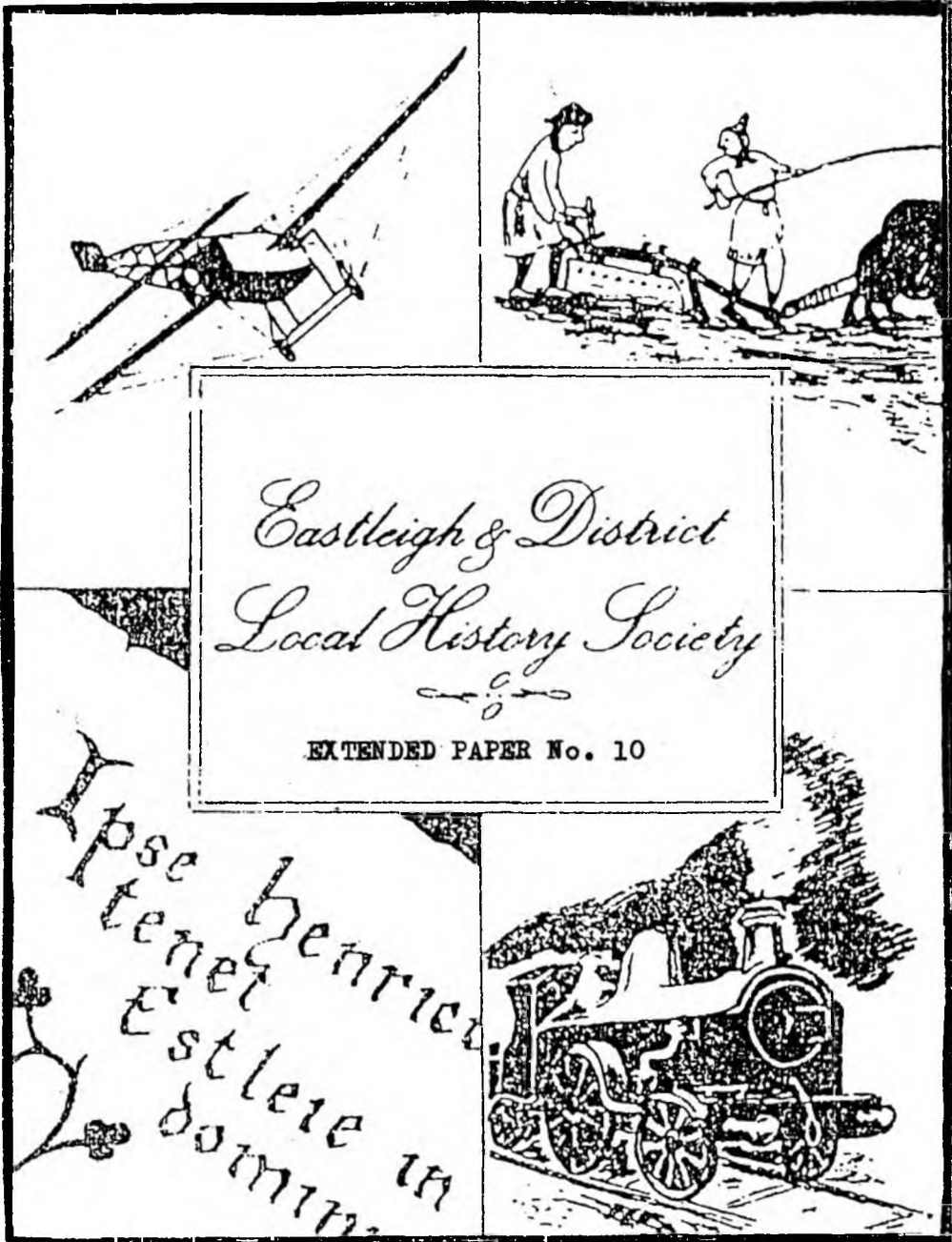


The Old School Theatre, Allbrook.



Castleigh & District
Local History Society
EXTENDED PAPER No. 10



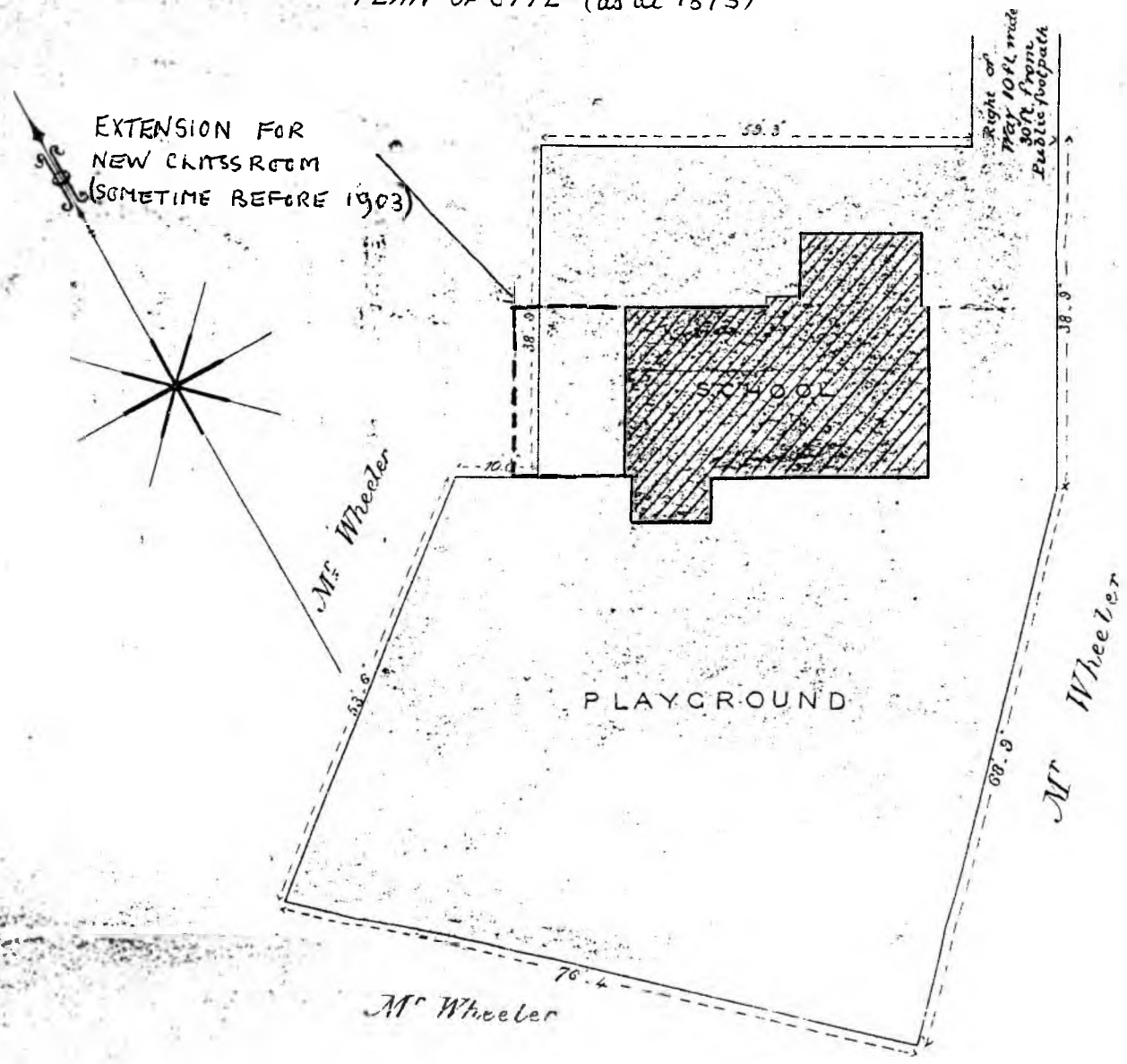


THE OLD SCHOOL
THEATRE

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 also with full and free right of r



ALLBROOK SCHOOL
 PLAN OF SITE (as at 1873)



Scale of Feet



hereby declared that is

THE OLD SCHOOL THEATRE, ALLBROOK

The story of The Old School Theatre in Pitmore Road, Allbrook, is one of a dedicated group of people on one side, and on the other, a building waiting to serve some useful purpose after being declared redundant. The coming together of the two brought new life and vigour to both. In such a story it is sometimes difficult to decide which should take precedence in the telling – the people or the place. Since, however, the building was in existence before any of the people were born, we begin with the building.

[1]

On August 25th 1873 Henry Wheeler, of Allbrook Sawmills, who owned a great deal of land in the area, signed an agreement with Julian Bargas Yonge (Rector of Otterbourne) and Herbert Smith (farmer and Churchwarden). He presented to these gentlemen and their successors land on which a school had already been built. A plan of the site included in the document places the land and building to the west of the public footpath from Allbrook village to Otterbourne. This footpath was later to become School Lane and, later still, Pitmore Road. The building was for the education of the young of the parish and for the celebration of divine worship. The whole property - land and building - was to revert to Henry Wheeler or his heirs, should it no longer be used for educational purposes – *“to all intents and purposes as if these presents had not been made”*. The original document is held in the Records Office in Winchester .

Externally, the building was typical of many small village schools built at the time as a result of the recent Education Act. Brick built, fairly steeply pitched roof, and the windows set high in the walls, more to prevent pupils looking out than the world looking in. Interestingly enough, while the plans show the original outline of the main building, there is no indication of outbuildings. It must be assumed that toilets, if any, were wooden constructions. Or were the children (and teachers) expected to maintain exceptional self control?

In its original state, the school appears to have consisted of one large classroom and an entrance cum cloakroom space. On the side away from the public footpath, a large porch led to the playground. At some time before the school was taken over by the County Council on October 1st 1903, the building had been extended by some twenty feet on the northern end. This extension, which required a slight alteration to the existing site boundary, was to provide an extra classroom. The school log books from this date are extant and much ‘intimate’ information about the life and times of the school can be gleaned from these. We are for the first time given a definite statement on the dimensions and the capacity of the building. There existed: -

Main Room – 26' 6" long, 18' 3" wide and 15' 11" high - capacity 48

Class Room - 18' 3" long, 18' wide and 15' 8" high - capacity 32

There is no reference to how, or if, these rooms were divided. There is no later mention in the log books of any constructional upheaval. It can surely be assumed therefore, that the sliding wooden partition was by now in place. It also seems probable that outside brick toilets, and a large dormer window over the porch were of the same date as the extension, since there is a very close match in the brickwork.

The school was heated by stoves and there are regular reports of deliveries - or delay in delivery - of coal and bundles of wood. There are also reports, over a period of some forty years, of trouble with the stoves which smoked and occasioned temporary evacuations. There is also mention of a 'gallery' for the babies. From evidence from other school buildings in the area, it would appear that this was a raised section in one of the rooms rather than a 'balcony' around the walls. The younger children occupied this vantage point to 'observe' what their older brothers or sisters were doing. This gallery was considered, at first, uncomfortable and then 'unsatisfactory'. It was removed at the end of 1904.

In 1903, the school year commenced (October 1st) with 73 children on roll (28 boys and 45 girls). Over the years this number fluctuated wildly, reaching an all time low in April 1939, when pupils numbered 29. These fluctuations, moreover, were weekly rather than monthly or annually. Numbers for January 1909 were 77, by April 30th the same year they were 57. One explanation of this particular drop could be the transfer of children to 'senior' school at the beginning of the school year, but children did seem to come and go to no obvious pattern. At times a child would be removed from the books, only to reappear after a few weeks. Was this, in the early days, a sign of changes from semi-rural to more urban conditions, to population change, or reluctance of parents to send children to school when there were more gainful occupations at home or on farms? Overall, however, with a few exceptions, the general trend was down from 77 in January 1911, leading to the eventual decision to close the school in 1950.

Allbrook C. of E. School is often referred to as 'Infant School'. Strictly speaking this is a misnomer since children left at the age of 9 to go on to other schools. Until 1927 both boys and girls went to the senior schools in Otterbourne. From that date there seems to have been some choice. Girls still went to Otterbourne but boys went to Chamberlayne Road Boys School in Eastleigh. Finally, in 1936 there is the first reference to boys and girls going on to Winchester Road School (later named Crescent School) and this practice continued until 1950.

The age for entry to the school is somewhat obscure. The reference to 'babies' in 1904 is substantiated by an entry in the Log Book for June 4th 1909:-

" is a delicate child and likely to be very irregular. I have advised that she does not attend school until she is four years old, at least".

By directive from the Education Sub-Committee (10.12.1915) "*under fives are excluded*". About half a dozen children who had, presumably, been attending school regularly, were promptly sent home.

Numbers on roll must not be confused with attendance. Careful note is kept in the Log of 'percentage of attendance', i.e. the number present against the number on roll. These percentages were critical and there are numerous occasions on which the attendance was too low, so that on instructions from the authorities in Winchester, registers were not marked; this could have quite serious consequences for the staff in terms of salary and security.

The reasons for absence, both of pupils and teachers, give a fascinating insight into life around the school through the years. Illness, of course, accounted for the greater number of absences; there are constant references in the early years to diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles, whooping cough, ringworm and head lice. On more than one occasion the school was closed for several weeks due to 'epidemics' of something or other. 1918 was a particularly bad year, when the school was closed three times because of whooping cough (March), measles (May) and influenza (October). On November 24th 1909, the headmistress records:-

"a telegram from Dr. Livingstone to send children home, because of diphtheria contact".

Presumably the quickest means of communication between Winchester and Allbrook was by telegram in 1909.

The weather - extreme cold, floods at the bottom of School Lane and snow - played their part. Some children, however, were habitual absentees. "*..... and her brother are most irregular*" appears several times and there is something of a note of relief in the entry which records this pair as having left for good.

Teachers too, sometimes had to have excuses for absence - besides the usual illnesses. The Log records attending a law suit and on May 24th 1909:-

"both teachers absent due to being involved in a cycle accident".

(knocked down? collision? surely not a tandem?!)

There is also one sad reference to absence due to a relative being killed in the 1914/18 War.

On the other hand, there were rewards for good attendance and every year certificates or medals were awarded and presented by some local worthy or the vicar. Indeed, on July 17th 1912, there was: "*a whole holiday in honour of Annie Miller for 7½ years perfect attendance at Allbrook and Otterbourne Schools*".

On another occasion, the Headmistress attempted to promote good attendance by deciding that any class with full attendance for the week should finish school fifteen minutes early. Within a month or so, the concession was cancelled from above.

Allbrook School was very much part of the community. Local dignitaries visited regularly, sometimes leaving 'surprises' for the children at Christmas and ensuring, to their own satisfaction, that things were going well. Mrs Henry Bateman was a regular visitor (almost every week) during the early part of the century; the church influence was also strong. In addition to Government Inspectors' reports, copies of which appear in the Log Books, there are Diocesan reports which comment on the religious side of the children's education - how well they know their Catechism, the use of Nelson's Bible Pictures and the ability of some to write out the Lord's Prayer, neatly and accurately. The vicar called regularly.

The Government Inspectors' Reports were almost invariably favourable. On one occasion the Inspector expresses pleasure at "*returning to this pleasant school*". There is regular comment on the enthusiasm of the staff and the application and industry of the children.

There is nothing outwardly dramatic in the history of the school. The years went by in the usual round of holidays, annual sports, flower shows, Christmas entertainments, saluting the flag on Empire Day and going to church on Ascension Day and other church festivals. Staff and children came and went, on the surface no disasters, no great triumphs. If the Log Books are to be believed, the outside world had little effect on the rhythms of school life. Saving campaigns during the wars, the digging of air-raid shelters in the playground in 1939 and one reference to an air-raid warning when "*some people were evacuated*" are little more than footnotes to the routine of school life. In 1940, that stove was still giving trouble and in 1948 the chimney was taken down. A little too late perhaps. The circle was to be broken after nearly 77 years.

On April 5th 1950, the last entry in the Log Book reads: "*There was a final programme of songs, recitations and games given before parents and friends and Managers and the school was permanently closed at the end of the afternoon*".

The second strand of our story begins in 1931. A small group of amateur actors decided to break with the All Saints Players so that they could present a wider range of plays than the Church connection allowed. They engaged a producer (she was paid £6) and decided, with laudable if misguided optimism to present 'Sweet William' - a play which required no less than four different sets. They had the players, but were lacking the expertise, the materials and the facilities to make the scenery. One of the group was Gwen Tapley and it was suggested that as her husband was interested in the theatre and was also something of a practical man, he might be willing to lend a hand. He was and so Ted Tapley (later to become A Borough Engineer) took on the task.

Faced with no money, no materials and no space, ingenuity was called for. After investigating the use of dividing panels from redundant railway coaches, Ted embarked on what was to become standard practice for the next few years. He begged, borrowed, but stopped short of stealing what was necessary. Shirley Ball, a timber merchant, provided a thousand feet of 2 x 1 timber. Canvas was obtained courtesy of the railway. Rogers, the paint retailers, offered to look out some paint. The scenery was made, with difficulty, in Karl Hodges' garage. When it came to the painting, it was discovered that all that was available was orange distemper. Tom Skinner, a signwriter, offered to help and a satisfactory result was achieved. The play was finally presented at the Town Hall. No mean feat when it is remembered that the only 'stage lighting' in the Town Hall was four wall brackets!

After 'Sweet William' the group was in debt and the producer was 'disengaged'. Ted Tapley was asked if he would take over. He agreed to do so, provided he could choose the plays and make all final decisions in matters of production. This was agreed and the company launched into 'The Creaking Chair'.

The company - now the Eastleigh Amateur Dramatic Society (the Amateur was later dropped) still had no real base from which to work. This was temporarily solved when Ted Bull offered the use of the builders' yard at the corner of the Crescent and Newtown Road. This gave facilities for rehearsing and for the building of scenery. 'The Creaking Chair' - with a fine set in grained panelling, courtesy of Tom Skinner, was successfully staged at the Town Hall.

The company was only in the Crescent for a short time before Ted Bull had reluctantly to ask them to vacate the premises. Once more without a home, the Society was fortunate to be offered the use of space above the workshops at the back of Harrison's Garage in Southampton Road. This was opposite the Campbell Road Bridge and has long since given way to development.

The approach to the workshops was by the side of the garage. Across the yard one came to a small door set in larger doors. Through this was a flight of stairs leading, apparently, through a solid ceiling. A long pull on a rope, however, lifted a trap door and gave access to the upper floor. This was roughly 'L' shaped. The space immediately around the trap door was used for scenery building or painting. Racks of stored scenery left just a narrow passage which led - past a 'loo', a small kitchen and an office - to the rehearsal room which ran at right angles to the rest of the floor.

The rehearsal space was large enough to provide an acting area which was somewhat narrower than the Town Hall's stage. Moreover, the slope of the roof made it necessary for anyone making an entrance from the side to bend almost double while awaiting their cue. Facing the stage were several rows of chairs for the audience of actors and members of the company not taking part in the current production. The space was adequate if somewhat primitive and served its purpose well for many years. It was warm enough in winter, sometimes too hot in summer (unless a door was opened over a somewhat precarious drop) and from below came the almost constant smell of oil, grease and cellulose. Although obvious precautions were taken, no one worried about the potential fire hazards. I do feel, however, that present day regulations would have precluded its use. Above all, it was a happy place and the Society prospered and grew. Patrons, many of whom have remained faithful over the years, will remember Alf Howes, George and Poppy Howe, Helen Grahame, Kay and Les Eaton, Betty Gordon, Jerry James, Jimmy Wilding, Mollie and Doug Dyson and many others. Competition for parts was quite fierce and many members were willing to wait and watch rehearsals, hoping for a chance to read in for some absent member of the cast and hoping, too, to be noticed and considered for future 'stardom'.

The Eastleigh Dramatic Society became very popular very early on and in 1933, George Wright, who owned the Regal Cinema (in the block which now houses Martines) became a little worried by the competition. He suggested an arrangement whereby the Society produced the entertainment, he provided the theatre and publicity and the profits were shared. This worked well and among plays presented at the Regal were 'Hawk Island' and 'Leave it to Psmith'. Eventually, however, the need for more seating in the cinema and consequent alterations to the stage put an end to the venture and plays were once more presented at the Town Hall.

During the war (1939-45) the Society was affected, as were many 'amateur' societies throughout the country. Men (and women) went off to the Forces or to war work and numbers became depleted. The Society, however, battled on at home and continued to rehearse and perform. In 1941 a production of Noel Coward's 'Fumed Oak' won the Home Counties and District Drama Festival, receiving great praise from the much feared and respected critic, James Agate.

A 'Roadshow' entertained troops in the area and in 1945 a Non Stop Variety Show was presented. A famous visitor to the Loft - as the rooms over the workshop had come to be known - was Ralph (later Sir Ralph) Richardson, who was stationed at the airport in the Fleet Air Arm.

Members returned from the war, new members joined and life got back to normal. All the while, the dream had been to have a theatre of our own (the story becomes more personal here since I joined the Society as soon as I was allowed in October 1944). Profits were saved and a scheme was inaugurated whereby patrons and friends could 'buy a brick'! There was a constant lookout for possible and practicable sites. At one point, one possibility was behind the Billiard Hall which once stood at the corner of Market Street and Blenheim Road.

The time had not yet come, however, and life continued at the Loft. The routine of setting up for productions at the Town Hall became almost a ritual. The move would begin on Saturday morning. Charlie Elkins would arrive with his lorry, the scenery and other equipment would be carried down and loaded, then it was off to the Town Hall where everything was stored in buildings off the yard at the back. At midnight, when the Saturday night dance was over, the main hall was cleared and all the scenery was laid out on the floor. Work of setting up went on all night, with as much tea and refreshments as rationing would allow. When the set was finished, most of us went home for a rest. Then it was back in the afternoon, to find that others had finished setting up the lights. The rows of chairs were set out and Dress Rehearsal took place. Public performances began on Monday. At first there were only three performances, but this changed and eventually we were playing for a whole week. On one occasion - 'Alf's Button' - there was even a Saturday Matinee - but that was later. After the performance down would come the lights and the set and it was back to the Loft, leaving the Town Hall clear for its next occupants.

The pattern of rehearsals, set up, performance, take down and begin the next show continued until the summer of 1950. The village school at Allbrook was closed and put up for auction. The Society purchased the premises and land with a view to converting the school building into a Little Theatre. The building, which was in a fearful state of repair, was bought for £850.

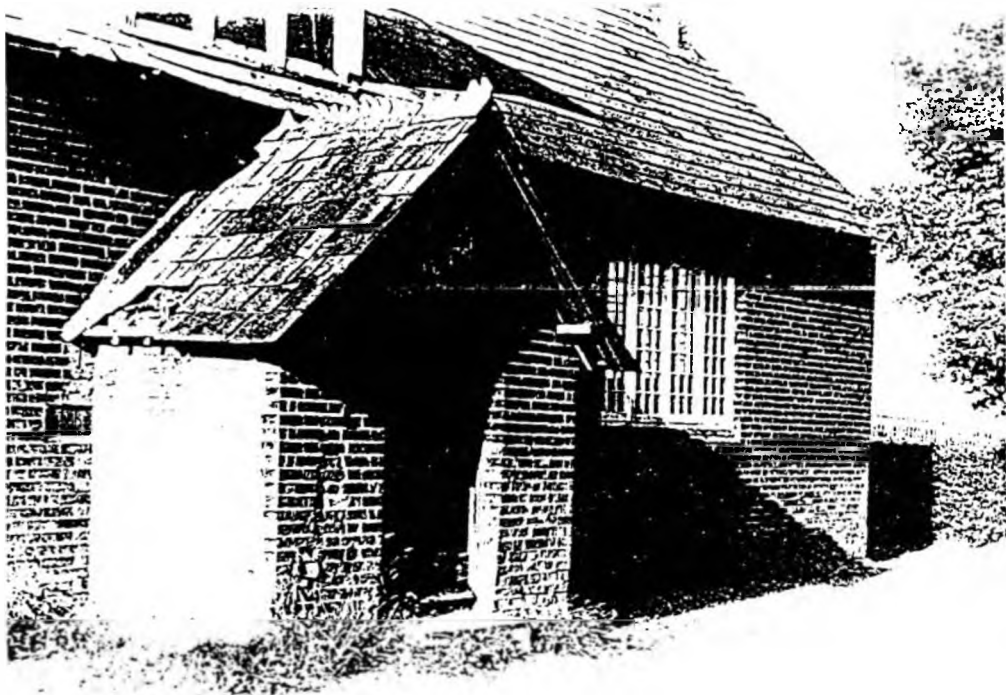
The two parts of the story have now come together. The 'permanent' closure of the School had lasted about three months. The Eastleigh Dramatic Society's dream had apparently come true after nearly twenty years.

What had the Society got for its money? - the school building with its two main rooms divided by a sliding partition, an entrance hall cum cloakroom, a rather antiquated block of toilets across the yard, two air raid shelters and space for expansion and parking.



The School at time of purchase - Summer 1950

While rehearsals for the current production 'Peace in Our Time' continued, plans were laid and submitted for the transformation of the building into a theatre. The plans were passed with some modification and a programme of work for the next few years was set in motion. First, the porch on the playground side was demolished, drains were laid and the toilets across the yard were cleared of debris and various species of livestock and generally refurbished to make them usable. The two air raid shelters were cleared, purged of their collection of unidentifiable but unpleasant smells and made into stores for furniture and properties. For years afterwards, until they were abandoned, going down the shelters to find some property or other was a strange experience. One was never quite sure what one might find lurking there. Spiders can appear enormous in dim light.



Rear views of School, showing porch and existing windows



Rear view of School, showing dormer window over porch





Ted Tapley laying drain



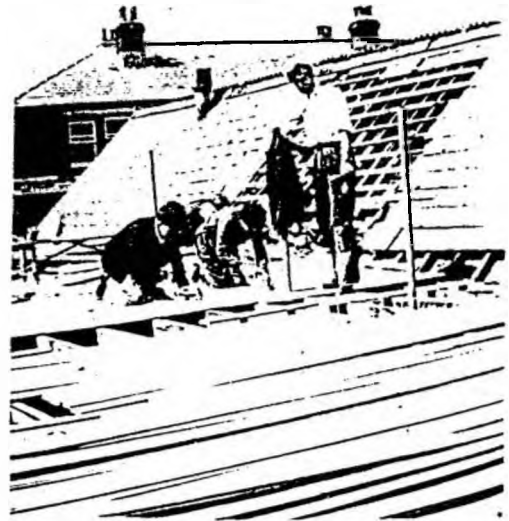
Demolition of porch

The next major operation was the removal of the dormer window. This had no sooner been removed, leaving a gaping hole in the roof, than it began to rain - not just gentle rain, but torrents. Temporary cover of stage cloths was hastily erected. Unfortunately, the rain drenched the cloths and the workers ended up covered in blue paint and looking as wild as a tribe of Ancient Brits. in full ceremonial woad.

With the windows gone, it was time for the workshop. This extension was about equal in area to the main room of the school and access to it was through the doorway where the porch had been. The work was carried out by Tom Jurd and the resulting covered space was used for making scenery and storage of existing sets. It would later be used as dressing rooms. An outside door led to the toilets across the yard and double doors at the other end gave access for furniture and scenery when the move to the Town Hall for performances was made. All rehearsals and other preparatory work was done at the School, but performances still continued at the Town Hall. Time had not yet come when the Old School Theatre could be open to the public.

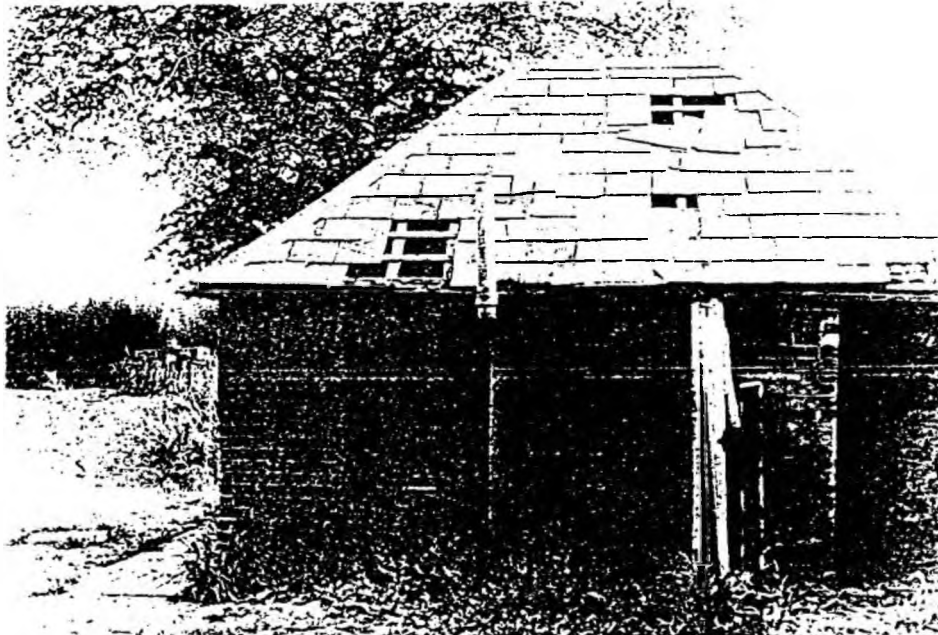


Opening left by dormer



Work on workshop roof

With the workshop complete and with more working space available the next task was 'raking' the floor of what was to be the auditorium. This involved considerable hard labour in digging down at the end where the partition divided the two classrooms and building up with beams and platforms at the other end. When the work was finished there was accommodation for ten rows of seats, each seat having an uninterrupted view of the stage. Total seating would be for 85 persons.



The outside toilets before 'conversion'

[Handwritten signature]

After what seemed a short breathing space, an extension was begun stage right. This extended beyond the workshop end and incorporated under one roof the 'loos' which were no longer reached by the 'open-air' route. The operation also necessitated the complete removal of one of the air raid shelters. A temporary roof was put on the new extension and the existing side wall of the school was opened up to provide extra 'wing' space on this side.

What was hoped would be the last major construction work was to build out stage left. This also included building an electricians porch and a new back wall. When the work reached the correct height, steel joists were thrown across the space, through the existing pitched roof to form a new flat roof for the stage house. When the outside structure was complete and roofed, the inner shell (what had been the second classroom) was pulled down, leaving a stage area of 40' x 24' with a height to take 12' scenery. The original plan had been to build high enough to 'fly' scenery, but this part of the development had had to be abandoned. The tidied up proscenium arch measured 18' - almost as wide as the original classroom - and took the place of the sliding partition; the existing cloakroom had also been turned into a combined foyer and kitchen area.



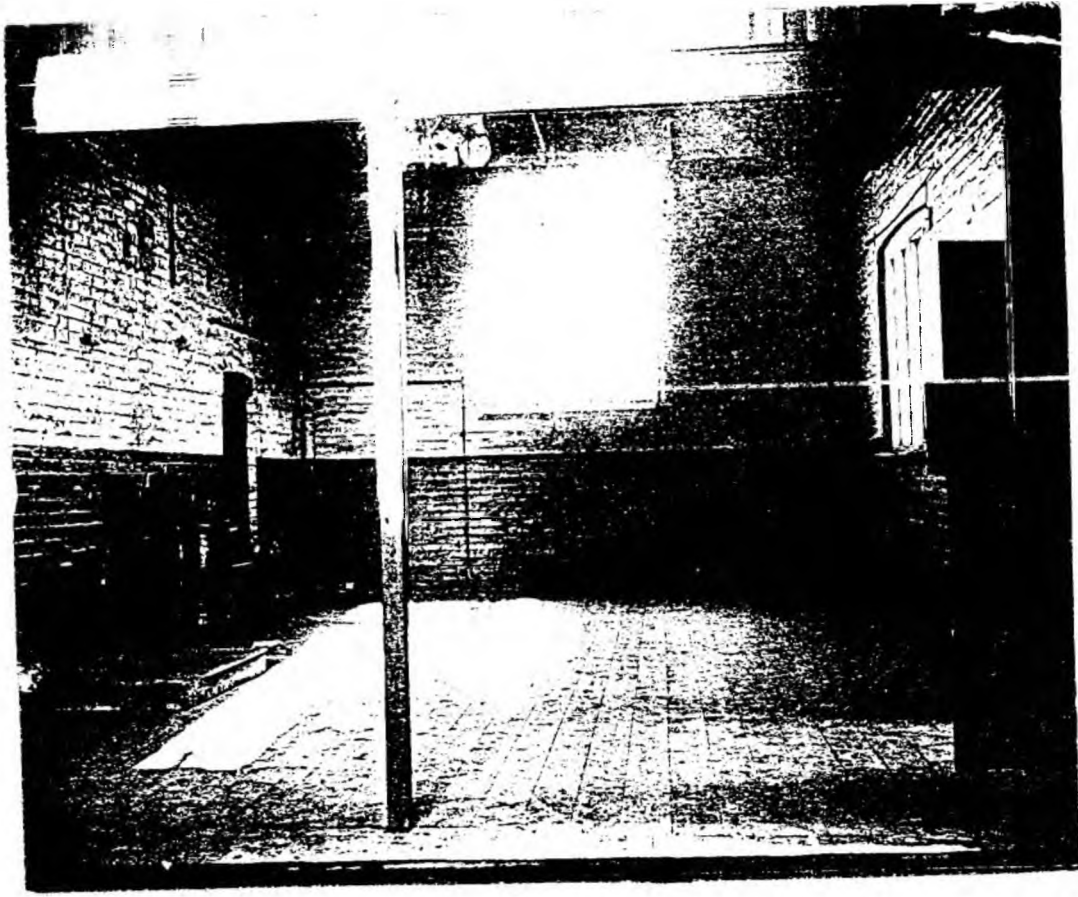
Positioning the beam for stage house roof

It must be remembered that while all this work (which took about ten years to complete) was going on, the Eastleigh Dramatic Society was still regularly presenting plays at the Town Hall. In those ten years from the purchase of the School until 1960, no fewer than eighteen plays were produced. Some of these were ambitious and elaborate productions with large casts. Some people may still remember the hordes of ants in the 'Insect Play' (one of the ants, who were boys from the old Toynbee Road School, is still with the company as electrician). Another magic production was 'Teahouse of the August Moon' with a cast of thousands, including a goat.

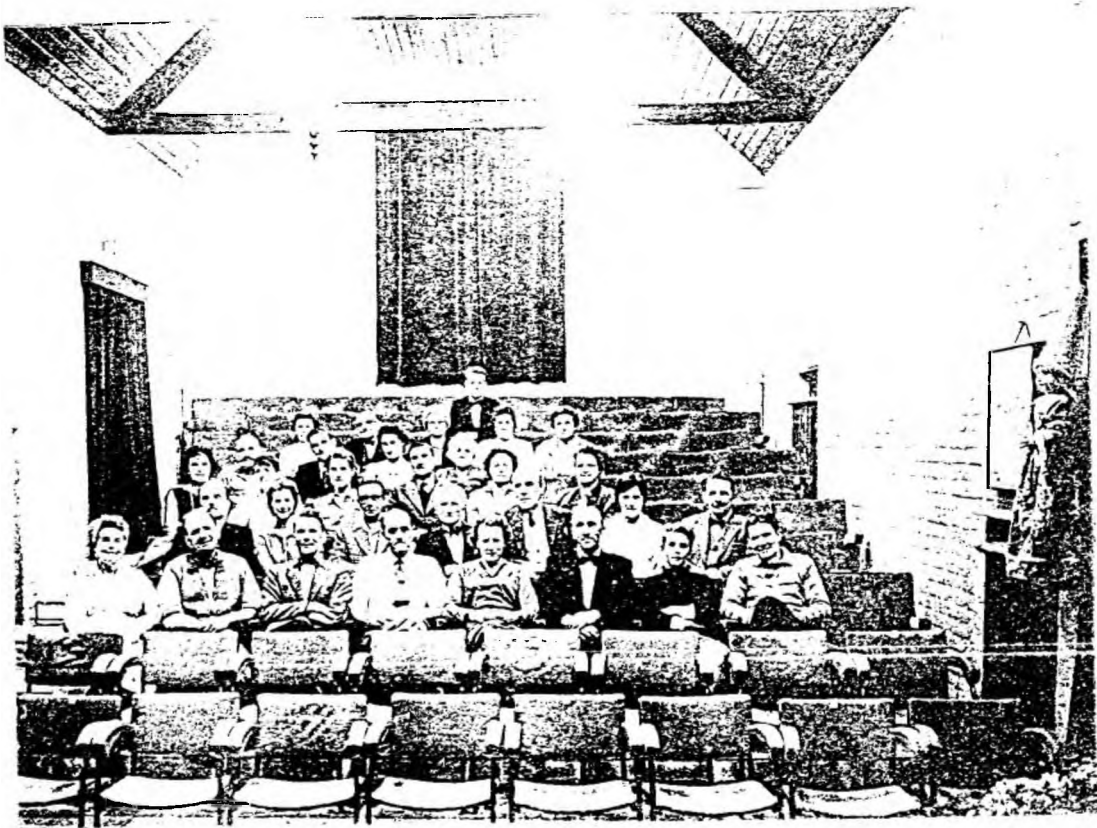
In 1960 came the climax to thirty years of waiting and ten years of hard work; the theatre was considered sufficiently complete to permit plays to be presented to public view on home ground. In a smartly painted auditorium, with seats rescued from the old Grand Theatre in Southampton, eighty five persons (guests and paying public) watched the opening performance of 'Queen Elizabeth Slept Here'. A dream come true. All plays would now be performed at The Old School Theatre. A long association with the Town Hall was over. Nearly eighty plays had been performed there over a period of some thirty years - and never a real disaster. There were some moments - as when we discovered that Lilibet the goat in 'Teahouse' had become hungry while waiting for her entrance and had chewed lumps out of the door frame of one of the offstage rooms.

A dream come true - but then came the nightmare. Dry rot was discovered in the auditorium; this meant that much of the work done had to be undone. Floors were taken up, timber was removed and burned, walls were scraped - even soil was removed so that everything could be cleansed, replaced and fumigated. Then everything had to be put back - and life went on. In all this chaos, and indeed during all the work on the Old School Theatre, the Society was helped in many ways by a multitude of friends - Jack Winstone the builder and the late Peter Green being but two among others too numerous to mention. Gifts of carpets, timber, labour and money enabled us to carry on through very trying times.

Improvements continued to be made for the comfort and convenience of both customers and company. Then, in 1962, it was decided that the Society would present 'The Women', a play for a large number of women and with many changes of scene. It seemed almost impossible that the play could be satisfactorily staged. The only solution was a revolving stage - and so a revolving stage was built, something which if not unique, must be very rare outside the commercial theatre. The centre of the existing stage was cut out and a circular railway track was laid down. The Revolve, made up of triangular sections on metal frames, was mounted on wheels which ran on the rails. The 'turn' was provided by manpower. 'The Women' was a great success and the cast of thousands must have travelled quite a distance in the course of two week's performances.



The 'auditorium' when the School was first purchased in 1950



The auditorium before the opening of 'Queen Elizabeth Slept Here' in 1960

They say that lightning never strikes twice - but dry rot does. In 1964 dry rot was discovered in the revolve. Whether a new infestation or remains of the previous bout is not certain, but a great deal of worry and effort was expended before it was once more, and hopefully finally, eradicated.

Plays have continued to be presented in the theatre without any further mishap - apart from leaking roofs and hiccups with the gas, water and electricity supplies. New toilets have replaced the old - which now act as an electrical store. There is good gas heating which ensures the comfort of patrons on even the coldest of nights. The kitchen provides adequate supplies of coffee during the interval, supplies of which are instantly dispensed to the audience in their seats in an operation that works with all the efficiency of a military campaign.

We are often told how lucky we are to have our own theatre. The reply is 'Yes, we are lucky - but we've worked hard too'. It has been a great deal of hard work by comparatively few people. Everything that could be done has been done by members. Only the larger construction work has been contracted out and even then members have acted as labourers to complete the final details.

In 1991 the Eastleigh Dramatic Society will be sixty years old and the Old School Theatre has been open to the public for thirty of those years. With the years, members have come and gone. Of pre-war members many are dead or have moved away. A few are left - but no longer active - Alf Howes, Molly Dyson, Kay Eaton, Poppy Howe and Jimmy Wilding. Of acting members, two of us have been continuously with the Society for more than forty years. One person alone has been there from the very beginning. Ted Tapley, who took up the reins in 1931 is still the guiding force behind the Society. He has produced almost every play, he has planned every new development and without his drive we would not have achieved all that we have.

We are few in numbers now. In these busy times few have the time, the energy or the inclination to rehearse three times a week for three months or more and then perform for two weeks at the end, which has been the practice of the Eastleigh Dramatic Society for the past many years. Meanwhile, few as we are, we look forward to celebrating our 'sixty glorious years' in 1991. After that - who knows?

R. SIMMONDS
October 1990

Plays Presented by the Eastleigh Dramatic Society

- 1931 Sweet William
- 1932 Creaking Chair; Sport of Kings; To Oblige Benson
- 1933 Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure; Vindication; Leave it to Psmith; Hawk Island
- 1934 Interference; And Afterwards; A Pair of Braces; The Mocking Bird
- 1935 The Whole Town's Talking; Happy Death Ltd.; Afterwards
- 1936 Vindication; Winsome Winnie; The Man From Toronto; Nothing But the Truth;
Ali the Cobbler
- 1937 Death Takes a Holiday; Almost a Honeymoon; Such a Big Adventure
- 1938 Winter Sunshine; Journey's End
- 1939 Carpet Slippers; Busman's Honeymoon; Ladies in Waiting; Old Moore's Almanac;
Fantastic Flight
- 1940 I Killed the Count; Meet the Wife; The Wilful Wife .
- 1941 Cause and Effect; Home and Beauty; Fumed Oak
- 1942 Ladies in Retirement; Road Show
- 1943 Sunday Costs Five Pesos; Noises Off; Olivia and the Duke; The Second Visit;
The End of the Beginning; Yellow Sands
- 1944 Tony Draws a Horse; Lucrezia Borgia's Little Party
- 1945 Give Me Yesterday; Non-Stop Variety; When We Are Married
- 1946 Love From a Stranger
- 1947 Saloon Bar; The Tudor Wench; The Poltergeist
- 1948 Uncle Harry; Poison Party; Fumed Oak; Quiet Weekend
- 1949 Granite; Arms and the Man; The Shot; The Dear Departed; The Dark Lady of the Sonnets
- 1950 See How They Run; The End of the Beginning; Peace in Our Time
- 1951 Alf's Button; Rookery Nook
- 1952 Sit Down a Minute Adrian; Ann Veronica; Insect Play
- 1953 The Line Between; Happiest Days of Your Life
- 1954 Dandy Dick; Pick-up Girl
- 1955 Grand National Night; One Wild Oat
- 1956 Anastasia; Hobson's Choice
- 1957 Beauty and the Beast; Teahouse of the August Moon
- 1958 Black Limelight; Women of Twilight
- 1959 Man Alive
- 1960 Queen Elizabeth Slept Here; Separate Tables

1961 Family Portrait; Mr Samson; Elizabeth Refuses; Dock Brief; Don't Listen Ladies
1962 Captain Carrallo; The Women
1963 My Three Angels; The Brides of March; The Whole Truth
1964 Noah
1965 I Remember Mama; As Long as They're Happy; Something to Hide
1966 They Came to a City; Semi-Detached
1967 Shop at Sly Corner; Diplomatic Baggage
1968 Deadly Friends; The Little Hut; Bonaventure
1969 Nude With Violin; The House by the Lake
1970 Pygmalion; Alfie
1971 The Facts of Life; Madame Tic-Tac
1972 Not Now Darling; Ladies in Retirement
1973 Boeing-Boeing; A Gown for His Mistress
1974 The Wisdom of Eve; Plaza Suite
1975 Suddenly at Home; The More the Merrier; Count Your Blessings
1976 Who Saw Him Die; Big Bad Mouse
1977 Every Other Evening; Night Watch; The Bride and the Bachelor
1978 The Heiress; The Moon is Blue
1979 Love by Appointment; Blithe Spirit
1980 Love From a Stranger; A Bedful of Foreigners
1981 Cactus Flower; Laura
1982 Birthday Honours
1983 Trial and Error; Move over Mrs. Markham
1984 The Tender Trap; Two and Two Make Six
1985 Key for Two; A Murder is Announced
1986 House Guest; Children's Day
1987 -----
1988 Gaslight
1989 A Month of Sundays
1990 The King Fisher

PEACE IN OUR TIME

Characters in order of appearance:

ALMA BOUGHTON	Joan Cleveland
JANET BRAID	Doris Brown
FRED SHA TTOCK	Douglas Dyson
NORA SHATTOCK	Helen Graham
DORIS SHATTOCK	Dorothy Knott
MR. GRAINGER	William Harris
MRS. GRAINGER	Joan Richardson
BEN CAPPER	Sam Bashford
MARY CAPPER	Sheila Robbins
LYDIA VIVIAN	Evelyn Lawn
GEORGE BOURNE	Edwin Croxford
CHORLEY BANNISTER	Jimmy Porter
ALBRECHT RICHTER	Ron Mockford
PHYLLIS MERE	Iris Pyle
MAUDIE	Poppy Howe
GLADYS MOTT	Desiree Browning
GERMAN SOLDIER	Alan Bartlett
BOBBY PAXTON	Rodney Simmonds
ALFIE BLAKE	George Howe
FRAULEIN HUBER	Jacqueline Wittmann
FRAULEIN MANN	Joan Purkis
FIRST GESTAPO GUARD	John Tillin
SECOND GESTAPO GUARD	Arthur Wilding
BILLY GRAINGER	Pat Clements
DOCTOR YENNING	George Purkis
LILY BLAKE	Gwen Wilding
STEVIE	David Knott
MR. LAWRENCE	Alan Bartlett
ARCHIE JENKINS	Leslie Eaton
KURT FORSTER	Arthur Wilding
MRS. MASSITER	Kay Eaton
THE WOMAN	Poppy Howe
YOUNG GERMAN SOLDIER	John Tillin
FIRST S.S. GUARD	Rodney Simmonds
SECOND S.S. GUARD	Ralph Richens



“The Mocking Bird”

This is our first production, a rather ambitious one you will admit, since the Society took possession of its new home at Allbrook. During the summer, taking advantage of the all too few fine days that we have had this year, the group toiled untiringly and almost unceasingly at the task of cleaning up the Old School and making the building and its outhouses a place suitable for the work of preparing plays for presentation.

We have little to show externally for our labours but visitors find a very considerable change within. Some time must, of course, elapse before we can hope to complete the scheme of adapting and converting the premises into a Little Theatre, because the work of "Playmaking" (the very reason for our existence) must go on without interruption, but we hope to be able to give you news in the near future of a probable opening date.

We wish to emphasise that we have no intention whatever of discontinuing our appearances at the Town Hall. Productions at Allbrook will be additional to, not instead of, performances at Eastleigh.

We are already rehearsing there, and as we have much more room than we enjoyed at our old headquarters (we couldn't possibly have worked with a cast of thirty-five at The Loft) we are no longer compelled to discourage people from applying for membership for lack of accommodation.

If you are interested and prepared to work in the cause of Drama as energetically as the present team does, we shall be delighted to hear from you, and to welcome you to our ranks, whether you be aspiring actors, scene painters, budding electricians, or mere students wishing to learn something about, and to become proficient in, one or more of the many arts and crafts of the theatre.

We are already working on our next production for presentation at the Town Hall during the week commencing 19th February, 1951, when you will be able to see many of the present company in W. A. Darlington's famous farce, **Alf's Button**. We feel sure that if you like fantasy and fun, mixed up with mirth and magic, you will not fail to enjoy this colourful piece of amusing nonsense and that we shall then have you roaring with laughter at what promises to be more pantomime than play.

T.T.

OUR LITTLE THEATRE

Karl Hodges, whom many of you will remember in early productions of the E.D.S., was the man to whom, perhaps, more than any other, the Society owes its origin. It was certainly he who, when the Constitution was drawn up, insisted that one of the objects of the Society should be the establishment of a Little Theatre in Eastleigh. He, and one or two others, owed their enthusiasm in a large measure to Frank Sladen Smith then, as now, the Director of the Un-named Society of Manchester, whose famous Little Theatre in a Salford slum was the fore-runner of many other small theatres run by amateur groups.

In a way Frank Sladen Smith may be said to be the "father" of the E.D.S., for not only was he indirectly responsible for the idea of building a Little Theatre in the town but it is he who has had the greatest influence both personally and through his writing upon our present producer.

But it was not until 1939, after seven and a half years of building up a reputation and some sort of a bank balance, that the Society was able to announce that it had acquired a site and prepared plans for a Little Theatre. There was an immediate response from members and friends and by Subscriptions, Treasure Hunts, Dance Displays, Jumble Sales and what-have-you, a considerable sum of money was raised within the following twelve months. And then, of course, the blow fell : war was declared and the Little Theatre scheme was put on one side. Yet still in the hearts of members was kept the idea of the Little Theatre, their Little Theatre, Eastleigh's Little Theatre, and all profits made on each year's working were carefully put into the Little Theatre Fund.

And now, after 10 years, the Society is once more straining every nerve to increase the fund, so that when the time comes, and we hope that it will be soon, there will be sufficient money for us to go forward with the building scheme.

You ask : " What is the Little Theatre for ? "

First of all it would be used for rehearsals and would give workshop accommodation and storage room—you have no idea how much space is required for scenery, furniture, properties, lighting equipment and wardrobe.

Secondly, performances of plays would be given in it, probably plays which would not be possible or suitable for performance in the Town Hall, to audiences composed of associate members. Associate membership would be open to anyone who cared to pay a small annual subscription for the right and privilege of obtaining seats at these performances. The ordinary productions in the Town Hall would not be interfered with in any way.

This then, in brief, is the history of our project and the reason why, on our posters advertising the present production, you see the words, " In aid of the Little Theatre Fund."

M.G.T.