

## **Stickney and District Conservative Association Women's Branch**

The first mention of the Stickney & District Conservative Association appears in the Parish Magazine of 1895 and refers to a Knife & Fork Tea that was arranged in the School by Mr & Mrs Dodds. The event was a social evening organised to raise funds for the local Conservative party

Another evening was in Jan 1900 mentions a Smoking Concert when Mr E Ingamells recited, The Absent-Minded Beggar. A poem by Rudyard Kipling. Smoking Concerts were particularly popular in the Victorian era. They were originally an evening of music and entertainment for men only to smoke and discuss politics

A black book has also materialised among the early records for the Youth Club, and it is obvious from the minutes recorded that it is not the start of the association and hopefully previous minute books may survive.

The first entry is the minutes of a meeting held in the school on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1936 when arrangements for a Social on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> November are being discussed. The programme set out is to have tea at 5 o'clock and the Whist Drive to start at 6-30pm followed with dancing afterwards until midnight. Miss Dalleywater has been asked to play the music. It may be that this event was arranged to coincide with the Stickney Feast when the school original closed for a week in November, but in later years only for a day or two.

These socials appear to be a regular occurrence before the war and were no doubt very popular and well attended occasions.

The social that was held in February 1939 had the music provided by the Blind Boys Band. They were a popular band from Spilsby and played at many functions in the area. Another popular group was The Melody Makers who also played regularly in Stickney and the surrounding area.

There is a big gap in the minute book from February 1939, because of a pause in the activity of the Association during the war. The next entry is for a meeting in December 1946 when it was decided that the fund raising should be restarted and that it would be an advantage to form a joint Men's and Women branch of the Horncastle division here in Stickney. Dr Thompson was elected President and Mr Woods was voted in as Chairman with a committee of fourteen members although seven others not at the meeting were later asked

to join. It was agreed that the pre-war subscription of 6d would be increase to 1s a year as funds for the conservative party were desperately needed.

A meeting was held in January to arrange a Tea and Whist drive for the following month. It was decided to have a raffle for which Miss Dodds offered a guinea fowl for a prize. After the initial business of the meeting was finished the ladies stayed to arrange the refreshments for the event and the men retired to The Rose & Crown to organise the tables and chairs and crockery that had to be borrowed and moved from the Church & Chapel usually by Mr Cott's or Mr Handsley's lorry. Even a bag of coal had to be supplied, usually by Mr Handsley in the winter for the stoves in the school room although electricity was by now connected for the lighting.

The tradition of a dance following the Whist Drive seemed to stop when the Association resumed after the war, but another form of entertainment was introduced.

The meeting in February 1948 was advertised as a Cinema Night and after the AGM business was completed a George Formby film was shown with an entrance fee of 1s each being charged. An Entertainment tax is mentioned in the minutes and was probably in connection with the film. Many other films were shown in the following years, one in particular being Reach for the Sky starring Douglas Bader.

As mentioned, the ladies arranged the refreshments and particular people were asked to supply or obtain specific items for the evening. There were two butchers in the village at the time and two bakers who were both equally patronised although only Shaws Butchers was used and not Betts, even though both had a good reputation.

For most events, as many as 10 sliced loafs were required. Five from Mr Donner at Stickney Mill and five more were bought from Mr W Shaw at Stickford Mill. 24 dozen cakes were ordered for one event @ 2d each and often three or four dozen pastries as well. It wasn't until 1960 that sausage rolls were regularly requested.

The fillings for the sandwiches were mostly potted meat or corn beef from Butcher Shaw or in later years sliced ham or shoulder was bought instead. Salmon or mackerel spread was also popular and one or the other was always specified at the meeting. Cheese & Tomato and egg were also appreciated by the guests.

Four bottles of milk usually came from Mr Taylor who ran the dairy to the north of the village but sometimes as many as seven people volunteered to bring a pint each.

Two of the ladies were always requested to supply the margarine needed for every social but only until 1964. After that only butter is then mentioned until 1972 when they change back to margarine again. One pound of tea was needed, four pounds of sugar and the coffee always had to be Nescafe.

The only "Room" in the village was the Primary School where all the social events were held. There was no village hall or community centre in Stickney until the Youth Hut was built by the members of the youth club and eventually opened 1<sup>st</sup> April 1954. The first time that the Youth Centre was used by the association instead of the school room was October 1954 when another cinema night was arranged. Advertising posters, whist score cards and the playing cards were supplied by the Agent and the event was advertised in the Lincolnshire Standard for two weeks before.

In November 1954 the agent asked for a list of supporters who had a TV set and who were willing to invite friends into their home to watch the party-political broadcasts possibly because of the imminent general election in the following May.

The Annual Dinner was in March and was held at the Imperial Café at Skegness usually with an MP as guest speaker. The ladies always arranged an outing in the Summer to places like Alton Towers or Hunstanton. It was agreed that a trip to Scarborough or Windsor would be too long a journey by bus. In July 1950 they arranged a trip to Norfolk on Fenwicks bus. Lunch had been prepared for them as they arrived at Norwich, then a boat ride on the Norfolk Broads and tea at Wroxham, followed by a music hall show at Norwich before travelling home. In 1956 a train was run to London to see the Motor Show and the Dairy Show. Woburn Abbey was visited in Summer 1957, but the last outing was in 1958 to Regents Park Zoo. After this and through the 1960s only one committee meeting a year was being held and no outings were discussed.

The Conservative Association used to hold a Tea & Whist Drive every month for several years but once the Youth Centre was built and was being used regularly many other clubs and committees were also organising whist drives to raise funds. They eventually were only arranging one a year. The last meeting in the book is the minutes for January 11<sup>th</sup> 1977 to arrange a whist drive for 22<sup>nd</sup> January.

*Researched and written by Martin Gosling*