

## **Reading room's first 100 years.**

**A HUNDRED years' ago this month a purpose-built reading room opened its door to the villagers in Hampsthwaite, built and dedicated to the cultural well-being of local men and boys.**

For the last 25 years, it has served the whole community as a meeting place for local organisations and also as the venue for the monthly parish council meeting.

This year's centenary celebrations organised by the management committee have so far included a social event and a display of local arts and crafts.

And, next Friday (August 31), there will be another event to mark the historical milestone - a wine and nibbles evening to begin at 7.30pm.

There will be a bring-and-buy stall, a competition and a brief history of the building's service to the community will be presented.

Tickets costing £2 can be had from the village post office and members of the hall management committee.

The Village Room was a gift of the Wright family, then of Hollins Hall, and it was opened in 1890 as a place where the village's male population could sit and read newspapers and periodicals in the days when very few homes could afford them. The cost to each reader was 1d.

An engraved stone plaque sign on the front of the building records the fact the building was a gift in memory of John Field Wright from his widow and the opening took place in August, 1890.

Members of the building's present management committee, parish councillors John Illingworth and Bernard Wilson, this week explained how use of the building has changed to suit local needs. Coun Wilson, who has studied the village's history said, when the building's use as a reading room became outdated, it became a village club room and a three-quarter size snooker table was installed.

Coun Illingworth said a full-sized table, which was later used by members of that first snooker club, is still in use at the village Memorial Hall

About the time, the original reading room's use as a club room was beginning to falter, the village's wooden Memorial Hall was destroyed by fire. The full-sized snooker table was removed from the reading room and stored until the present Memorial Hall was built. It is now one of the two tables used at the hall by the village's present snooker club,

As a reading room, the building was originally managed by a board of trustees headed by the local vicar. Then, as the building gradually fell into disuse, there was local concern for its future,

Coun Illingworth said he was chairman of the parish council at that time and members decided something should be done to revive the building's fortunes.

He said: "Our then vicar, Rev Bill Suthern, agreed a new trust should be formed - most of the original trustees had died and had not been replaced. Only one of the original trustees could be traced and he agreed to the change.

"New trustees were appointed and a management committee of representatives of local organisations and the parish council now looks after the building in its new use, serving the whole community."

Coun Wilson recalled, during the Second World War, the building was used as a billet for soldiers. The Cockhill Beck runs past the back of the building and a post on a bank is the last remnant of a bridge which the soldiers used to reach toilets installed on land at the other side of the beck.

The Village Room is now within a row of cottages but Coun Wilson's local history research has revealed, when it was built, it stood alone on a wide area of land beside the village's main street - land which would have also accommodated the local market.

He added: "There used to be two thatched cottages on the site - they went to make way for the new building, all part of the village's changing scene."

**Hampsthwaite Village Room management committee members, parish councillors Bernard Wilson (left) and John Illingworth, pictured outside the building which is celebrating its centenary.**



Friday, August 24, 1990

**News**

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● HAMPSTHWAITE Village Room management committee members, parish councillors Bernard Wilson (left) and John Illingworth, pictured outside the building which is celebrating its centenary. (PG350)

**Planning**

THE following planning applications have been received by Harrogate Borough Council:

**WILSILL:** Building precast concrete panel muck storage compound at Byrl House Farm for Mr D W Dobson.

**GREENHOW:** Building single-storey extension at Red Brae for Mr C Hawkesworth; building of detached house at land between Miners Arms and Sunday School for Mr

larder and wash up in existing disused rear rooms to Castle at Ripley Castle Estate; converting barn to office and provision of associated car parking at Birthwaite Barn, Birthwaite Lane, for J B Swan.

**BLUBBERHOUSES:** Toilet block to replace previous planning approval at Washburn Valley for British Canoe Union.

**MENWITH HILL:** Covered walkway operations at Men-

**Notes from Nidderdale**

by Chad

**Skips' notice**

Harrogate. The evening service at 6.30pm will be led by the Pateley Bridge Methodist Circuit's new superintendent min-

front of their front windows.

Their annoyance has been understandable: their houses on the hillside overlook Pateley Bridge in its lovely setting among the Upper Nidderdale scenery. A view of leaf-laden branches in summer and stark bare branches

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