

VILLAGE ECHOES

Goudhurst Parish Hall

Among the Local History Society material is a small pamphlet entitled "Village Hall for Goudhurst Parish" which was produced as a record of the subscribers and of the amount of money they had contributed by the 1st August 1903 towards the building of the proposed hall. Thus, we learn that subscribers to the general building fund had contributed just over £1,195, whilst a further £181 had been donated to a separate "Billiard Bay" building fund. Other money had been promised towards the expenses of the "Reading Rooms" in the first year (£75) and a *separate* "Ladies Reading Room" if sufficient funds could be obtained – at this date only £12 12s had been donated for this purpose and it will be no surprise to learn that no men had contributed to the latter.

All this activity had arisen from previous meetings, the first of which was held in February 1902 to inform the villagers about the proposal in general and that negotiations were underway to purchase a piece of land opposite The Plain on



which to build the hall. Architects' plans had also been produced and the estimated building cost at that time was £1,100. At the second meeting, in September the same year, subscribers were informed that the original negotiation for the desired plot of land had fallen through but that General Alfred

FitzHugh, who lived at Grove Place, had generously offered a plot of land which could be purchased for the sum of £25. This duly happened and Davis and Leaney, the local building firm, were given the contract to build the Parish Hall (to give it its correct name) which we still use today.

Unfortunately for the fund raisers, an account of the finances dated 3rd September 1903, shows that the building costs were more than the £1,195 referred to earlier and that another £309 was needed to cover them. On the other hand, Sir Charles Jessel had offered a guarantee on the Bank for £500 and to supply the billiard table and necessary accessories.

For the record, the ladies did not actually get a separate Reading Room but according to the byelaws of the "Goudhurst Hall and Reading Rooms Association", they were allowed the use of the Hall on Fridays from 2.30 pm onwards despite the fact that hall was open to members from 10 am until 10pm daily.

Local History Society.