Events	6- 3- 9	34-15- 1	Improvements	87-13- 5	
Sundries	28-13- 3	8- 0- 3	Sundries	34- 7- 8	17-11- 6
Premium Bond		125- 0- 0	Social Events		24-14- 0
			Building Fund		100- 0- 0
Total	262-79	585- 3-11		279-10-0	476-17-11

why, after closure in May, the Junior Cub was revived as the 'Ashford Road Teen Club' in late June 1963. By the autumn this had attracted 40 members, all but five coming from the neighbourhood. In January 1964 a Mr Lilley was appointed leader but he then to be reminded that membership was to be geographically restricted. The Teen Club's committee had to attend the Management Committee to smooth over new difficulties. And the Teenagers helped to deliver the ARSC Bulletin. Even so the Club House record player was stolen, causing the Management Committee to advance the teenagers £4 for a new one until the insurance paid up. It also amended the Teen Club's Constitution in April 1964. In 1967 the Club's insurers were also called on to cover for an outburst of hooliganism which damaged the building.

While the Teen Club agreed to help in developing the tennis court and was invited to run stalls at the summer fair, provided profits were split with ARSC, troubles continued. The new leader complained both of apathy about organized evenings and of difficulties in maintaining discipline. He therefore stood down, leading the Management Committee to

turn to the East Kent Youth Federation to find a replacement. In the interim parents and friends kept the Teen Club going. They were, however, refused both the right to sell alcohol and to be allowed to shift from associate to full member status inside ARSC, which would have entitled them to serve of the Management Committee. Although it was reported in June 1965 that the Club was settling down, it had neither paid its rent nor collected subscriptions. Hence it was decided to review its future. In fact, come late September, it was decided to suspend it from 7 October 1965 until such time that there were enough local children interested to warrant its re-opening. Its funds were then again transferred to the adult section.

Given all this, finance seems to have remained a problem since, in the autumn of 1963, Edwards who was to stand down as Chairman in March 1964 (being replaced by Jacobs, pushed the committee to get Furley Page, their solicitors, to again seek planning permission first for three and then for five houses. This was again turned down by Bridge-Blean RDC in April 1964. This may be why the Committee looked again at a new demand from Fred Hill to buy a further piece of land in addition to a strip purchased in 1961. A sale finally went through in 1976. And in March 1966, giving up on its own attempts to build on the Club ground, it approached Bridge Blean to see if it would be interested in buying land for its own housing needs. Although the RDC showed no interest, this does show how the Club's problems were eroding its traditional stability and ethos.

Overall, as the following table shows, the Club generally ran at a small profit, often due to profits on Whist Drives. Lettings also became an increasingly import revenue stream. They account for the increasing profit towards the end of the period. However, a sign of things to come was that the losses in 1967-68, 1971-2 and 1975-76 were due to heavy spending on repairs. These cost £545 in 1975. Generally speaking, decimalization does not seem to have posed too much of a problem. Subscriptions were thus smoothly changed to 40 pence, following the currency switch over in 1971.

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
1956-57	272-13- 0 1/2	244- 3- 9 1/2	27- 9- 3
1957-58	375- 5- 7 1/2	369- 3- 4	6- 2- 3 1/2

1958-59	242- 4- 6	211-15-8 1/2	30- 8- 9 1/2
1959-60	312-19-10	284-10- 1 ½	29- 9- 8 1/2
1960-61	287-10 5	228-16- 1	58-14- 4
1961-62	262- 7- 9	279-10- 1	-17- 2- 4
1962-63	342- 9- 8	328-19- 0	13-10 8
1963-64	345-15- 8	399-17-10	-54- 2- 2
1964-65	286- 6- 6	250-15- 3	35-11- 3
1965-66	231-13- 2	227-11- 1	4- 2- 1
1966-67	269- 8- 1	199- 3- 1	70- 5- 0
1967-68	457-13- 3	522- 9- 6	-64-16- 3
1968-69	494- 9- 9	458- 9- 7	36- 0- 2
1979-70	525-13- 3	495-14- 8	25-19- 7
1970-71	585- 3-11	476-17-11	108- 6- 0
1971-72	631.59	769-37	-137.78
1972-73	559.31	497.23	62.08
1973-74	589.09	468.00	121.09
1974-75	762.18	607.56	154.62
1975-76	722.25	950.31	-228.06
1976-77	981.39	806.48 1/2	174.90 1/2

Despite these difficulties, the Club did manage to develop some new activities in the 60s and 70s: its own Garden & Handicraft Fair, a Solo Drive , a New Year's Eve bottle

party and a Black & White Minstrel show. It also held its own Garden & Handicraft Fair. Outside trips, to the Palladium and the Wembley Ice show continued though one, to Hever, had to be cancelled for lack of support. The Club House, meanwhile, provided a home for the Parish Council (from 1966), for elections and for the Red Cross. It also hosted carpet sales in 1967-8, wedding receptions in 1970-71 and especially, the Pilgrims' Wine Club, which became a regular and continuing visitor. This was symptomatic of the way the Club was having to leave behind its foundational ideas and move to a more pragmatic and more outgoing stance in order to keep going.

At the same time the Committee found itself dealing with recurring maintenance problems: grass cutting, flooring, the roof and cleaning - carried out by Herbie Pilcher whose wages were a frequent source of debate. Moreover, the realization of the need to replace the building seems to have emerged since a Building Fund was established. In 1969 this amounted to £459 though by 1976 it had fallen to £412. It was invested in Premium Bonds and the South of England Building Society, later replaced by the Trustee Savings Bank. In any case the roof was aqua sealed in the summer of 1972 and redecoration was started at the end of the year. However, some members obviously felt that the painting was too much of a burden and should be entrusted to outside labour, a point laboured by Mrs Bradshaw at the 1973 AGM.

Nonetheless, the Club seems to have enjoyed something of an upturn in the later 1960s. Attendance at the AGM rose to 35 in 1965 and more new members arrived, raising the total to 60 by 1968. Hence the Whist Drives and the Produce Shows prospered. And, at the 25th Anniversary celebrations in August 1971 it was said, by the new Chairman Arthur Palmer, to be a happy club which was going from strength to strength. The guest of honour was Mrs Ashenden, the widow of the man whose kindness in selling the ground had ensured that there would be a permanent club. A dinner was followed by dancing according to the Kentish Gazette.

In reality yet more problems were emerging. In 1969 there was a brush with the WI which felt that it was not being fairly treated, especially over rent. Then in August 1972 it came under pressure to adapt and become part of a wider Community Centre. This it rejected. Equally in December 1973 it refused to let the Thanington Community Association

- a mainly football oriented body - use the hall, although it initially accepted a Council Play Group request until it realized the costs of care-taking and repairs involved. In fact the Committee was very aware of declining interest and the rising costs of hosting the WI and repairing the roof, which was still leaking despite having been recently resealed. The Committee agreed to spend a further £100 on treatment by Murray Blench even though success was not guaranteed. However, this meant they could not afford new fan heaters even though heating remained a problem.

Earlier that year the Club also saw a resignation from the office of Secretary because the incumbent, Mr Moody, felt he was being asked to do too much. He was persuaded to carry on as Lettings Secretary with Esther Eyles taking over the correspondence part of the portfolio. The Treasurer had to carry on because nobody was willing to replace him. Unfortunately, by January 1974 the former had to stand down due to pressure of work, leaving Mrs Philips to take over. And, at the 1974 AGM, attended by 27 members, people had to be bullied to serve on the Committee. At that stage the Club also decided to advertize its services in both Adscene and the Parish magazine in the hope of attracting more local people. This showed how far the original impulse to provide facilities for a restricted and relatively unprovided area community was no longer working. The Produce Show was also not doing well either.

In fact, although the 40 strong 1975 AGM was told that Whist Drives, cribbage and Old Tyme dancing were doing well, problems were mounting. So, although the Dancers agreed to become a part of ARSC, in March 1976 they did not like having to turn over their profits to the latter. Moreover, by October 1976 it was reported that the Whist Drives were running at a loss so that the number of prizes had to be cut. In other words the upturn had run out.

At the 1976 AGM, attended by 37 members, although Esther Eyles returned as Treasurer, Jacobs resigned because friends of his were, in a last flowering of the old corporate ethos, turned down as members. The Committee also rejected a call for a new Youth Club on the grounds that there was not enough educational support for it. And, in any case, the Club House was already being used every night of the week, even if some felt that it was being let out too cheaply. In June 1976 rents were therefore increased by 20%.

This was symbolic of the fact that the Clubhouse, and indeed the Club, was now fulfilling a rather different role from that wished in 1945. Interestingly an offer by a neighbour to buy land was turned down although some on the Committee thought this might be a way to raise the large sums then needed to be spent on the Club House.

All this shows that the initial rationale for the Club was fading just as the initial buildings were reaching the end of their useful life. Increasingly a band of volunteers was providing a service to a whole range of interests from across Canterbury. And this meant it was difficult for it to respond to new demands, notably from the young. So, despite the optimism expressed at the 25th Anniversary, the Club was less well situated than was claimed. In fact events were to show that the Club was facing a new and difficult phase of its life, in which new roles and initiatives would be needed.

The Difficult Years 1977-1987: Despite it being Jubilee year, which saw the Club hosting ‘unforgettable’ celebrations (including a buffet at the AGM), the first year of the Club’s fourth decade proved a troubling one. This was to be symptomatic of the growing problems it was facing. Getting a committee together got harder as local interest increasingly faded. Hence the Club was pushed further away from its foundational role And this seems to have been generally accepted. Nonetheless, the question of whether the Club could, or should, survive, was repeatedly posed. And though there was usually a commitment to continue, there was no clear decision on how to do this. Only as the 1980s came to an end, and new leaders emerged, were decisive, and ultimately successful, steps taken to revive the Club.

In 1977 in fact volunteers had to be called for to get the hall decorated, something achieved ‘in tobacco brown gloss’ by December of that year. But the roof was again proving a pain while the Club had also trouble with locals’ dogs fouling the grounds. About the same time two Calor gas heaters were stolen. There was even a clash with the Jubilee Committee which wanted to use its profits to help local children rather than the Club, something which flouted ARSC’s now somewhat old fashioned rules. Moreover, the new caretaker, himself a resident of Ashford Road, resigned after only 6 months, as did the Lettings Secretary, forcing the Committee to suspend bookings for things like weddings.

This shows how dependent the Club was on the efforts of a few.

Not surprisingly the deteriorating state of the building was causing problems with the Royal Insurance company. In fact there was an Emergency Committee Meeting on 28 October 1977 to discuss the company's threat to cease insuring after 31 December, a that which raised severe questions about the future of the Club. The idea of selling the grounds to a developer and perhaps rebuilding was raised. However this was set aside once the Royal extended insurance cover first till March and then till March 1979, thanks to the boarding up of vulnerable windows. The lack of storage space was also a continuing problem. So was the in roads into the walls being made by field mice.

The Club did try and stage new events: a Cookery Club, tombola and a fashion show which raised £80 for the Building Fund, but generally there were very few free evenings for these. Nonetheless, former Chairman George White asked the 53 members attending the 1978 AGM whether the Club had a future beyond the next year. And why, it was asked, were there no dances and discos in line with the new fashions of the times? Chairman Arthur Palmer retorted that, on the one hand, the Club had no licences for these and, on the other, the Fire Brigade had advised - and he had accepted - that, for insurance reasons, they could not safely allow the public - as opposed to members- into the Club House in its present sad state. , for insurance reasons. And, while he was exploring several avenues for the future, he could not say anything at present. However, he did accept a motion requesting that a report should be made to a future EGM.

Yet, despite this appreciation of the difficulties facing the Club, when it was suggested that the subscription be increased from 40p per year to 50p, as the Committee wished, there was a tied vote in the AGM, a decision described as 'not a happy result' since the unsatisfactory status quo continued, forcing the Club further towards a commercial orientation. In fact, preserving members' privileges in this way meant that the Club was decreasingly able to provide the special services for locals that it had been set up to do. Indeed as it was forced to look more widely for business especially just keeping it going became a major financial and general concern for the Committee. Seeing the large loss on the year, due to a repair bill of £634, this description seems an understatement. And by then subscriptions had fallen to a mere 2% of total income.

Indeed, the Club's finances were extremely poor at this time, even if turnover went up as the following table shows. In fact there were losses in three of the first five years of the new phase. Hence In 1980 and 1982 some funds were transferred to reserves but,

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
1977-78	1036.62	1300.23	-236.61
1978-79	795.24 1/2	655.29	139.95 1/2
1979-80	1162.73	1114.31 1/2	48.41 1/2
1980-81	1138.77	1195.95	-57.18
1981-82	1988.28 1/2	2090.93	-102.64 1/2
1982-83	1359.69	1000.86	358.83
1983-84	3714.56	3284.84	429.72
1984-85	2982.28	2741.26	151.02
1985-86	<i>Figures</i>	<i>not</i>	<i>available</i>
1986-87	3484.89	3675.99	-191.10

generally, there was little by way of surplus. In fact the Club was increasingly dependent on its reserves, described as the 'Gold Book' funds and the income from its lettings. Very often one year would see both money being put aside into reserve and then drawn on soon after. Heating and rates were by then the major items of expenditure as figures for 1981-82 show.

Income	1979	1981	Expenditure	1979	1981
Cash in Hand	338.58 1/2		Electricity & fuel	174.28	204.40
Subscriptions	65.00	80.00	Stationery	35.58	9.68
Whist Drives	115.33	116.91 1/2	Refreshments	29.16 1/2	38.54-
Cribbage	155.05	132.30			

Lettings	205.35	226.50	Rates	165.32	226.67
Use of Grounds	21.00	17.56	Cleaning	24.32	16.05
Produce Show etc	245.45	110.77	Produce Show etc	69.13	123.09
AGM	58.90		A GM	18.37	
Music Hall	48.13		Repairs	80.32	123.09
Sundries	3.44	2.00	Building Fund	525.00	300.00
Old Tyme Dancing	274.51	171.90	<i>Total</i>	1121.48 ½	
Transfers from Reserves		950.00	Cash in Hand	382.73	
Total	1504.21 ½	1988.28 1/2		1504.21 1/2	2090.93

And, the year after, a repair bill of £2369 was covered only by drawing heavily on the Building Fund and the generosity of the Canterbury City Council Lottery of the time. Repair bills were, in fact, to remain high throughout the decade even if 1980-1 was an exception, allowing another deposit to be made in the Building Fund to offset heavy drawing on it earlier in the financial year. Costs of rates and heating were mounting while refreshments were a decreasingly significant element of expenditure and income.

Moreover, the report on future prospects promised in 1978, was very slow in coming. Indeed the record suggests that it never seems to have appeared at all. Thus, while the 1979 AGM did hear suggestions that KCC might want to take over the land or that the Club House might become a Parish Hall, no statements of purpose were made and major concrete steps were actually taken. Instead fund raising continued with the proceeds being invested in more Premium Bonds, none of which ever seem to have produced a win. Hence, in March 1981, the bonds were redeemed and the proceeds transferred to the Trustee Savings Bank. This also benefited from deposits of £300 in 1980 and of £330 the following year. The Club also benefited from the recovery of the Calor Gas heaters stolen in 1975 whereas an attempt to raise money by putting on special events for Senior Citizens failed.

At the AGM the Secretary had to complain of a general lack of enthusiasm and support from the members. Yet there was no real discussion of the Club's future. And this remained true in 1981 and 1982. However, Arthur Palmer, Esther Eyles and others gave notice that they would only serve for one more year and, if they were not replaced, then the Club

would presumably collapse. In the event they were replaced though Mrs Bradshaw was still calling for more support for Club activities so as to keep ARSC going.

While all this was going on, it seems that the physical plant was further deteriorating. Hence in March 1983 the idea of putting a new skin around the Club House was floated, given the financial and general impossibility of rebuilding. £700 from the Building Fund also had to be committed to repairing the roof. Some idea of its state can be gathered from the prominent wrinkles visible in this photograph of a fete held in the mid 1980s.



5 Local fete held in front of the old Club House in the 1980s

Because of these problems, the Committee once more turned to the Canterbury Lottery and, for the first time, to TVS for grants and were successful in getting £900 from the first and, in October 1984, £400 from the second. This was, however, earmarked for new folding tables. Moreover, the Committee was also able to sell a small piece of land to a neighbour for a garden extension, pushing him up from £450 to £750. The Civil Parish Council also lived up to its promises and provided support for a an application for an entertainment licence and later followed this with a grant of £202 for the work necessary to fulfil the conditions of the licence. At the same time all letting charges were increased and the Clubs's

funds were moved from Lloyds to the Trustee Savings Bank which paid more interest. More land was also rented out to Bidy Roche for grazing sheep, which brought in a little extra revenue. All this encouraged the Committee to formally commit itself to continuing the Club in October 1983.

Then, at the 1984 AGM, attended by 38 members, an appeal was made to the Club to ensure that the building should not be allowed to stand idle, which demanded friendship and generosity of spirit. This was symbolic of the election of Mary Baldock as Chairman since she, with Esther Eyles, was to do much to keep the Club going through these difficult times. In September 1984 this was followed up by a new round of circularizing locals. This renewed enthusiasm also produced new ventures such as Christmas sales, coffee mornings, daffodil teas, strawberry teas and band practice. However, Fred Dunn's request to hold accordion practice in the Club House was rejected. The Club was also greatly helped by the labours of local Community Service volunteers who carried out a good deal of redecorating work for it.

Unfortunately, the same year saw yet more new problems emerging. Thus not only did the Caged Birds Society end its connection because of transport difficulties but the Club was handed bad publicity when Radio Kent carried a report that the Old Tyme Dancing was also closing. So it was perhaps not surprising that the Club lost 20 members at this time, which may help to explain why, as well as looking to the local lottery for help with buying new stacking chairs, the Club had to take a short term loan of £500 to tide it over. All this led the officers to threaten, on 4 October 1984, that if they were not replaced, they would let the Club fold. The Club House could then be handed over to the Civil Parish Council, sold or left to a new committee to sort out. All this shows that the new strategy promised by Arthur Palmer had still not been enunciated let alone delivered. However, the new leadership was aware of how unsatisfactory things were and that something really had to be done.

In the event, the 35 members who attended the 1985 AGM decided to keep the Club going, at least till the 40th Anniversary and the forthcoming boundary changes as the latter might change the Club's setting. With lettings doing well, the Committee decided to withdraw £500 from reserves to cover repainting. This enabled a successful ceremony to be held on 20 September 1986, involving tea, supper and dancing. This attracted 120 people. Some of these were founder members who came out of residential care to attend. There

was also an exhibition of photos showing the Club in its early days.

The following year the Committee, faced with the continuing difficulty of getting people to serve, decided to make all the societies using the Club House, nominate representatives to the Committee. This meant the Whist Drive, the Cribbage players, the Old Tyme Dancers, the WI, the Pilgrims' Wine Club and the new Cavalier Short Mat Bowls Club, suggesting that the Club was now clearly seen as essentially as a body providing a base for others rather than providing for the local community. While the Clubs were supportive, the threat by officers to leave if not replaced, remained. This time four possible options for the future were canvassed: handing the Club over to the Parochial Church Council or the Civil Parish - to run as a Parish Hall - , leaving it to the WI or just selling the whole property. However, the Council was likely to turn this down because it regarded the site as greenfield land and therefore not available for building. The officers asked for views by November 1986. They said they did not want the Club House to fall derelict again but that was what would happen if there was no Committee.

Unfortunately, three of these options were immediately blocked. The WI had said publically in 1982 that it could not bear the burden of running the buildings. The Rev Len Cox also said in early December that the Church was unable to take it over because it too was unable to get sufficient members for its own Committee while the Civil Parish Council also declined, although also offering to help the Club if it could. However, the 24 replies to the circular were all in favour of the Club continuing. They also canvassed the idea of setting up a new Junior Section. Yet, at the same time, there were no new nominations for the Committee.

Nonetheless, the Committee circulated the neighbourhood ahead of the March 1987 AGM, and this then took a formal decision to carry on. However, while there was talk of rewriting the constitution and taking legal advice on the status of the Club, it was still far from being a certainty that the Club would actually continue. Instability continued. So, in other words, the ten difficult years ended with no clear idea of if, or how long, the Club would survive. However, the Club did have a few who wanted to ensure that it did and who were willing to accept the new challenges then facing ARSC, even if they were to regret the warm and friendly atmosphere generated by the old hall.

Dissolution and Rebirth: 1987-90: Although the crucial decision to continue with the Club was taken early in 1987 the year in general was a difficult one for it, as was 1988. This was due mainly to problems with the roof which were a symbol of the way that the Club House as a whole was rapidly deteriorating, having all too obviously reached the end of its ‘shelf life’. And, while turnover was increasing, balances remained low with traditional income falling off, forcing an increased reliance on lettings in the face of ever increasing repair bills. However, none of this generated the capital sums the Club needed, any more than had earlier attempts at investment, so the financial situation remained uncertain. Nor was there any real surge of renewed local interest in the Club. Equally the Club’s status and rules were no longer in line with modern requirements. Putting all this right was neither easy nor likely to be quick, especially where funding was concerned.

So there was much to do in the way of fund raising and repairs in the late 1980s while a new committee also began to seek advice from new quarters about its future. Increasingly this had to be found further afield. In fact advice from Kent Rural Community Council and other bodies led the Club to renew its constitution and to change its status in line with new legislation passed since the Club was founded. As a result ARSC was dissolved in March 1990 and replaced by the Ashford Road Community Association. And, two years before that, serious thought was being given to building a new hall. However, nothing was then done because the structures needed to help the Club attract outside funding were not then in place. By the end of the decade they were. However, making a reality of the aspiration to have a new building was still to take up most of the 1990s. And it was a risky business because the extent of the Club’s problems were not always appreciated. Equally there was no certainty that new structures, although required by law, would be able to secure the necessary rebuilding. Generating enough funds was also a difficult matter as the low, and often negative, balances shown below, reveal.

	Income	Outgoings	Balance
1987-88	2741.46	2468.60	272.86

1988-89	3605.36	3774.34	-168.98
1989-90	3333.03	3383.05	-50.82
1990-91	4267.97	3784.71	483.26

So the transformation took some time to develop. Thus the new style committee structure which had been decided was only a partial success as, although the user organizations provided members, there were no new ordinary nominations from among the 70 members (out of a total of over 80 each paying £2 pa subscription) present at the February 1987 AGM. This was, as already noted, despite an AGM committing the Club to continue in being. So the Committee was left to sort out vacancies itself something which took it some time to achieve. David Swain eventually emerged as Chairman in late April, just as Mrs Pilcher, the last founder/life member died. Imperceptibly the Club was entering a new, and challenging, era.

The new Chairman set himself the task of helping the Club get back on its feet. This involved new lettings and activities. The former included an Accordion Club, the League of Friends of the K&C, Keep Fit, the Canterbury Lions' Club, Neighbourhood Watch, and the local Scottish and Model Boat Clubs, all of which used the Club House at this time, slightly boosting its income. Amongst the Club's own activities there was a May Day Fayre, a Darts Evening, a Harvest Supper and various coffee mornings. Unfortunately the Old Tyme dancing sessions did finally come to an end on 12 October 1988. This ended a 40 year history, testifying to the way leisure tastes were changing.

The most important of the new activities, however, was the re-emergence of a financially successful Youth Club. In its foundation year of 1987-88 the Youth Club had an income of £524.46, the major elements in which were a grant of £210 from ARSC and the £137 proceeds from the sale of snacks. As with the Club subscriptions were a much lesser source of income. The main outgoings were the £193 spent on sports equipment and the £111 disbursed for snacks. The Youth Club finished the year with £186 in hand. This pattern was maintained into 1990 by when it finished with £343 in hand. The increase seems to have been due to levying attendance fees which raised £219 while snack bar income was £435. All

together Youth Club income came to £722.58 and outgoings to £688.34. Nearly half of this, at £48 went on snack supplies, but alongside fees, charity payments and trophies the Club was also able to repay ARSC £200 of its initial advance.

However, the Club did manage to trade at a profit during this period as the preceding table shows. It usually had about £400 to £600 in hand at the end of the year on a turnover of around £4000. The largest single element of income came from lettings, often rising from a quarter to at least a third of the total. After this came money for Club activities, notably events or drives. The cards sold were greetings cards. Withdrawals from the Deposit Account and cash float were also significant elements. The Club's largest outgoings were on repairs followed by electricity & fuel, rates & insurance and phones. In other words a lot of money had to be spent on maintaining the building which was supported by outside use as much as by members. However, none of this succeeded in generating enough capital as the following figures show.

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90		1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Income				Outgoings			
Cash in Bank	294.88	578.84	407.39	Fuels	422.46	462.67	507.02
Cash in Hand	63.89	52.79	55.26	Refresh.	157.43	19.68	26.66
Subscriptions	136.50	182.00	150.00	Phone	68.80	135.92	137.32
Whist Drives	189.59	149.65	210.02	Repairs	490.8 3	1574.41	1201.75

Cribbage	155.45	135.78	180.73	Rates & Insurance	437.00	628.32	415.97
O T Dances	134.29	127.39	57.19	Cards	76.36	146.60	---
Lettings	1234.00	1090.25	1334.25	To	500.0	700.00	500.00

				Deposit			
Events	439.62	516.88	757.60	Misc	36.25	89.04	360.06
Sale of cards	103.01	165.51	158.74	Youth C	263.31	---	---
Deposit A/C	300.00	1000.00	---	Cleaning	14.16	17.70	86.80
Donations	21.00	164.00	284.50	Cash in Bank	578.84	407.39	282.67
Xmas Raffle	---	73.90	---	Cash in hd	52.79	55.26	129.96
Miscellaneous	28.00	--	----				
Youth Club	--	--	200.00	Youth C	263.31	--	
Totals	3100.23	4236.99	3595.6		3100.2	4236.99	3795.68

However, as the figures suggest, none of this generated enough money to help the Club overcome the increasingly desperate state of the Club House. In fact, in 1988-89 £1000 had to be withdrawn from the Club's Deposit Account in March 1988 to enable it to meet a repair bill which ran to £1574 that year. This left only £560 in the account although in October 1988 £500 was repaid. The following year a further £500 followed, taking the total to £1691 in January 1990. This was a useful buffer but far short of what would be needed for any major redevelopment.

Hence the aid of the Civil Parish Council was sought for help in redoing the toilets and staging, estimated at £4000. This was a large sum yet it was dwarfed by the needs of the roof. This was a priority because the rain had taken most of it down in November 1988. It was partially repaired in January 1989 but the rest of it was in a sorry state, symbolic of the fact that everyone increasingly realized that the Club House was at the end of its useful life. Hence it was agreed that it was useless to waste money on further repairs. So there was some discussion of a new hall although others still thought in putting a skin round the existing structure. So the Committee wrote to all organizations using the Club about the situation. It was also agreed that there was no point in thinking of selling off land for

housing given that planning permission had been so regularly refused.

A further impetus towards change came from the possibility that a proposed new access road to the new development on the St Augustine's site might cut across the Club's grounds. This might mean that the land would be compulsory purchased, thus liberating a substantial capital sum for rebuilding, presumably elsewhere. There was also some thought that the ongoing parish boundary review by CCC might have implications for the Club. In the event this had little effect although it did bring the Council housing estate into the Parish. However, its social composition being what it was, this generated no new interest or resources for ARCA. And the link road to St Augustine's went eastwards to Milton so that the status quo was not changed there either.

Nonetheless, this combination of future uncertainties and a fast disintegrating Club House forced the Committee to break out of the cocoon of past precedents and start to come to terms with the late 20th century world of new legislation and new standards of communal provision. In fact the Committee adopted a two pronged approach to things. On the one hand, it began to look to other funds and examples of Hall development. Hence there are cuttings on new halls in Broad Oak and Upper Harbledown in the archives. More importantly, the Club got into contact with the KRCC, attending many of its briefing meetings on halls and related subjects. This was to prove an irreplaceable source of advice and support in the move towards new structures.

On the other hand, a process of constitutional revision was started since the Club's rules did not conform to modern requirements. So a sub-committee was set up to look at a new set of rules, drawing on established models, with a view to laying these before a joint meeting of members and trustees. In fact the latter would be replaced, if they were willing, by the Parish Council, acting as Custodian Trustee. To have such a backstop was a requirement for becoming a Community Association, a charitable status which conferred considerable advantages over that of being a mere club and which was acceptable to the existing trustees as it allowed the Club to preserve its own identity. The change was strongly urged on the Committee by Ted Hobday of KRCC and his arguments carried the day. Increasingly the Committee were realising that he, and KRCC as a whole, were an immense help to the Club.

However, the change had raised questions about the actual status of the existing Club. These were brought to the surface after Esther Eyles invited the then Chairman of the Civil Parish Council, Clive Church, to look over the Club House and its activities. He came to the conclusion that, given the number of lettings, the Club was financially viable on a day to day basis. However, it needed a new committee and a new structure, the real problem being that there were not enough people available to help support the Club. He then got Geraint Thomas of the Kent Law School to provide a free legal opinion on the Club's dissolution. This identified a possible problem over the distribution of the Club's assets, given that some precedents suggested that founding members might have a claim on the assets. Again it was decided to seek the advice both of Ted Hobday and the Charity Commission.

A Committee meeting on 17 April 1989 heard Hobday argue that there was a chance of financial support for rebuilding from KCC and CCC though it might mean repeated applications since there was a finite amount of money available each year and many applicants. Attempting to raise their own funds would also help. The Club would have to decide whether to be a Village or a Community Hall. In any case at least £130,000 would be needed. This figure was to prove a considerable underestimate. And the procedure for bringing the constitution into line with the new requirements was explained. It involved the trustees, the Parish Council and a meeting of all members. The Charity Commission would also have to vet the lease from the Club.

So, two months later, on 20 June 1989 there was the required Joint Meeting of Committee and Trustees: Mrs M. Bradshaw, F Kemp and A Palmer. It is clear from the minutes that Palmer was unhappy about the way things were going. He regretted both that the Committee had consulted outsiders before the Trustees and that it had not begun by seeking a valuation of the site, suggesting that he was drawn to selling off the land. In reply it was explained that the Committee had proceeded in the way required by the new legal requirements. Hobday having made it clear that the Club had to become a Community Association if it were to be eligible for grants. And these could reach 75% of the likely cost. Eventually it was agreed to proceed with a revised constitution and the help of a local solicitor with experience in dealing with affairs involving the field of local halls.

A further two months on saw the Committee meeting with a Mr Caine of Bolton &

Lee (Solicitors) and progress was made on updating the Constitution. On 17 October, again assisted by Ted Hobday, the decision to move to Community Association status at an EGM was formally taken. This was approved by the Trustees and the Parish Council which wished the Club well. So, on 6 February 1999, 22 people attended a Special GM and unanimously approved the new constitution which would permit the transformation of ARSC into a Community Association. This would be formally a Charity, subject to the Charity Commissioners. The existing trustees would be replaced by the Civil Parish as Custodian Trustee. The Parish Council Chairman also committed the Council to make a donation so that the new body would be in a position to take over the Club House. It also helped to vet the new constitution. The question of whether ARSC's funds would also be transferred to the new body was left open. In fact there was a slight glitch before the Parish Council could actually take over the land.

The 33 people who attended the two 19 March meetings were told that 1990 would be a historic year for the Club, seeing the end of one era and the opening of another. Ensuring that the latter would be successful would need the interest and help of all members. Yet many events had had to be cancelled in 1989 because of a lack of support. Esther Eyles' announcement that, after seeing the new Constitution into operation, she wished to stand down as secretary, reinforced the feeling that an era was coming to an end. She had, in the view of many, almost single handedly kept the Club on the road during the difficult and transitional years. And she also pointed out that the recent damage to the Club House roof should remind them that the new era would need to see a new building erected, so dilapidated was the existing Club House.

The AGM, after having the new Constitution explained to it, heard formal reports on the disbanding of the Old Tyme Dancing group and on the flourishing state of the Youth Club. This had successfully established a section for younger children. Keep Fit classes had been started. There had also been a number of joint social events. And the finances of the Club were in good order. In fact a new account for ARCA was to be opened the following day with the old ARSC account with the National Westminster being closed on 31 March 1990. Some £185 was then transferred to ARCA. However, the accounts went on being kept in same way as before.

The EGM then went on to pass three key resolutions, apparently without any opposition. Resolution 1 formally dissolved the ARSC while Resolution 2 authorized the Trustees to hand over any assets to ARCA. The final resolution also authorized the Trustees to make a voluntary conveyance of the Club's land to the new Custodian Trustee, the Civil Parish Council. The Chairman of Thanington Without CPC said that the Parish Council was honoured to become the new Trustee and promised not to interfere in the running of the new Community Association. 36 out of 44 paid up members present then signed Instruments of Dissolution and Adoption as Annex Three shows. The Secretary undertook to visit the remaining members who had been unable to attend so as to get their signatures. Looking to the future, the Vice Chairman, Colin Spicer outlined some possible plans which led to a debate on how to raise funds.

So it was that, sadly the Club came to an end. It had enjoyed many fruitful years but it had also found that it had outgrown, and outlived, the original rather narrow local ambitions which had given it birth. It had been forced, often somewhat unconsciously, to develop new and more outward looking and commercial roles. But, as Trustee F J Kemp said, it was a relief to everyone that the happy social occasions of the past would continue under the aegis of the new Community Association. He, like many others present, wished the new body well for the future. Taking it into the new future would, however, have to be the work of the existing committee which would serve for 15 months.

Towards the new hall and beyond, 1991-2001: Despite the new structure and rules, there were still problems and there were several false starts. In fact the first few years of ARCA were quite similar to the last years of ARSC. The efforts of maintaining the old Club House - the roof of which was by then in a desperate state - and planning for a new one continued to fall on a small number of people. Local interest remained low and what there was often went in competing directions. However, as time went on the likelihood of a new hall became the dominant topic even though, at the start ARCA only had £1040.00 in its Building Fund. And modes and rates of fund raising and expenditure changed and grew. Increasingly ARCA had to concentrate ever more closely on looking outside for the capital needed.

Moves towards a new hall began early in ARCA's life with the committee applying for grants from CCC and taking advice from architect Les Simmons. Quotations were also sought from Denne builders on the basis of his suggestions. A formal appeal for sponsorship was made in the late summer of 1990 since other fund raising was very slow and without funds they could not pay for planning applications. The appeal was justified on the grounds that the Club House was continually booked even though its rafters and roof were now heavily suspect. In October it was agreed that an appeal would be made to all members and all houses in the area ahead of the 1991 AGM. This told people that ARCA was their hall and the Committee wanted their input and nominations for the Committee. But only 22 people attended the AGM and there was no change in the Committee's membership. The 1992 AGM was even less well attended. It heard that, sadly, both the Cribbage and Whist Clubs had finally followed the Old Tyme Dance group into extinction. One reason for this, and for increasing problems in finding volunteers for ARCA activities was that far more women were now working and so were not available to help out in afternoons and evenings. This was another example of the way that changes in taste and social preferences were affecting the Club .

Nonetheless, the Committee tried to push on with discussions with Denne, its initially preferred builder, but these seemed to lead nowhere, the firm failing to return calls, and it was eventually decided that it would be better to draw up precise plans before going any further. These were still being talked about in November 1993, the cost of £2500 may have caused the delay. However, thanks to new activities like Bat & Trap, Wine & Wisdom, a Lace Group and lettings including to the Canterbury Welsh Society and a Driving School, the building fund passed £6000 by early 1992. The return of a Short Mat Bowls section inside ARCA, replacing the old one which folded in early 1993, will also have helped. Subscriptions also rose from £3 to £5 annually by 1998.

Although a 50th anniversary celebration was held in 1996, the Committee was anything but amused to find that, while ARCA was struggling, the District Council was able to find £50,000 for extensions to the Thanington Within residents project whereas they only got £400 from the District Lottery. This encouraged then Chairman, Mandy Holland, to write to Councillor Frogley pointing out that ARCA was providing a very important service and

meeting point to the Community, even if its building was no longer used as a Polling Station. She also invited him to come and visit and meet residents. Unfortunately the Minutes do not record whether he accepted the invitation. The fact that Mrs Holland promised in February 1994 to contact the Council about the Residents' Association suggests he did not. In any case, the annoyance felt may explain why an application from Thanington Residents' Youth Club to meet in the Club House was turned down, contrary to ARCA's increasingly outward looking stance.

In fact, as a result of income from Letting, the new Association's finances were relatively sound during the decade, as the following table shows. However, they did not generate anything like enough profit to allow it to take on the costs of rebuilding without massive outside assistance. It was rare for the annual surplus to get over the £1000 mark and, though it never went into the red, its surplus could be as low as £300. Moreover, even the rapidly growing Building Fund, which was accounted for separately, was still not able to provide enough cash to enable building to start, as will be seen.

	Income	Outgoings	Balance
1990-91	4267.97	3874.81	483.26
1991-92	55589.71	5000.92	576.79
1992-93	6149.19	5282.28	307.43
1993-94	5998.45	4572.08	1426.37
1994-95	8582.96	7442.96	1140.00
1995-96	8875.74	8436.29	439.13
1996-97	7951.14	7267.88	683.26
1997-98	10,772.11	9779.19	992.92
1998-99	7691.84	7219.21	472.63
1999-2000	5697.31	4346.44	1350.87

2000-01	15009.84	8540.41	6469.43
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ARCA's normal income was increasingly dominated by lettings. As the following table shows, it regularly provided an income of at least £2000 per year. The next largest contributor was events. But income from these was, understandably, somewhat variable and some seem to have made a loss. Subscription income was up but never provided ARCA with a firm basis anymore than it had for ARSC. And some of the old reliables like Whist, Cribbage and cards had ceased to make much, or indeed any, contribution. On the expenditure side electricity and fuel was usually the largest outgoing, closely followed by the demands of rating authorities and insurance companies. Repairs could still be a sizeable amount, despite the fact that the hall was being allowed to run down. Cleaning was also a continuing and significant cost. Nonetheless, payments to the deposit account were still possible.

Income	91/92	95/96	99/00	Expenditure	91/92	95/96	99/00
Cash b/F		1140.00		Cash c/F		439.45	
Subscriptions	153.00	310.00	435.00	Electricity & Fuel	671.65	1789.06	1329.21
Whist drives	157.00			Cleaning	335.90	338.23	312.00
Cribbage	226.52			Repairs	796.26	1396.40	753.08
Lettings	2281.52	2241.50	1681.50	Rates & Insurance	935.02	1891.83	1097.9
Events	439.75	1658.39		Events	506.19	429.69	277.42
Sale of Cards	134.23	50.97	90.00	Cards	102.62	39.00	
Donations	460.00	385.00	100.00				
Phone Box	8.50	45.50	33.40	Phone	135.48		
Deposit A/C	120.00		150.00	Deposit A/C	1300.00	40.00	171.00
Sundries	125.00		45.00	Sundries	228.40	33.97	
Bowls Club		1745.99		Bowls Club		1783.99	

Newsletter		65.00		Printing/Stationery		194.12	
Repayments		1233.59	315.76	To Building Fund		500.00	
Totals	5106.45	8875.74	5697.31		5013.32	8875.74	4346.44

In any case, funding from other quarters such as Carnegie and the Sports Foundation was also explored. The former, in fact, provided £1250 for bowls equipment. Ideas of what should go into the new Hall such as a small room, storage, kitchen and toilets, along with an internal corridor setting these off from the main hall were largely endorsed at the AGM in 1994, although only 28 people attended. A little later, the City Council made it clear that the idea of rebuilding elsewhere was not acceptable but there was a site meeting with Bob Britnell, the Planning Officer. This helped to decide where on the existing site the new hall should actually go. The Committee also had the land registered at the Land Registry in 1993. This followed on a longish and difficult process of conveyancing the land to ARCA in 1992.

In December 1994 the Committee, along with TWPCPC representatives, met with an architect called Malcolm Murduck who agreed to draw up plans, to be paid for by the Parish Council. This was not before time because the heating was increasingly inadequate, mice were becoming a problem and the both roof and the sides of the hall were collapsing. In fact Murduck presented plans on 26 January 1995. With the exception of the paucity of windows these were thought good and, when revised would be displayed to members and submitted to the Council. So the 1995 AGM which saw Brian Reynolds elected Chairman, was hopeful that the new hall would soon be a reality.

In fact things were moving on. Plans were submitted in mid-April and the Council suggested some acceptable changes in May. The revised plans were then resubmitted in late July and Murduck was paid off with help from the Parish Council. The City Council went on querying things like fire proofing, hiring charges and sound proofing. As a result the new Chairman undertook to chase things up in February 1996. But only in late March were they finally cleared. Meanwhile the Club House had suffered two attacks by vandals. Moreover, the Pilgrims' Wine Club and the Mother & Toddler Club both folded. The Youth Club followed them in early 1997 because there were too few children attending and, as so often, too few helpers. There was also trouble with the Caged Birds Society. However, Cheese & Wine

parties and Line Dancing were introduced while a Karoke Carousel was purchased in November 1998

With the plans approved, a meeting with Odile Clark of KRCC was held in May to discuss the next steps. This led to a new National application - the local equivalent having by then died the death - being made and a questionnaire was issued to people living nearby to see what they wanted. In fact the application forced the Association to become organized and specific in its thinking as the National Fund demanded detailed plans and procedures. Overall, the move to charitable and community status brought with it much more legalese, including defining an Equal Opportunities policy. ARCA also had to give up paying its own members to cut the grass and clean, since this breached Employment law. Separate appointments of external people had to be used. Hence it is not surprising that Pam Blackman and Jenny Woods went on a formal course on community association affairs in the late 1990s. This provided ARCA with many new ideas and insights. In the long run new Rules of the use of the ARCA Hall, Conditions of Hire and a Development plan were drawn up.

Before this, more significantly, a Building Sub Committee, on which Vice Chairman Tony Martin was the leading member, was established in June 1994 to meet weekly so as to ensure that development was not held up by having to wait for a monthly meeting of the full committee. A newsletter on progress on funding and building was promised. Applications were made to Eurotunnel and the Sports Board while the Parish Council helped with work on the always problematic roof. However, the 21 strong 1997 AGM was told that £250,000 would be required to pay for a new hall, with a down payment of 20% needed if they were to get a capital grant, whereas the Building Fund stood at only £17,000. And a Buy a Brick project never got going.

Throughout the 1990s money had been put away, first into a Nationwide Building Society Account, then into a National Savings one and, finally, into an account with the Yorkshire Building Society. It was fed by three main sources: interest on existing holdings; the proceeds of raffles, trips, a Whiskey Bottle for spare cash, and especially from a 49 Club scheme - which raised as much as £1,200 a year; and donations. The latter ranged from three to 10 a year and came, on the one hand, from anonymous donors, individuals and families. These were usually small in nature ranging from £3 to £186. On the other hand, larger sums

were realized from regular donations made by the organizations using the Club House: Bowls, Caged Birds, Independent Driving Schools Association, Keep Fit, Lace group, Mother & Toddler Group, Pilgrims Wine Club, the Women's Institute and the Youth Club. Thanks to them the fund which started off with £2400.00 in hand in 1989, rose by anything between £1500 and £3600 a year to reach £6033.72 in 1991 and £12,980 in 1995. Local firms provided only small amounts of money or, in the case of Bretts, the promise of a discount on the cost of any concrete bought from them. The fact that membership had risen to 88 also helped. This may suggest that the new Committee's tireless efforts were finally having a local impact.

However, the Building Fund then fell to £9110.90 due to providing for repairs and transfers. Moreover, £5000 was then transferred from the Nationwide to the National Savings account which stood at £17,887. Further investments in the latter followed till it amounted to £25,302 in 1999, a year in which £5000 was raised, leaving only £1916.91 in the Nationwide. The next year most of the monies were transferred to the Yorkshire BS which then amounted to £30,914.46.

Remarkable though this was, it was still a long way short of the monies likely to be needed for a new hall. Indeed raising enough money to pay for architect's plans was also a problem. A large number of applications for large scale funding had therefore to be made. KCC had no money and applications to the National Lottery and the 21st Century Halls fund were initially unsuccessful. Then, in mid November 1998, the National Lottery Charities Board suddenly granted ARCA £200,000. This was a remarkable achievement and made the whole project realistic. It was the real breakthrough moment and as not only did it mean that the majority of the funding was assured but it probably also encouraged both new local efforts and more outside donations.

In any case, with the assurance of having such a large sum, concrete plans could be made. It was agreed that the new hall would provide car parking, disabled access and facilities for wedding receptions. Timetabling also became possible. Initially it was hoped that building work would start in spring 1999 with completion in time for the Millennium. This would mean that normal activities would be limited in the interim although ARCA was required, as one of several conditions attached to the grant, to keep the existing building in use as long as possible.

As had been promised earlier, regular bulletins on the actual progress began in December 1998. These informed the committee and the membership that CCC was considering both a grant and setting up a sports and community centre on the Thanington Playing fields, bringing together three associations including ARCA. Luckily the latter idea came to nothing (although ARCA was told to liaise with the Tenants' Association) and £48,000 was eventually granted, though only £16,000 seems to have materialized at first. The Rural Development Council was also approached for £15,000 to cover fees. There was also more money from KCC than had been expected, £32,000 eventually being paid over. In fact donors seem to have been both very approachable and somewhat erratic in their giving. Funders proved able to find further sums for the project when these were needed even though they had initially claimed they could not help.

Meanwhile, detailed planning moved ahead. In fact Tim Shefford FRICS, aided by colleagues, agreed to take over from Malcolm Murduck who had felt unable to prepare the final fully specified plans. As a result progress was also made with getting emended plans approved and Building and Safety Regulations complied with. The Sub-Committee itself also visited other new halls in the area while also trying to tap both possible suppliers and firms who had seemed sympathetic two years before. Luckily few conditions were imposed when the planning application was approved by CCC. Restrictions on noise were laid down but ARCA was allowed unfettered rights to use the hall as it chose.

A good deal of attention had to be given to trying to attract new users, this being another obligation placed on ARCA by the National Lottery. Hence the sub-committee sought as much publicity in the local press as it could so as to bring the attractions of the new hall to public attention. This achieved some success. And there were hopes that the National Autistic Society, Home Start and the County Library might be prevailed upon to use the new facility. The Sub Committee consulted such potential users so as to ensure that necessary facilities could be included during the initial build rather than being added on afterwards. This meant that it had to seek compromises between conflicting aspirations.

In the end tenders went out to five firms in late April 1999 and replies came in during mid May. All the tenders were significantly over ARCA's budget, ranging from a high of £392,000 down to £325,138 from Abbots. The sub-committee reckoned at one stage that they

were £50,000 short, and this was without having any kitchen equipment. The three highest tenders were therefore discarded and further enquiries were made of the two lowest bidders. At the same time new approaches were made to other sources of funding: Coombs, the Countryside Agency, the South East England Development Agency [SEEDA], Lloyds Bank, the Lottery and the Rural Development Corporation.

Although the last seemed promising as ARCA's application was strongly backed by a local representative, it was still by no means clear that ARCA could, or should, proceed with building. This was because there was a risk of starting and then finding that funds ran out leaving only a shell. So the sub-committee then set about working out what savings might be made so as to make building achievable within the financial envelope then available. However, the decision of principle was left to the main committee. In conjunction with Tim Shefford the sub-committee worked out savings of £43,295. This involved demolishing the old building themselves, reducing insulation and material specifications, altering the approach road and providing fewer mechanical services. And it worked out that, on the new figures, at £300,000, the actual costs would be £3000 inside their budget. So a paper on the pros and cons of starting on 2 August - a delay which was helpful to funding prospects and expenses - was put to the main Committee on 5 July. This unanimously accepted two new resolutions. The first was to go ahead on 22 August and the second to accept Abbot's bid providing the firm agreed to ARCA's savings.

This they did but with the proviso that they could not start until 14 September. Electrical and services consultants were then appointed and contracts were signed in late October 1999. Payments began shortly thereafter whether made directly by ARCA or by the National Lottery finance department. Applications for further grants were largely pending and though SEEDA had turned them down, the Countryside Agency had offered £30,000 or 8.66% of the final figure. Getting such a grant from them, or from Pelham Homes, would allow them to cover the cost of a beechwood floor and a kitchen. In fact Pelham Homes came forward with an offer to supply and fit the floor. Accepting this might have allowed ARCA to reinstate its contingency fund and perhaps allow for someone else to demolish the old hall. However, Abbots were unhappy about losing control of this aspect of the building and, in the end, Pelhams simply provided an unconditional £10,000 donation. Lloyds, however, refused

to make any grant. Six Mile Excavations were asked to demolish the hall as well as laying the car park. It was finally agreed that the Club House would be pulled down on 1 May 2000

Abbots did start on the 14 September as promised but were soon held back by constant rain and by snags like coming across both a cess pit and a fractured water pipe. Some further changes to bricks and roof tiles had to be made because those suggested were unacceptable to the Council. But, despite this and the late arrival of steel work, the builders were only a week behind by 8 November. However by late January 2000 this was up to three weeks. Nonetheless, windows were in and both the electrics and the plumbing were being fitted. The roofing contractors started work in December and it was largely completed by late January. Interestingly outsiders were interested in taking away the old heaters and flooring. However, ARCA was still £17,000 short by late January 2000 despite getting a grant from the Countryside Agency. Further applications for money were therefore made from the Millennium Awards and Lottery funds. There were also hopes of more money from the City Council while the Parish Council provided £2000 for furniture and fittings.

Nonetheless, things progressed in the early spring with gas and electricity being connected and the plumbing finished. Painting was also underway. By late April carpets were going in and final inspections were in hand. This allowed for the old hall to be pulled down as planned. Once that was done the car park and roadway could be finished.

In the end, the new building was ready for use in early May, the handover being on Thursday 4th May. ARCA formally took it over the following day and celebrated with a party on the Saturday afternoon. That evening the WI was the first organization to use it, holding a Nosh & Knowledge session. And the 53rd AGM on 10 May 2000, attended by 35 members, was held in the new premises. The Chairman hoped that ARCA's problems were finally over, now its dream had come true, allowing it to have a successful future. The formal opening, by the Mayor, followed on 12 August. The new building was clearly in a different league from the old one, being not just more modern but more self contained than the old assemblage of huts visible in picture 5. It was also far better landscaped as the following two photographs, kindly taken in 2013 by David Lewis, show. And inside it was also far larger, lighter and liveable than its predecessor. Equally, maintenance and cleaning were likely to be easier, and possibly cheaper, than with the old huts.



6 ARCA hall from the south west, 2013



7 ARCA Hall and grounds from north east

Obviously there were some teething problems and here were fears for the new floor while there were some problems about levelling the grass area and lighting the car park. However, generally everybody was very satisfied, as the arrival of 45 new members between May and October - taking the total to 122 - shows. This was evidence of the way that gaining the major funding galvanized local interest. At the same time all the old users renewed their leases and some new ones joined. However, they were under real pressure to take good care of the new building. Bookings for wedding receptions also began.

So the Building Sub-Committee was able to cease presenting its reports after July 2000. It was wound up in April 2001. Long before then the Committees had held a celebratory lunch on 29 October. While purchases of new equipment went on, the final bill for the building was paid in late November. By then there was still a shortfall of £3000 even though Six Mile Excavations, which accepted the task of demolition, had saved them £2000 on Abbots tender. In June 2001 there was, nonetheless, £5217 in the Yorkshire Building Society Reserve. Luckily maintenance was not proving too costly.

Overall, the new building and its associated works had cost nearly £350,000. Of this only 57% was covered by the National Lottery Charities Board grant, showing why there had been a real question mark hanging over the project for so long. However, other funders helped to make up much of the shortfall as the following table shows. Both the County and

Income		Expenditure	
Lottery Fund	200,000.00	Abbots	299,488.20
KCC	32,000.00	Shefford	20,725.64
CCC	40,465.00	Kettle	3,642.51
Countryside Alliance	30,000.00	Sheppard	2,526.25
Single Regeneration Bd	3,000.00	Carford	15,970.76
Pelham Homes	10,000.00	6 Mile Ex	3,275.00
T Without CPC	2,000.00	CCC Fees	1,692.00
Robert Brett	1,000.00	Astra	705.00
	318,465.00		348,025.36

District Councils helped more than had been initially expected, as did other official agencies.

Nonetheless, there was still a short fall of just over £30,000. This was covered by ARCA's own funds and efforts. Money for the building project came from donations from members and groups, bank interest and activities such as coffee mornings. Remarkably, the Association still had £10,000 in its reserves when the project was completed.

Some 86% of the expenditure went to Abbotts for their major efforts. Smaller amounts went on professional and legal fees (Shefford & CCC), other construction work (Six Mile Excavations etc), and catering equipment (Carford). Beyond the figures in the table, there were probably other sums, paid out of ARCA current funds, which ought to be included in the overall costs. These included sign writing, gardening costs and architectural ironmongery amongst other things. They were not strictly speaking part of construction costs but things needed to make the new building attractive. And some of them shaded off into normal maintenance costs.

Despite the signal achievement all this represented, the 28 March AGM was attended by only 26 members even though there had been a further doubling of the membership. The meeting was able to look back with pride on what had been achieved. Admittedly money was still being sought for equipment but the Association was able to look to the future. Hence all the sub-committees were wound up and each member of the main committee was then given specific tasks. A caretaker was also sought. Nonetheless, after a decade of striving and challenges, the new building was up and running. And the Association could now embark on a new and promising era. Unfortunately here we must end the story.

Retrospect and Prospect: The story so far has been a changing one and it has never been easy. When it started, the area, and the houses within it, had few facilities so there was much enthusiasm for providing them. The impetus also owed much to the Second World War both in terms of social energy and the concrete installations that formed the Club House. But, even then, not everybody was willing to put in the effort that the founders expected. So, while the Club did well in rapidly paying off its loans and providing a home for many popular activities, it still found it hard to attract members and devise programmes which appealed to an age increasingly affected by television. This showed itself particularly in problems with the Youth Club.

By the mid 70s, the limitations of the original buildings were beginning to exert a considerable pressure on the Club despite its ability to celebrate further anniversaries. Attempts to sell off land and provide parking remained problematical. The Club often ran at a loss even though it was increasingly making most of its money from letting out its premises to users from outside the parish who needed a public space for their activities. Hence the question of allowing the Club to fold emerged. Though it was decided that the Club should not stand idle, it became an increasingly difficult matter for an ageing committee to carry it on. And increasingly it had to depend on outsiders to help it do this by bringing them on to the Committee.

In the end, even this did not work. And people began to realize that, for everything to stay the same, everything has to change. So the Club had to alter its status in line with new charity legislation. It thus came to rely on the Parish Council as its ultimate guarantor. This enabled the new Association, in a new phase, to embark on the long and arduous task of seeking the external funds which were then available. So the history ends with the technicalities of erecting a building meeting contemporary needs and standards

With a new building and a continuing demand for the use of its facilities, ARCA is well situated to go on providing the services that society, not just locally but further field, demands. However, it cannot do this without local support. Yet, as social change continues to affect us, today's local community seems less concerned to build its own exclusively local networks and looks at things in a wider context, profiting from the IT and media revolutions of recent years. This means that ensuring there are enough local people to attend events, and to provide the administrative oversight which has always been essential remains difficult. So some of the problems which have marked ARCA remain just as do its manifold achievements over the years since 1945. It is a remarkable record of devoted service to the various local communities in our area. This deserves to be known, celebrated and continued. And I hope that publishing this account through CHAS, as well as through ARCA, will go some way to helping this to happen.

CHC 31 October 2013

ANNEX ONE: List of Members in November 1946:

Ashford	Bramley	Tonford	Other
Mrs Askem <i>Perose</i>	JWB Abeny 57	Mr Bridger 10	Mrs Castle 9 St Martins Rd
Mr Attwood	W Abeny 57	Mrs Bridger 10	Mr Easter 81 Wincheap
Burroughs <i>Orcome</i>	Mr Chittenden	Mrs Bowden 9	Mr Finch Caldeon Terr
Mrs Burroughs -“-	Mr Corbett	Mrs Clark Rail Xing	Mr Isherwood Ingoldsby Road
Bradshaw <i>Wayside</i>	Mrs Childs 50	Epps <i>Elmleigh</i>	Mr Mitchell Wincheap St
Mrs Bradshaw -“-	Mr Deverson	Mrs Epps -“-	Mr Spratt Athelstan Road
Bradley Beverly	Mr Fairbrass	Mrs A Epps <i>Sunpatch</i>	Mr Swain 20 St Jacobs Place
Miss Bradley -“-	Miss Fagg 34	Mr Griffiths <i>Sundown</i>	Mrs Swain -“-
Miss Collins Than Ct	Mrs Fagg 34	Mr Giles <i>Sunpatch</i>	Mr Scott Wincheap
Mr Course <i>Greencroft</i>	Mrs Fowler 40	Mr Gibbs <i>Whitegates</i>	
Mr Clough Oliver V	Mr Heyburn	Mrs Gipps 8	
Mrs Clough -“-	Mr Ingram 42	Mrs Prebble 12	
Mrs Day <i>Highfield</i>	Mrs Ingram -“-	Mr Stockbridge	

Elvidge Rose Cott	Mr Jacobs	Mrs Stockbridge	
Mrs Elvidge -“-	Mr Kelway 43	Mr Smith 41	
Mrs Flanders Lime Kiln Cottage	Mrs Kelway -“-	Mr Skeet	
Filby Stondon	Mr Kent 25	Mrs Skeet	
Mrs Filby -“-	Mr Linkin 39	Mr Taylor 40	
Miss Guest Garth	Mr Myers (Senior)	Mr Thompson	
Mr Harrow Lime K	Mrs Mvers	Mrs Thompson	
Mrs Harrow -“-	Mr Newberry		
Miss Hasler Garth	Mrs Newberry		
Mr Lamkin Sirhowy	Mr A Smith 35		
Mr Martin Bungalow	Mrs Saunders		
Mrs Martin -“-	Mrs Sample		
Miss G Martin -“-	Mr Taylor		
Mr Myers Janal	Mrs Taylor		
Mrs Myers -“-	Mrs Tookey 54		
Mr Mount Leneora	Mr Waters 44		Mr Maple Ramsgate

Mrs Mount -“-	Mr Weller 41		Mrs Maple -“-
Mr Marshall <i>Corrfud</i>			
Mrs Marshall -“-			
Miss E Martin <i>Bungalow</i>			
Newman Orchard <i>Estate.</i>			
Mrs Newman -“-			
Mr Pilcher <i>Ronsdale</i>			
Mrs Pilcher -“-			
Mrs Percival <i>Newhaven</i>			
Mr Palmer Rosea			
Mrs Palmer Rosea			
Mr Rye <i>Fairhaven</i>			
Mrs Rye -“-			

Rev Stevens Rectory			
Mr R M Swain Glencoe			
Mrs RM Swain -“-			
Miss Still Orchard Est			
White Highbury			
Mrs White -“-			
Mr Wilkinson			
Mrs Wilkinson			

ANNEX TWO. LIST OF MEMBERS IN 1957

Ashford Road	Bramley	Tonford
Mr Bradshsaw	Mr Corbett	Mr Bridger
Mrs Bradshaw	Mrs Corbett	Mrs Bridger
Mrs Bennett	Mr Corbitt	Mr Edwards
Mr Elvidge	Mrs Corbitt	Mrs Edwards
Mrs Elvidge	Mr Easy	Mr Epps
Miss Guest	Mrs Easy	Mrs Epps
Miss Hasler	Mrs Fagg	Mr Stevens
Mr Kemp	Miss Kelway	Mrs Stevens
Mrs Kemp	Mr Linkins	Mr A Skeet
Mrs Hammersley	Mr Haynes	
Mrs Mitson	Mrs Haynes	
Mrs A Myers	Mr Newberry	
Mr Pilcher	Mrs Newberry	
Mrs Pilcher	Miss F Pine	
Mr Palmer	Mr Pryor	
Mrs Palmer	Mrs Pryor	

Mrs Perceval	Mrs Musselwhite	
Mr Rye	Mr Musselwhite	
Mrs Rye	Mrs Waters	
Mrs Tritton	Mr Abery	
Miss Singleton	Mrs Abery	
Mr Twyman	Mrs Pyrah	
Mrs Twyman		
Mr Warwick		
Mrs Kite		
Mr Burgess		
Mrs Burgess		

Honorary Members: R Swain; Mrs R Swain; Mrs Wevill; Mr Pearson; Mrs Pearson; Mrs S Swain; Miss J Harlow; C Norris; M. Wood: G Baker

ANNEX THREE: Members Agreeing to Change the ARSC Constitution on 6 February 1990

Joan Hambrook

Valerie Paget

Margaret Nicholson

ER C Jones

W R Anderson

B P Nicholson

C J Spicer

P Bowden

M Edens

D Austen

P Binlin

Graham Page

Sue Knott

Clive H Church

Marguerite Chambers

Mary Baldock

Mandy Holland

Linda Huggett

DS Swain

C W Spicer

Esther Eyles