

POOL ECHO

er 16th 1948

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kind in Liverpool.
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Mary Ventris.

EVENING EXPRESS

Wednesday, November 2, 1949

ROUND THE CLUBS — No. 8

The 'Florrie' is a lasting memorial

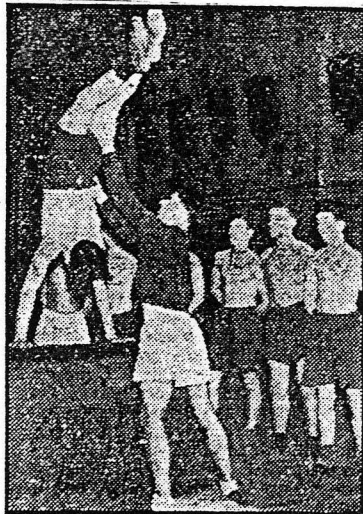
WHEN Florence Bernadine Hall died in Paris at the age of 22 in 1887, her father, Mr. Bernard Hall, a Liverpool merchant trading with the West Indies, and a former Lord Mayor of the City, decided to erect a lasting monument to her memory.

Since then thousands of men and boys in the Mill street area of Liverpool have been in contact with

by
CLARION

that memorial, for there are few men in the area who have not, at some time or other, been associated with the Florence Institute.

Today the "Florrie," as it is affectionately known, is as much a



THE Gym instructor, at the "Florrie," Mr. T. Coldock, puts the boys through their paces.

part of the neighbourhood as the street itself, and despite its rather forbidding exterior has provided leisure and relaxation for thousands.

Plenty of room

THE lads at the Florence Institute are lucky in that they have plenty of room in which to move about. In addition to many subsidiary rooms, there are two large halls, one used as a gymnasium, the other for concerts, dances, etc.

That they make the most of their "gym" is proved by the fact that they are the holders of the Merseyside District Basketball Cup, despite the drawback that newcomers must master the art of dodging collisions with the stone pillars which support the balcony above the gym.

With a total membership of more than 400, the "Florrie" is divided into four sections—the "Pioneers," aged 11-14, Juniors, 14-16, Seniors, 16-18, and Old Boys—the last-named being independent for all practical purposes, but housed in pleasant rooms in the same building.

Basketball

WHEN I visited the "Florrie," club warden Mr. John Spens was busily engaged enrolling new members.

A tour of the building revealed ample facilities for indoor games, the table-tennis room containing five tables. Down in the gym, two basketball teams were hard at it, playing with the enthusiasm which has won the club its high reputation for the game.

In the freshly-painted canteen, its walls decorated with past and present "Florrie" personalities and events, Mrs. Florence Thompson, a real friend of the lads, was busy making mountains of toast and pouring out tea.

Rarely does a night pass when Mrs. Thompson is not busy at her voluntary, self-imposed task, attending to the needs of the boys.

In the art rooms a score of lads were busily applying painstaking care to their work, supervised by Mr. J. Bamford. Results, too, appeared most encouraging.

The "Florrie" is another club possessing its own camp site, on ground owned by Lever Brothers at Thurston.

During the summer week-ends, old boys and members alike have been busy digging a trench, 500 yards long and two feet deep, to connect the camp with the mains.

Decorations to 11 rooms at the "Florrie" have been carried out by club members during the last two years.

Saturday social

EVERY Saturday evening a social is held in the large hall, which, says Mr. Spens, "is getting like a large family gathering. It is grand to see Old Boys return, perhaps with their girl friends, perhaps still in uniform with the Services, meeting again in their old Club Hall."

A Boys' Council of 12 members is elected by ballot once a year. Present chairman of the Council is R. N. Wignall, with R. Knox as secretary.

"Our motto, 'No pains, no gains,' if not very attractive, is at least forthright, and there are many of us today who might do well to take heed of these words," says Mr. Spens.

"We make a point of telling all new members to the 'Florrie' that they must put their best into the Club if they want to get the best out of it. There is no short cut to get the best out of life."



A CORNER of the library at the Florence Institute.

EVENING EXPRESS

December 22, 1953

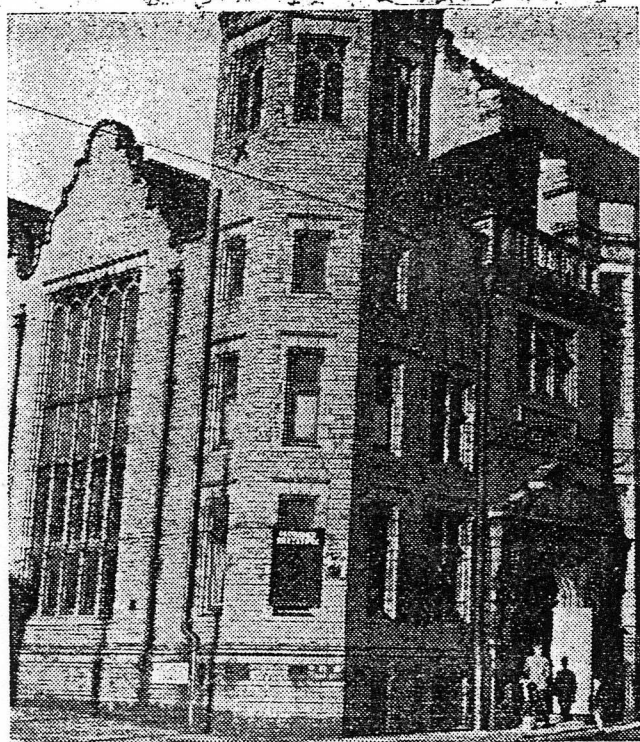
Memorial Library

A LIBRARY in memory of members of the Florence Institute for Boys who lost their lives in the last war will be opened next January by Lt.-Col. J. Graeme Bryson, T.D., Joint District Registrar of the High Court of Justice, Liverpool.

A new basketball gymnasium will also be opened the same evening.



Pouring tea in the Fiesta Club canteen is Mrs. Florence Thompson, the longest serving voluntary helper.



The exterior of the Florence Institute, built 72 years ago as a place of recreation for the poor and working boys of Toxteth.



Weight-lifting is 15-years-old Edward Melville, of 76 Parliament Street, Toxteth.

ably, particularly during the past few years," she said.

A voluntary helper at the club for 19 years, Mr. William Brown, aged 53, is the club doorman. He has seen many different boys come and go.

THE DIFFERENCE

"The main difference in the boys these days is that they have to be led. In the old days they ran things on their own," he says.

The Florrie has a men's club, meeting in the basement, which includes the Florence Albion football team, stars of the I Zingari League for many years.

There is a flourishing old boys' association, too. Since it was formed six years ago, the association has raised more than £1,400 for the club, partly by an annual charity football match and also by collections and donations.

Collections by customers of local public houses have contributed nearly £700 towards the total.

Officials of the club are hoping, however, that most of the money for the current modernisation scheme will come from grants from the Ministry of Education and Liverpool Education Committee.

"It depends on these grants whether we can complete the scheme," said Mr. Gallop. "If we don't get them we will have to think about raising the £2,000 ourselves."

"We are determined to keep this club among the finest in the city."

72-years-old youth club gets a 1961 decor

NEW LOOK "FLORRIE" RE-OPENS

Mystery donor gives £500 cheque towards cost

SEVEN weeks after closing for a £2,000 face-lift, the 72-years-old Florence Institute, Mill Street, Toxteth, was re-opened last Tuesday by the Deputy Chief Constable, Mr. H. R. Balmer—and was immediately presented with an anonymous donation of £500.

Old boys' re-union

Old Boys of the Florence Institute, Mill Street, Toxteth, held their annual Hot Pot Supper on Friday, at which two former wardens were present.

They were Mr. J. Hodson, now warden of the L.B.A. camp, and Mr. F. T. Molyneux, who was warden at the "Florrie" between 1928 and 1934.

Also among the 70 guests was the oldest member of the Old Boys Association, Mr. E. H. 'Pop' Jackson, who lives at 89 Fulwood Road, Aigburth. Pop is in his 87th year, but is still as sprightly as ever—and, according to Association Chairman Mr. Jack Flatley, always the first with his donation.

Three years ago, in fact, he kicked off for the Florence Albion at their annual Easter charity football game which has helped collect £1,500 for the institute since the Old Boys were re-formed six years ago.

Following the supper, entertainment was provided by Len Annett, Ray Ryder and Duggie Evans.

The announcement of the gift came late in the evening, and was made by the club chairman, Mr. Alan W. Waterworth, J.P. Neither he nor the warden, Mr. David Gallop, were aware that any such gift was going to be made until a gentleman approached him halfway through the evening, offering him a cheque.

The crowd of nearly 500 friends and visitors speculated excitedly as to the identity of the donor, but came no nearer solving the mystery.

Mr. Waterworth later said that the money would be used to help defray part of the cost of the new improvements.

He explained that these had been part of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme for the whole district, and the Management Committee felt that the "Florrie," as it has been known since it opened in 1889, should not be backward in following the lead of the rest of the area.

The improvements had been designed and supervised by Mr. Norman Page, who had made a first-class job of it despite only a limited budget to work on and had managed to make it go a very long way.

"I am not asking for money tonight," said Mr. Waterworth. "It would not be in the spirit of the evening. But I must say that the improvements have not been paid for!"

"I would also like to thank Mr. Braithwaite, our contractor,



Mr. H. R. Balmer, Deputy Chief Constable of Liverpool, in the new Fiesta coffee-bar at the "Florrie," which he re-opened on Thursday. Also in the picture are the Warden, Mr. David Gallop, and Alan A'Court, the Liverpool and England footballer, together with two club members, Alan Davis, aged 16 (standing) and 14-years-old Paul Tucker.

for the great help he has given us, and signify the regret of everyone that the Chief Constable, Mr. J. W. T. Smith, is unable to be here tonight because of his illness. (Mr. Smith was admitted to hospital on Tuesday evening).

OLD BOY

Mr. Balmer, who performed the opening said he was an old Florrie member who was born in Princes Road.

"This is for me a particular honour," he said, "since I was a keen member here 45 years ago. Unfortunately I had to give it up as I was also a corporal in the 14th Boys' Brigade.

Mr. Balmer went on to explain that there were two points necessary for the success of a club like the Florence Institute these days. These were the power to attract youth, and the people necessary with time and energy to give their all for the club.

STREAMLINED

He concluded: "If a club will keep up with the times and the lads believe this, then they will count it an honour to be a member of that club, and the district will be proud of them. I have great pleasure in opening the Florrie as it is today."

Finally, Mr. David Gallop gave

a review of the club's amenities and activities, past and future, before leading visitors on a tour of the buildings.

Among the improvements which have taken place is the building of a new and streamlined entrance, with glass swing doors, the redecoration of the gymnasium, and the renovation of the library.

Next project to be attempted by the club which attracts a total of more than 200 members and over 100 each night is the rebuilding of the large concert hall.

The floor of the library was presented to the club by Messrs. Fogharty, while the rest of the library was paid for by the Ladies' Committee, who held coffee evenings and the Old Boys' Association which has raised more than £1,500.

Among the distinguished visitors who met the boys were the members of the Management Committee, and others, including Councillor A. Morrow, former Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Mr. J. Morton, H.M. Inspector of Education, Mr. James W. Waterworth, and Mr. Alec Tumington, Treasurer of the L.B.A.

They saw the newly decorated coffee bar, with its exciting contemporary designs, and in which the Fiesta Club meets once fortnightly on Saturday's for teen-

age boys and girls. Also, they visited the adventure room which contains trophies from the boys' expeditions to various parts of the country, and the exhibition of colour slides taken during the visit of the Florence Institute football team to Belgium at Easter.

HIGH STANDARD

Mr. Alan Waterworth paid tribute too to the voluntary helpers and to the high standard of dress and behaviour of the boys at the club, whose ages range from 11 to 18.

Behind the counter at the coffee bar was the team of ladies who volunteer their assistance. These were headed by the catering manageress, Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson, of 6 Greig Street, Toxteth, who has held the position for the last 21 years, and she was helped by her sister, Mrs. Evelyn Carr, 30 Lucerne Street, Aigburth, and her niece, 17-years-old Jillian, who is a typist.

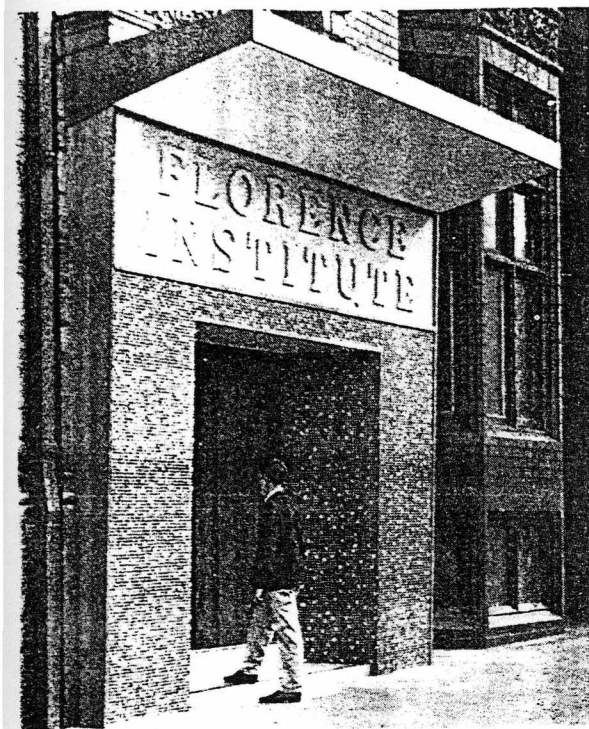
Also in the catering team were Mrs. Tucker, 310 Long Lane, Fazakerley; Mrs. Irene Taylor, 4 Sandbeck Street, Dingle; 18-years-old Pat Fazackerley, 432a Mill Street, Dingle, a factory worker; and Barbara Reeves, aged 17, of 27 Lockhart Street, Dingle, who is a shop assistant.

A NEW LOOK AT THE 'FLORRIE'

Liverpool's Oldest Boys' Club

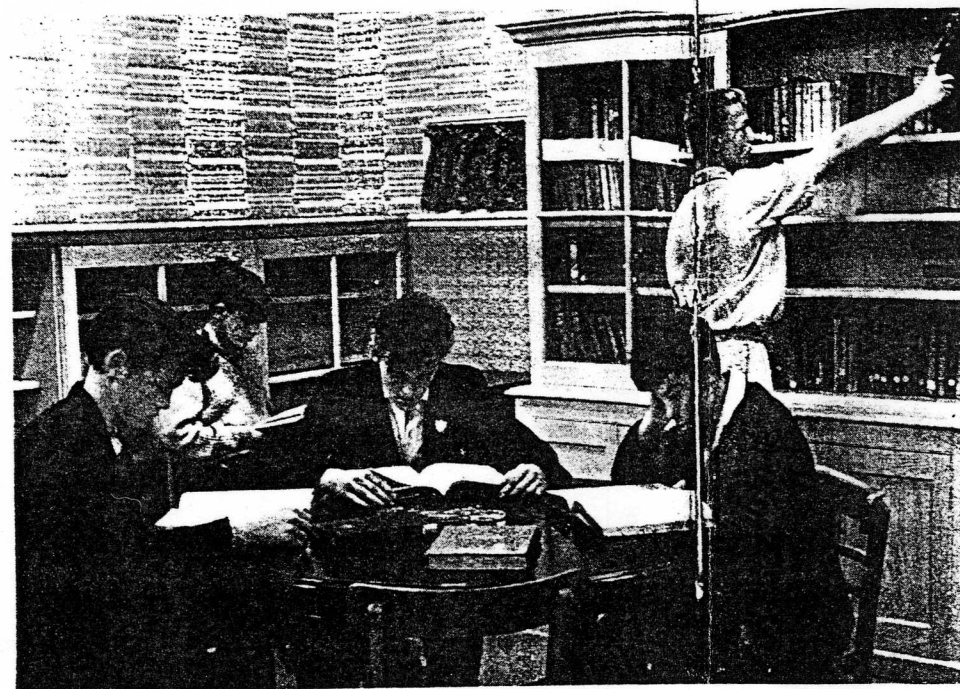
by JOHN STREET

Photographs by A MARTINEZ



SEVENTY-TWO years ago the Florence Institute for Boys was founded in Mill Street by Bernard Hall, City Alderman and (ten years earlier) Lord Mayor of Liverpool, as a memorial to his daughter, Florence. If the founder could have been present at the Reception held recently at the Club, to celebrate its re-opening after alterations, he would certainly have been proud of the material progress that has been made. A gathering of more than 500 were greatly impressed with the changes, renovations and general 'brightening up,' designed to break completely with the tradition of

'brown paint and grey stone' usually found in boys' clubs. This break has indeed been achieved, and I admired the new stream-lined entrance with its glass swing doors, the canteen-cum-coffee bar with its contemporary lay-out, and the excellent and imaginative murals on the walls of the games room. The £2,000 which this 'face-



The Library is a welcome oasis of quiet for boys who wish to study or read. Left to right: George Bethell, Eddie Roberts, Robert Brooks, Billy Hillaly (standing) and Robert McKittrick.

lift' has cost has obviously been well spent.

Reverting to the founder and his imagined visit to the Club as it is today, he would have been pleased to find that the original aims and objects are still being adhered to—with one serious exception of which I shall have more to say later. Originally formed 'to promote the welfare of poor and working boys, more especially during the critical period between the time they leave school up to the age of 21,' the club during its 72 years of existence has welcomed through its portals many thousands of Liverpool boys who have learnt new pursuits, made new friends and in many cases found a new purpose in life. Old boys always have a very soft spot for the 'Florrie,' and they constantly drop in or write asking for Club News. The Old Boys' Association, which was revived some seven

Table Tennis is a popular game. At the far end watching the contests Mrs. Thompson, who looks after the canteen, is standing between the Warden, Mr. D. Gallop, (right) and Mr. Farmer, Swimming Team Manager. Note the imaginative murals painted by club members.



Everything stops for a coke. The boys in this picture are mostly members of the schoolboys' Saturday Club which consists mainly of younger boys who can make use of the Institute facilities on Saturday mornings.

or eight years ago by the present Chairman, Mr. J. Flatley, has done yeoman service in raising money (more than £1,500) purchasing sports equipment, and helping in many other ways.

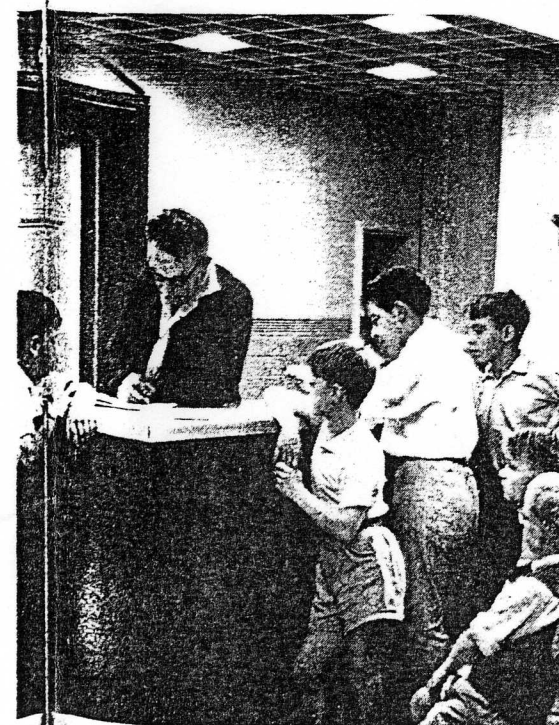
At present there is an average nightly attendance of some 160 boys out of a total membership of 210, and the Warden, Mr. David Gallop, is assisted by a loyal group of voluntary workers and five instructors from the local education authority. The latter give instruction in modelling (Mr. L. Flatley), woodwork (Mr. W. Peers), boxing (Mr. J. Peers), physical training and gymnastics (Mr. T. Coldock, popularly known as 'Sarge') and judo (Mr. G. Deakin). Among the voluntary helpers, mention should be made of Mr. C. Walker, senior football team manager, with 12 years service, Mr. C. Taylor (9 years), in charge of junior football and cricket, and Mr. Robin Farmer, swimming instructor whose lads won the LBA junior championships this year. The canteen is staffed entirely by voluntary assistants under the benevolent aegis of Mrs. F. E. Thompson who has served the 'Florrie' for 21 years. I must also mention the doorman, Mr. W. Brown, who has been 'on duty' for 19 years and still prides himself on never forgetting a name or a face.

Two enterprises worthy of note are the Fiesta Club, a self organising body formed to promote social activities, which meets every other Saturday night throughout the winter, and the Adventure Club, created by Mr. Gallop. The latter was formed as an outdoors section to encourage boys to take an interest in the countryside, natural history, camping, cycling etc.

I had an interesting talk with the present

Chairman of the Committee, Mr. A. W. Waterworth, who has strong views about the present set-up of boys' clubs in Liverpool. With the chronic shortage of staff and funds, he thinks it unrealistic that these should be dissipated among a large number of clubs in a comparatively small area: 'Why, there are half a dozen clubs within 1½ miles of the 'Florrie,' he declared, 'some with inadequate premises and resources, but all drawing on available helpers and cash.' He believes there should be a policy of centralisation so that a smaller number of really well organised, fully staffed clubs, would draw their members from a wider area. Mr. Waterworth is now in his fourth year as Chairman and has done a great deal of very hard work for the Florence Institute to which he is obviously devoted.

I must conclude on a note of criticism, which applies not only to the Florence but to a great many other clubs also. Although the material development has been tremendously impressive, there is no semblance of spiritual guidance for these boys who need so desperately in this pagan age to learn the principles of Christianity. Bernard Hall's original statutes clearly include the obligation of 'Providing religious and moral instruction of a Christian undenominational character, to be given by means of classes for the study of the Bible and Christian teaching, and by unsectarian religious services.' The official reason for the lack of such classes and services is that the different Churches cannot agree on a formula of instruction. What a sad state of affairs, particularly at this time of attempted collective advance towards Christian unity!



Mr. C. Taylor, a voluntary helper, on duty in the new Reception area.

