

**SHIPLAKE MEMORIAL HALL AND  
INSTITUTE.**

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MASONIC STONE LAYING CEREMONY.

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UNVEILING OF A MEMORIAL TABLET.

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SIR FREDERICK ELEY'S GENEROUS  
OFFER TO PURCHASE A SPORTS  
GROUND.

For a place of its size there are few parishes in England which is richer in memorials to the illustrious-dead than the parish of Shiplake-on-Thames. It has its memorials in the church; there is that beautiful memorial cross at Hollybush Corner; the Ancient Order of Foresters have their memorial in their Court Room at "The Plough"; and now, to crown all the rest, a magnificently designed memorial hall and institute are being erected on land, given by Mr. R. H. Mardon, situate on Binfield Heath road, near the Schools and Council Cottages. Not only has Mr. Mardon given the land, but he and Mrs. Mardon are generously defraying the expense of the erection, running into a cost of nearly £9,000. Last year Mr. and Mrs. Mardon visited their elder son's grave in France and they were so deeply impressed with what they saw that the offer to erect a memorial hall was made by them with the one proviso that a sum of £1200 be raised to provide a fund for its future upkeep.

This generous offer was accepted and a committee was chosen to raise the money. When the committee met to consider the matter they felt that the scheme would be more complete if a village institute could be added. Consultations took place with the result that Mr. and Mrs. Mardon made the magnificent offer to defray the cost of erection of both the memorial hall and institute, provided that, by June next, £2,000 was raised towards a maintenance or endowment fund, The Committee, of which Sir Frederick Eley, Bart., is chairman, undertook the responsibility of raising the money and issued an appeal for funds. So far £500 has been given or promised, but the committee have every confidence of being able to raise the remaining £1500 by the time specified - June next. Meanwhile building operations are proceeding apace in accordance with plans prepared by Mr. Frederick G. Sainsbury, of Reading, the builders being

Messrs. Walden and Son, of Henley-on-Thames.

The structure has advanced to that stage when the memorial corner stone could be laid, and this ceremony was performed on Saturday afternoon and was of a most impressive character. At the same time a memorial stone to the fallen was unveiled. Although it rained in the early morning, the afternoon was gloriously fine, the heat being tempered by a strong breeze from the south-west. The building site was decorated with a plentiful display of flags, and excellent arrangements were made for the location of the several units taking part in the ceremony. The committee responsible for the arrangements was as follows: - Sir Frederick Eley, Bart., (chairman), Mr. H. J. Young (vice. chairman), Mr. W. Cooling Lawrence (treasurer), Mr. F. Simpson (hon. sec.), Mr. C. F. Harding (chairman of the Parish Council), Messrs. P. Beresford, O. M. Burge, C. Day, F. Farmiloe, A. Histed, F. Jones, W. Morlev Wood, T. Newberr, F. W. Nicholson, H. Sanger, W. J. Styles and Hartley Sharpe.

LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE.

At 3.45 a procession was formed at the schools and wended its way to the site of the new build-ings in the following order:- Cross bearer; Shiplake Parish Church Choir ; the Rev. C. A. W. Aylon (vicar); the Right Rev. Bishop Shaw, D.D. (Archdeacon of Oxford); the Worshipful Master, Officers and Brethren of the "Thames " Lodge of Freemasons; Worshipful Bro. Mark V. Weyland (Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Oxfordshire); the Officers and Members of Court "Pride of the Hill," Ancient Order of Foresters, with their banner and in full regalia, the chief officers present being Bro. W. G.. Foster (C.R.), Bro. A. Gale (S.C.R.), Bro. Owen Porter (Secretary), Bros: C. J. Smith, H. Walters and J. G. Walters (trustees) ; the Shiplake Branch of the British Legion in charge of ex-C.P.O. L. Young, and the school children. On arrival at the site the procession passed through an avenue formed of Boy Scouts under the command of Assistant Scoutmaster E. Smith. The several units passed to their allotted places, whilst in an enclosure was a large number of invited guests and the general public formed the fringe. The Freemasons were in full regalia and the Bishop was robed-in cope and mitre. Members of the St. John

Ambulance Brigade. Henley Division, were present to render assistance should it be needed. Sir Frederick Eley presided and with him on the platform were Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Mardon, Mr. J. Eric Mardon, Miss Shaw (daughter of the Bishop) and Mr. C. F. Harding (chairman of the Parish Council).

Led by the choir all present joined in singing "O God our help in ages past" to the grand old tune, St. Anne. An exhortation was read by the Vicar setting forth the reasons for their gathering together and asking God of his good providence to bless all who in any way contributed towards the completion of the buildings. The 23rd Psalm having been chanted the laying of the foundation stone was proceeded with in accordance with the rites and ceremonies of the Freemasons by the Deputy Grand Master of Oxfordshire, officially assisted by the W.M. and officers of the Thames Lodge.

#### UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL.

The Chairman of the committee (Sir Frederick Eley) next requested Mrs. Mardon (who was assisted by Miss Olive Gray and Master Leslie Gray) to unveil a memorial tablet which has been inserted into the brickwork of the tower facing the road. When the Union Jack covering the tablet (which is of Portland stone) had been removed the following inscription was revealed: - "In grateful memory of those from this parish who answered the call of duty, left -all that was dear to them, fought valiantly, and gave their lives, that we may live in freedom, in the Great War, 1914 - 1918. Lest we forget. This hall and institute has been erected and presented for the use of their fellow parishioners by Reginald and Lydia Mardon, whose elder son was killed in the advance on Le Cateau; October 9th; 1918." The Vicar read out the names of the fallen as follows:- Charles Gorell Barnes, D.S.O., M.C., Tom Belcher, Harold Bennett, Eric Cheasley, William Collins, John Cox, Ernest Dayies, Bryan Dewes, Robert Dobb, Robert Fairclough, Albert Gale, Ernest Gibbs, Thomas Goff, Francis Gray, Harry Harris, Cecil Harrison, James Hinstead. Alexander Irving, Reginald Mardon, Clarence Marnier, Charles Montague, Laurence Nicholson, D.S.O., Richard Painter, William Pawley, Philip Sheham, William Stenner, Charles Smith, George Tedder, Alfred Walters, Leslie Weston, Jack Wickens, George

Wyatt, George Young. The Right Rev. Bishop Shaw offered a dedicatory prayer and all present joined in singing the hymn "All people that on earth do dwell."

#### GENEROUS OFFER BY SIR FREDERICK ELEY.

Sir Frederick Eley said it was his pleasurable duty to propose a hearty vote of thanks and to express their deep gratitude to the donors of that magnificent institution (applause). The history of it was well known to them all. It covered a brief space-of time and all had been quickly done. He would like to take that opportunity of expressing his indebtedness to his colleagues on the committee, who had worked very hard in connection with that day's ceremony and in the collection of the maintenance fund. He believed at the outset there was some misgiving as to whether the scheme would be completed, but that day all those misgivings had been wiped away (applause). They felt that the new buildings were going to be a lasting benefit to everyone in the village and that great good was to be got out- of the place. There were very few- places he knew of which had been so fortunate as Shiplake in having a lady and gentleman to come forward and do so wonderfully as Mr. and Mrs. Mardon had done - (applause). He would like Mr. and Mrs Mardon to feel that they had wholeheartedly their thanks and everlasting gratitude - (renewed applause). As they went about the country and saw the various memorials which had been erected they could not help feeling that if the money expended on their erection had been utilised in building a similar place to that whose foundation stone had just been laid it would have been much better - (hear, hear). He appealed to all to support the committee in raising the amount required as a maintenance fund. The widow's mite would count as much as the bigger sums. They did not want it to fall on the shoulders of the few. They had something practical which they could see and it should appeal to them more than any words he could express. He asked them, therefore, to rally 'round them in the big push. Many of those present knew what that meant in July and August 1918 and he wanted them to realise what that meant in regard to the raising of the maintenance fund by June next. As a parting personal gift he would ask the Committee to request Mr. Mardon to put a price on the five acres of land

adjoining the new buildings, which could be used as a sports field and he would give them a cheque for it - cheers.). Again he thanked Mr. and Mrs. Mardon and prayed that God might spare them and their son. In asking Mr. Harding to second the proposition he would like to express his appreciation of his work on the committee

#### HOW TO RAISE THE MAINTENANCE FUND.

Mr. C. F. Harding said that as Chairman of the Parish Council he had much pleasure in seconding the proposition and expressing on behalf of the whole parish their grateful thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Mardon. If he were to search all the dictionaries there were, or had the eloquence of Disraeli or Gladstone, or a University education, words would fail him to adequately express the thanks they felt were due - (applause). Their Chairman had given them a splendid lead and he would like to take that, opportunity of thanking him for his generous offer to purchase the adjoining field for a sports ground. They had in the past been indebted to those who had kindly provided them with playing grounds on their own private property, but now they had the prospect in view of their day dream being realised in having a proper sports ground for the whole parish. It was difficult at times, especially after seeing such a solemn ceremony as they had just witnessed, to find words to give expression to one's thoughts and he hoped he would not be misunderstood in what he was going to say. There had been certain murmurings in the parish that such a big building was not required and that Mr. Mardon had a motive for what he was doing. He asked them to put aside all hearsay talk as to motives at once - (applause). It had been his privilege to have had many conversations with Mr. Mardon during the past few years and he had always been interested in providing facilities for a village hall. The question had been discussed but he believed that up till twelve months ago no idea whatever was in the minds of Mr. and Mrs. Mardon of what they saw was being raised to-day. They heard at the public meeting which was held last October the sentiments which prompted Mr. and Mrs. Mardon to make the offer, when Mr. Mardon said that after realising the sacrifices which had been made when he visited his son's grave he felt they should make some sacrifice

for those who were spared to return home. The new buildings were their sacrifice for the benefit of the village - (applause). The people of the village were asked to make their sacrifice by providing £2000 as a maintenance fund. They already had £500 and he thought if all took a share the raising of the remaining £1500 was quite feasible. It worked out at a pound per head of the population, but that would not be an equitable way of raising the money. They could not expect the children to give a pound, but if each child sacrificed a farthing per week, in forty-eight weeks that would amount to shilling each, or taking all the children that would mean £5, which he thought would be their share. Those who were older might put aside a penny or threepence per week and if that was done he saw no fear of the amount not being raised. The Committee had never wavered in their opinion that the money would be raised, especially when people saw those magnificent buildings which would be for their use for all time - (applause). When the buildings were completed he asked the parishioners to rally round them by expressing their desires and share with them in the work - (applause). The resolution having been put to the gathering it was carried with ringing cheers.

#### MR. MARDON'S REPLY

Mr. Mardon said that on behalf of Mrs. Mardon and himself he thanked all present from the bottom of their hearts for coming there and assisting in that solemn ceremony. It was a day which had long been looked forward to and one which they would remember all their lives. Perhaps under Providence those buildings would have a wider influence on the life of the parish than they ever anticipated. He hoped that it would serve to bring them all closer together and that they would also be able to enjoy themselves on the sports ground, thanks to the kindness and generosity of Sir Frederick Eley - (applause). They could make no sacrifice equal that of those thousands of men who, for a shilling a day, went out to fight for their country's freedom and who now lay in countless graves across the water. The least that they could do was to do something for England and the Empire and shew the world that they were not unworthy of their heritage - (applause). Let them all pull together, work together, and show those who followed how they had striven for their heritage. He hoped

their gift would be one which would not perpetuate his and his wife's memory but the memory of those who went forth never to return - (cheers). Prayers having been offered and the blessing given by the Bishop, buglers from the Berkshire Regiment sounded the "Last Post" and after a minutes' silence the "Reveille" was rendered, the proceedings concluding with the singing of the National

Anthem. Subsequently Mr. and Mrs. Mardon entertained the Masonic brethren and a number of guests to tea in a large marquee, the catering being admirably carried out by Mr. W. Good, of Henley. In another marquee the members of the British Legion, Scouts and others were provided with tea, Mr. Owen Porter, of the Plough being the caterer. The school children had tea in their playground.