

Note – the talk is apparently on Facebook – much of the talk delivered drew on these notes – but they are primarily intended to be used in the early chapters of forthcoming book by Louise Beaton (et al?) – backed by many more illustrations

Slides	4 Carnegie
1. Rew	5 NCSS Advisory service 1934
2 Kemsing credo	6 war's over
3 VH Loan Fund	7 Rew

1. Caveat – much of early records 'lost' – remains are in accessible in various record office – used by Jeremy Burchardt and Keith Grieves – I have relied on massive online search of Times and BNA – plan to visit some record offices to complete story for new book due in 2022

2. scene 1920 – escape from the country – steady rural depopulation – 30% - bad housing, poor pay, no electric, no motorised buses etc – those who remained tended to lack ambition – only meeting places – school Frid evening weekends, a few pubs had Club Room with billiard table, neither suited new WIs

But already 800 village halls out of 7,000 parishes in E& W – some called hall, others clubs or institutes, most 'paternalistic' – varying elements of community management - Vill Club movement Suffolk in the 1870s met with some but ltd success

3. Rural regeneration movement sought halls or clubs separate from schools – slide 1 Rew

1904	Central			Rural Housing	Rural
1907	Smallholding s Society	Land Club League	Land and Home League	& Sanitation Association	Development Society
1911	National Land and Homes League				
1919	Rural Department Parked with dowry in NCSS				

Highlight 3 leaders all in Ministry Weaver

John Nugent Harris Agricultural organisation society		Sir Henry Rew Farming expert, retired civil servant	
Organising secretary 1918	chair	chair	
Village Clubs Association 1918 Grant from Dev Commission to develop rural social facilities		NCSS Rural Department 1919	

Nugent Harris pioneered Canadian import of WIs in 1915 - 1914 formed by 1920 – but had to meet in churches, homes etc

4. **HENRY REW** 3 hats – first and only chair VCA from 1918, got grant from Development Comm to dev halls , recruited Harris – whose wife was dev officer for WIs also funded by Dev Comm; Rew also chair Rural Dept in NCSS – RD had brought funds from 8 orgs into NCSS ,

Backers of VCA included Lord Shaftesbury, Lady Denman, Prof Abercrombie, CS Orwin

5. And **LAWRENCE WEAVER’S** guide in 1920 – 118 pages, packed with photos, designs, costings, VCA advice notes – a comprehensive village halls advice service funded by the Dev Comm

VCA series of pamphlets - 1. how to form a Village Club
Call a village meeting, ideally with speaker from VCA Model Constitution Centre of all social activities self-supporting free from patronage membership from all inhabitants without distinction of class, both sexes Control vested in committee elected by either members, or members and residents of parish Finance committee - Fund-raising to provide hall – may secure ex-army hut Ideally two rooms – one for games, dances, concerts, another for reading/library, and also outdoor sports Parish council can levy rate of up to 6d in £ to support village hall - additional 1d in £ if library, and organise additional voluntary fund-raising including memorial Encourage cooperation with Womens Institute, VCA provides lecturers on history, literature etc with magic lantern shows, discount on equipment and furniture

Slide 2 Kemsing credo

" The village hall should be placed under the full control
of the village community on the most democratic basis,
*and kept entirely free from any connection
with creed, party, or class distinction.*

It should be available for meetings of various kinds,
whether social or political ,
and music and the cinema should be permanent features
in the amenities provided to remove the stigma of dullness
from the life of the villager."

Kemsing Village Hall in Kent 'credo' opened 1911 – from Weaver's Village Clubs and Halls handbook 1920

VCA set up 14 county assoc, JNH worked with Isobel but WIs made better progress in getting branches set up – doubled from 1900 in 1920 to 3,800 in 1927 – easier to establish WIs simply as a group of people meeting wherever they cd – the vill 'club' – hall i.n today's language needed resources to create a building

VCA had £7k grant from 1919 – 237 bids to start clubs/halls from 46 counties in just 13 weeks – set up 116 new clubs by 1920’ Many as memorials to war-dead

enough to produce quarterly newsletter, offer advice, but no grants - Money was tight – benevolent landowners reluctant, most communities too poor to raise money – and FWI did better, assoc in every county,

In meantime Carnegie had funded some RCCs as a trial from 1921 – tackled many aspects but left halls to VCA

6. DevComm decided to cut grant to VCA fro £7kpa to £600 in 1923 – used savings for trial in 1924 put £5k into revolving fund to give 33% grants towards cost of new halls in those 5 counties with RCCs – admin through NCSS not VCA, extended by 1930 to all rural areas, but ncsc had to admin where no rcc – that was more than half country,

RCC coverage as % of population in rural districts -

15.2%	38.2%	46.5%	59.3%	57.7%	64.9%	70.2%	78.4%	84.3%	95.7%
1923	1926	1930	1934	1937	1944	1948	1953	1960	1975

7. LOAN FUND

Slide 3 Loan Fund

NCSS VILLAGE HALLS LOAN FUND	
Agreed 1925 £5,000 - Ministry of Agriculture through Development Commission - Administered by RCCs & NCSS Rural Department - Loans up to third of costs - Local fund-raising met rest - Interest-free - Upped to £15k in 1929 £102k by 1957	Loans made ➤ By 1928 20 ➤ By 1931 129 ➤ By 1938 449 ➤ By 1950 775 - Repaid over 5 yrs from hire income - Revolving fund - Every loan repaid in full on time - No defaults

progress – reliance on ex army bdgs Barnham in Sussex took just 2 yrs to repay their £200 loan in 1930

First WI hall had been 1919 Clowne in derbys, Hampton Lucy in Warws, surge in 1926 – did they get help from VHLF? – interestingly tried to trace the first 20 WI halls – none seem to have survived

8. CARNEGIE VH GRANTS from 1930 – Carnegie’s contribution is truly immense – first they funded the buildings, then the activities , they had £100k to dispense each year, and a large chunk came to Rural England - grants to improve rural life – drama music etc, thro RCCs but

their grant aid depended on a faster delivery of day-time venues- so Crnegie responded with grants of one sixth costs for hall projects – so ovrall half costs cd be met by grant and NCSS loan – and only in smaller communities, and with a cash limit that excluded any prestige projects

Crucial contribution – generous, far-sighted, demanding – short-term funding to start RCCs then flurry of grants to get activities going, but presumed somebody else wd keep RCCs afloat.

CARNEGIE UK TRUST & VILLAGE HALLS

- Major funder – wealth made in US - based in Scotland
- Core funded early RCCs from 1921
- Grants towards new/improved halls from 1930
- Village hall equipment upgrades from 1957
- Stimulus for activities based in village halls
- Adult education classes 1927
- Library service
- Drama 1927, music 1935 and local history 1936
- Young farmers clubs 1928

One of first was Duddington in Rutland in 1931 - £100 grant from Carnegie as a small village, £355 loan. Woodgreen in New Forest raised £363, loan of £240, grant of £130

New halls generated massive boost in vol orgs though there were critics who pointed to under-use and lack of electric, lighting, water, flushing loos etc – worth quoting CS Orwin who had been an early backer of Henry Rew's vision of village halls

Cinema shows depended on power from car batteries -

9. NCSS VILLAGE HALLS ADVISORY SERVICE

Published Village Halls manual and model trust deed in 1928

NCSS RCC VILLAGE HALLS ADVISORY SERVICE 1934

advice on

insurance, rates, income-tax, trust deeds, licences,
entertainments duty, management, other problems.

comprehensive insurance policy

Performing Right Society licence to perform copyright music

quarterly leaflet, **The Village** from 1932 – succeeded earlier VCA news

NCSS staff had vill hall experience, Sack, Ramsbottom & Snelson as chf rur officers had all been long serving RCC secretaries,

Cinema sports school overflow welfare

10. rates burden – particularly after 1927 – anomaly of exemption of church-halls, only resolved in 1967 when all halls assured 50% exemption, with discretion to go further – some RDCs gave full relief

11. performing rights – society had tried to collect fees from clubs and halls from its formation in 1914 – NCSS agreed that RCCs, or where none, NCSS, wd collect, -

most halls didn't subscribe to NCSS quarterly - The Village

NCSS village halls architects panel, some problems retaining and recruiting. Advice always a tussle between architectural extravagance and keeping costs down. They were good at recognising importance of providing plenty of storage space

12. POST-WAR PROGRAMME (slide 6)

Pent up demand, wartime preparations, promise of grants following Butler Education Act and wider remit for county councils. Obstacle shortage of building materials – priority on housing. – building licenses needed

1945 WAR'S OVER VILLAGERS ARE READY	
NCSS 2-3,000 new improved halls needed Yorkshire alone 346 Derbyshire 120 Warwickshire 74	Plans and local funds ready Many prepared in war years

But not so easy

Building materials shortage high prices	Building licence needed but embargo till c1950
--	---

Can you give us a grant?

Ministry of Education capital grants Suspended till 1955	NCSS Loan Fund £15k went go very far
---	---

So it's still make do and mend? Isn't that what villages are good at?

NCSS Temporary Halls Pre-fab assembled – rent just £13pa	Matt pre-fab huts Whatever materials available – volunteer labour
--	--

Irony that some attribute the embargo to Stafford Cripps who was chancellor of the exchequer from 1947-50, despite being a relative of Lawrence Weaver, squire of Filkins with a preWW1 hall, and father of John Cripps editor of Countryman, Oxfordshire RCCs committee promoting halls, and member of NCSS Rural Committee

A few halls did get built, often with ingenuity of Paul Matt who managed to find a material that wasn't currently subject to building restrictions – albeit this might be concrete or asbestos

1955 flood of schemes - Staffs 1955 – need 40, Worcester 30 planned, Warwicks 20, Herefd 13, Chesh 56 schemes planned

Most new build but many were conversion redundant chapels and **schools** – battles with Church who wanted max price in order to fund remaining schools – still issue today – couple of legal appeals restricted asset grabs!

Summary of grant aid options - not used, too messy for p/point

CARNEGIE GRANTS			
1930-48		1957	1991
Met 1/6 th costs up to c£130, thro NCSS, vills u4k spent £80k in 9 yrs on 550 projects, 600 in all Ran to 1948		£100k fund to upgrade pre-war halls in u1k cties equipmnt, max £200 helped 550 schemes, 1,000 bids	carnegie back with grants to extend activities in v halls

STATE GRANTS			
Nat Fitness Council 1937 ex ncss/rcc staff grants of up to 50% for halls & playng fields, all tiers of loc govt cd help ceased 1939 Chinnor ox known to be helped		Ministry 1945-81 Ncss to manage in rural under 4k limit of third of cost, no hall to cost more than £3k unrealistic match by loc gov Ltd by building licences Only effective 1955 Suspended 1965-67 Withdrawn 1981	NCSS temp buildings 1947-65 devcomm funds bdgs transported & assembled on sites providd by vhc 157 temp vill halls by 1951 200 by 1965 when closed Sold off remaining halls in 1968

13. Progress achieved thro some dedicated RCC secretaries, many long-serving, recall conferences with Michael Martindale in Cams – Saturday tea-time events, and Alec Trotter in Northumberland, clearly living legends in their counties, Snelson spent 40 yrs, first in Yorkshire, fortunate to become CRO in 1957 at time of surge in vh schemes

and many deputies who were funded by their county councils to promote building and advice – Pam Gibson in Suffolk, Betty Richardson in Shrops, Sue Harper in Worcesters, Joy Smith in Leics, and much help from ncss notably advice role of Paul Matt

County-wide conferences>training one or two each yr in Sussex by 1950 – booked Ryl Pavilion in Brighton

Best managed/maintained vill hall competitions – Staffs under David Gibb, Worcesters under Harry Stubbs aka vicar of Ambridge

Warws set up standing conference of vill halls by 1958, West Sussex had tried in the 1920s but no enthusiasm from the halls

14. MODEL DEEDS – original trust deeds were often dodgy - donors and family named – you know the stories – court case led to 1958 Act – led to new trust deeds, aided by Gerald Emerson in NCSS , 1600 new trust deeds drawn up between 1952 and 1966

15. END OF DES GRANTS had made important contribution, but had only been open for bids for 23 of the 44 yrs since the 1937 Act, clear that civil servants weren't keen, change of govt in 1979, we'd tried to persuade Tory manifesto team to retain, others had lobbied to end the scheme, and it ceased in 1981 – £3.4m 'saved' was put into the rate support grant just a the time that govt made significant cuts to the overall grant, and county councils didn't make up the losses

16. VILLAGE HALLS REVIEW 1980 Marjorie Hann, veteran, from filing clerk to adviser, was a character, retired. more effective in PR and campaigning. service had become too punch and judy – “that's the way we do it” –

Successor drawn from many very effective deputies, likes of Sue Harper short-mat bowls, Pam Gibson, Betty Richardson, we appointed Ian Strong from Derbyshire, who continued working from the office in Derbyshire.

Vill Hall Committee had relied on NCSS to invite members - killed off – drifted for long – Never clear what it was meant to do – certainly wasn't a voice for halls – replaced by

VILLAGE HALLS FORUM more effective in PR and campaigning. Leslie Pring from Somerset very effective chair, Joan Davis fro Staffs16.–i t did give RCCs direct presence, and MPs on reading any representations from the Forum, could relate to the halls in their constituencies