

RINGMORE PARISH ROOM: ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF VILLAGE LIFE

Just over a hundred years ago the Manor of Ringmore was owned by a syndicate of three members: Frank Coyte, George Coyte, and Arthur Pode. Their extensive manorial property included the site of cottages that had burned down, and an adjoining patch of land.

The syndicate presented this site to the then rector, Prebendary Hingeston-Randolph, for the purpose of building a Church Institute for the parish.

The idea for the Institute had developed from the Erme and Avon friendly Society, founded by Hingeston-Randolph in 1865 to replace a Public House Club. The foundation stone for the new Institute was laid by Mr Francis Mildmay and Mrs Alice Mildmay on 20 May 1908 and the institute building was soon erected and in use.

At first, the hinterland of the site was designated for use as a recreational area, but it was so steep and rough that it proved to be too hazardous for sports and games. So in 1923 it was sold to raise money for the improvement of the Institute building and plans were formulated to extend the hall. The new area would have to be at a higher level than the existing building, but this higher part could be used as a platform when required and closed by shutters when not in use. This is the building we now have and which for a century has played such an important part in village life. The land sold in 1923 to raise the money for the extension is where the house *Three Ways* now stands.

The extension was built as a memorial to the men of the village who died in the First World War. It was in use by 1926, was provided with a billiard table and served as a very companionable men's club room. Over the century the Church Institute, now named the Ringmore Parish Room, has also been known as the Church Room, the Parish Room, the Village Hall, and the Reading Room. It has served the parish nobly by housing innumerable parties, socials, dances, birthdays, anniversaries, whist drives, quizzes, village wedding receptions, harvest suppers, discos, society and council meetings, games, and concerts. Congratulations to it upon achieving its centenary! It deserves not only our affection, but also our continuing support for its maintenance, improvement and general well-being.

Di Collinson

[Much of this account has been derived from Ardene Bennett's History Society booklet, *Domestic Buildings of Ringmore* (1998).]



Mrs Mildmay laying the Foundation Stone of the Institute - of Ringmore. May 20th. 1908.