

## The Children of the Village Hall

On the 29th June 1889 four children each laid a memorial foundation stone at the front of what was to be Quorn's new Village Hall.



This raises an intriguing question – who were these four children? And what finally became of them?

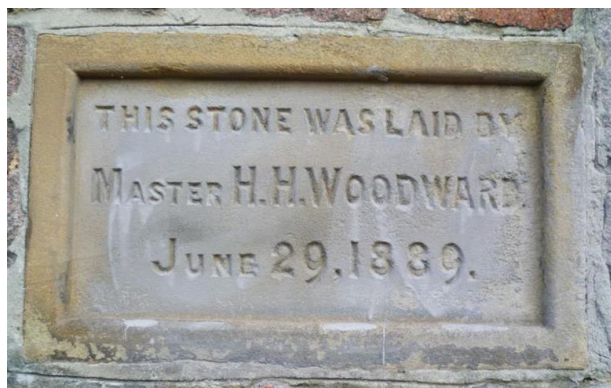
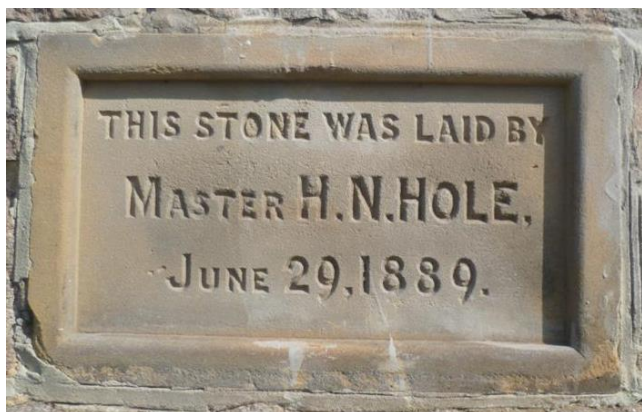
Our four youngsters were all members of Quorn's gentry:

Marjorie Anne Wright, aged 4

Lillian Mildred Gertrude Farnham, aged 5,

Hubert Northcote Hole, aged 9

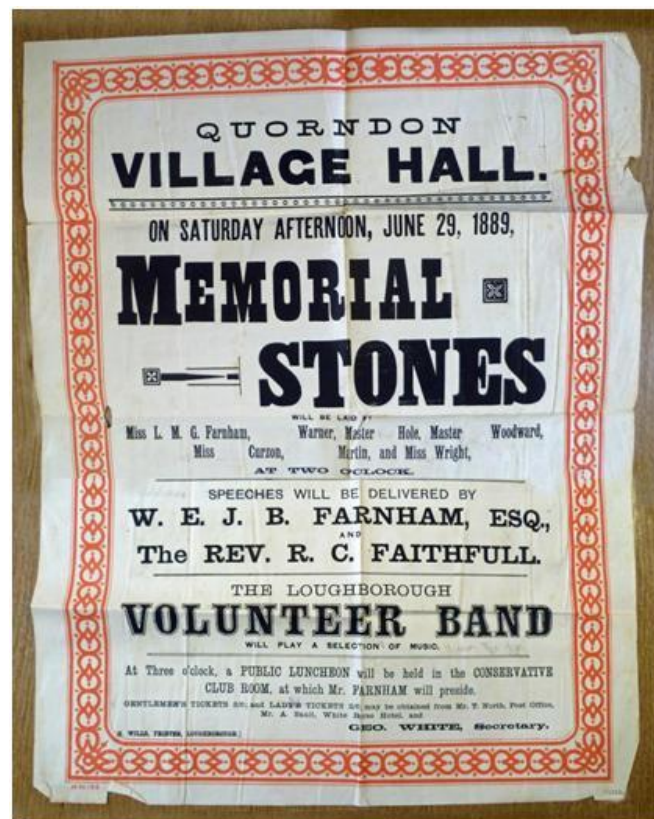
Hubert Hawkes Woodward, aged 5





## Building the Village Hall

The need for a community hall in Quorn had been recognised for many years in the 1800s before it actually happened. Groups of prominent villagers had met and money had been pledged previously, but the constitution for running it was always a stumbling block, and plans were abandoned. However in December 1888 William Edward John Basil Farnham from Quorn House on Meeting Street, convened and chaired a meeting, which agreed that the best way forwards was to set up a company, with shareholders providing capital to meet building costs. The land - the site of an old tannery - was donated by William Farnham, and Mountsorrel Granite Company provided the granite at half price. Local builders were used, headed by Benjamin Fewkes from Station Road, and the joinery was carried out by John Sanders from 27 Meeting Street, their joint costs were £742 15s. Things seemed to happen much more quickly in those days – the share application forms were dated January 1889, the foundation stones were laid on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1889 and the Village Hall was opened on the 26th October 1889. The whole thing had taken less than a year.



## Laying the foundation stones – 29<sup>th</sup> June 1889

There was great excitement and a carnival atmosphere on that Saturday afternoon in June 1889, to celebrate the building of the Village Hall – the first hall in Quorn that would be available to the public for events and celebrations. Children were dressed in their best clothes, and local people turned out to see the 'gentry' and listen to the Loughborough Rifle Volunteer Band. An account of the day describes it as 'a red letter day in the history of the village'. Proceedings opened with an address from the vicar (Revd Robert Faithfull), followed by the children each in turn laying a stone. A newspaper from the time says:

*"After seeing that each stone was 'well and truly laid' Mrs Farnham presented to each a silver-plated trowel with an ivory handle. W E J B Farnham Esq then gave an address on the uses to which the Hall is intended and he hoped that in another year there would be funds forthcoming to enable a tennis court to be made on the ground adjoining the Hall."*

After the speeches there was a luncheon at the Conservative club, with dancing to Barrow Brass Band until 9 o'clock in the evening.

## What a find!

.... And this brings us to a small, but very special and tangible piece of Quorn's history. Recently, quite out of the blue, a gentleman contacted the museum team having purchased a job lot at auction which contained an item relating to Quorn. The item turned out to be the engraved trowel, presented to nine year old Hubert Hole at the Village Hall when he laid his foundation stone. After much excitement and a small amount of negotiation, the trowel was purchased and has now been brought back to Quorn by the On-line Museum team, where it will be looked after as a valued part of our village's heritage.



So to return to our four lucky children;

### **Marjorie Anne Wright, aged 4**

Marjorie was the youngest of the children. Her grandfather Michael Wright had brought his elastic webbing factory, M W Wright and sons, to Quorn in the 1870s. Michael died in 1881 and his sons carried on running the firm together. Originally Marjorie's mother and father, James and Mary, lived on Loughborough Road at The Hurst, where the Royal Chequers, Chinese Restaurant is today (January 2013), although eventually the family moved to Barrow. Marjorie was renowned in the family for her singing, piano playing and particularly for her skill at tennis. During WW1 she was a nurse for the Red Cross. Marjorie did not marry and died in 1940, aged only 45.



Marjorie Wright, with her mother Mary.

### **Lillian Mildred Gertrude Farnham, aged 5**

Lillian was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1884. She was the only daughter and eldest child of William Edward John Basil Farnham and his wife Catherine Matilda Annie Georgina Farnham (known as 'Pussy'), who lived at Quorn House on Meeting Street. The Farnhams were the principal family and Squires in Quorn from when they were first granted land in the village around 1260. Lillian's father (known as Willie), was only 24 when he inherited the considerable Farnham estates in 1879. He was a generous and kind man, but liked high living, entertaining and travelling. He took a great interest in Quorn, becoming involved, both financially and personally, in many village and Church projects, including the building of the Village Hall. Lillian's mother was apparently very concerned that they were living beyond their means, but Willie assured her that there was nothing to worry about, despite him having taken out several mortgages. The five year old Lillian would have been oblivious to these family problems as she helped to lay her foundation stone in June 1889.

Unfortunately the family's financial position soon reached crisis point, and in the early 1890s, the banks started to foreclose on Willie. In 1893 he was declared bankrupt and everything had to be sold, including Quorn House. Willie was devastated and was eventually committed to an asylum. Lillian would never see her father again.

'Pussy', Lillian and her brother John (Jack), were left with no home, and although Quorn House was eventually bought by Willie's younger brother George Francis Farnham, it was no longer available as a home for his family. Initially Pussy and the children went to live with her parents, but they later moved to her Uncle's house in Surrey. His wife had recently died and he needed a hostess and female to head the household. The arrangement suited them both and gave them all a stable home. As Lillian grew older she did not need paid employment, but was very involved with the Red Cross and worked for many years in hospitals, as part of the Voluntary Aid Detachment during and after WW1.

George Francis Farnham never married, and lived at Quorn House until his death in 1933. By this time Lillian's younger brother Jack had married and had children, but had died of a heart condition in 1930. George Francis bequeathed Quorn House to Jack's five year old eldest son, ie his great nephew George.



Lillian (left), and her mother Pussy in 1930. The children are Lillian's nephews and niece, the young George Farnham and twins Ronald and Judith.



This enabled Pussy, Lillian, Jack's widow (Lily) and their three young children to be able to return to the family seat that was Quorn House. Lillian suffered from various health problems and conditions, thought to be possibly congenital due to her parents being first cousins. She never married and died aged 51 at Quorn House on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1935

### Hubert Northcote Hole, aged 9

The Hole family first arrived in Quorn in the late 1850s, when Hubert's grandfather Richard from Leicester, came to live here with his wife Harriet. Hubert was born in 1879, the youngest son of Henry Hole and Mary (nee Toller). The family were wealthy and lived at Quorn Lodge which, was a large house situated off the main A6 as you go towards Loughborough, beyond One Ash, just before the (old) left turn to Woodthorpe (now called Lodge End). It was demolished in 1938. Hubert lived a privileged life, and shortly after laying the foundation



**Quorn Lodge**



**Hubert Hole in 1902 when he was a member of Trinity College Tennis Team**

stone at the village hall, he went off to the prestigious public school Charterhouse, followed by Trinity College, Cambridge. Whilst he was at Charterhouse, in 1894, his father Henry Edward Hole died aged only 52. In April 1871, Henry had had a terrible accident while on a drill with the Leicester troop of the yeomanry cavalry. It can be seen on the census return for 1891, that he is described as 'paralysed'. Two years after Henry's death, Hubert's mother Mary married Christopher Theophilus Parker. They continued to live at Quorn Lodge, and Christopher's farming interests developed into 'Parker Farms Ltd', which still exists today. Sadly Hubert died in 1907, aged only 27 from rheumatic fever. He is buried in Quorn Churchyard and the family plot is marked by an impressive



**The Hole family plot**

gravestone. Inside the Church, the lives of Hubert and his father are also commemorated by a stained glass window on the East side of the North aisle. The family connections carried on in Quorn for many years - Mary and Christopher Parker continued to live at Quorn Lodge until they died in 1929 & 1938, and Mary's nephew, Colonel William Shirley Northcote Toller, moved to Quorn from Leicester, when he bought Quorn Court from the Cradock estate in 1926.



**Hubert Woodward as a boy**

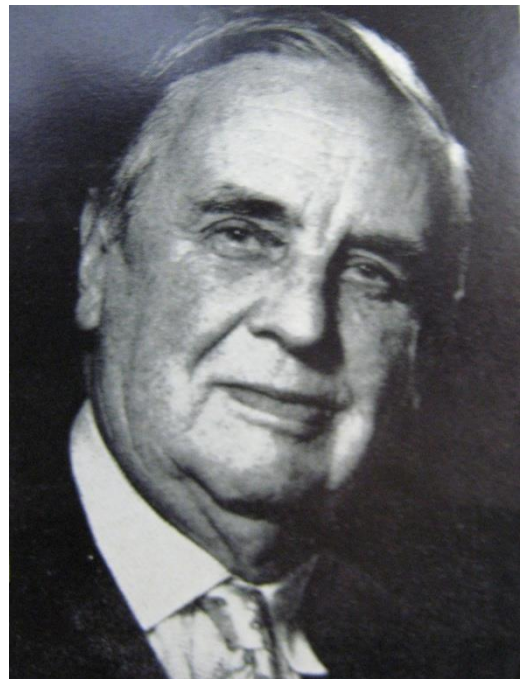
### **Hubert Hawkes Woodward, aged 5**

Although Hubert Hawkes Woodward was born near Solihull, he had strong roots in Quorn. His mother had been born Emily Anna Cradock and had lived with her family at Quorn Court on High Street before she was married. In 1887, when Hubert was four, his parents were summoned back to live at Quorn Court as Emily's mother's health was failing. Hubert's father was a solicitor and a keen sportsman. The Woodward family, like the Cradocks were involved in the Quorn Hunt and other village affairs, including all being major shareholders in the Village Hall. This is not surprising when the whole venture was organised by their great friends, the Farnhams.

Despite the family's comfortable circumstances, young Hubert did not have an easy childhood. He had been born with 'club feet', combined with very small calf muscles. He had more than ten operations and spent much of his time in leg irons. Despite all this he did not let it interfere anymore than necessary with his sporting activities. When he was ten years old in 1893, he was taken to London for a major operation. This was largely successful and in 1895 the Woodward family returned to Quorn, this time living at 'Westfield' on Loughborough Road. This is now number 78, known as 'Westwood'. The front is at right-angles to the road and today the premises are occupied by accountants, Robert Whowell & Partners.

During his early twenties, Hubert was becoming more and more drawn towards a career in the theatre, and in May 1908, aged 25, he made his first appearance on the London stage in an amateur production at the Royal Court Theatre. After various theatrical ups and downs, a few years later he made his first West End appearance in a small part at the Garrick theatre. This was the beginning of a long and colourful theatrical career. Hubert died in Kensington in 1977 at the age of 93. He outlived the oldest of the rest of the 'Village Hall children' by 37 years. If you would like to read more about Hubert Woodward's story and his recollections of life in upper class Victorian Quorn/Britain, go to Quorn On-line Museum at [www.quornmuseum.com](http://www.quornmuseum.com), and put **artefact 1303** or **Hubert Hawkes Woodward** in the search box on the right-hand side.

This article was produced by Sue Templeman on behalf of [www.quornmuseum.com](http://www.quornmuseum.com). Thank you to George Farnham for the photograph of Lillian and Trinity College Cambridge for the photograph of Hubert Hole. If you have any photographs, reminiscences etc Sue and the team would love to hear from you. Please contact [sue@quorndon.com](mailto:sue@quorndon.com) or 01509 412112 or pass a message through the Parish Office.



**Hubert Woodward in older years**