

The sum of £500 was donated by Mr Bird to the proposed Young Men's Institute, and the first committee of management was formed from leading townsmen. The Corporation of Cowbridge was approached on the subject of a site, and "recognising the benefits likely to accrue to the town by the establishment of the Institute," agreed to sell the site close to the Town Hall for £180.

# NEW PLANS FOR POPULAR VALE BUILDING

## Cowbridge Y.M.C.A. May Become Communal Centre

A DECISION has been reached by the local management committee to wind up the affairs of the Cowbridge Y.M.C.A., but it is hoped that the little gabled building, which has housed this association for so many years, will now be offered to the people of the town, so that it may become a community centre. The change, however, is subject to the permission of the controlling Charity Commission being obtained.

The long-expected announcement that the Y.M.C.A. will cease to function was made by Councillor Edward John to a meeting of the Cowbridge Borough Council, recently.

### IN TOWN'S INTEREST

Councillor John reported that the controlling committee, of which he is a member, had decided to wind up the affairs of "the Y.M."—as it is known locally—early in March.

"It was the committee's opinion," he explained, "that no-one would want to see the centre closing up completely. They felt that it was in the interests of the town that they should meet the Town Clerk, as he would be able to explain the legal formalities which would have to be completed in order to give the building to the townspeople.

Mr John concluded by saying that there were various groups using the hall at the present time, and the committee knew that they wished to carry on until the new arrangements could be made.

And so the small one-storeyed building, which stands at the rear of the Town Hall, may soon enter a new phase in its historic existence.

### ORIGINAL IDEA

There have been several phases of change since the idea of a "Young Men's Institute for Cowbridge" resulted in the construction of this building in the latter part of the 19th century.

The late Mr Nathaniel Bird, Cowbridge, was the man who first conceived the idea of an "institute where young men may have cheap and easy access to newspapers, periodicals, and other literature, and where, in a commodious building, meetings may be held and lectures given," say records of its history.

ladies associated with the Institute was because he "desired to bring women out into public life, more than has been thought suitable, hitherto."

Needless to say, young girls were accepted at the Institute in recent years.

### 1912 CHANGE

'Regulation' of the Institute was officially handed over to the Charity Commission for England and Wales in July of 1912, but the affairs of the Institute continued to be conducted by the local committee, and two trustees, one of whom has always been the Mayor of Cowbridge.

This handing over was effected after an application had been made to the Charity Commission in February, 1912, by the trustees, who felt that financially it would be for the betterment of the Institute.

During the early years of the war many servicemen were stationed in and about Cowbridge, and in order to accommodate them at the Institute, it was decided that the name Young Men's Christian Association should be substituted for "Institute." Since those years it has retained the name of the great world-wide association.

Now, if the Charity Commission agrees, the "Y.M." building will be handed from its management committee to the Mayor and Borough of Cowbridge.

### MR BIRD'S WISH

And with the handing-over of this little grey-stone building, the desire of one man, Mr Nathaniel Bird—who did not live to see the seeds of his idea bear fruit—must be changed.

Nathaniel Bird was a man born and bred in Cowbridge. And it was in his late fifties that he expressed a wish to "promote the welfare of a few of the town's inhabitants" by creating a meeting place for young men.

But no doubt the late Mr Bird would smile if he knew that now his "brain-child" is—perhaps—to provide a communal meeting place for all the citizens of his native Cowbridge.

### SCHEME MODIFIED

A two-page circular was sent to members of the public inviting them to subscribe towards the proposed building, saying that "it was felt that it would be a serious reflection if the large sum voted by Mr Brd for this good object had to go elsewhere for want of public interest."

Alas, money was not quickly forthcoming, and plans for a two-storeyed building, designed by Mr Robert Williams, did not materialise, the sum required being over £1,000.

In his plan of design the architect had included a general reading room and a study room on the ground floor, with a committee room and a lecture hall—capable of seating 125 people on the first floor. The committee of management—which then included Mr D. Bowen, the Vicar, who was chairman; Messrs W. F. Evans, headmaster of Cowbridge Grammar School; Thomas Rees; John Williams; David Tilley; and William T. Gwyn, the late Town Clerk—decided after long deliberation that a modified building would have to be constructed.

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