A History of the Village Hall in Kingsdown

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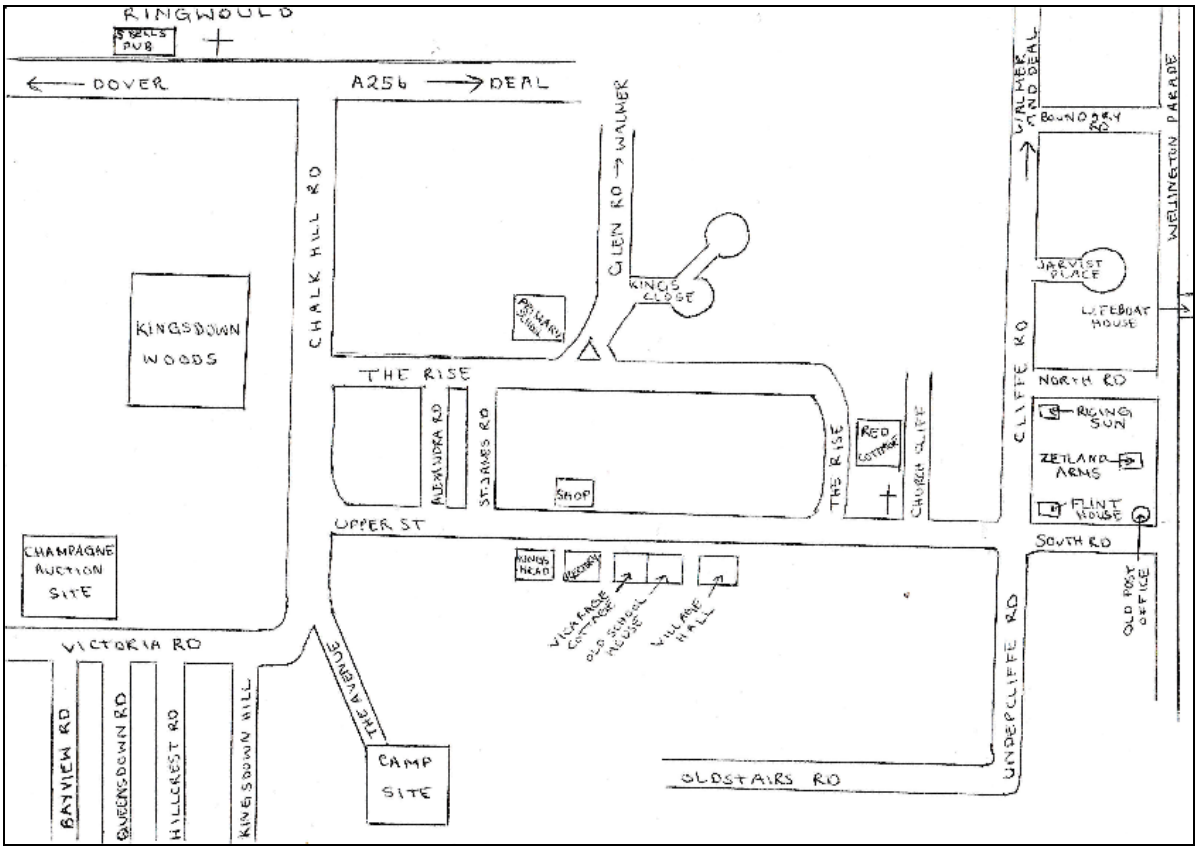
Summary
The story of Kingsdown, its church, village school and its wealthy benefactors William and Elizabeth Curling, started in the early 1800s. The Curlings built their home, Kingsdown House (now the Manor House), and afterwards financed the building of the original Victorian School in 1843 (now the Village Hall), the School teacher's house (now Old School House), the church of St John the Evangelist, and the rectory.

Stylised map of Kingsdown

By Alice-May Barratt



Local historian, Jenny Wall [(1)] has researched and produced a booklet on the Curlings. For a recent presentation of Jenny's research on the Curling family, see www.thehistoryproject.co.uk or contact jen.wall@outlook.com

Copies of this History are on sale on request to the hall trustees via the website www.kingsdownvillagehall.org.uk

The Victorian school operated from 1843 until 31st December1937. The building was used as a troop's canteen in the Second World War, and afterwards by the villagers as a communal meeting place until the Ministry of Education, who were at that time responsible for it, insisted on the sale of the property in 1950.

In 1952, after both legal and financial advice and agreement from the Village Parochial Church Council of St John's, the land and the schools were sold to the people of the village, complete with £200 still to pay on the mortgage. An anonymous benefactor paid off that mortgage. The property was vested in the Public Trustee of Charity Lands.
Unlike Ringwould Village Hall (which was built in 1934 on land owned by the Parish Council donated to them by the Monins Estate), **Kingsdown's hall and the land it is built on, belongs to the village.**
The Village Parochial Church Council insisted on various conditions in this transaction; the name of the hall was to be **St John's Village Hall Kingsdown,** and the hall was to be managed by a committee and run by the village for the village. The PCC also insisted that they had reserved exclusive use of the hall on Sundays and Good Fridays - hence the clause in our governing document, the Deed of Trust. The converted building opened as the village hall in April 1952[(6)]

The present Trustees are the successors of those very first Trustees of 1952. The original 'movers and shakers' included Lt Colonels, Brigadiers, OBEs, JPs, Parish Councillors, Vicars, Churchwardens, Lady's, Drapers, Publicans, Bank Managers, Guiders and 'ordinary' people who held the village dear to their hearts.

Those 'movers and shakers' not only ran the hall, but helped fund a bus shelter and the playing fields, and often gave their own money to these causes. An annual fete was held in the village every August for many years, usually in the grounds of 'Red Cottage', and the money was divided between the hall and the church. It was this fete which kept the village hall in the black – in fact they fell into the red if the fete was not held or not successful!

Following the building of the new primary school on the village green in Glen Road in the mid 1980s, several village groups moved from the hall to the school. The Hall Trustees continued to improve the facilities, including a big refurbishment with help from the Parish Council in 2010. The charity (number 302777) is still run for the benefit of the people of Kingsdown.

The original minutes from 1950 to 1999 have been transcribed and are now available in digital format.

Unfortunately, and despite extensive enquiries, all official hall data from 1999 to 2007 cannot be traced. It is believed all these minutes were lost during the refurbishment of 2010.

All records from 2007 are available as both hard and digital copies.

Background

The early 1800s was a time of rapid change in the midst of the industrial revolution, and a time when social justice, the spirit of reform, improving people's lives and particularly that of children, came to the forefront of modern thinking. Wealthy Victorians lived in an era when philanthropy was expected, and Kingsdown at this time would have fitted the bill as being a community in need of good deeds for the benefit of local people.

Kingsdown's wealthy benefactors were William and Elizabeth Curling. William's family were from the Wapping, Stepney and Limehouse areas of London. They made their money as ship builders and owners. Their businesses extended to rope making, trade in whale bones and other commodities such as sugar and slaves, sailing between London and the Caribbean islands.

William Curling (5th Aug 1773 to 4th May 1855) was the 6th of 10 children born to Robert Curling and Ann Curling *nee* Spencer, between the years 1769 and 1791.
Elizabeth Curling *nee* Green, from Middlesex, was born on 8th May about 1790 and died on 22nd December 1873. William and Elizabeth married at St James' in Westminster on 27th April 1827. They had no children.
William and Elizabeth rented 14 Dolphin Street, Deal on a 21-year lease in 1816, and came to Kingsdown in the early 1820's. At that time, the population of the Parish of Ringwould and Kingsdown was approximately 566, most of whom were employed in agriculture. William bought extensive lands across the village of Kingsdown (about 85 acres), and lived in the area for some 35 years. After designing and building Kingsdown House (the Manor House) together, the Curlings went on to commission the building of the school, the school house and then later the church and the rectory, all at their own expense.

Until the 19th century, most schools were built by private benefactors or entrepreneurs. The National Society (founded in 1811) was associated with the Church of England, and together their aim was to provide a school, teaching the 'three Rs' and religion in every parish. Plain new buildings were promoted, usually with a teacher's house to one side.

In 1833, the government offered grants through the National society.

The Schools Sites Act of 1841 allowed land-owners to sell or donate a maximum of one acre of land to charities for the provision of schooling 'poor persons'.

The Village of Kingsdown

In the census of 1861[3] Kingsdown is recorded as being in an ecclesiastical division separate from Ringwould. The deputy-lieutenant of Surrey [2], a barrister by the name of Mr Thomas S. Clarke JP lived in Kingsdown House. The school master, James Potter, lived with his mother in the School House. The village vicar recorded in that census was Robert Charlton.

There are surnames of families whose descendants still live in the local area:-
Arnold - Jarvist Arnold *1815-1896*, whose portrait as a lifeboat crew member is exhibited in the village hall, was the licensee of the Zetland Arms. He was previously a boatman, fisherman and pilot;
Pittock - Duncan Pittock ran the old Post 0ffice in South Road, and Isaac Pittock took over the Rising Sun in 1703;
Sutton - Richard Sutton took over the Rising Sun in 1771, and Steven Sutton was the licensee of the Kings Head.
Bingham, Lilly, and **Erridge.**

In 1870, the Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales [4] described Kingsdown *'as a village and a chapelry in the Parish of Ringwould, Kent. The chapelry had been constituted in 1850, and at that time the population was 508 people living in 95 houses. The church was built and endowed in 1850 by W.Curling Esq. There is a national school'.*

In the 1871 census, a Mr Edward Page was the school master, living at the School House with his wife Fanny and their children; Thomas S. Clarke was still a resident of Kingsdown House. (Mr Clarke's widow built Flint House, Cliffe Road, in 1873 in her husband's memory). Rev Edwin Badger was Kingsdown's vicar.

The 1881 census recorded 207 houses and 250 families in Ringwould and Kingsdown. Rev. Edwin Badger was still the vicar.

The Curling's former residence, Kingsdown House, was acquired by the Brightstone Holiday Centre in 1934 and a holiday camp, known as Kingsdown Holiday Park, operated in the grounds.

Later, the Manor House operated as a restaurant known as 'Don Medi' and afterwards was converted into private dwellings.

The Church of St John the Evangelist

It was Elizabeth Curling who selected the site that the church was to be built on – the site of a beacon for ships. According to the local press in April 1849, contractors met at the Sunday School to examine plans for the church.

An article appeared in the national press announcing the laying of the foundation stone by William Curling on May 4th 1849. The Daily News (London)[5] Friday May 11th 1849 reports the new church *'was to be built near the old beacon on the cliff and that the building was endowed and paid for by Mr William Curling Esq. at a cost of £6000.'*

A long article in the Morning Post vividly describes a procession of 1000 persons and 100 invited guests passing through a triumphal arch decorated with flowers on its way from the school for the laying of the foundation stone.

Building work was completed 13 months later. Tea was taken in the schools after the opening of the church ceremony.

William died in 1855, three years after the church was finished [1].

The School

The local paper of January 1844 reported that 'for less than £200, the Curlings had just built a new infant and junior schoolroom'. According to a map of the period, the school (only for children of labouring, manufacturing or poorer classes) was built on PLOT 24 – (PLOT 25 was the garden), and a Thomas Walton (mentioned in Elizabeth's will) was the occupier of the 'house of the Parochial Church' - believed to be the school house. PLOT 22 was the 'home meadow'.

The school building, the present Village Hall, had two large rooms with a fireplace in each room. (Note the difference in the pattern of the floor in the main hall). The present lower hall was originally the cloakroom, with hooks for the children's clothes.

By 1850, Elizabeth Curling ran the Sunday school, and there is a report that on New Year's Eve 1850, some 80 to 90 children were fed on roast beef and plum pudding in the school, courtesy of the Curlings!

It is believed that a Mr Bingham was a church warden at this time.

The School Deed[6]
(no date – this was found on a small handwritten note in VH records)

1. **The school may only be used as a school**
2. **The committee to be Incumbent plus 5 others who must subscribe £1 per annum to school funds**
3. **The only people entitled to elect a member of the committee shall be a contributor of 10/- per annum to the school**
4. **Mistress of school with a member of C (committee? / C of E?)**
5. **The committee may dismiss the teacher**
6. **Each April a committee of 4 ladies can be…..?**
7. **The school is only for the children or…..of labouring, manufacturing or poorer classes**
8. **The Trustees of the school are the Vicar and Churchwardens**

The running of the Victorian school was very different to today's standards in many ways! Lawrence Kirkman, the schoolmaster in February 1859, was reported in the local press as being 'up before magistrates' as he had caned a pupil of 15 on the back of a hand and the back of his head.

Under the School Grants Act of 1855, and following William's death in that year, Elizabeth sold the school premises to the Minister and Church Wardens of the Village Church. There are references to a conveyance of 30th July 1856 in the hall's records, but the document itself is not in the archives.

Elizabeth continued to be involved in charities after William's death. Four charities which administered money in Kingsdown were under the umbrella of the Esther Upton Charities (working name of Ringwould Church Charities), whose charitable objectives were for the 'general benefit to poor sick and distressed females of the parish of Ringwould'. There is documentation both at Kent History and Library Centre and the National Archives, which relate to these educational trusts. In 1966 when the Charity Commission[9] came into being, these became registered charities (number 248460), but they were all dissolved in 2002.

After 1856, the Diocese were responsible for maintaining the buildings and managing the school, including appointing the teachers who lived in the School House next door. The school catered for 90 pupils by the early 1900s, and was run by the Diocese until the 1930s.
There were many Acts of Parliament relating to education, and therefore to the running of the school in Kingsdown.

The schools – both infant and junior – were finally closed on 31st December 1937.

Changes in Education[8]

Prior to the 19th century, schools were generally built and run by rich entrepreneurs or by the church, and the teaching of religion was often one of the main driving factors.

The Schools Sites Act of 1841 (the long title of which is 'An Act to afford further Facilities for the Conveyance and Endowment of Sites for Schools') allowed land-owners to sell or donate a maximum of one acre of land to charities for the provision of schooling 'poor persons'.

This act was invoked 164 years later on 27 October 2005, in the case of Fraser & Fraser v Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance. It was found that the Church of England had sold land given under the act (mostly for residential developments) and had kept the proceeds, despite a provision in the act that required funds raised from selling the land to be given back the family of the original donator should the land cease to be used for educational purposes. The House of Lords declared the money be given to the descendants of the original donator of the land as the act required.

The 1855 School Grants Act sought 'to render more secure the Conditions upon which Money is advanced out of the Parliamentary Grant for the Purposes of Education'. It stated that, where Parliament had made grants for land, or for the construction, enlargement or repair of school buildings, they were **not to be sold, exchanged or mortgaged without the written consent of the Secretary of State for the Home Department[7]**

After the **1870 Education Act**, the state began to replace churches as the main educational establishments, and education was made compulsory after 1880 until either a child reached a certain educational standard, or the age of 10.

In **1880, the Elementary Education Act** made school attendance compulsory for children from 5 to 10 years.
The abolition of basic fees in 1891 made church run schools more difficult to keep going.
The Board of Education act of 1893 raised the school leaving age to 11. Further changes increased this to 12 in 1899 and the later act of 1899 increased this still further to 13, and heralded more uniform standards of education.

The 1902 education act, also known as the Balfour Act, was a highly controversial Act of Parliament that set the pattern of elementary education in England and Wales for four decades, and made radical changes to the entire educational system of England and Wales. It ended the divide between schools run by the 2568 school boards and the 14,000 church schools, administered primarily by the Church of England, which educated about a third of students.

Local Education Authorities were established, which were able to set local tax rates, and the school boards were disbanded. The Act provided funds for denominational religious instruction in voluntary elementary schools, owned primarily by the Church of England and Roman Catholics.

The Act was brought to parliament by a Conservative government and was supported by the Church of England, but opposed by many Nonconformists and the Liberal Party. In 1902 the Methodists operated 738 schools, but these rapidly declined throughout the 20th century. Only 28 remained in 1996.

By 1907, the Board of Health were responsible for inspecting schools. The Church schools now had solid financing from local ratepayers and had to meet uniform standards. This led to a rapid growth of secondary schools, with over 1000 opening by 1914, including 349 for girls. Eventually, the Anglican schools were nationalized. Grammar schools in London became funded by the London Education Authority.

The act was of particular significance as it allowed for all schools, including denominational schools, to be funded through rates (local taxation), and ended the role of locally elected school boards that often attracted women, non-conformists and labour union men. The Liberals came to power in 1906, but their attempt to repeal the act was blocked by the House of Lords, setting up a major constitutional confrontation. In the long run the Nonconformist schools practically vanished.

Although there was another education act in 1918, the re-organisation of secondary education really began in 1944, with the **Butler Education Act,** which was an answer to surging social and educational demands created by the Second World War and the widespread demands for social reform.

Changes in government approaches towards education meant that it was no longer regarded adequate for a child to leave education aged 14, as that is the age when they were seen to really understand and appreciate the value of education, as well as being the period when adolescence was at its height. It was beginning to be seen as the worst age for a sudden switch from education to employment, with the additional year in schooling to only provide benefits for the children when they leave. Although there were concerns about the effects of having less labour from these children, it was hoped that the outcome of a larger quantity of more qualified, skilled workers would eliminate the deficit problem from the loss of unskilled labour.

In **1944**, R. A. Butler, the then Minister of Education, made an agreement with William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, that the church would accept some state control over its schools as a condition of receiving

funding to relieve the problems with their buildings. The **'Butler' Education Act represented a historic compromise between church and state,** two thirds of the funding coming from the state and one third from the church. In return **the schools kept the title deeds to the land**, but taught an agreed religious education syllabus.

The Act took effect in 1947; education was made compulsory to age 15. It defined the modern split between primary and secondary education at age 11; it established the secondary school Tripartite System consisting of grammar schools, secondary modern schools and secondary technical schools. It ended the divide between voluntary schools, largely administered by the Church of England, and schools provided and run by elected school boards.

The 1944 Act had also recommended compulsory part-time education for all young people until the age of 18, but this provision was dropped so as not to overburden the post-war spending budget (as had happened similarly with the Act of 1918).

In 1950 the Prime Minister appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Nathan, to consider and report on the law and practice relating to charitable trusts.

The committee's report in 1952 was broadly accepted by the government and formed the basis of the Charities Act 1960.

The Conversion of the School Buildings to a Village Hall

The 1855 School Grants Act stated that school buildings were not to be sold, exchanged or mortgaged without the written consent of the Secretary of State for the Home Department. A declaration of trust had endowed the building in Kingsdown to the Ministry of Education for the continued purpose of being a school, but this had ceased to be used for educational purposes on the 31st December 1937. (It is believed the children of Kingsdown then went to school in Ringwould or farther afield).

After the Second World War during which time the school buildings had been used as a troop's canteen, the villagers used the school buildings as a venue for local societies to meet. It still had no electricity supply!

The Ministry of Education was responsible for education in the Kingsdown schools, but by 1950, they were no longer prepared to be responsible for the premises, and wanted to sell the property. The St John's Parochial Church Council Trustees (to whom the building had been left in trust) passed a resolution to make an offer for the purchase of the schools.

A group of villagers met in the building then known as the Village Schools, on 31st October 1950, and a committee was appointed upon *'the resolution.....that the school was a suitable site for a village hall, subject to extensions and alterations'.* **(5)**

The officers confirmed at a meeting on 21st Nov 1950 are listed as:-

Chairman	Dr M L Farmer
Hon Treasurer and Vice-Chairman	Mr P H Sanders
Hon Secretary	Miss Sybil Crocker

The committee members are listed as:-
Mr Harris, Mrs Bushell, Mrs Burtwell, Miss I Newman, Mr.Youden, Miss H Lloyd-Price, The Rev Swain, Lady Ward, Mr Park, Mrs Ellison and Mr Bradley. Lt Col Willis Farrier OBE, JP.

The minutes of that first meeting record the passing of the resolution - *'that this committee considers ways and means of alterations to the present building to suit present and future requirements of the Village, such alterations to conform with future extension, and the advice of a local architect be attained'.*

Events moved very fast over the following 18 months!

In January 1951, the school site was sold to the Parochial Church Council, (or rather to two individuals, namely Mr Mitchell and Mr Youden) who purchased it with a mortgage of £250 with the intention of letting it to the village at a peppercorn rent under a 99 year lease. The PCC at that time wanted to retain the ownership of the building, but later it seemed there was the possibility that they would sell it to the village.

Col Willis Farrier was a very influential figure in these affairs, as by February 1951, he told the village committee that the PCC would submit properly drawn up conditions for the use of the hall by the village. He also stated that the church wished to protect their interests, and they wanted the Vicar and church wardens to be permanent members of a future village committee.

The Chairman of the village committee, Dr Farmer, said that as they were appointed to represent the village, he asked that the PCC at their next meeting would let them have any points that they specially wanted incorporated in the rules and constitution.

These were the conditions set by the PCC in March 1951.

- *That the hall be called St John's Village Hall*
- *That the Vicar and two Churchwardens and the two Parochial Church Council's Trustees for the time being, be ex-officio members of the Village Hall Committee.*
- *That the committee be limited to sixteen members including the ex-officio members.*
- *That the members of the committee be adults living within the areas – Bordered on the west by the Parish Boundary, on the North by the footpath running from the Ringwould Lynch to the bottom of Grams Road, to the East by the line from Grams Road to the South East corner of Walmer Castle, and to the South by the sea.*
- *That future extensions other than the present scheme be only carried out by consent with the Parochial Church Council*
- *That the liabilities of the Village Hall Committee shall not exceed £200 without the consent of the Parochial Church Council.*
- *That this agreement can be reviewed and altered by mutual agreement of the Parochial Church Council and the Village Hall Committee.*

In May 1951, it was reported that the PCC were prepared to grant to the village a 99 year lease of the schools at a peppercorn rent and to adopt the model trust deed as suggested by the Kent Council of Social Services.

Dr Farmer suggested that the committee should engage a solicitor to look after the committee's interests.
By July 1951, the Conveyance Deed had been completed and the money for the purchase of the schools paid.

The legal owners, Mr Mitchell and Mr Youden, were asked to apply for an electricity supply to be brought into the school building, the village Committee to accept responsibility.

At an **open meeting held on 31st July 1951**, Col Farrier stated that *'it was the wish of the PCC that the hall should be run for the use of the whole village and that all would share in it'.*

The possibilities of obtaining a grant towards the alterations needed for the old schools to be converted to a village hall were clarified. The hall would have to be non-political, non-sectarian, and be run by the village for the village.

Advice from the committee's solicitor, Mr Gerald Hardman, at the open meeting suggested that a Trust Deed on these lines would have to be drawn up and the hall would have to belong to the village.

The PCC could not qualify for a grant. Legally, it would also be best for the hall to be vested in the Trustee for Charity Lands rather than individuals. The moment this was approved, the Ministry of Education would take charge of all building licences.
Mr Mitchell raised the question of a lease
A vote was taken on how to proceed, and the result of the meeting vote was 47 votes to proceed and 12 to wait for a grant.

Mr Hardman, the solicitor appointed by the village committee, then asked for consent to draw up a draft agreement between the Parochial Church Council and the Village Hall Committee.

Minutes of the meeting of 31st July 1951 state that:
'it was agreed that subject to the concurrence of the Parochial Church Council the freehold of the property be vested in the Official Trustee of Charity Lands', and 'that a Trust Deed on the lines of the precedent be prepared and submitted to both the Village Hall Committee and the PCC'.

In September 1951, the Trust Deed prepared by Mr Hardman was approved.

The PCC had agreed to adopt the draft scheme submitted for the establishment of the St John's Village Hall, Kingsdown, and apply to vest the freehold of the property in the Official trustee of Charity Lands', subject to the following conditions:

- **That the hall should be called St John's Village Hall Kingsdown**
- **That the church had the exclusive right to the hall on Sundays and Good Fridays**
- **That the model Trust Deed be accepted**
- **That the Village Hall Committee agree to take over the £200 loan on the building**

By November 1951, Mr Stanley Player Mitchell and Mr Cecil Osmond Youden had signed a letter undertaking to vest the property in two Trustees appointed by the Village Hall Committee, and there was confirmation that the Official Trustee for Charity Lands was prepared to take over the property with the existing £200 mortgage.

On 1st April 1952, the village hall secretary, Miss Sybil Crocker, read a letter from a local benefactor who wished to remain anonymous, in which he said he donated the sum of £200 to pay off the mortgage on the hall, and another letter from Mr Hardman saying he had paid off all the interest and legal charges.

The generous gifts made the hall the property of the village absolutely.

The 13 Committee members of March 1952 are listed as:-

Officers

Chairman	Dr M L Farmer	
Vice Chairman	Lt Col Willis Farrier; OBE JP	Kingsdown House
Hon Secretary	Miss Sybil Crocker	7 Coastguards, Kingsdown
Hon Treasurer	Miss Irene Steele-Perkins	
	Wooloomooloo, Wellington Parade	

Committee

Mr H Ellard-Styles (clerk of alteration works)	
Mrs Alice Bushell	
Mr. Cecil Osmond Youden	Mount Pleasant Cottage (2)
Mr J A Park	The Shop, Kingsdown
Mrs Aileen Ellison	
Rev. Stanley Nothard Swain	
Mr H V Harris	
Mr J Wood	
Lady Ward MBE	

Organisations Represented

PCC	Mr. Cecil Osmond Youden
Parish Council	Lt Col Willis Farrier OBE, JP
Garden Society	Miss Irene Steele-Perkins
Angling Club	Mr H Ellard-Styles
Guides and Brownies	Miss Sybil Dorothy Marienne Crocker
Girls Club	Mrs Alice Bushell
Women's Institute	Mrs Aileen Ellison

Mothers Union	Rev. Stanley Nothard Swain
Valerian Guild	Mr J Wood

At the first AGM of 1952, thanks were recorded to the PCC for allowing the hall to be purchased for £200.

During the next couple of years, the committee worked extremely hard.

- the lettering for above the hall had been approved and ordered;
- Col Farrier said his company was willing to give the extra land if it were need for the kitchen and cloakroom extensions;
- Miss Steele-Perkins stepped down as Treasurer, and was replaced by Mr H Lane OBE;
- Kingsdown builder, Mr E G Smith, was appointed to complete the work on the kitchen, and another £300 had to be found.
- Two committee members offered to loan the money - Lady Ward £150 and Mr Ellard-Styles £150.
- Miss Irene Steele-Perkins donated a deed box (our infamous 'black box')
- Rev Norris Alcock was the new Vicar as Rev Swain had died.
- A new bank account was opened in the name of 'St John's, Kingsdown, Village Hall account'.
- The Trust remained known as St John's Village Hall Kingsdown.

By 1954, the loan for the alterations for a kitchen had been repaid and the hall freed of all debt.

The hall relied heavily on the proceeds from the annual fete to balance their books. The agreement was always 2/3 hall and 1/3 church. Mrs Bushell held weekly whist drives in aid of the hall equipment every year.

A picture of HM the Queen was bought in 1955. This was generously restored by a villager in 2014.

In 1957, the minutes record a tribute to the retiring Hon Secretary Miss S. Crocker for all she had done for the hall with such untiring enthusiasm and efficiency. Col Farrier said he doubted whether the Village Hall would have been acquired without Miss Crocker's efforts. The Vicar also made a formal appreciation of Miss Crocker's public work to the village.

Mr and Mrs A J Park retired from taking the bookings for the hall since the beginning, and were succeeded by Mr and Mrs Powell at the Kings Head, (known as Maj 'Pip' Powell).

A fence was erected in 1964 between Old School House and the hall, the owner also serving as chairman for many years until the advent of a playgroup.

In the last 66 years, successions of local societies have used the village hall. These include the WI, The Garden Society, The Angling Club, Youth Club, Boys Club, Girls Club, Child Welfare Clinic, the County Library, the Devine School of Dancing, Darby and Joan Club, Civil Defence, Mothers Union, nursery, playgroup, whist club, the Parish Council, Table Tennis Club, Preschool, Sunday School and group meetings.
Since 1952, the hall has been used by the community for events such as jumble sales, coffee mornings, street parties and private hire.

The support of the village is key to its continued success, so long may this tradition continue!

This history was researched by Sharon Morris (Chair) and Jane Banks (Secretary).

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3. Census Records
4. John Marius Wilson's 'Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales'
5. Local and daily newspapers
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8. History of education in England, Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia
9. History of the Charity Commission

TIMELINE OF THE VILLAGE HALL

1843 – A Sunday School was built by William Curling for 'poor female children'. It became the day school for all village children, both infants and juniors.

1850 – The Church of St John the Evangelist was consecrated.

1855 – William Curling dies

1856 – Elizabeth Curling draws up a conveyance to pass the school building, and the land it is built on, to St John's Church before she leaves Kingsdown and settles in Eastbourne.

1856 – For several decades the school is run by the Diocese.

1937 – After a disastrous government inspection, the school is closed.

1939 to 1945 -The building is used as a NAFFI for the troops during WW2 who occupied the village.

1950 - The Education Department forced the sale of the building to the Parochial Church Council. It was eventually purchased for the village. A committee was set up to guide this transaction.

1952 – The old school building was re-opened as a Village Hall.

KINGSDOWN

Village Hall Proposal

A scheme to provide an adequate village hall for Kingsdown, by enlarging the school premises which have not been used since 1939, is under consideration. At a meeting last week a £2,000 scheme was considered too ambitious but a sub-Committee has been appointed to make suggestions. The members are :—Messrs. P. H. Saunders, J. E. Bradley, Youden, H. V. Harris and Park, Dr. Farmer, Lady Ward, Mesdames Ellison and Bushell, and Misses Helen Lloyd-Price, Crocker and Newman.

Dover Express November 1950

KINGSDOWN VILLAGE

There has been a settlement at Kingsdown since before 1066. By the 19th century, it had developed into a fishing community, with some boat building. The herrings, which were caught and cured in the villagers 'hangs', were famously known as the 'Kingsdown Bloaters'.

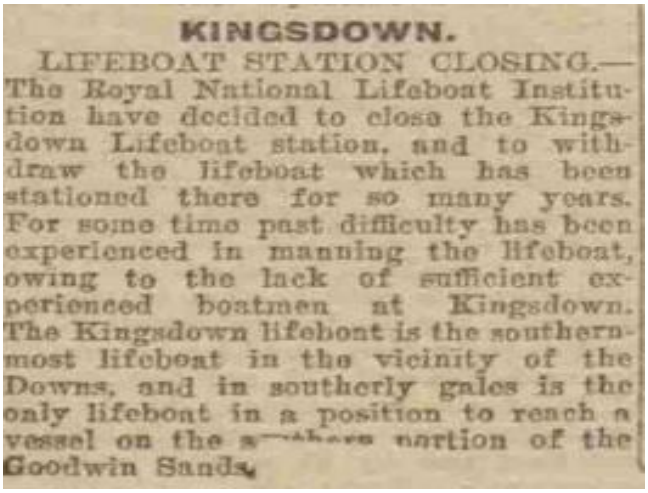
The steeply shelving shingle beach has, throughout the centuries, proved to be a challenge for the boatmen. Eventually capstans were fixed along the beach to allow the men to drag their boats out of the sea.

With its proximity to the Goodwin Sands, it's not surprising Kingsdown took ownership of its first lifeboat in 1866. This particular sandbar was so notorious it merited a mention by William Shakespeare in 'The Merchant of Venice' as:

'*The Goodwins - I think they call the place - a very dangerous flat, and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried'.*

The brave lifeboat crews saved many lives when they were launched to rescue ships stranded on the treacherous Goodwin Sands.

The lifeboat was finally removed from Kingsdown in the 1920s, as motor powered boats took over. Today Walmer has the only local Lifeboat Station.



KINGSDOWN.

LIFEBOAT STATION CLOSING.—The Royal National Lifeboat Institution have decided to close the Kingsdown Lifeboat station, and to withdraw the lifeboat which has been stationed there for so many years. For some time past difficulty has been experienced in manning the lifeboat, owing to the lack of sufficient experienced boatmen at Kingsdown. The Kingsdown lifeboat is the southernmost lifeboat in the vicinity of the Downs, and in southerly gales is the only lifeboat in a position to reach a vessel on the s—there portion of the Goodwin Sands.

Dover Express 25th June 1926

Smuggling has always been rife along the beaches from Deal to Kingsdown. Kingsdown, in particular, was a quiet shoreline on which to unload contraband, although the authorities were never far away…

Custom-House, London, 29th September, 1815.

WHEREAS it has been represented to the Commissioners of his Majesty's Customs, that in the night of the 24th instant, JAMES HALL, deputed mariner of the Scourge Lugger, in the service of the Customs, and his Assistants, having chased on shore near Kingsdown, in the port of Deale, a Two SAIL GALLEY, with a cargo of smuggled spirits on board, were feloniously fired upon when about to take possession of the said galley by the Smugglers on board, and by a large party of Smugglers assembled on the beach.

The Commissioners of his Majesty's Customs, in order to bring to justice the said offenders, are hereby pleased to offer a reward of

THREE HUNDRED POUNDS

to any person or persons who shall discover and apprehend, or cause to be discovered and apprehended, any one or more of the said offenders, to be paid by the Collector of his Majesty's Customs at the port of Deale, upon conviction.

The following is a description of the said Galley:—Painted white outside, down to the water line, with tarred bottom; deal clench built, fitted to row with six oars, and for two lug sails; burthen nine tons and a half, length 38 feet 1 inch, breadth 7 feet 2 inches, depth 3 feet 8½ inches.

By Order of the Commissioners,
D. CURLING, pro Secretary.

After a storm, the villagers would search the beaches for anything profitable or useful that was washed up from an unfortunate wreck. The children were taken out of school for this lucrative activity.

It is said the women would attach large pieces of wood to rope and wrapping it around their waists drag it back to their cottages to use for firewood. Nothing was wasted. Life was hard.

In 1926 the first woman to swim the English Channel, Gertrude Ederle, emerged on to Kingsdown beach after the 35mile crossing.

GIRL SWIMS THE CHANNEL

IN RECORD TIME.

On Friday, the U.S. girl swimmer, Miss G. Ederle, who is only 20 years old and 5 feet high, succeeded in swimming the Channel in the record time of 14hrs. 39 mins. She started from Grisnez at 7.5 a.m., some two hours before high water, and landed at Kingsdown at 9.44, the same evening.

The swimmer was accompanied by her father and sister, Mr. Costa, who is described as the organiser of the swim, Miss Cannon, an American, Helmy, an Egyptian swimmer and William Burgess, her trainer, who is one of the five who had previously succeeded in swimming the Channel.

Dover Express 13th Aug 1926

France is clearly visible from the beach and cliffs of Kingsdown. It is this proximity that has led to the village being in the front line when it came to war. In WW1, a military airfield was situated on the Hawkshill Freedown, between Kingsdown and Walmer.

Towards the end of WW2, Kingsdown Wood was the secret location of 'OBOE', a new radar system which enabled our aircraft to bomb at night and in poor weather.

Kingsdown can also claim to have been a favourite with royalty too. In November 1842, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were invited to stay at Walmer Castle to 'take the air'.

They were great walkers and set out most mornings to walk along the path crossing the Freedown, winding down to the beach at Kingsdown followed by a climb back up through the village to return to the castle along a track that is now known as Liverpool Road.

ADD SOMETHING TO YOUR VISIT….

If you have time, why not stroll along Upper Street?

Turn left, as you come out of the Village Hall, and you will discover The Kings Head, one of the three public houses in the village. It is said that smugglers met here in the back room.

Further up you will be able to spot the Well at the front of the now aptly named 'Well Cottage', used for centuries as the source of clean water for the inhabitants of Kingsdown. At least you would have been walking downhill carrying those full buckets of water!

There are also many attractive Victorian Villas, built by developers, who encouraged people from London to buy a home by the sea.

The School

Until the 19th century, most schools were built by private benefactors or entrepreneurs.

The National Society (founded in 1811) was associated with the Church of England, and together their aim was to provide a school, teaching the 'three Rs' and religion, in every parish. Plain new buildings were promoted, usually with a teacher's house to one side. In 1833, the government offered grants through the National society.

The Schools Sites Act of 1841 allowed land-owners to sell or donate a maximum of one acre of land to charities for the provision of schooling 'poor persons'.

The local paper of January 1844 reported that 'for less than £200, the Curlings had just built a new infant and junior schoolroom'.

According to a map of the period, the school (only for children of labouring, manufacturing or poorer classes) was built on PLOT 24 – (PLOT 25 was the garden), and a Thomas Walton (mentioned in Elizabeth's will) was the occupier of the 'house of the Parochial Church'. PLOT 22 was the 'home meadow'.

We have much pleasure in recording the liberality of Mr. and Mrs. William Curling, of Blackheath, who have just built, at an expense of upwards of £200, a new infant school room, capable of accommodating 100 pupils, near their elegant marine residence on their estate at Kingsdown near Walmer. A school-mistress has been already appointed, the duties of the school having been for some time past conducted in a room of a private house. The new room will be opened on Wednesday, and suitable preparations have been made for the occasion, when the children and the villagers generally will be treated with roast beef and plum pudding. The whole institution is conducted at the expense and under the immediate direction of Mrs. Curling, who has devoted much time and personal care to the establishment; and who by this and other acts of benevolent consideration, has secured the esteem and affection of the neighbourhood. It is by such conduct as this, by the proper exercise of wealth, that the rich will best establish a rule in the hearts of the poor and create mutual confidence and good will between all classes.

Kentish Gazette January 1844

The school building had two large rooms with a fireplace in each room. The present lower hall was originally the cloakroom, with hooks for the children's clothes. By 1850, Elizabeth Curling ran the Sunday school, and there is a report that on New Year's Eve 1850, some 80 to 90 children were fed on roast beef and plum pudding in the school, courtesy of the Curlings!

The running of the Victorian school was very different to today's standards in many ways! Lawrence Kirkman, the schoolmaster in February 1859, was reported in the local press as being 'up before magistrates' as he had caned a pupil of 15 on the back of a hand and the back of his head.

Photograph taken outside the school 1930's

<u>The School Deed</u>
(no date - found on a small handwritten note in Village Hall records)

The school may only be used as a school

1. The committee to be Incumbent plus 5 others who must subscribe £1 per annum to school funds
2. The only people entitled to elect a member of the committee shall be a contributor of 10/- per annum to the school
3. Mistress of school with a member of C (committee? / C of E?)
4. The committee may dismiss the teacher
5. Each April a committee of 4 ladies can be.....?
6. The school is only for the children or.....of labouring, manufacturing or poorer classes
7. The Trustees of the school are the Vicar and Churchwardens

It is believed that a Mr Bingham was a church warden at this time.

Under the School Grants Act of 1855, and following William's death in that year, Elizabeth sold the school premises to the Minister and Church Wardens of the Village Church.

There are references to a conveyance of 30th July 1856 in the hall's records, but the document itself is not in the archives.

The schools – both infant and junior – were finally closed on 31st December 1937.

What did Victorian schoolchildren wear?

The photograph below shows how girls wore their aprons. Perhaps the children's clothes would have been so grubby and possibly lice ridden and so the apron gave the teacher some protection!!

The white cotton aprons, often trimmed with lace, were fastened at the back and were put on over normal clothes as a means of protection. They were made of cotton and were often hand made by a parent. The knee length dress would be made of a dark cotton or woollen material and would be worn with long black stockings. The shoes would be flat and boot like.

Girls did not wear the mob cap (sometimes wrongly called a mop cap) as this was worn by servant girls. They may have worn a bonnet, especially on special days, but often they just had their head uncovered, wearing white ribbons in their hair. Long hair was the norm.

The Victorian schoolboy would have worn jackets and stout trousers and ankle boots. Those in short trousers wore long socks. The colours would have been drab. Shirts had large rounded, stiff collars and were often worn without a tie. Boys would wear a waistcoat or jumper under their jacket. Some boys wore a cap, or even a bowler type hat, but these would not be worn indoors.

A lady teacher usually wore a simple black dress which was full length. A high collar white cotton blouse would be worn underneath. They would wear stout flat boots. The school mistress would wear her long hair up in a bun.

A male teacher would wear a suit with a white shirt with a deep rounded collar, and a tie. He would wear strong boots.

Most teachers did not wear the graduate gown and mortar board because the majority were not graduates, although in public schools standards were much higher and teachers would have been graduates. Most male teachers were in holy orders.

Monday.

Lawrence Kirkman, schoolmaster, of Kingsdown, was charged with assaulting George Cole, a lad about 13 years of age, and a scholar in the school.

George Cole, on being sworn, said—I was at the Kingsdown school on the 8th of February. My master, Mr. Kirkman, called me from my class and asked me to hold out my hand, which I refused to do; he then took hold of it by force and cut me across the back of the hand with the cane, and afterwards across my head. I told him that my father said that was not a proper place to strike me, and then left the school and went home.

The magistrates, after a few minutes' deliberation, dismissed the case, admonishing Mr. Kirkman to be more careful in future as to how he inflicted punishment; this being the second time he had appeared before them under similar circumstances, and recommended him in future wherever punishment was necessary, to take the advice of the clergyman, the Rev. Mr. Charlton, before inflicting it.

Kingsdown School Log Book

The original book is held by the Canterbury Cathedral Archives and available to view.

1862

1st Dec. Alfred Sutton, James Lilly and Hannah Lilly absent without leave, to see the Races on the Freedown.

4th Dec. Sarah Jane Golder, taken ill on Monday, died today of the croup aged 6 years last July.

5th Dec. Caroline Goldsack and Sarah Brown had their pinafores at home a week for washing.

1863

4th Feb. S Myers, G Myers, S Goldsack, E Pattison sent home for neglecting to bring clean pinafores.

13th April. Thin school. The potato season.

4th May. Very thin school in consequence of the boats preparing for the Mackerel season.

11th May. Many of the children unable to write owing to bad fingers.

28th May. Thin school. Mackerel along the shore.

26th July. Rev W Badger addresses the children on obedience to the will of God.

1865

1st Feb. Hopper left school (the pupil teacher who got paid by the school for teaching the younger children). The reason stated in December. Mother's inability to keep him respectable and comfortable for his money. Since then his mother and he have quarreled when he struck and otherwise abused her. He was paid monthly by Mr. Clark, so no money could be stopped.

8th May. Thin school. The boats skealing for Mackerel fishing.

* *Unable to discover a definition of 'skealing'. Maybe a local word?*

5th June. Arrears of school fees nearly all paid up. (*Many schools charged a small amount, 6d a week, to send children to school. It wasn't until 1891 that education became free for all.)*

6th July. Very thin school in the afternoon being Kingsdown Fair.

7th Aug. Harvest commenced, very few of the children left.

2nd Nov. Alice Arnold aged 8 years 7 months died this morning. Illness. Scarlett Fever. The first bout left her so weak she never recovered.

9th Nov. Very thin school owing to a shipwreck near the Hope Point.

1864

19th April. Kingsdown Mixed School Inspected. The school is supported by the Squire. It is ably taught and superintended by the Master though space and desk room are not adequate for the numbers. The children have committed much scripture to memory. The Religious Knowledge would probably have been more evenly distributed but for a habit of promiscuous answering. (B F Smith. Diocesan Inspector).

25th Nov. School irregular this morning owing to the wet, the herring boats coming home and the wreck of a collier.

1870

30th June. The coastguard children away yesterday afternoon and this afternoon. The boys picking up bullets after the marines' practices at the targets near the Coastguard Houses.

15th Dec. Could not see to read and the girls could not work after 3.30pm because of the darkness. Very wet and dismal. Very poor attendance.

1871

15th May. 51 present this morning. 6 of the Kingsdown boats went off on Sat afternoon for Mackerel. Several boys gone with them.

29th May. Richard Webb very troublesome all day. Gave him a good thrashing in the afternoon.

3rd July. Sarah Sanders away all week to have her shoes mended.

8th Aug. Numbers decreased today as wheat was cut at East Bottom Farm.

14th Aug. Ellen Wellard and John Jarvis have leave all this week to take their father's dinners to the harvest field.

20th Sept. Potato digging commenced, few present.

Dec. While examining the writing of the First Class on Wednesday morning I playfully took hold of Ellen Turner's ear and asked her what she had written a small hand copy with? This took place about 11.10am.

During the dinner hour her father came up in a tremendous rage enquiring why I had 'dragged his girl about by the ear'. As he was particularly foul mouthed I shut the door in his face and left him to foam and swear at the knocker, or amuse himself in anymore engaging pastime till he chose to go away.

School to Village Hall

The Victorian school operated from 1843 until 31st December 1937.

The local paper of January 1844 reported that *'for less than £200, the Curlings had just built a new infant and junior schoolroom'* for children of labouring, manufacturing or poorer classes. By 1850, Elizabeth Curling ran the Sunday school.

The school building had two large rooms with a fireplace in each room. *(Note the difference in the pattern of the floor in the main hall).* The present lower hall was originally the cloakroom.

Elizabeth sold the school premises to the Minister and Church Wardens of the Village Church. A conveyance of 30th July 1856 is referred to in the hall's records, but the document itself is missing.

In 1944, the Minister of Education made an agreement with the Archbishop of Canterbury:- the schools kept the title deeds to the land and the church accepted some state control over the syllabus taught in the schools.

By 1950, the Ministry of Education was no longer prepared to be responsible for the premises and insisted on the sale of the property.
A group of villagers met in the Village Schools on 31st October 1950, and a committee was appointed upon *'the resolution.....that the school was a suitable site for a village hall, subject to extensions and alterations.....and the advice of a local architect be attained'.*

The buildings had been left to the PCC in trust. In January 1951, the site was sold to them, (or rather to two individuals, Mr Stanley Player Mitchell and Mr Cecil Osmond Youden) with a mortgage of £250, with the intention of letting it to the village at a peppercorn rent under a 99 year lease.

Dr Farmer (Village Chairman) suggested that the committee should engage a solicitor, Mr Gerald Hardman. The legal owners, Mr Mitchell and Mr Youden, were asked to apply for an electricity supply to be brought into the school building, the village Committee to accept responsibility.

Open meeting 31st July 1951
Mr Hardman advised that a Trust Deed between the PCC and the Village Hall Committee should be drawn up; the hall would have to be non-political, non-sectarian, and be run by the village for the village. Legally, the hall should be vested in the Trustee for Charity Lands rather than individuals.
A vote was taken on how to proceed, and the result of the meeting vote was 47 votes to proceed and 12 to wait for a grant.

Minutes of this meeting state that:
'it was agreed that subject to the concurrence of the Parochial Church Council the freehold of the property be vested in the Official Trustee of Charity Lands', and 'that a Trust Deed on the lines of the precedent be prepared and submitted to both the Village Hall Committee and the PCC'.

In September 1951, the Trust Deed prepared by Mr Hardman was approved.
In fact, many of the PCC's requests are included in the Deed of Trust that governs how the hall operates today.

The PCC agreed, subject to the following:

- *That the hall should be called St John's Village Hall Kingsdown*
- *That the church had the exclusive right to the hall on Sundays and Good Fridays*
- *That the model Trust Deed be accepted*
- *That the Village Hall Committee agree to take over the £200 loan on the building*

By 1952, the land and the schools were sold to the people of the village, complete with £200 still to pay on the mortgage.

An anonymous benefactor paid off the mortgage.
The property was vested in the Public Trustee of Charity Lands.

Unlike Ringwould Village Hall (which was built in 1934 on land owned by the Parish Council donated to them by the Monins Estate), Kingsdown's hall and the land it is built on, belongs to the village.

The converted building opened as the village hall in April 1952.

The first AGM was held on 1st April 1952. Thanks were recorded to the PCC for allowing the hall to be purchased for £200.

The village hall secretary, Miss Sybil Crocker, read a letter from a local benefactor who wished to remain anonymous, in which he said he donated the sum of £200 to pay off the mortgage on the hall, and another letter from Mr Hardman saying he had paid off all the interest and legal charges.

The generous gifts made the hall the property of the village absolutely.

The Trust remains known as St John's Village Hall Kingsdown.

THE FIRST COMMITTEE

The 13 Committee members in March 1952 are listed as:-

Officers

Chairman	Dr M L Farmer	
Vice Chairman	Lt Col Willis Farrier OBE JP	Kingsdown House
Hon Secretary	Miss Sybil Crocker	Coastguards, Kingsdown
Hon Treasurer	Miss Irene Steele-Perkins	

Committee

Mr H Ellard-Styles	(clerk of alteration works)
Mrs Alice Bushell	
Mr. Cecil Osmond Youden	Mount Pleasant Cottage
Mr J A Park	The Shop, Kingsdown
Mrs Aileen Ellison	
Rev. Stanley Nothard Swain	
Mr H V Harris	
Mr J Wood	
Lady Ward MBE	

Organisations Represented

Parochial Church Council	Mr. Cecil Osmond Youden
Parish Council	Lt Col Willis Farrier OBE, JP
Garden Society	Miss Irene Steele-Perkins
Angling Club	Mr H Ellard-Styles
Guides and Brownies	Miss Sybil Dorothy Marienne Crocker
Girls Club	Mrs Alice Bushell
Women's Institute	Mrs Aileen Ellison
Mothers Union	Rev. Stanley Nothard Swain
Valerian Guild	Mr J Wood

At the first AGM of 1952, thanks were recorded to the PCC for allowing the hall to be purchased for £200.

During the next couple of years, the committee worked extremely hard, attending to the following issues:

- the lettering for above the hall had been approved and ordered;
- Col Farrier said his company was willing to give the extra land if it were need for the kitchen and cloakroom extensions;
- Miss Steele-Perkins stepped down as Treasurer, and was replaced by Mr H Lane OBE;
- Kingsdown builder, Mr E G Smith, was appointed to complete the work on the kitchen, and another £300 had to be found. Two committee members offered to loan the money - Lady Ward £150 and Mr Ellard-Styles £150.
- Miss Irene Steele-Perkins donated a deed box (our now infamous 'black box')
- Rev Norris Alcock was the new Vicar, as Rev Swain had died.
- A new bank account was opened in the name of 'St John's, Kingsdown, Village Hall account'.

DR M L FARMER

Committee 1952 -1953.

First Chairman of the Management Committee.

Dr Malim Lethbridge Farmer was the son of Rev. Robert Letts Farmer, Rector of Shardlow, and was born in Kirk Langley in Derbyshire in 1882.

He attended 'The Oaks' school in Willington in Burton-upon-Trent.

From there he studied medicine at Liverpool University, and was practicing in Hull in 1913, having married Doris Kathleen Scott Hebblethwaite, in 1912.

He served as a Captain in the R.A.M.C in WW1 and was living at 'Patches', Bay View Road, in 1940. He and his wife moved to 'The Warren' Alexandra Road.

He died in Victoria Hospital, Deal on 11th July 1963 and is buried in Kingsdown churchyard. He was 81 years old.

Lt.Col. Willis Farrier O.B.E

Committee 1952 – 1964

First Vice Chairman.

Willis Farrier was the son of PC John Farrier and his wife Margaret Agnes of Deal.

Before WW2, Willis Farrier and his wife, Dorothy, were listed as Catering Managers for Campus Ltd, Kingsdown Park. They lived in Kingsdown House in 1934.

Willis Farrier was a Rural District Councillor and a J.P. In WW2, he served in the Royal Marines and was gazetted on 7th March 1940.

He served in the MNBDO (Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation) before moving to the Headquarters Staff in 1942, then serving in Deal during 1945/46 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He was awarded a Military O.B.E in the King's Birthday Honours of 1946.

After the war, he returned to Kingsdown House, where he hosted meetings of the Village Hall Committee, before retiring to Autumn Cottage, Back Street, Ringwould.

He died in Victoria Hospital, Deal in May 1965 aged 62.

MISS SYBIL CROCKER

Committee 1952-1957

First Hon. Secretary

Sybil Dorothy Marienne Crocker was the daughter of Frederick and Marie Crocker.

Her family were of private means and, in 1939, Miss Crocker was an Antique Dealer in Chelsea.

Having spent the war years in London, she moved to Kingsdown in 1946. By 1952, she had made her home at 7, Coastguard, Kingsdown, but was described as a 'housewife' in a passenger list from Lisbon to Liverpool.

Miss Crocker enjoyed gardening and fruit-growing and became District Brown Owl plus she ran the Kingsdown Brownie Pack.

By 1980, she had moved to 'Rosecroft' Church Lane, Ringwould, where she died aged 77.

Miss Irene Steele-Perkins

Committee 1952 – 1955

First Hon Treasurer.

Miss Steele-Perkins was the daughter of Dr George Chapman Steele-Perkins, who was born in Exeter, Devon, and Alice Eliza Chapman who was born in Australia.

He wrote treatises on 'Chronic Constipation' and 'Clergyman's Sore Throat'. In 1907, he was gazetted to the 1st Devonshire Royal Garrison Artillery (volunteers), being promoted from Surgeon to Surgeon-Lieutenant on 17th January. He died in 1932 aged 82.

Irene had one brother, Cyril, who served in the Royal Lancaster regiment and is remembered on the WW1 War Memorial in Kingsdown's church.

In 1939, Irene and her mother were still living at 'Woolloomooloo' Wellington Parade. They had been there since at least 1916. The house was named after an area in Sydney, Australia, the birthplace of Alice.

We are indebted to Irene for gifting our infamous black Deed Box which is on display.

Irene died in 1969, in Littlebourne House Nursing Home aged 80 years.

LADY BESSIE WARD & MR RICHARD WORDSWORTH CALLENDER

Committee 1953

Lady Ward and Mr. Callender were appointed to the first Management Committee.

Mr. Callender was one of the auditors and Lady Ward represented the later defunct Valerian Guild (a village society), but they had another very personal connection.

Having served in the Intelligence Corps in WW1, Mr. Callender returned to his pre-war position as a Bank Manager in Cairo.

Here he met his wife, Dr Constance Muriel Maer who had had a challenging medical career as one of the first 'Lady Doctors', serving both in Malta and Egypt, in 'the war to end all wars' for which she was awarded an OBE.

On their retirement, they returned to England, living first in Ripple, then at 'Overhill', Upper Street, Kingsdown, after WW11. Before WW1 Dr Callender had also worked in India.

Richard Callender died in 1953.

Lady Bessie Ward, wife of Col. Sir John Chappell Ward K.B.E, C.M.G, C.I.E, D.S.O., M.B.E. was born in India.

From a fisher lad in Yarmouth, Norfolk, her husband entered the Royal Indian Marine and saw meritorious service in WW1.

Following his retirement, he became Port Director in Basra, a port city in Iraq, until his final retirement. Lady Bessie and her husband returned to England where they lived at 'Tanooma' on Wellington Parade.

Sir John died in a London clinic in 1942. Lady Bessie continued to live in 'Tanooma' but died in Littlebourne House in 1974 aged 89. Both are buried in St John's Churchyard.

The recorded personal connection between Lady Ward and Mr. Callender, is through the death of his wife.

This was a very tragic and unfortunate accident in the village of Kingsdown which was reported in detail in the local papers.

Dr Callender enjoyed riding her bike and in 1948 on a journey to see a friend in Walmer, she took the route down Upper Street only to find Lady Ward's car just passing what was then Vine's Grocer's shop, next to the Rising Sun public house.

A collision occurred, and Dr Callender lost her life. At the inquest Lady Ward was completely exonerated.

St John's Church was full for her memorial service which Lady Ward and other members of the village hall committee attended as personal friends. Dr Callender's ashes were scattered at the Crematorium.

If you would like to know more about the extraordinary Dr Callender, Pat Smith will be giving a talk entitled 'Ranking Nowhere' on Tuesday 13th November 2018 at the Deal and

District Branch Meeting of Kent Family History Society, held at The Landmark Centre in Deal. 7pm for a 7.30 start. Entrance £2.00

REV.S.N. SWAIN

Committee member 1953-1954

His full name was Stanley Nothard Swain, the elder son of Charles Swain. His middle name came from the maiden name of his mother, Hannah Elizabeth Nothard, who was widowed when his father died, aged 30, in 1879, when Stanley was just three years old.

Stanley was an accountant before studying at Kings College London to become an Associate of the College (A.K.C). He was ordained a deacon in 1911 and priested the following year.

He married Hilda Margaret Coleville in 1913. During WW1 he served as an Honorary Chaplain in the army, with the rank of Captain.

From 1921 until 1926, he was vicar of Leeds St Nicholas (Kent). He then became Rector of St Martin, Great Mongeham in 1926, until 1933 when he moved to St John's the Evangelist in Kingsdown until his retirement.

In retirement he and his wife lived at 'Plen', Glen Road. He died in 1954 in The Kent Nursing Home, The Marina, Deal, aged 78.

MRS ALICE BUSHALL

Committee member 1952-1964.

Formerly Alice Greenham, before her marriage to Bert Alfred Bushall in 1927, Alice held Whist Drives as fund raisers for the Hall for many years and often provided refreshments at the A.G.M.

BERT ALFRED BUSHALL

Committee member 1963-1964.

Bert was a Deal lad. His father, Thomas, was a gardener and the family lived at 'Clematis Cottage' in Kingsdown. Bert enlisted in the Royal Marines, Engineers Division, in 1915, giving his occupation as that of a carpenter.

Bert served at Cape Helles, Gallipoli, becoming dangerously ill while hospitalized in Alexandria. After a period in Haslar Hospital, Gosport, he returned to the Engineers Division in 1917. He was hospitalized again in 1918 with trench foot. During WW11 he served as a Special Constable. He resigned from the committee on the grounds of ill-health and his wife resigned to care for him.

Bert died in January 1975, followed by Alice in July of the same year.

Village Societies over the years

Past
Angling Club
Beavers, Cubs and Scouts
Boys Club
Church Youth Club
Civil defence
Darby and Joan
Decimus Society
Garden Society
Girls Club
Guides and Brownies
Kingsdown Young Wives
Lunch Club
Mothers Union
New village hall (from 1999 to 2007)
Parish Council
Play Group
Valerian Guild
Whist Drive
Wissant / Twinning Society

Present
Parochial Church Council
Preschool
Table Tennis
Womens' Institute

The Fate of the Fete

The Village Hall committee, or at least a sub-committee, ran a village fete every year from 1951, to supplement both the income of the Village Hall, and that of the church.

The proceeds were split between the two, usually in the ratio 2/3 to the Hall and 1/3 to the church.

The fete was held each year in the garden of 'Red Cottage', The Cliff (now Church Cliffe), the property being owned by Brigadier Trevor Hicks Spear and his sister, Catherine Louise Spear.

In 1939 Catherine was living at Red Cottage with her elderly parents James Spear, previously a silk merchant, and her mother, Florence.

Trevor enlisted in the East Kent Regiment (The Buffs) in 1922 and made the army his career. He died in 1989 aged 89.

Catherine remained at 'Red Cottage' finally passing away in Littlebourne House Residential Home in 1987.

From letters found in the hall's 'black box', it would seem that the property known as 'Red Cottage' was divided into three building plots and sold some time before the spring of 1972.

The committee asked the owners if the village fete could still go ahead. From the minutes of the AGM in 1973, it would seem that no fete was held in 1972.

Villagers learned that one was to be held during the summer of 1973, and that all the proceeds would be devoted to the St John's Church Restoration Fund.

£200 was raised for the Hall from the fete in 1975, along with 50% of the proceeds of the fete held on 31st July 1976 and 20% from the fete held on 22nd July 1978.

The annual fete continued to be held each year, although it seems the Village Hall committee were not the main organisers.

The tradition seems to have stopped once the new school was opened in 1985.

The Evolution of Preschool at the Village Hall - from Nursery to Play Group

This group had a somewhat controversial start to its history at the village hall.

The first reference in the hall's records to a nursery, to be run by a local individual, was an agreement to the use of the lower hall starting on Monday 16th January 1956.

However, by June 1956, the organiser was in arrears with the payments, and it took the committee over 6 months to collect the rent. The tenancy was cancelled at the end of the Easter term in 1957.

Another villager was offered the tenancy, this time with the payment of £10 for the term, payable in advance, the agreement drawn up by Mr. Gerald Hardman, Solicitor.

However, efforts to re-start the nursery proved unsuccessful, not least because the original group organiser had received money from parents and had not repaid it.

The Chairman reported the matter to the police for investigation on the basis of mis-representation, but the police found that, although there was a case against the organiser, as there was no prosecution, the case had been dropped.

The second hirer did not wish to continue.

The next attempt at establishing a Play Group was in July 1968. Unfortunately, this met with considerable opposition from the chairman at the time, who also happened to live next door to the hall in Old School House. He and his wife were particularly concerned about noise from the children and the blockage of drains!

As recorded in the minutes, he was so incensed that he handed in his resignation, slammed the hall keys down on the table, and even went so far as to put his house on the market. Sadly, he and his wife resigned from all village societies and left Kingsdown.

A special meeting was called in August 1968, at which the committee took a vote on whether to allow a Play Group to be run in the hall by the 'Young Wives'. The vote was 3:3, with 4 abstentions. The acting chair at the meeting cast his deciding vote in favour of the motion.

Terms were then agreed between the committee and the Play Group.

These terms included:

- A trial period of six months, with the committee reserving the right to terminate the hire at any time during that period
- If the hire extended over six months, the arrangement will be subject to one term's notice on either side
- The committee would fit a suitable gate to the entrance of the forecourt and provide a cupboard for the storage of group equipment.
- The number of children between 3 and 5 be limited to 15
- The group would meet two mornings a week.
- The forecourt could be used for a break period of 15 minutes, during which time the supervisors must be present to ensure that children are not unduly noisy, do not climb walls, or behave in an unruly manner.
- The cost of the letting of the hall to the group will be 20/- a session, payable monthly.

The Play Group was a success and the group were offered a place on the management committee the following year (1969). In early 1973 it was agreed that the Play Group could hire the hall for three mornings a week.

However, at the end of July 1973, the Play Group terminated their hire of the hall from September 1973, citing the lack of facilities and space to store equipment. It is assumed that the group met elsewhere for a short time.

In March 1974, the Play Group asked the Trustees if the group could return to the upper hall for 5 mornings a week if their storage needs and other requirements could be met. The proposal was carried with voting of 5 in favour and 2 abstentions.

The idea of the storage cupboard was born in June 1974. The Trustees supplied the timber for the project, and the play group supplied the labour.

A tarmac fund was started in October 1978, and by July 1980, the forecourt had a new surface, paid for with funds from Dover District Council, the Trustees and the Play Group, who, once again, provided the labour.

A toddler session was introduced, which ran until the end of 2016.

The Play Group was now a Preschool, governed by the rules and regulations set down by OFSTED.

In 2017, the Trustees agreed that the Preschool could extend their hours yet again, this time so that the Preschool could offer 30 hours of government funded childcare. At present the group occupies the premises all day, every day, from Monday to Friday during school term times.

New Hall/Old Hall dilemma

In January 1970, the Village Hall committee discussed the possibility of building a new hall on another site in the village. This was discussed at AGMs held in 1970, 1971, and 1973. The public showed no enthusiasm for the project at all, so plans were made to make alterations to the old hall instead, but the dilemma continued.

Public meeting 12th June 1974

'The Chairman then opened the subject of the necessary repairs to the hall, and the need to finance these, as explained in a leaflet circulated throughout the village before the meeting. This lead to a lengthy discussion on the possibility of the village acquiring a new hall. Such diversion of opinions was expressed that the chairman, on behalf of the committee, undertook to thoroughly investigate the various aspects of the possibilities available.'

At the end of June 1974, the chairman reported that he had met with officers of the Dover District Council, and that *'more difficulties, than originally envisaged by supporters of building a new hall, are being encountered, but the matter is still being investigated and in the meantime, estimates and discussions regarding repairs to the existing hall are going ahead.'*

Public meeting 19th September 1974

The Chairman gave the reasons why the committee had decided that the only economical way of providing village hall accommodation was to repair and improve the existing premises.

Those reasons included:

- Investigations into availability of land
- Various types of halls; brick and fabricated
- Planning difficulties likely to be encountered
- High demolition costs involved if new hall built on present site
- With a grant, the committee would have to guarantee at least 50% of any outlay.

A plan, outlining the proposals for repairs and improvements to the existing hall, was met with the approval of the meeting.

The first plans, to build a new hall in the village, were made by the Parish Council in 1973. The subject was not mentioned in the Hall's minutes again until the 1990s.

Again lead by the Parish Council, a Sub-Committee set about investigating the options of building a new hall somewhere within the village of Kingsdown.

Village hall meeting 23rd January 1995

At this meeting, the Parish Council representative said that they were still 'pushing the Council for a new hall'.

A letter in the Hall archives, addressed to the 'Clerk to the Parish Council' from the Trustees, dated 5th February 1996 states:
'Today the committee has met to discuss the above proposal recently put to them by the Parish Council.
It was agreed by a majority vote that a new village hall would be of great benefit to Kingsdown and that the Parish Council should go ahead with preliminary enquiries.'

However, we have no record of this meeting on the 5th February 1996 in the Hall's minutes book.

Village hall meeting January 1999

This meeting was attended by 9 committee members, three of whom were also Parish Councillors. They formed the new hall sub-committee who reported:

- Architect's bill for £600 + VAT has been paid by the Parish Council.
- A school governor's meeting to discuss progress will be held on Wednesday 20th January 1999.
- An informal letter from planning gave approval to Scheme 1.

It was proposed that the sub-committee be given full powers to engage an architect, progress the planning application and to see the project through to completion. The motion was carried unanimously.

AGM of May 1999

At this meeting, Mr C Cotton retired after fifteen years as Chairman.
Item 9 on the Agenda related to the new village hall project. The sub-committee had conducted a survey, in October, showing that a majority favoured the school site and much work was in progress on this proposal, funded by the Parish Council. Their aim was to complete the building of the new hall by the end of 2000.

The full committee reminded the meeting that, once full plans were ready, no action could be taken until the residents of the village had been consulted again in accordance with the hall's Trust Deed.

This project did not happen. It is assumed that the same problems were encountered as in 1974.
Another survey, conducted in 2009, began with the following question:-

On the whole, which ONE of the following options would you prefer?

1. The façade of the present hall be retained, and the hall refurbished to today's standards **45.7%**
2. A new purpose built community centre built on the present site **10.3%**
3. A new purpose built community centre built on a different site in Kingsdown (e.g. school grounds or old scout camp) **40.0%**
4. No reply **4.0%**

The Trustees went on to hold an 'election style' vote. The result was 340:129 in favour of refurbishing the present hall.

The present Trustees are continually improving the facilities on the hall premises for the benefit of all villagers.

Into the 21st Century

Flat roofs constantly need attention. In 1982 they actually collapsed! They were repaired yet again in 2001.

A DVD was made in 2002 entitled 'Kingsdown Ancient and Modern', to mark the 50-year history of the Village Hall.

In 2007, the hall, kitchen and toilets were painted by the Community Services (labour free, materials paid for by the Trustees).

In 2009, a 'Grassroots Grant' for £5000 paid for new chairs, tables, crockery and cutlery. A Sandwich Deanery Grant for £500, in September 2010, paid for a hearing loop to be installed.

The idea of a new hall was still on the agenda. To decide this issue, a questionnaire was delivered to the 900 plus households in the Kingsdown Parish. A Public consultation meeting was held in May 2009, followed by a voting day on 13th June 2009 for all eligible residents.

This was a very emotional period in the history of the hall, but the result was 340 to 129 in favour of refurbishing the present hall.
The Village Hall Committee now had a mandate to work towards the residents' choice, with the aim of having a hall suitable for the 21st Century and beyond, by the hall's 60th anniversary on 1st April 2012.

The stage was removed during the summer of 2010. New toilet and kitchen facilities as well as central heating were installed. The work was funded by the Ringwould-with-Kingsdown Parish Council.

A year later, the Lower Hall was completely renovated to form a self-contained meeting room. The **opening ceremony was performed** by the chair of the Parish Council on 10th September 2011. On display were photographs of the village, dating from about 1900 to the present day. One resident even brought with her a souvenir programme from 1st April 1952.

In 2011, a £9500 grant towards the replacement of the preschool cupboard was successful, and, during the summer break, a mezzanine floor was constructed in the main hall - the 'unofficial royal box' - with storage facilities underneath.

Summer 2012 saw the forecourt fitted with a safe play surface, artificial grass, security lighting, fence, notice board, hanging baskets on the wall and a replanted flowerbed.

Preschool organised and funded most of these works, with help from a competition run by the East Kent Mercury. The remainder was paid for by the Hall Trustees.

A year later a further grant of £2500 helped refurbish the floor of the main hall, and the main hall, lobby and kitchen were decorated during the summer of 2013. Our old hall needs constant care!

The main hall lights were replaced in February 2015. In 2016, a community defibrillator was installed in the forecourt, paid for by generous donations from the family of the late Mrs. Perry, a grant from KCC and a donation from Deal Fire Station.

The Trustees are committed to maintaining the equipment.
Two diseased trees at the front of the forecourt were removed in 2016, and a wooden sculpture was made from them, by the late Mark Trewartha.

Also, in September 2016, we were awarded funds, from the Big Lottery Grant, towards updating all five of the original distinctive windows. Secondary double glazing was installed during the Christmas break.

Extractor fans have been installed to reduce the problems of condensation, but the damp issue persisted until the wall next to the 'Old School House' was treated at great expense in 2017.

In 2018, the adjoining land owner began clearing his site to erect residential buildings. Planning permission was given, provided that a rear fire exit was constructed for the Hall. We now have a fenced path, paid for by the land owner, allowing access into the forecourt. The issue of access from Upper Street into the forecourt remains, but you can only eat an elephant a bite at a time!!

To bring us up to date, we now have broadband and an iPod dock; Preschool has outgrown us, and we now have to grow our client base and offer a greater diversity of events for the village.