

## A youth club with an adult outlook

THE record that was playing at Tenterden Youth Club one night last week gave the first clue that something of a revolution has taken place in youth centres over the past few years.

Pop stars were taking second place on the turntable to Gerard Hoffnung's address to the Oxford Union involving an unfortunate worker in the building trade and his mishaps with a barrel of bricks.

### QUIET ENJOYMENT

A game of chess was in progress in one corner, a group of members sat at the coffee bar talking pop stars and sport, table tennis and table football were being played in the lower part of the split-level hall, and there was a pervading air of quiet enjoyment.

All of which goes to prove that, if you treat people like adults, then chances are they will behave like adults.

Club-leader Mr. Robert Matthews summed up the new youth club attitude in a few words: "We let members do what they want to do and give them as much help as we can."

### CYNICAL APPROACH

To the cynical, this may sound a dangerous approach, but there has not been a single serious outbreak of hooliganism at the club since its present headquarters opened in 1965.

Attention was first drawn to the need for a youth club in the town in 1964, when a public meeting was called by Dr. H. R. Gompertz, Mr. Gordon Miller, and Mrs. Eileen Winter.

The meeting was a success and club nights were started on one evening a week in the town's Drill Hall.

### A PLACE OF ITS OWN

Membership increased to over 100, bringing a demand for more meeting nights. The cost of hiring the hall was £7 an evening, and the club decided it would have to find its own H.Q.

A site was found in Highbury Lane; in July, 1965, the prefabricated building was delivered and, by the first week in October, the club was using its new £7,500 home. Members spent many hours working to clear the

## NEW ATTITUDE PAYS DIVIDENDS

site (formerly an orchard), so that the building could be put up as soon as it arrived.

### HIGH ON THE LIST

Money-raising activities are high on the list of club projects, for the only grant it has received is one for £1,500 for equipment. The Kent education committee offered to put the club premises on its building programme—for 1970.

The building debt is now only £3,000 and the club is hoping to pay that off in the next few years.

The faith shown by the organisers in allowing members freedom has been amply justified. Members appreciate this and honour the trust placed in them.

### JUST SIT AND CHAT

John Mills, Anthea Edmonds, Judy Edmonds, Julia Walker, John Hepburn, and Alan Garlinge form the nucleus of the members' committee which discusses club management and any new ideas for club activities.

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, are the present meeting nights and a member can take part in any one of a dozen traditional youth club activities, or just sit and chat with friends.

Any adventurous spirit who wants to introduce a new project is assured of all the help Mr. Matthews and the adult helpers can give.

### VARIED PROGRAMME

"We aim at providing as varied a programme as possible," said Mr. Matthews. More adult helpers were always welcome, especially if they had a particular interest which could be of use to the club.

A chat with members revealed that not all today's teenagers worship the Swinging London image.

"I don't really like London," said Carol Bugden, age 17. "It's too crowded. I much prefer the peace and quiet of the countryside."

While members were not in entire agreement on the subject of the capital, swinging or otherwise, they did agree that their club was a great place.

### WELL EQUIPPED

"It's a nice place to come to and just relax," said Carol.

The freedom allowed members was praised by Eugene Blackburn, aged 19, who said, "There is no over-organisation by the senior people in the club."

Eugene, well known for his passionate interest in sports cars, added that the club was comfortable and well equipped; it was a great advantage to be able to buy coffee and snacks.

A project introduced this year is the Sunday evening coffee bar, held between 7.30 and 11 p.m. for the 16 to 21s.

### LIVELY DEBATES

Speakers are invited to give a short talk, after which there is a discussion. Two of the most lively of these Sunday evening debates dealt with sex and Vietnam.

It would be wrong to give the impression that Tenterden's teenagers

are an unusually studious bunch—they enjoy their monthly beat dance as much as the next pop fan—but they are probably much more responsible, and aware of the problems facing the world and this country, than many people think.

The freedom which members are given is allowing them to develop into responsible adults with mature minds of their own.