

The VISCOUNTESS BARRINGTON'S  
VILLAGE HOMES

and

WELFARE INSTITUTE  
For Disabled Ex-Service Men

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REPORT and . . . . .  
BALANCE SHEET to  
31st DECEMBER, 1930

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**VILLAGE HOMES**

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THE VISCOUNTESS BARRINGTON'S  
VILLAGE HOMES AND WELFARE INSTITUTE  
FOR DISABLED EX-SERVICE MEN  
IN BERKSHIRE.

(Registered under the War Charities Act, 1916).

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Committee:

The COUNTESS OF HALSBURY.  
The VISCOUNTESS STOPFORD.  
The LADY TALBOT DE MALAHIDE.  
The LADY FRENCH.  
LADY LATTA.  
LADY HARRIS.  
Mrs. MATHESON FRASER.  
Rt. Hon. SIR FREDERICK MILNER, Bt.  
F. WROTTESLEY, Esq., K.C.  
LADDIE CLIFF, Esq.  
TREVOR BURNETT-BROWN, Esq.

Chairman:

The VISCOUNTESS BARRINGTON,  
Beckett, Shrivenham, Berks.

Treasurer:

BERESFORD HEATON, Esq.,  
8, New Square, Lincolns Inn, W.C.

Auditor:

Mr. G. E. TITLEY,  
*Chartered Accountant.*

# REPORT

OF THE

## Village Homes Association

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 1930.



### AIMS & OBJECTS.

1. To provide disabled ex-Service men in rural areas, having about 40 per cent. of disability, with cottage homes in their native villages, and by finding for them suitable employment, to enable them to supplement their pensions and thus to earn a comfortable livelihood.
2. To provide a Welfare Institute for social and educational purposes, and a Recreation Ground for sport and rest, where the amenities afforded in tending to the revival of rural social life and increasing the health-giving properties of our Settlement, will benefit alike the disabled men and the other inhabitants of the place.

IN issuing the Report of the Village Homes Association for 1930, we present for the benefit of those unacquainted with our Scheme, a short summary of its inception and its development from earliest date.

### EVOLUTION OF OUR SCHEME.

Originating in a Scheme for the revival of rural social life in the opening years of the twentieth century, the plan was adopted of endeavouring to reach and brighten the lives of every class of the village community, through various clubs and associations formed for their benefit, to secure for the young people of Shrivenham the openings for the future which their parents were unable to procure for them, and generally to improve social conditions throughout this and adjacent villages. The inauguration of the Women's Institute, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides—the first in the County—was a feature of the new movement, and social evenings and educational classes met the wants of old and young alike; while an organizer of experience was engaged for a time to direct the various branches of the work.

This enterprise, which was attended with considerable success in 1912-1913, had necessarily to be discontinued on the outbreak of hostilities, and when, towards the end of the War, plans were made for its revival, it was recognized that in all schemes for the good of the village inhabitants the wants of the disabled Ex-Service men of the district who had suffered in the Great War, should receive prior consideration.

In 1917 the first steps were taken to combine the social efforts of pre-war days with the more important work of providing for disabled ex-service men of the vicinity, and while the undertaking was confined at first to Berkshire, it was hoped that a successful example there would lead to its adoption in other counties.

An Association was formed to promote the objects stated above, while a London Committee undertook to raise the money required. A grant from the Red Cross Society, generous subscriptions from friends, and the handsome proceeds of a Berkshire Appeal, gave a splendid

start off to the Scheme. Still more lucrative were the excellent results obtained by the Entertainments and Cabarets organized by Mr. Bouchier, Mr. George Robey and other theatrical friends, during and after the War, on behalf of our funds.

### HOMES FOR DISABLED EX-SERVICE MEN.

The provision of cottages for the married disabled Ex-Service men of Shrivenham and the neighbourhood was the first object in view, and to this end a field of twelve acres was bought in the heart of the village of Shrivenham, and semi-detached cottages (each containing living room, parlour, three bedrooms, bathroom, larder and scullery) with good gardens and workshops attached, were placed round a Recreation Ground, forming as it were, the background of the large space allocated for recreation and sports, while the Welfare Institute on one side faced the main village street, and on the other, overlooked the Sports Ground; with the spacious Refreshment Room and Loggia, opening from the large Hall, in full view of the Cricket Pitch.

With these amenities provided, it was hoped to add to the attractions of rural existence, more especially for the Ex-Service men returning from the all adventurous life abroad. The importance of providing homes for these men amongst their friends and relations had also been emphasized in the experience gained after the Boer War, when demobilized men, placed in Settlements some distance from their homes, almost invariably wished, after a time, to return to their native villages.

In the next few years the Scheme developed with considerable success, though the high building cost prevailing would have led to the postponement of the work, but for the urgent need of housing accommodation in rural areas at a time when men returning from the War, were often obliged to live in one village, and their wives, with their parents, in another parish. As the cottages were completed, they were occupied by suitable candidates, and though a disregard of an economic rent was considered justifiable in the case of the men who had lost so much in the War, a feeling of independence was conferred by



the rental charge of 3/6 per week for the smaller houses and 4/6 per week for the shop-cottages.

In selecting the disabled men, due consideration was given to the training and occupation of each man before the War, his Army references, and the openings afforded in the neighbourhood, while care was taken not to interfere with the trades and vested interests of the place.

### **OCCUPATIONS FOUND FOR THE MEN.**

The first occupants of our Village Homes carried on the various trades in which they had been formerly employed.

One, a saddler, soon enjoyed good patronage in the neighbourhood; another, a bootmaker, found occupation in repairing the boots of the villagers, in the workshop adjoining his own cottage. A third, a bicycle-maker and repairer, succeeded in carrying out his business in one of our shop cottages and filled up his time with various odd jobs. Another, who had lost one arm in the War and could only find employment two days a week, in the next village to Shrivenham, was engaged by us to run the electric light plant and to keep the Village Institute clean, at the current wages of the district. A clever mechanical contrivance, replacing the arm he had lost, enabled him to execute this work. Yet another, who could not lift his arm above the level of his elbow, kept our Recreation and Sports Ground in good order.

The two later arrivals were a Lifeguardsman and a bricklayer. The former, more difficult to place, having no trade of his own, made so good a name in the neighbourhood that he was appointed Overseer of Shrivenham and adjacent parishes, whilst his wife undertook the village Haberdashery Shop. The bricklayer, who had worked on the Hall and Cottages since operations commenced, has found constant employment from that day to this. Intensely proud of our Settlement, and solicitous for its upkeep, his wife complains that she is not allowed to put a nail in the wall, on which to hang a picture, in her husband's fear of spoiling his cottage! This man's health has so much improved since he came to Shrivenham that he is now able to play, on his best days, in the Cricket Eleven.

The openings in life secured for the inmates of our Homes, and which they could not have found for themselves, materially increased their weekly earnings and it is interesting to note, as regards the suitability of the work selected, that not one of the men has evinced any desire to change his particular job from that day to this.

The eighth cottage was built in 1925, and the Welfare Institute practically completed (though another wing remained to be added) in the same year. H.R.H. Princess Beatrice, who has, from the commencement, most kindly supported our work, officially opened the building in 1926. But it was not until some time later that a generous loan from Mr. Sanford (part of which was transmuted into a gift later) placed the building at the disposal of all.

### **ADMINISTRATION.**

In the recognition that the Institute would soon be available for general purposes, it was decided that a Superintendent or Administrator should be appointed to direct and control locally the whole enterprise and to co-ordinate its various activities. The Welfare Institute and cottages must be kept in good repair, the work of the Groundsman and of the Hall Caretaker must be superintended, and supervision in other ways would have to be maintained, to ensure the observance of rules, and that privileges were not abused, while it was necessary that advice and assistance should be available for the men if occasion arose.

The success of the educational development of the Scheme was also dependent on the Administrator keeping in touch with County Council Educational Authorities, and on the classes and lectures he must organize for adults, as well as for boys and girls, in the Institute Room. Again, on the financial side of the work, though the control of the general funds remained in the hands of the Treasurer and Chairman, local direction of expenditure was required. Rents must be collected, wages paid, running expenses kept as low as possible; sports, competitions, etc., organized, to bring in a steady income. The increased employment in connection with summer sports and winter



entertainments, had also to be regulated to ensure that the extra earnings thus made possible might be shared equally by all.

We were fortunate in securing, for the time when the undertaking was in its initial stage, the services of Captain Taylor, R.N., whose previous experience in organizing social work amongst soldiers and sailors at Portsmouth and elsewhere, peculiarly fitted him for helping us make a start in our Settlement.

Such were the ideals on which our Scheme was founded, and the earlier steps taken with these objects in view.

#### OPENING OF THE VILLAGE INSTITUTE.

1926 will ever be memorable in the annals of the Association as the year of the opening for practical purposes of our Welfare Institute. The favourable results obtained in the next few months exceeded our most sanguine expectations and established the soundness of the underlying principles of our scheme.

The wide appreciation by all classes in Shrivenham and the neighbourhood, of the social and educational advantages provided in our Institute, and the patronage of the building for many and various activities, proved the need of a Centre of all village life and interests in any endeavours to promote rural social reform, and justified the construction of a Hall large enough to serve so many purposes.

Further, the receipts obtained from the bookings of the Hall and the rentals of the rooms, etc., confirmed our prognostications that the Institute would not only, in time, pay its way and cover the deficit on less lucrative parts of our undertaking, but, by bringing extra trade to the village, should add to the material well-being of the men of the Settlement and of the villagers alike.

The Recreation Ground, which had been opened eighteen months previously, had already brought many together for outdoor sports and exercise and was still more widely

[Capt. Taylor was succeeded 3 years ago by Mr. G. W. Young, who has, since then, ably undertaken the duties of administrator.]

used for Cricket, Tennis and Hockey Club Matches, when, on the completion of the Hall, Teas and Refreshments could be obtained on the premises. The subscriptions from these Clubs already amounted to a considerable sum, and as we shall see in the later pages of our Report, were substantially increased from year to year.

Many and various were the functions held in the Institute throughout 1926, and in the years immediately following. Concerts, theatricals, dances and County entertainments supplied the social needs of the neighbourhood, while educational wants were met by lectures, agricultural classes and Women's Institute demonstrations.

Amidst so many and encouraging circumstances we could not expect to be altogether immune from the criticisms and problems incidental to any new undertaking. The prophesies of the pessimists that the Hall would never be patronized, were speedily falsified in the object lesson of the numbers using the building, while those who had foretold financial disaster in providing so large an Institute, were disillusioned by the considerable receipts obtained. But other problems still remained—amongst them the difficulty of ensuring preferential treatment for the disabled Ex-Service men, as our supporters desired, in these new social developments, and further, of bringing the Hall within the reach of all village inhabitants, and yet making it a paying proposition.

Again, as regards administration, it was difficult, in the evolution of a scheme, often on unexpected lines, to frame hard and fast rules for fluctuating conditions, and rigid regulations for unforeseen contingencies. It therefore seemed advisable, in this case, by the elasticity of unwritten laws, to facilitate their revision, if necessary, at a later date. Two definite conclusions were, however, established. First, that in all the amenities provided, our disabled men should primarily benefit, and secondly, that by special terms to Shrivenham inhabitants, the Institute should be available to all, but for those outside our village, and for county users, a charge should be made, justified by the building cost of the large Hall, and necessary to make it a financial asset.



1929-1930.

### RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

The success achieved on the opening of the Institute has been more than maintained in the past two years, and has reached a point in 1930 which we can review with very considerable satisfaction.

The material well-being of our disabled men improves from year to year as their work is more patronized, and increasing employment at the Institute adds to their earning capacity. It has been found possible, owing to our larger receipts, to raise the wages of the electrician and the groundsman, while the wives of the disabled men are enabled to supplement their husband's earnings by the assistance they render at the functions of the Hall. But as time advances it is more clearly realized that War injuries will take their toll in due course, even if the healthy surroundings of our cottages and the open-air life retard for a while the growth of illness or the development of disease.

We have to record with deep regret the first loss in our Settlement, which took place about a year ago. As one of our earlier arrivals, this man Collins had done remarkably well in his trade as a bicycle repairer. He leaves a widow and four young children, who will be well provided for by the generosity of the British Legion. His shop cottage will be given to another disabled Ex-service man—preferably a tailor—for whom much work would be forthcoming in the neighbourhood. In the case of Collins, as in that of two other men whose health has lately caused grave anxiety, it is gratifying to think how illness and suffering can be mitigated to those who have endured so much in our Cause, by the advantages and comforts they enjoy in their cottage homes.

This is the more keenly felt by one of our latest arrivals—who lost both legs in the War. It is difficult to describe this man's content with the pleasant surroundings of his new home, as compared with the dingy rooms in Reading which he formerly inhabited, or his absorption in his humble attempts at poultry farming, carried out on a piece of land at the back of his house. In this instance

the full pension for total disablement and the allowance for his wife and children, make the family self supporting. We can, therefore, keep to our rule that when once our disabled men are given the occupations suited to their capacities, they shall no longer rely on pecuniary assistance from our Association, save in exceptional circumstances.

A further loss has been experienced in these two years, by the death of Mr. Sanford, whose warm sympathy and interest in our work has been as deeply appreciated by our Committee as the generous gifts, including one of £500, made by him to our funds.

### EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL WORK.

On the educational side of our work there is also good progress to be recorded. Classes for drill and gymnasium exercises for boys are held weekly by Toc H Members. Lectures on agricultural subjects are provided on winter evenings by the County Council Authorities at Reading, and demonstration classes are given by the Women's Institute instructors, in other parts of the building. British Legion Associations, as well as Girl Guides and Women's Institute, have now engaged by the year the rooms they require for weekly or monthly meetings, while the large Hall is so much in request that engagements have to be made well in advance. Dances, Whist Drives and Cinema performances take place in our Hall throughout the winter months, and it was a proud moment when we were approached by the Committee of the Hunt and Wire Balls for permission to hold their yearly entertainments in our Hall.

In these few years the Institute has more than fulfilled our expectations in becoming the Headquarters of all social life and endeavour, where the privileges and amenities provided are the equal rights of Shrivenham and its neighbourhood, and where, amongst those meeting frequently, with common objects in view, a sense of fellowship and a community of interests have been developed to a remarkable extent. The gratification of the Women's Institute and Girl Guides, in possessing a Club Room of their own, and thus having a "local habitation and a name,"



is reflected in the remark of an old and evidently impecunious inhabitant of the village, who, resting on one of the Recreation Ground seats, remarked to her companion on the boon of such a place, adding with evident satisfaction and pride, "It ain't many villages that have a Recreation Ground like this!"

For the Recreation Ground has assumed an important part in our plans for the brightening of village social life. Sports on the playing fields fill in the summer afternoons and evenings, and flannel dances and light suppers tempt the visitors from neighbouring towns to remain in country air until nine or ten p.m. North Berks Hockey Matches take place on our grounds, Tennis Tournaments attract many from adjoining parishes, and Cricket Elevens from Swindon and other towns play regularly on Saturdays against our Shrivenham men. Neighbouring villages, as well as towns, share the advantages and recreation provided and a sense of reciprocity has ensured many pleasant evenings at Swindon for those who have been the entertainers on our playing fields or in our Hall. While the subscriptions of the members of the Sports Clubs nearly cover the groundsman's wages, the fees charged to non-members help to defray other charges and upkeep expenses.

#### STEPS TOWARDS COMPLETION.

The main achievement of the past two years have been the levelling and preparing of the football ground, on some of the land hitherto unappropriated and the completion of the second wing of the Village Institute—always designed in the original plan of the buildings and required to complete the symmetrical effect of the whole.

Owing to the number using the Institute in recent years, temporary erections have had to be made on Gala days, to afford the extra space required. The second wing, providing this additional accommodation, was therefore urgently needed, but though we were assured of increased earnings, when once the new part was finished, we did not consider it justifiable, in the position of our finances, to incur fresh liabilities while our debts remained

unpaid. This new wing, therefore, has necessarily hung fire until a donor came forward to present it as a free gift. The extra rooms in question have been planned to meet all demands—one on the ground floor will be used as a sitting-out room, while the one above, lined with book-cases, will serve as a Village Library and will be appreciated for other purposes when large entertainments take place. Baths have been provided for those playing Hockey and other games, and in the course of a few months the takings of the buildings have almost doubled.

In the same way, the Football Ground, on which North Berks Neutral Matches can be played, promises to become a financial asset, in the absence of any other available space in the neighbourhood. The money for this undertaking was provided by the proceeds of our various Bridge Tournaments.

#### ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

A new experiment of the past few months should be of interest in the history of our Institute, as the first steps towards the goal of local self-government. Though the administration of our finances must still remain in the hands of the London Executive Committee, who, with the generous assistance of the theatrical profession, have raised the bulk of our funds, it has for some time been considered advisable, by the appointment of a Committee of local representatives, to co-ordinate the various branches of the work and to advise on matters of policy, when occasion arises. On this local Committee a representative of each of the various Clubs and Associations, and of other interests in the place, is asked to serve.

The more personal interest in the success of our enterprise, conferred by a new sense of responsibility, has resulted in the tempering of criticism and the dispelling of some of the illusions and prejudices incidental to any undertaking where entire control is left in the hands of a central authority. A warmer sympathy has also been engendered for the disabled men of the Settlement, for whom at one time some jealousy had been evinced, while a closer acquaintance with the workings of our scheme has brought



the recognition, somewhat difficult to instil, that everything cannot be given for nothing, and that to ensure the success of our work, everyone must do his part.

### THE FINANCIAL POSITION AND THE FUTURE.

In the past few years our funds have suffered, in common with those of other charities, from the stringency of money conditions; the increased burden of taxation; and the conviction held by many people that if the State takes over charity, under the guise of social work, their own subscriptions to private enterprise must necessarily suffer.

The large sums raised in days of War generosity are now past and gone. Though our London Committee are unflagging in their efforts in the Cause and Mr. Laddie Cliff and other artistes are still most willing to organize for us Souper Dansants and Matinées, it has been found increasingly difficult to ensure for these entertainments the success of former times. On the other hand, the yearly increase in the receipts from the Hall and the considerable sums now raised by Bridge Tournaments have partly compensated for our material loss in other ways.

We are deeply grateful to those who, by organizing these Bridge Tournaments, and to others, who by increased subscriptions, have tried to substitute one form of assistance for another. Mrs. Plevins, in three separate Bridge Tournaments, last year made £200, Mrs. Ansley's Tournament brought in £70, while Lady Latt's kindness in lending her house and providing tea at yet another entertainment, resulted in takings of £100. Mrs. Orme, Mrs. Dupre, Mrs. Lawrence, etc., have done much for us also, in the same direction.

Again, we feel we cannot sufficiently thank the various friends in the theatrical profession who have, throughout these years, given us such invaluable and constant assistance. The cottages built with the proceeds of entertainments organized by Mr. Bouchier, Mr. George Robey and Mr. Laddie Cliff, and named after them, show how practical this help has been. Further, we would express our deep

appreciation of the munificent gift of £200 which the Chairman and the Committee of the Empress Club have most kindly given us, in three instalments, in the past two years.

But it is evident that the reduced income we now receive, though covering our running expenses, with the exception of the interest on the mortgage (this up to now has been generously remitted by Lord Barrington) is altogether insufficient to discharge both this mortgage and the loan to the Bank and to complete our Scheme, as originally contemplated.

In our programme of earlier days we included two more cottages, a Cricket Pavilion, to obviate the constant hiring of tents on Fete days, and the building of a Laundry, which, owing to the wants of the neighbourhood, should become a financial asset, but we fully realize that the work remaining to be carried out, though eminently desirable in its way, must be postponed until all our present liabilities are discharged.

We have raised £28,000, but have still a mortgage of £3,000 to re-pay on the land and building, and a further loan to the Bank of £1,000. While this seems a formidable amount to collect, our success hitherto and our confidence in the generosity of those who have helped us so far, inspires us with hopes of securing this further amount required. It is then our intention to hand over to Trustees a self-supporting unit of a type of Settlement we should like to see established throughout the counties of England.

### AN APPEAL.

A final effort in a deserving cause, made by those who have worked so hard for its fulfilment, an Appeal, which, if favourably entertained, should make the whole undertaking pay its way, will, we believe, receive an adequate response. By an Appeal in Berkshire, the home of our enterprise, by again approaching City Companies and Charitable Associations, from whom we have received promises of support, and by subscriptions guaranteed for three years to come, we confidently expect to raise funds to carry to a successful conclusion a scheme which has



received the approval of the leading authorities, the Appointments Board and the Ministry of Pensions, and which has this added recommendation—that there are no salaried officials and that all subscriptions are applied solely to the objects for which they are given.

We claim that this enterprise has these unique features; that it provides in a way hitherto unconsidered, for the happiness and well-being of disabled men in their own county villages; that it gives scope to private initiative and local effort in shouldering the national burden entailed on the country by the War; and that, in adding to the attractions of country life, the wage earning possibilities for those in rural areas, it contributes to the attainment of the long desired goal, i.e., the establishment throughout the countryside of happy and prosperous communities.

As a War Memorial again the scheme may well stand on its merits, for it associates a lasting testimonial to the memory of those who suffered and fell so nobly in our cause, with the provision of comfortable homes and a brighter and fuller social life for those who have survived.

CHARLOTTE BARRINGTON.



# VILLAGE HOMES AND WELFARE INSTITUTE FOR DISABLED EX-SERVICE MEN.

## AN ACCOUNT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS TO 31st DECEMBER, 1930.

### RECEIPTS.

	£	s.	d.
To Grant from British Red Cross Society ...	2,000	0	0
To Donations ... ..	5,091	13	0
To Bazaars and Fetes... ..	2,762	12	7
To Concerts and Entertainments ...	2,813	18	4
To Matinées ... ..	5,024	5	2
To Dances ... ..	5,496	13	7
To Flag Days and Collections ...	444	15	11
To Building Grants ... ..	1,320	0	0
To Interest on Deposit Account ...	341	7	1
To Rent Received ... ..	652	19	6
To Sports Ground Revenue ... ..	881	1	2
To Refund of Income Tax ... ..	83	13	7
To Loan from C. H. Sanford, Esq. ...	500	0	0
To Balance—Cash overdrawn ...	1,760	12	1

£29,173 12 0

### PAYMENTS.

	£	s.	d.
By Purchase of Land ... ..	513	15	0
By Buildings, Gardens and Roads—outlay thereon ... ..	19,200	6	9
By Recreation Ground— Outlay thereon ... 1,527 11 0 Wages ... .. 2,000 6 8	3,527	17	8
By Bazaars and Fetes—expenses ...	155	1	0
By Concerts and Entertainments—expenses	124	5	9
By Matinées—expenses ... ..	846	14	1
By Dances—expenses ... ..	1,262	12	0
By Flag Days and Collections—expenses...	31	5	5
By Donations to Clubs and Gifts ...	71	5	11
By Salaries ... ..	618	8	10
By Audit Fees ... ..	22	3	0
By Stationery and Printing ... ..	426	15	5
By Stamps and Petties ... ..	94	7	4
By Bank Interest ... ..	490	11	10
By Rates, Taxes and Insurance ...	466	11	0
By Interest on Mortgage ... ..	1,321	11	0

£29,173 12 0

Audited and found correct,

G. E. TITLEY,

Chartered Accountant,

Greenwich House,  
10-13, Newgate Street,  
London, E.C.1.

3rd June, 1931.



Note by Tony Jones 16 Nov 2002  
regarding Balance Sheet,

It would appear that the  
balances shown are total  
cumulative over the years  
and not the balance just  
for the year.

A handwritten signature, possibly 'GJ', in cursive script.