

## **My Memories of the Partridge Green Youth Club**

by Doug Pennifold

I joined the Club when I was about 14 (that is some 63 years ago) and yet my recollections of many of the activities we got involved in are as clear now as they were at the time. I know a number of those who were members still live in or are associated with the Village and perhaps it is for this reason I decided to write this in the hope that any of them that chance to read it will be reminded of the many good times we had together. I could list out all those I remember who were members at that time but I would be sure to forget some so it is best not to attempt it.

Before the Second World War there was an organisation for young people in the village named the Imps. It was not a Youth Club and catered for almost anyone who was single and, I think, over the age of about 17. It folded with the outbreak of war as many of the members were of conscription age. It was 2/3 years later that George Gumbrell, who had become head of Jolesfield School in 1940, and Elsie Knight set up the Youth Club and the Village Hall was established. It was not long before Elsie Knight (affectionately known by so many as "Auntie Elsie") was running the Club on her own. Her brother and his wife lived near Jolesfield School with their 3 daughters. I remember Joyce and Mim were Club members and this may be where the "Auntie" came from.

Elsie established standards that she expected us all to follow and yet she did it in a way that led us to think that we made the decisions. She established a committee from the members and it was the committee who worked out the programmes. We started all meetings with a short formal period; correspondence was dealt with and announcements made. From that time to 9.30 pm we had our main activity and then on the dot Mrs Mason would arrive to play the piano for 30 minutes of dancing and we ended with an epilogue. I must say something about Mrs Mason: she lived in Station House, her husband being head porter and signalman. She never used sheet music and had the ability to play all the most up-to-date tunes with exactly the right tempo.

During the summer we used to go for walks and cycle rides. The latter were most frequently to Fulking or to Wineham. It is coincidental that there is a pub at each, the Shepherd and Dog and the Royal Oak. (Wendy and I took a nostalgic walk to the latter earlier this year) I underestimated the distance and had to get a taxi back to our car). The challenge at Fulking was for some of the boys to race to the top of the Downs behind the pub, and I would guess this is one of the steepest escarpments on the South Downs. I can't say he always won but Ron Sayers was always among the leaders. We also cycled to Sayers Common at weekends where there was an outdoor swimming pool at Stroods Hotel (long since demolished). Other summer events were playing rounders and stoolball and sometimes with other Youth Clubs.

There was one evening when we played cricket against the Fire Brigade; but fire stopped play! One fire man "commandeered" my bike which, sad to say, had no chain guard and he was only half way to the road when his white flannels got caught in the greasy chain and he fell off.

**West Grinstead Newsletter Autumn 2007**