

-MADELEY REST ROOM— The first fifty years

-Madeley Old People's Rest Room, on the original site in Park Avenue (near the present day Somerfields' supermarket) — from a 1930's postcard



This article is reproduced from the 1979 (Fiftieth Edition) of the "Madeley Rest Room Review". It was written by Chris Moore, the grandson of the founder of the Rest Room, Robert Moore, or "Uncle Bob" as he was known to several generations of Madeley people.

It has yet to be disputed that the Rest Room in Madeley was the first place in the country, possibly the world, to be built specifically as a meeting place for old age pensioners, both men and women.

This Rest Room was the inspiration of Robert Nathaniel Moore, who made caring for the old and lonely his life's work. He was born on the sixth of May, 1880, in Stiperstones, a small Shropshire village near Minsterley. His father, John William Moore, was the local Schoolmaster and also ran a Sunday School at the Bog, two miles away.

Robert Moore was especially fond of his mother. Although there were ten children in the family, he was the favourite, and for this underwent much teasing at the hands of his brothers and sisters. There may have been a special attachment between them because during the first six months of his life both mother and son were very near death, and although the doctor had given up all hope, both survived.

Each of the children had his or her jobs to do round the house, and Robert had to carry two large buckets of water 400 yards to the house every evening. He also had to go to the farm for milk and butter (there was no corner shop), and on Saturday he had twelve pairs of boots to clean.

He looked forward to the bilberry season for the school was closed for nine weeks, the only time it was closed except for Good Friday, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. It was by picking bilberries that people earned money to pay the rent. He loved the Stiperstones hills and valleys and the Devil's chair, a prominent rocky outcrop, and enjoyed birds nesting and playing marbles. In the evening the whole family would listen to stories read by his father.

A great feature of his home life was the daily Bible reading and family prayers, led by his father. The influence of those Bible readings and prayers remained with him for the rest of his life. Another feature of his home life was the "Medicine Box". The nearest doctor resided five miles away, and not only did his family have recourse to the box, but all the neighbours as well. His mother was called both day and night to attend to people in the village who had fallen sick. The medicine bottles were replenished as necessary when the family visited Shrewsbury, some twelve miles away, and many a doctor's bill was saved in this way.

Mrs. Moore had been a milliner before her marriage, and held afternoon sewing classes in the school house for the older girls. Old folks were her particular friends, and she was always willing to lend a sympathetic ear and suggests ways of helping them.

Robert's father conducted cottage meetings with the sick and infirm, and some of his happiest memories are of the occasions on which he accompanied his father. The Moore family were all temperate and ardent advocates of the Band of Hope.

Undoubtedly, Robert Moore loved his home, but most of all he loved his mother. A picture of his parents appeared in several issues of the Review and their memory was sacred to him. It was because of his love for them, and their love for old folk that he was to found the Rest Room.

At the age of thirteen he went to Oakengates to learn the grocery and confectionery trade. It was his first parting from home, and he cried day and night for nearly a month, but finally became resigned to his new life. It was not uncommon to work from 6am until 10pm, and on Saturday nights it was 11.30pm or even midnight before he had finished.

For the first three years he worked for nothing except the experience. To get money to pay for clothes and boots he cleaned the shoes and the bicycles of those on the staff who were earning wages.

During this period in his life he attached himself to the Baptist Church in Oakengates. He took an active part in the meetings and Bible Class, and it was here that he first prayed in public and preached his first sermon.

He stayed at the store for ten years, and then in 1902 came to Madeley in partnership with J. W. Owen in Court Street. In 1905 he moved to a grocery shop at 53 High Street, where he stayed for almost the rest of his life, living only his last two years in a bungalow he had built in Tynsley Terrace.

At Madeley he associated himself with the Baptist Church, and was Treasurer from 1906 to 1950. Also in 1906 he married Sarah Ann Allen, a china burnisher at Coalport. Besides being a local preacher for fifty years, he was President of the Shropshire Baptist Association in 1938 and a Magistrate from 1938 until his death in 1953.

Robert Moore had always loved old folk, but in 1923 he began to take a more positive interest. He visited them in their homes and took them for country runs in his car. He took them to see their friends, and their friends to see them.

Just before Christmas 1923 he placed a notice in the window of Madeley Post Office announcing that Father Christmas would give a gift of coal to all old age pensioners over 70 who left their names and addresses. Nearly one hundred and fifty did this, and each subsequently received two cwts. of coal. Extra help had to be found to deliver the coal before Christmas because there was three feet of snow on the ground. No one knew the identity of Father Christmas although a few had a good guess. Several people Mr. Moore was visiting at the time did not guess the right one.

Robert Moore continued his sick visiting for six years. He also gave his special gift every Christmas, although by now everybody knew who was responsible for it. After the first two years the gift was in money as some of the old folks lived with their sons who were colliers and they had plenty of coal. The money could thus be used for some other needy purpose.

In 1929 his work amongst old people took its biggest step forward when he opened a room for them to meet on Friday mornings.

During his sick visits he had often heard old folk say, "I'm not wanted, I'm in the way", and he had been filled with a desire to bring a little joy into their lives at eventide. He had noticed the weekly visit to the post office of the local veterans to collect their pensions. If the forward journey was tiring the return was even more so. They had to go every Friday whatever the weather, and there was nowhere to rest before setting off on the journey home.

So Robert Moore hired an ante-room on the ground floor of the Anstice Memorial Institute. This was in an ideal position as it was right opposite the post office. It was open every Friday from 10am to 4pm, and a bright fire was provided, together with books and papers.

The first meeting on Friday 13th December 1929 was attended by R. N. Moore, Rev. T. Lloyd Morgan (Pastor) and four old men. They listened to the wireless service from London at 10.15am and all six enjoyed it very much. Later that day five more men ventured in.

At the second meeting the following Friday about a dozen attended, and on the third Friday two ladies were present.

The programme for those early Friday morning meetings was as follows:

10.15 Wireless service from London.

10.30 Free and easy, hearty handshakes, jocular remarks etc.

10.45 Community singing and Bible Reading.

11.00 President's announcements. Reports of sick ones. Humorous tit-bits.

11.10 The address of the morning speaker.

11.30 Singing and speeches from the O.A.P.'s, and chaplain, vote of thanks etc.

12.15 Closing prayers and Doxology.

12.15 — 1pm. Talking and chatting to friends etc.

An old harmonium was used to accompany the singing. This had been played in the Stiperstones home of the Moores and had seen better days. When the weather was damp it played a tune of its own, and often wheezed away during solos. Mr. Joe Ellis was the first organist, and after his death Mrs. T. E. Moore helped out. Miss Edwards, now Mrs. M. Wilde, came to play in 1931 and thus began an association that continues to the present day.

Interest was maintained by the great variety of speakers from all denominations who came to give cheery, helpful and instructive messages. As well as all the local ministers, addresses were given by missionaries, Salvation Army Officers, and one M.P.

In January 1930 they were honoured by a direct message from the B.B.C., wishing the Rest Room every success. It was eagerly listened to by the pensioners on the portable wireless.

In 1931, as a token of their appreciation, the O.A.P.'s presented the President, R. N. Moore, with a very handsome eight-day clock and the Chaplain Mr. Morgan, was given an umbrella.

It was about this time that Robert Moore was first called "Uncle Bob". The name stuck and he was "Uncle Bob" to all and sundry for the rest of his life.

Although the Friday morning meeting was the most important part of the Rest Room, there were many other activities as well. In September 1930 the first of the annual summer outings took place, when 136 old folk were driven in charabancs to Lilleshall Hall. There they had tea and spent a lovely day looking round the grounds.

Each year Mr. Moore took the patients of the Beeches Hospital for an outing. Over 100 of them enjoyed trips to Cannock, Ludlow, Stourport and Trentham, together with a free tea. The outings brought a new joy into their lives, for they lived in expectation of these events. Those in the hospital too ill to come were given small presents.

There was always a Christmas party at the Rest Room, and an anniversary party in September. Both were celebrated with great glee. A free tea was provided on each occasion, followed by a concert.

The Birthday Scheme was also very important, every pensioner was sent a card on his or her birthday. This brought real joy, for in many cases it was the only one received, and some had not realised it was their birthday until they got the card from the Rest Room. In the early years about 200 were sent out each year, but now (1979) approximately 450 are sent out. Since 1929 the Rest Room has sent over 15,000 birthday cards.

The numbers attending the Rest Room had been growing steadily and by 1933 there were regularly 80 at the Friday morning meeting. The Anstice Club had let the pensioners use their room as well, but even with the two rooms it was still cramped, there were not enough seats and many had to stand.

In July 1933 the President announced the building of a New Rest Room. The land had been a gift by Mr. W. H. Griffiths, a local cricketer, and was conveyed free by Messrs. Thorn-Pudsey and Derry. Mr. Alfred Jenkins of Wellington was the architect, and Messrs. Broome and Poole of Madeley the builders.

The total cost of the new room was £1,561,3s.4d. Alderman Legge had given £250, Alderman Dyas £250, the president himself gave £715 and a cheque for 100 chairs and another for the piano. 284 pensioners each gave one shilling for initialled bricks. (These are now in front of the Rest Room in Church Street). In all, the pensioners gave £35, and other gifts from 3d upwards totalled about £110.

-The stone laying ceremony on October 10th 1933, from an old postcard.

The stone laying ceremony took place on October 10th, 1933. The day was dull and there was much rain, but the weather cleared for two hours for the ceremony. The Rev. J. A. Sime presided and stones were layed by Alderman Dyas, Alderman Legge, Mr. W. H. Griffiths, and a joint one by Rev. T. Lloyd Morgan and Mr. R. N. Moore. Each one gave a speech, as did many local ministers, and the entire ceremony was very impressive.

Before leaving, community singing was enjoyed by all and the whole place rang with singing, followed by cheers.

On February 16th, 1934 the last meeting was held in the Anstice Hall. It was the 218th weekly meeting without a break, and Mrs. Owen, the caretaker of the Anstice, was presented with a biscuit barrel as a mark of appreciation for everything she had done for the comfort of the old folk during the previous four years.



Wednesday, 21st February, 1934 was a glorious sunny day for the opening of the new Rest Room, and by 10.30am, many pensioners and friends had gathered outside the Anstice Hall. At 10.50am they all marched from the old Rest Room to the new.

Outside the hall the whole assembly sang the hymn "O God our help in ages past". A lesson was read by the Rev. C. Fletcher, and then the Archdeacon of Ludlow, the Venerable Dr. H. T. Dixon, unlocked the door. The company then passed into the hall, where the Archbishop conducted the Dedication Ceremony.

The service was presided over by the Rev. J. A. Sime, and ministers from all churches were on the platform. A short statement was made by Mr. R. N. Moore, President, on "the future of the new Rest Room", and he thanked all who had helped and all who were present, also pointing out to them the motto written in large letters over the platform "To the Glory of God and the Joy of Old Age Pensioners."

The Archdeacon then gave the address on "working together and living together". He said it was good to work together in unity, and that the building and its work would be a means of drawing the members of the churches together in fellowship. The new room would bring hope and comfort to the pensioners in the eventide of life. His address was followed by the hymn "Jesus shall reign where'er the Sun", and the ceremony finished with ten minutes community singing. Over 300 people were present, and all agreed it was a delightful service and a grand start for the new room.

The celebrations continued in the afternoon with a variety programme at 3pm, several artists taking part. The hall was overcrowded and nearly 400 persons were present. At 5.30pm a free tea was provided for 200 pensioners by the deputy Mayor, Mr. E. S. Owen. At 7 o'clock the hall was again overcrowded when another variety programme was enjoyed. The Rev. J. S. Bond presided and gave an address on "the old and the new". At 9.15 pm the doxology was heartily sung and Jones's bus took the old folks home.

The day had been a very memorable one, with nearly 1000 people attending the three services. There had been a fine feeling at the opening ceremony which might be described as a "holy atmosphere" and all agreed the Rest Room had had a wonderful beginning.

The Rest Room was described in the "Wellington Journal" of the time thus: "The handsomely built and appointed building contains seating accommodation for 300 people and represents an architectural addition to Madeley. There is a stage for performances, and two ante-rooms, also kitchen accommodation etc.

Outside the imposing main entrance are two alcoves for resting in the open, faced with 284 "initial" bricks, these having been contributed by the old age pensioners themselves.

There is also under construction a bowling green, so that ample provision is made for recreation, both indoor and out. With their own piano, ample literature and plenty of speakers and entertainers always willing to contribute to their enjoyment, the Pensioners of Madeley and District are well provided for".

The backbone of the Rest Room work continued to be Uncle Bob's sick visiting. Thursday was the day he set aside for these visits, occasionally seeing as many as thirty-five people. The work was continued on Sunday morning before going to Chapel and he was ready to go out day or night in urgent cases.

It was not uncommon for him to make over two thousand house to house calls in a year, and one hundred and fifty visits to hospitals. In addition the Rest Room Chaplain, Rev. T. Lloyd Morgan made many hundreds of visits. Often it was only a two minute visit to make sure everything was all right, but sometimes he would take the portable wireless and listen to the services and vaudeville programmes with the old folk. The wireless visited over 60 homes and institutions and in some it was the only one ever heard.

Here is an account of one of his sick visits in 1933. "For two years husband and wife, living in the same cottage, had never been able to meet each other the husband in the upstairs room and the wife downstairs. A few months ago the wife was thought to be dying and wished very much to see her husband. The doctor was consulted but had grave doubts about the wisdom of getting him downstairs, and said he might never go up again-even if we got him down. At this time I was paying my usual sick visit to the home, and the son made known to me that if I would help him we would attempt to carry his father downstairs, just to see his mother for once. We ventured. We were successful, after a difficult task, and we witnessed husband and wife meet after two and a half years of being absent from each other. Here we draw the veil, and only add that it was a life experience we shall never forget. Then came the tremendous task of getting a heavy and helpless man upstairs again, and the stairs in our old-fashioned cottages present some problems, I assure you! A very familiar phrase to me in my sick visits is "Mind the stairs, Mr. Moore!" Well, step by step, slowly but surely, we reached the top, and saw our invalid safe in bed. Oh, how we thanked God for this special help, and for allowing us to help make it possible for these two loved ones to meet. When I left that cottage I can assure you it was with mixed feelings of joy and sorrow".

During his visits to hospitals he would perhaps read letters written to patients, write letters for them and sometimes quietly sing a hymn or say a prayer. He would often be asked to carry love from one ward to another and would get a smile when he inquired how that love should be conveyed.

He met with a tremendous amount of loneliness, depression and suffering. In one case a patient was admitted for her 15th operation, and in another an elderly lady was admitted to hospital for her 34th operation. Three ladies he visited regularly in three different hospitals had been there all the years he had been visiting; one 12 years, one 18 years, and the other 29 years.

His joy was very real when he brought a smile to a sad face, and for a little while helped the inmates forget their pain and troubles. Often the prayer he offered at the bedside was the last before the patient died: sometimes it was the only one. He writes of his visits: "Many a song, chat and prayer and also humorous story we have enjoyed with the patients, and brought a smile to a face drawn up with pain. To the matron and staff of each hospital I am extremely indebted for their kindness and liberty allowed to me . . . They have often told me of patients who have no-one to see them and asked me to visit them . . . I earnestly ask the prayers of all readers for God to bless and guide me in this work, done in His Name."

It was because he saw death so often that he was constantly reminded that if one was going to do anything at all for old age pensioners, one should do it now. Hence the Rest Room Motto-If you are going to do a good deed-DO IT NOW.

One of his greatest joys in visiting hospitals was to see those who were really getting better, to find them stronger on each visit, until finally they were fit enough to go home.

In 1951 he was presented with an illuminated address from the Beeches Hospital, Ironbridge, which he had visited weekly, almost without a break, for 25 years. The address read: "Presented to R. N. Moore, Esq., by the Patients and Staff of the Beeches Hospital, Ironbridge, as a token of their esteem and in appreciation of great kindness, affection, cheer and encouragement brought to patients and staff by his weekly visits to the hospital, and in many other ways, known and unknown by service voluntarily and willingly given during the past twenty-five years 1926-1951."

While his work was definitely among the old folk, he did not forget the children. For several years prior to the war, on each Bank holiday, he took a busload of over one hundred boys and girls for a ride in the country. He was also entirely responsible for two childrens' playgrounds in Madeley.

The new Rest Room was open daily from 10am - 4pm, except Sunday, for then it would clash with church worship. Draughts, dominoes, peggity and other games were provided, as were the daily papers. The "Express and Star" and the "Childrens Newspaper" were sent free weekly, and there were several shelves of books for reading Pensioners, particularly in winter, would sit near a radiator whilst they smoked, talked, or took a nap. There was also a bowling green, and on warmer days benches were placed alongside for interested spectators.

The Friday morning meetings continued to be the most important part of the Rest Room. The service was much the same as it had been at the Anstice, except that by 1937 the wireless service from London was no longer listened to, as most, now, had wirelesses in their own homes. The Rest Room wireless was only used on special occasions such as Armistice Day, when pensioners gathered in the Rest Room to listen together to the service broadcast from the Cenotaph.

The Friday programme opened at 10.45am with bright choruses, a prayer and Bible reading, President's report, then the address, a few words from regular supporters, more singing, sometimes a solo or recitation, a prayer, a closing chorus, a general handshake and a "God Bless You". There was no collection, but there was a box at the door if anyone wanted to give anything. The only time a collection was made was once a year at the Anniversary Service which was held on a Sunday afternoon.

A great variety of speakers came to The Rest Room. Ministers from all denominations, including Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists, Plymouth Brethren, Quakers and Parish Churches all round the Wrekin; missionaries from China, Africa and India, a speaker who worked on the Great Western Railway, and had driven the King and Queen from Birmingham to London, and on one occasion the address was given by a black African native who had been saved from death by General Gordon.

In May 1939 Uncle Bob's wife, Sally, was taken ill, and on the 17th she died. The blow was a very great one to him and he probably never entirely regained his former cheerfulness. Without her sacrificial love and loyalty much of what he accomplished would have been impossible.

The Rest Room was well used, for besides the weekly meetings, teas and concerts were held there on special occasions. Parties were given to celebrate King George V and Queen Mary's 25th Wedding Anniversary, and to celebrate the Coronation of 1937. The Rest Room was also used for the Annual Convention Week, when the churches of Madeley met for a deepening of spiritual life. The Rest Room was ideal as it was neutral ground. The Wesley Guild used the room each year for their annual party for O.A.P.'s.

During the War the Room was used by soldiers as a home from home for eating and sleeping, and the Red Cross used it as a first-aid station. Beds and bandages etc., were stored on the premises. It was also used for the distribution of ration cards and in 1943 it was used for blood donors for the first time. The Blood Transfusion Service still use the Rest Room for this purpose.

Attendances suffered because of the War, numbers falling from around 100 to 40, and even to 25 when the weather was very bad. However, this is easily accounted for, many pensioners went back to work in the war effort to take the places of younger people who had enlisted. Many old folk had died, and their places were not taken as usual by those just retiring, as they too stayed at work.

Nevertheless, the Friday morning meeting was always held, come rain or shine. Uncle Bob was very

proud of the fact that a Rest Room meeting was never missed. (In fact, it was not to be until 1958, five years after his death that the first meeting was missed). On Good Friday they used to meet the previous day, and if Christmas Day fell on a Friday they would meet on either Christmas Eve or Boxing Day. On one occasion a message arrived mid-week to say the speaker could not come, and just before the meeting another message came to say the Chairman was ill and could not be present. Then the pianist 'phoned to say her daughter was unwell and she too would be absent. However, a quick 'phone call to a local preacher provided the speaker, and one of the O.A.P.'s volunteered to play the piano. The President himself took the chair, and a very good meeting was subsequently enjoyed!

Even through the terrible winter of 1947, when on several occasions the whole country was snowed up, the meetings were still held.

The War brought a temporary suspension to the annual summer outing, which could not be held because of the fuel shortage. This was resumed after the war and for some was the only time in the year they left home.

The Rest Room Review continued to be published, although it was smaller during the war years due to scarcity of paper. Mr. Moore had published it every year since the start of the Rest Room, the first Review appearing in December 1930. He tried to get it ready in time for Christmas and it was greatly looked forward to by the O.A.P.'s. Each Review contained records of the previous twelve months, December to November.

It was published so that the pensioners could re-live happy memories of events of the past year by their own firesides, but it was also to advertise the work being done in Madeley to stimulate others to start similar work in their own districts. 5000 copies of some of the early issues were printed, and these were sent out all over the country, and a few abroad. A copy of one Review even got into Wormwood Scrubs prison!

The influence of the Rest Room spread to nearby towns, and Dawley Rest Room was opened in 1948, and Oakengates in 1949. Hadley Rest Room was opened in 1953, largely through the efforts of Mr. Bill Harris. All these Rest Rooms are still thriving.

As a direct result of the work being done at Madeley, help was given to old folks in Ironbridge, Wednesbury, Sheffield and Cannock.

A great event took place in 1947 when Madeley Rest Room was converted from gas to electric light, also that year a harvest festival was held for the first time.

In the New Years honours list of 1953 it was announced that R. N. Moore was to be made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.). It was given to him for 30 years work among the aged and sick. On March 3rd he travelled to London to receive his award from the Queen; 11 days later on March 14th he died suddenly at his home in Madeley. He was 72 years old. On the morning of the funeral his body was taken to the Rest Room where the old folks were able to pay their last respects. As the Baptist Church was too small to accommodate the great number who wished to be present, about 500, the Service was held at Madeley Parish Church, but even so many had to stand. The Service was conducted by the Rev. J. S. Leigh, assisted by Rev. C. E. Wright. The Rev. W. E. Moore (nephew) gave the tribute. Most of them, he said, would remember him not as "Robert Nathaniel Moore, M.B.E., J.P." but as "Uncle Bob" and that title was typical of the man. He said that although Uncle Bob was a Baptist, and proud of it, and was always loyal to his own Church, he was interested in Christian work wherever it went on and under whatever name.

"Nathaniel" meant "God-given", and if ever a man was given by God that man was R. N. Moore. If they wanted a monument to Uncle Bob they just had to look round Madeley at the Rest Room, at the Baptist Church and at the many people who owed more than words could say to him. They were proud of the honour which had been conferred on him in the recent award of the M.B.E., and so was he, but he thought his greatest reward was in the hearts of the people who knew and loved him and would never forget him. He concluded with this tribute: "Madeley has lost a great friend, and not only Madeley, but this country and the world is the poorer for the loss of R. N. Moore. We have far too few of his kind in the world today".

He was buried with his wife in Madeley Churchyard, and the epitaph on his tombstone reads "He lived to the Glory of God and the Joy of Old Age Pensioners."

After his death Trustees were appointed in accordance with his wishes. They were Mr. G. R. Moore (son), Mr. T. S. (Tom) Cookson ([click here to read about Tom Cookson's father, Sam, a miner at Madeley Wood pit](#)) and Mrs. T. E. Moore. They formed a management committee consisting of a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and one representative from each of the five churches in Madeley, viz., Fletcher Methodist, St. Michael's, High St. Methodist, Baptist and Congregational. The committee meet monthly to arrange the day to day running of the Rest Room.

The Committee realised it would not be possible to continue all the sick visiting Uncle Bob had done, but it hoped that some of the contacts could be maintained, if only now and then. Accordingly, Christmastime visits are made to Innage House, Bridgnorth, Park Street Hospital, Shifnal, and to the Beeches, Ironbridge, early in the New Year. Carols are sung and each patient is given a Christmas card and a small gift of sweets and biscuits.

It was also decided by the committee that the Friday nearest to the anniversary of the death of Robert N. Moore should be observed annually as Founders Day.

In 1954 it was proposed to make the plot of ground at the side of the Rest Room into a Memorial Rose Garden. It would be a memorial both to Uncle Bob, who loved flowers, and also to all those who had been connected with the Rest Room but had now passed on. Anyone who wished to donate roses in memory of a loved one was invited to do so. The land had originally been the bowling green, and was laid out free of charge by Mr. Newbrook shortly after the new Rest Room had opened. Many games of bowls were enjoyed on it during the summer months for many years, but by 1947 it had become overgrown and was left derelict until 1954. Mr. J. Painter removed mountains of grass and nettles, and together with voluntary helpers the garden was laid out. It was opened on June 27th, 1956 by Mrs. N. J. Taylor, the Deputy Mayoress, and tribute was paid to Mrs. T. E. Moore, without whose drive and initiative the garden would not have come into being. A tea was provided, some eating indoors whilst others ate outside sitting on the garden seats.

The ground at the back of the Rest Room was made into a vegetable plot by Mr. Painter and Mr. Harper, and proceeds were given each year to Rest Room funds.

On July 2nd, 1957, the first Open Day was held, as it was a warm sunny day it was possible to sit out in the Rose Garden. There were refreshments and "bring and buy" stalls. This was very successful in raising a useful sum of money so it was decided to make it an annual event. An Open Day has been held every year since, with regular competitions for flower arranging, best rose, handicraft, embroidery etc.

The Rest Room Choir was formed at the beginning of September 1957, the object being to sing at the annual Shropshire Old People's Festival held in October in Shrewsbury. However, many friendly hours had been passed at practices, and so after the Festival the Choir continued. They met for two hours every Friday afternoon for practice and a cup of tea, the first practice being held on 6th September, 1957. After singing at the Festival, where several choirs sang in unison, their first solo public appearance was at the tea given for the Beeches Hospital and Blind friends in November 1957.

The Choir has since sung at many churches and fetes, as well as singing at the Rest Room at Christmas, Founders Day and Easter. They have also sung at Rest Room parties and some Friday morning services, besides giving concerts for Rest Room funds. They often sang at the Old People's Festival in Shrewsbury, where their singing was much appreciated.

In 1968 they won the Percy Bullock Cup at the Old People's Choral Festival in Wellington. They had never before sung in a competition and it was a great thrill to them all to win.

The Choir is entirely self-financing and all the members, usually about 30, pay a small weekly contribution which makes it possible to have a Christmas party and two or three outings a year.

The Shropshire Old People's Festival, organised by the Shropshire Old People's Welfare Committee at the Music Hall, Shrewsbury, was attended by a large party of Rest Room members from its



inaugural year in 1955 until 1970, when the organisation of the Festival was changed. As well as entering in the competitions, and enjoying the tea provided, members had the opportunity to look at Arts and Crafts of every description, and to listen to the choirs singing. Rest Room members regularly featured in the list of prize winners at the Festival.

The Flying Needles were formed in July 1963, being a group of ladies interested in handiwork. They met weekly to make clothes and toys to sell for Rest Room funds, as well as selling articles given to them, and donated many hundreds of pounds to the Rest Room. In 1974 their name was changed to the Working Party, and they have continued to make valuable donations to funds.

It had been a long-cherished idea of Mr. R. N. Moore's to build homes for old people. In 1949 Mr. W. H. Griffiths of Coalport had given a plot of land in Church Street specifically for this purpose. He died a few months later, aged 93. Uncle Bob also died before anything was done, and in the years immediately following his death the committee found all their time taken up with Rest Room matters.

In 1959 a plan for four separate bungalows was considered but it was decided that this was not making the best use of the land.

There followed a period of visiting housing schemes for old people in the Midlands and even further afield. It was eventually decided in 1963 to provide sixteen single bed-sitter flatlets; each unit comprising an entrance lobby, individual toilet, bed-sitting room and separate kitchen. Also provided is a Common Room, Warden's flat, laundry full central heating and hot water throughout, a telephone and a call bell connecting all flatlets to the Warden. It was felt they would meet a real need in providing companionship and security yet respecting the independence which older people value so highly.

The scheme cost approximately £40,000 and a charitable housing trust, The R. N. Moore Housing Trust, was formed, and registered with the Charity Commissioners and the National Federation of Housing Societies. The local support was magnificent and donations were received from many organisations and individuals and special events that were held. The Ladies Social Club, led by Mrs. F. Harris, raised sufficient to donate one flatlet, and a generous donation was received from the "Neville Williams Trust".

The Opening ceremony on November 20th, 1966 was performed by Mr. Neville Williams, and by the following January all sixteen flatlets were occupied, thereby making a substantial contribution to the happiness and well being of the older generation in Madeley. They have continued to be fully occupied apart from one occasion when three people left or died within a few weeks leaving one flatlet empty for three months.

In 1967 the Rest Room was placed under a compulsory purchase order by the Dawley Development Corporation. They agreed to provide a new Rest Room of similar size on a freehold site in Church Street, but the committee decided that with the expected increase of population the New Town would bring, it would be wiser to build a larger hall than the present one, and accordingly £800 had to be found to cover this.

It was the 1,763rd meeting in that room, and the 1,981st since meetings began in 1929.

The following Friday, on 19th January 1968 a new chapter was begun in the history of Madeley Rest Room when the first meeting was held in the new building. Mr. G. R. Moore presided and the Rev. G. Burgon spoke on "The mill cannot grind with the water that is past".

The new room had a larger stage, and the lighting, kitchen facilities and toilets were greatly improved.

On Wednesday, March 13th the building was dedicated by the Bishop of Hereford, the Right Rev. Mark Hodson. The room was full to capacity and a memorable ceremony was enjoyed.

The old Rest Room had always been open from 10am-4pm daily with books, games and papers provided, but very few pensioners had made use of this facility since the late forties. It was decided not to open the new Rest Room daily as there was the risk of vandalism when there was no supervision.

The pensioners of Madeley have been well looked after by the generosity of people in the town. From 1951-1969 the staff and customers of the Commercial Inn provided an outing for the O.A.P.'s each year. Sadly, the 1969 Outing to Trentham Gardens was the last one because the "Commercial" was demolished by the Development Corporation.

The Fletcher Methodist Guild organised a party for the old folk of Madeley from the late twenties until 1974. Originally it had been a New Year Party, and they had been held in the Anstice Hall until 1940, since when they were always held in the Rest Room.

The Miners Arms have been especially generous to the Rest Room and to the pensioners of Madeley. The Rest Room had always given a small gift of money to the pensioners at Christmas, at first 2/6 and later 5/-. In 1963 the Miners Arms O.A.P. Committee offered to take this burden off the Rest Room funds, and also to increase the gift to 10/-. The following year they again provided the gift, and increased it to £1. A few years later this Christmas present was extended to every pensioner in the Madeley postal area.

In 1968 they provided 16 tables for the new building, and at Christmas 1969 surprised everyone with the gift of a baby grand piano. They also paid for the curtains needed for the stage, and have also donated money to the flatlets. In 1974 they moved their headquarters to the Barley Mow, and now under the name of the Madeley O.A.P. Fund they continue to provide all the pensioners in Madeley with a present of money at Christmas.

The Madeley Male Voice Choir used the Rest Room on Tuesday evenings for choir practice since they were formed in 1945 until 1979. It was then decided to use the Court Centre as this was already warm and heating costs would be less. They are now known as The Telford Male Voice Choir and have given many concerts for Rest Room funds and often entertain at the Anniversary Service.

The Rest Room in 1979 still remains faithful to the same aims and ideals as those of 1929. Its central feature is the Friday morning meeting which has changed very little since 1929. At first the meetings ran from 10.15am until 12.15pm and then they were shortened to 10.45am until 12.15pm. Nowadays, however the service lasts from 11am until 12am. At 10.45 cups of tea and biscuits are available and there are sales tables comprising stationary, cakes and miscellaneous things and which are sold for Rest Room funds. The order of the Service, which is not rigidly fixed is:

11am Chorus, Opening Hymn, Prayer Bible Reading, Poetry reading or solo, Rest Room Choir etc., Request Hymn, Address of the morning speaker, Notices, mentions of members birthdays, Thanks.

12 Noon Closing hymn, Benediction.

The old folks remain seated throughout the service. There is no collection, although there are two boxes for freewill offering at the back of the room. One is for general funds, and the other towards Elcock's bus, which picks up people round Wrekin View and Woodside before the meeting and takes them home again. Membership is about 475 and about 130 come to the service each Friday. At Christmas children from local schools take the services and on Good Friday a joint service with local ministers is held in the Rest Room. This is for all, not just pensioners. Founders Day is held in the Spring, as is the Annual Party, when the old folks are treated to a tea and concert. In Summer there is an Open Day and also the annual Summer outing when about 200 Rest Room members are taken for a day out. The Rest Room Anniversary is held in September, and the Harvest Festival in October. Also that month there is a tea and concert for the patients of local hospitals and blind friends. At Christmas committee members and friends visit these hospitals to sing carols for the patients.

Every Rest Room member gets a card on his or her birthday.

The Rest Room was built for the comfort of old age pensioners and that is the first consideration at all times, but the committee are glad for it to be used for worthy causes. The Blood Transfusion Service use the room twice a year, and the Girl Guides have held training sessions there. The Cub Scouts have staged exhibitions and it is regularly used for the distribution of 'bus tokens'.

Uncle Bob always insisted the Rest Room work should be called not "his work" but "our work", for without the multitude of helpers always willing to come forward success would have been impossible. It was founded at a time when the State did little for the elderly. Pension was 10/— a

week, and with the trade depression causing unemployment men were at home so the old were often in the way. The Rest Room was a place where they could go every day, and the special meetings on Friday mornings were eagerly looked forward to. Old folk were often heard to say, "Oh, I shall be glad when Friday comes", and with that thought in their minds they felt there was something to live for after all. At the Rest Room they met old friends and made new friends, and a spin-off was that they would visit each other in their own homes.

The Rest Room is neither church nor chapel, yet it is a place of worship. Many people go there who never go to a church. Denominational differences are forgotten, and there is no social barrier. Special emphasis has always been given to Christian teaching and it was a source of great joy to Uncle Bob that the old people preferred it so.

There is still a tremendous amount of loneliness and depression amongst old folk, especially after a life-long partner is lost, and the Rest Room will continue to provide fellowship and comfort that many cannot find elsewhere.

C. (Chris) R. Moore

(Grandson of the Founder)-

-The Rest Room today (June 2000), in Church Street

