

Extract from a publication entitled "The Village" circa 1948/1949 . . .

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS

Build a Village Hall

By H.S.E. Snelson

At the village of Tickton, near Beverley, in the East Riding of Yorkshire there is, in one corner of the village playing field, a new village hall built of brick - one of the very first permanent halls to be built since the end of the war.

How this tiny village and the adjoining hamlets of Weel and Eske, with a combined population of less than 700 and with no wealthy inhabitants, got its village hall is a long story but I think I like best two stories that have come to me in connection with it.

The first is of how one of the menfolk from the village went with a *licence* in his pocket to seek approval of the plans by the local Council and how, in true Yorkshire fashion, he listened to the official's comments and to his sympathetic expression of 'serious doubt' as to the likelihood of obtaining a licence - before he disclosed that he already had one !

The second is of how the village as a whole tended to 'pooh-pooh' the idea of building a hall by voluntary labour - until it was seen that the few enthusiasts meant business - when everyone became so keen to lend a hand that there weren't enough jobs to go round and people were literally falling over themselves to help.

Self Help

Simply told, the story would relate how a few people, all men strangely enough, saw the need for a village hall (see [photograph of the men's club room in the GALLERY to see the 'relevance' to this](#)) and considered how, since money was short, they could build it themselves. They had heard vaguely of the Rural Community Council and thought it worth trying to see if they could help. As it turned out the Rural Community Council *was* able to help: by telling them that grants could be had - and they hadn't quite realised before how generous these grants were - by helping them to get a licence; and in other ways. The parish council allowed them a corner of the playing field as a site; a local architect drew plans for them; and by their own labours the hall was built.

The question of the *licence* to build was not as difficult as many people seemed to have imagined. The village people had said that the hall would have to be built by voluntary labour, so that there was no question of labour being diverted from more essential work; and they had agreed that only a limited quantity of material, subject to licence, would be used. The case for the village was put personally to the Ministry of Works' Regional Officer by a member of the Rural Community Council's staff, but clearly he would not have granted a *licence* if any infringement of the regulations had been involved.

Co-operation

There the story might have ended had it not been for a suggestion made by the National Council of Social Service that Tickton might be glad to make use of volunteers from the International Voluntary Service for Peace who would help with the heavy unskilled work. Tickton was glad to have them, and the arrangements that were necessary to provide accommodation for them, brought out a most remarkable spirit of co-operation.

The cottages in the village were too small to house them, even singly, and there was no hostel or school in the neighbourhood which could be used. The only solution was for them to camp in the playing field. For this camp, the tents and equipment were loaned by Bootham School, the tents were erected by the school children under the supervision of the Guide Commissioner; mattresses came from a school in Bridlington; blankets from a neighbouring Authority.

The work of these volunteers has been of great value in more ways than one. Apart from the labour they gave, which shifted about one thousand tons of rubble to raise the floor level, built a supporting wall, dug drains and cesspool and levelled the site round the hall, their presence in such a tiny village had interesting repercussions. There were fourteen volunteers, men and women, for a period of six weeks, some staying a week, some a fortnight and some longer, but those who departed were all replaced. They came from Austria, England, Finland, France, Germany, India, Norway, Scotland and Switzerland, and they proved excellent ambassadors for their own countries. I feel myself, that by their visit, they have acquired a real understanding of the kindly simplicity of a Yorkshire village and have left behind them a realisation which perhaps, did not exist before, that these foreigners are just ordinary human folk like ourselves.

For reasons which I cannot understand, the publicity that accompanied this activity at Tickton, both in the local and national press and on the BBC, tended to draw attention particularly to the presence of the volunteers and the contribution that they were making, and yet those volunteers to whom I spoke were the first to admit it, the real worth lay in the **efforts of the local village people**, who night after night – after their day's work was done, could be seen first digging the foundations, then unloading and leading bricks as they arrived, mixing concrete and handing tools and materials to the bricklayers at the walls began to rise. The owner of a local flour mill lent his lorry for carting. The village joiners were responsible for all the timber-work - roof trusses, windows and doors; the window sills and lintels have been cast in the village; bricklayers in Beverley, four miles away, have come and offered their services; the ironwork was cast by hand; and firms supplying materials have in nearly every case allowed substantial rebates. The school children have helped and those too old to work have contributed money.

Fruit of their labours

And now, after five months, the shell of the hall is complete, with the roof on – a roof alas of asbestos sheeting and not of slate or pantiles as was hoped. The inside has yet to be completed but when that is done the village will have a community building with a main hall, with seating accommodation for 200 people and stage, with men's and women's club rooms which can be used as dressing rooms, with cloakrooms and the usual offices. They meant having this hall, but the grant which has been offered by the Ministry of Education has eased the way for them and has enabled them to get a better building than would otherwise have been possible.

And, when the hall is finally opened some time in the Spring there will be great scope for the development of social activity in the village. The use of a village hall can be more of a problem than its building, but in the case of Tickton, he would be a Jeremiah indeed who, after such evidence of self-help and co-operation, could not look forward with the greatest optimism to the future.