

## From Frank Willard's Memories of the Ashington Community Centre

Before 1939 the village did not have a village hall or recreation ground.

There was a room at the Red Lion for meetings also the reading room which was a working men's club and a 1914-18 War Army hut a wooden building in the School playground. (This was of course the old school) The hut was also the headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Ashington Boy Scouts troop. In 1943 the scout troop was disbanded and the scout leader Mr. Charles Woolven was anxious as to what would become of the premises and so called a Public Meeting.

A small committee was formed under the Chairmanship of A.G. Linfield (later Sir Arthur Linfield) and Frank Willard as Secretary. This hut was then used as a temporary Village Hall. It was unanimously decided that a more permanent solution should be found. Soon after the war a strip of land bordering Sands Path between Rectory Lane and Church Lane came on the market. It was scheduled for development. The top three quarters were bought by the local council for the Sands Estate leaving six acres of land and farm buildings as an adjoining plot still available for the sum of £1500. The Chairman upon hearing of this development called a meeting of the Committee to express the view that this would be an ideal site not only for a Village Hall but a recreation ground as well. After much discussion Mr. Linfield guaranteed a loan of £1500 from the bank to buy the land in the names of himself and Frank Willard. The land was obtained the Committee elected to include all interested groups in the village. The land was levelled grants obtained and the farm buildings modified with the help of a lot of voluntary labour and enthusiasm.

In 1949 at the annual flower show the Ashington Community Centre was officially opened and the Ashington Community Centre was registered as a Charity for the benefit of the Village.