

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Report by H.M. Inspectors

on

SHRUBLANDS YOUTH AND ADULT CENTRE,  
GREAT YARMOUTH

Inspected ~~on~~ in

November, 1951

NOTES

*This Report is confidential and may not be published save by the express direction of the competent authority of the ~~State~~ Centre. If published it must be published in its entirety.*

*The copyright of the Report is vested in the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. The Controller has no objection to the reproduction of the Report provided that it is clearly understood by all concerned in the reproduction that the copyright is vested in him.*

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CURZON STREET, LONDON, W.1.

Y.69/51

## Introduction

Gorleston-on-Sea is part of the ancient County Borough of Great Yarmouth, with a combined population of 53,000 inhabitants. On the perimeter of the town a new estate is growing, on part of which stands Shrublands, an attractive Georgian house with extensive out-buildings and approximately 6 acres of grounds. This site and the house was acquired in 1948 by the Local Education Authority who recognised its possibilities as a Youth Centre. The County Borough has a Youth Officer, and some 2,000 members of voluntary youth organisations, but no paid youth leaders. Most of these organisations meet in borrowed premises and suffer the usual handicaps of such arrangements. At the time of the purchase of Shrublands the needs of the adult and particularly of those families who were moving from Great Yarmouth to the new housing estate in Gorleston were also remembered. In the plans for the new estate provision was made for the building of a community centre, but since houses and schools are so urgently needed the possibility of bringing this part of the plan to fruition seemed remote, so the original idea of a youth centre was extended to include adults. The centre was opened in July, 1949, as the Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre.

## Premises

The house, consisting of eight good sized rooms, was adapted and comfortably furnished to provide for work and leisure; the rooms thus made available and in use are a common-room-cum-news-room, with display friezes maintained by the members, a selection of newspapers and periodicals and a small library; a lounge; a music room with piano and radiogram; a needlework room; a room for cookery demonstrations which is also used for light crafts, a committee room and a discussion room; a canteen - adapted from the old farmhouse kitchen - which is well equipped with a serving counter and small tables. The attic rooms are now being brought into use, and one in particular is being converted into a dark room by the Photography Group. With the exception of the canteen, these rooms are all easily convertible for other uses, and full advantage is taken of this. The news-room is well used by the members, particularly those under 21, who clearly appreciate and respect the opportunities it affords with its comfortable chairs, rugs and cheerful fire, to enjoy the company of their contemporaries in a reasonably spacious place. Here they are aware of themselves and are recognised as persons by their elders.

The out-buildings have been used from the time the centre was opened, the large barn providing space for badminton and other high spirited activities associated with the younger members of a community. A scheme to enlarge the premises known as the "Barn Development Scheme" is now being carried out, entirely by the voluntary labour of the members. This is an ambitious project of which part is already completed. The small hall is in use, and the cloakrooms and dressing rooms adjoining the large barn are nearing completion. During the inspection some of this work was seen; the determination with which the members have tackled this formidable task, and the spirit in which the work has been carried out, deserves the highest praise.

The conditions of the premises, which are used on seven days a week, bears testimony to the excellence of the caretaking and to the respect and the appreciation which the members themselves have for the centre.

It would be a good thing to provide one or two pictures. The lighting of the rooms used for practical crafts such as dressmaking and embroidery, and that of the outside lavatories should be improved.

The garden is a source of revenue, and is maintained by the caretaker-gardener. It is well planned and well tended, and although surrounded by a growing housing estate, has never been damaged in any way, a tribute both to the tenants and to the effectiveness of the centre. Schemes are being considered for developing part of the site as playing fields: whatever may be decided it is important that the planning should preserve the park-like dignity of the grounds as they are.

## Organisation and Membership, Management, Staffing

In establishing the Shrublands Centre the Local Education Authority sought the co-operation of the existing Youth and Adult organisations in the area. The response of the voluntary organisations was excellent, and the constitution finally approved by the Education Committee has their support.

Membership is of two kinds: individual membership open to all residents over the age of fifteen, and group membership open to approved organisations which are affiliated to the centre - this affiliation is sanctioned by the Management Committee. The annual subscriptions are:-

	s	d
(a) Individual membership - Youth members	2	6
(15-21 yrs. of age)		
Adult members	5	0
(b) Affiliated Groups - Youth Groups	£1	1 0
Adult Groups	£2	2 0

At the time of the Inspection there were 111 individual youth members and 140 adults, the sexes being equally divided. During last year these numbers rose to a membership of approximately 330 individual members, of whom 144 were adults. The affiliated organisations are 4 Youth Groups and 6 Adult Groups, of which the Towns Women's Guild is the most prominent user; Instructors for these are provided and paid for by the Education Committee under Further Education Regulations.

The centre is governed by a Management Committee on which there are representatives of the Education Committee, the affiliated groups and the individual members; the Chairman is selected from the representative of the Education Committee.

In addition there is a House Committee composed entirely of members of the centre. This Committee meets monthly and communicates its wishes to the Management Committee. The Management Committee is responsible for the selection of the Warden, whose appointment is approved by the Education Committee. An annual report and balance sheet is submitted by the Management to the Education Committee. This latter committee is responsible for:-

- (i) Salaries of staff (including canteen staff and clerical staff).
- (ii) Fuel, light and cleaning.
- (iii) Repairs and maintenance.
- (iv) Loan charges.

The full-time staff consists of a Warden, a Caretaker-Gardener, both of whom live in cottages in the grounds, and two part-time cleaners. With the growth of the centre and its use on seven days a week the need for some relief for the Warden has been recognised and a part-time Warden is employed for one day a week.

The centre is open from 2.0 p.m. - 10.0 p.m. daily.

The aims of the centre are set out as "to promote educational and cultural activities amongst clubs and organisations using the centre and for those members who wish to join as individual members, to provide a meeting place and facilities for physical and mental recreation, and social, moral and intellectual development, and to foster a community spirit for the achievement of these and other such purposes as may by law be deemed to be charitable" Service to the community is recognised; premises are provided for a clothing exchange which is operated by the Women's Voluntary Service; a children's clinic supervised by the Medical Officer of Health is held during one afternoon each week, and an old people's club meets every Friday afternoon. A firework party for the children on the estate was given, organised and carried through entirely by the members of the centre. Service as "sitters-in" is given from time to time by the members, but this is wisely controlled. In addition the centre has put aside a small room for use as a Citizen's Advice Bureau.

The canteen, financed and managed by the centre provides opportunities for pleasant and informal social meetings between the members themselves, and between members and their visitors. Here, and in the news room, the easy unhurried freedom which characterizes the life of the centre is perhaps most easily manifest. The centre is particularly fortunate in the canteen manageress who is genuinely interested in and concerned for the success of the venture.

The members of the centre are at all times, both collectively and individually, friendly, courteous and helpful. The atmosphere which prevails is that of a happy

and united family with a strong sense of service to the community - a spirit, which though difficult to define, should form the basis of any successful community.

The Warden, to whom is entrusted the development of this centre catering for such a diversity of needs and interests, is admirably suited to his task. He is a man of integrity, great humility, dignity, and singleness of purpose; devoted to his work, he is a friend of each individual member of the centre. He has shown himself ready to meet the needs of one or two - thus showing a sense of how real and not merely formal relationships are brought about, real and not meretricious activities secured. He has the confidence, respect and affection of all the members and is the trusted head of the family. His influence is unobtrusive but unmistakable.

Centre activities are planned for the interests of both the youth and adult members, but include those in which the two age groups can participate freely. With the exception of those classes arranged under Further Education Regulations, instruction is almost entirely voluntary and is given by members of the centre, or in exceptional cases, is paid for from centre funds. The standard of this assistance appeared to the Inspectors to be of high quality. To raise and maintain these funds requires constant thought and effort, but whenever possible the activities of the centre are organised to satisfy interest and demand and also to raise funds - for example - during the Inspection rehearsals for a pantomime were in hand.

The efforts which the members make so willingly and constantly to take their share of the running of the centre are most commendable but too much should not be asked of them; it is a situation which merits careful consideration lest it should become an intolerable burden.

The adult membership is at the moment almost exclusively confined to young adults; their needs and the needs of the youth members are well catered for and established. Matters concerned with the development of the centre were discussed in detail with the Warden, who is fully alive to possible lines of expansion. It seems clear however that it is desirable to appoint a full-time assistant warden, preferably a woman.

The conduct of the meetings held by the affiliated organisations is entirely in tune with the traditions which are being established at the centre. It was encouraging to see such good examples of how a group purpose can offer useful and enjoyable training in good citizenship. Meetings were handled informally but efficiently.

#### Conclusion

This is a Club-Community in which the members are free and unhurried. It is a place of true leisure. This is made possible by the provision of reasonably spacious and gracious premises of which the members are justly proud and which they feel belong to them. In conclusion it may be said that in the twenty-seven months since its opening the Centre has done much to fulfil its aims.

To this Report is appended a brief account of the activities of the Citizens Advice Bureau, the affiliation fee for which is borne by the centre.

#### Citizens' Advice Bureau

A small room at the Centre very suitable for private consultation is open for two hours every Monday evening, when a volunteer attends to assist enquirers with their problems. The Bureau is directed by a committee which meets monthly. Since its opening on January 1st, 1951, about 45 enquiries have been made of which more than a quarter were in the first weeks when the Bureau received some publicity in the local newspaper. The number of enquiries, though small, has been of a range and variety that indicate the very real need that the Bureau can meet. It should be added that the Warden can be consulted at any time when the Bureau is not officially open and the enquiries he has dealt with are not included in the records.

Although the services of the Bureau are available to the general public, the whole cost of its maintenance, including the fee to the National Council of Social Service and the expenses of the secretary's attendance at a London Conference, are borne by the Centre.

The indications are that with wider and more frequent publicity the services of the Bureau will be in greater demand and its very real contribution to the welfare of the local community will be enhanced.

Report by H.M. Inspectors on Shrublands  
Youth and Adult Centre, Great Yarmouth

Y. 69/51

ERRATUM

Page 3, line 27, should read "(i) Salaries of staff (excluding canteen staff and clerical staff)".