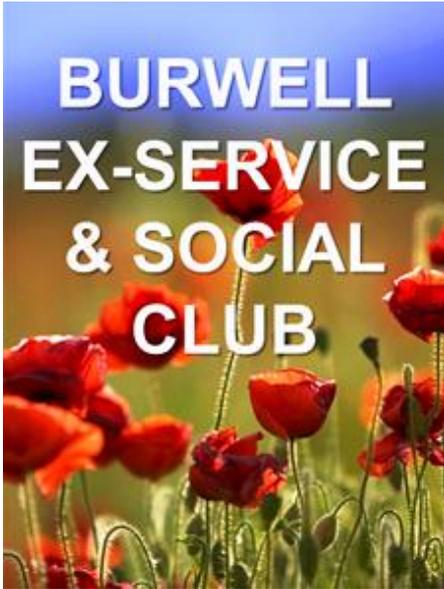
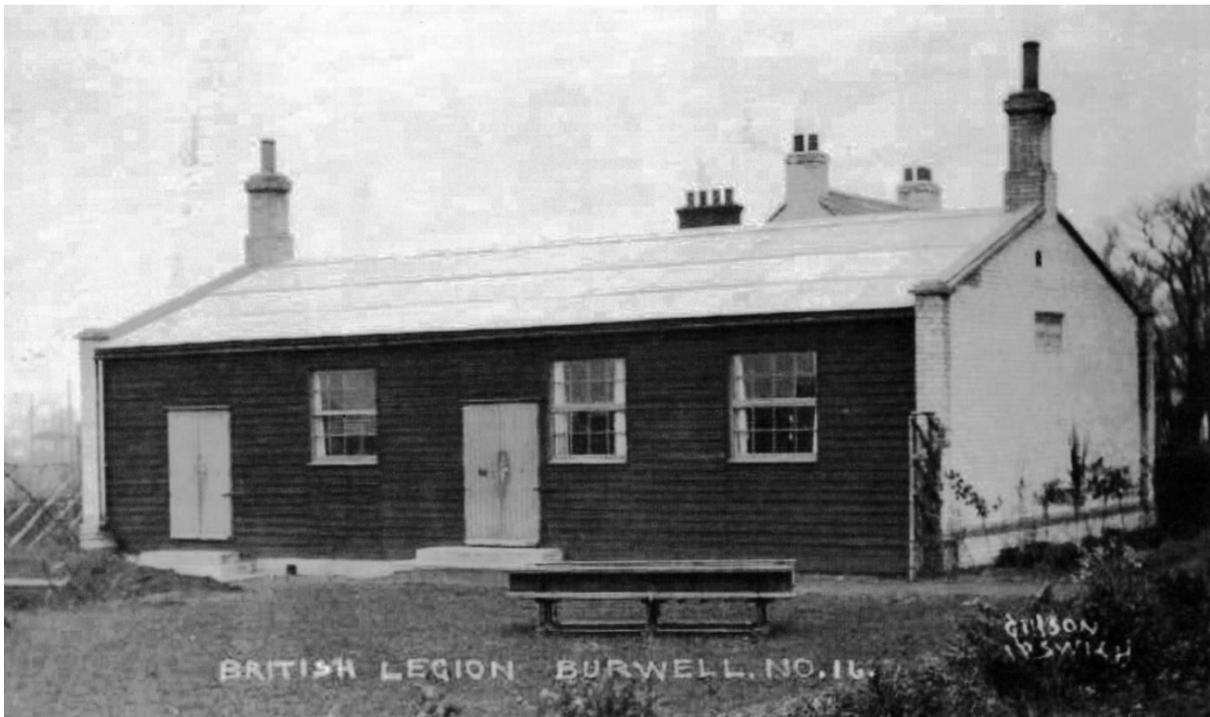


BURWELL EX-SERVICE & SOCIAL CLUB



A Brief History

Burwell Ex-Service Club was founded from funds raised locally for ex-servicemen returning home after the First World War. In 1921 land was purchased from the Commissioner of Crown Lands, the deeds specifying that use of the land be restricted as a site for a clubhouse for Burwell ex-servicemen. An ex-military wooden hut was acquired as premises and members undertook much of the fitting-out of the Club and care of the grounds voluntarily.



Within a couple of years the British Legion was formed for the welfare of ex-servicemen nationally. The Club joined and became the Burwell branch. Subscriptions were then paid to the British Legion and the Officers and committee, supported by members, undertook the benevolent duties of a local branch.

The Club, together with its British Legion activities soon became firmly established and in 1923 adjacent land was purchased to expand the recreational facilities. As before, this land could only be used in connection with the Club and furthermore, if the need arose to dispose of the land, the Commissioner of Crown Lands was to be given the option to repurchase the land for the original selling price of £100.

As the Club continued to flourish, brick replaced the wooden walls and considerable extensions and modifications were undertaken. Even during the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s the Club managed to continue, thanks mainly to favourable trading terms offered by the main supplier. During these difficult years the Club provided a place of warmth and recreation throughout the day for the many unemployed in the village. Non ex-servicemen were allowed to become honorary members and they gave additional support to the Club.

The end of the Second World War saw a substantial increase in ex-service members. The Club was now well supported though profits reflected the state of the country's economy which experienced some difficulties in the immediate post-war years.

In the mid 1950s British Legion Headquarters planned to enforce revised rules for its clubs. The requirement that non ex-service membership be limited to 10% of the total membership presented some problems to the Club which, in common with many clubs in rural areas, had a much higher proportion of honorary members. They also required that the British Legion should have ownership of the Club and its land. Burwell felt unable to comply with these rules since local people had established the Club for the benefit of villagers. As a result, along with several other clubs in the region, the Club ended its affiliation with the British Legion and reverted back to become the Burwell Ex-Service Club again. Some members did however form a Burwell branch of the British Legion and this functioned independently of the Club for a number of years.

In more recent years the Club has been further enlarged and extensively refurbished making it perhaps one of the best village clubs in the district. With the number of ex-service members declining, the success of the Club has increasingly been due to the membership and support of non ex-service members. In fact, there is no longer a clear distinction between the two with all members now being of equal standing and indeed the Club has been renamed as the Burwell Ex-Service and Social Club.

As in the past, the future of the Club depends on the support of members and on the enthusiasm and ability of the management committee. It should never be forgotten that the Burwell Ex-Service Club owes its existence to the generosity and goodwill of local people, few of whom are alive today, to provide a suitable place for villagers to meet. The Club is a worthy memorial to those founding members and to all those who have contributed since. Future generations will be able to benefit from these achievements.

R F Ridgeon – December 1999