

**HISTORY RECORDER'S REPORT
FOR THE VILLAGE OF HAWSTEAD
MAY 2006**

As this is my first report for two years the events recorded will cover the years from May 2004 to May 2006.

In my last report I commented that the developments surrounding Cullum House, formerly the village school would need to be monitored and that indeed has proved to be the case. With Miss Elsa Killpatrick's tenancy coming to end on 30th September 2004 it became known that the St. Barnabas Trust to whom the diocesan of St. Edmundsbury had transferred its interest in 1997 intended to sell the property. People who had lived in the village for many years recalled that in the early 1930's the property had been willed jointly to the Church and the village with the Church having responsibility for its maintenance. Rumours abounded! A poorly advertised meeting in the church was called by the Rev. Martin Thrower at the beginning of December 04. Although not well attended the strength of feeling in the village concerning Cullum House was very apparent and a further meeting was arranged for the 17th January 05 when the question of ownership would be fully explored. This meeting was to be well advertised throughout the village.

On 17th January the meeting chaired by Martin Thrower was also attended by Archdeacon John Cox among whose responsibilities lay parishes and their relationship with the community and who acts as the diocesan chair of the Church Board of Education. Also representing the Church of England was Nicholas Edgell, Diocesan Secretary and treasurer of the Board of Education. Minutes of this meeting are held in the Parish Church records. A synopsis of the meeting was given in the February 05 St. Edmund Benefice newsletter*. It was stated by John Cox that the property had been conveyed by deed of gift by Randall and Richmond Mercer in May 1930 to the Church. In 1997 the house needed extensive repairs and it was decided that this work would be financed by a loan from the Church Board of Finance on the condition that when the tenant relinquished her tenancy that the property was sold. It was further stated that the property had never belonged to the village.

Nevertheless it was established knowledge in the village that the old school house was a village resource and it was felt that some recompense should be made for its loss. When asked if a proportion of the sale price would be given back to the village John Cox replied that if the village could prove that Cullum House had been used as a Sunday school then a consideration of 3/14ths might be made towards a Sunday school fund. As the village has no meeting place it was agreed that the sale of the Cullum House should be delayed for six months while open consultation and a feasibility study was undertaken. In the mean time the property would be let.

A meeting in February 05 was arranged to discuss the proposed feasibility study. At this meeting it was agreed that a community forum, comprising of representatives from the Parish Council, the Parish Parochial Council and the Community Council should be formed and that an independent arbiter, John Lamb, from a Christian based firm of consultants called Community Spirit would meet with both the Community Forum and individuals to resolve the differences. Fairly broad terms of reference were set.

Consultations were undertaken and John Lamb prepared a report. It was agreed by the parties that while Cullum House belonged to the St. Barnabas Trust and the Trust had a right to sell it, the sale would be delayed for a further period while the village decided whether it wished to

purchase the property. In addition on the sale of the property the church would recompense the village for the loss of an amenity to the tune of £75,000. Should the village decide to build a new hall this money would be handed over when the total sum needed had been raised. The Church would also require some access to the new facility. At the time of writing Cullum House is tenanted and a final meeting between the Community Forum and the Church authorities has yet to take place

The project to build a new village hall despite two years of steady progress also suffered a set back with the leader of the group, Joan Cook, resigning in March 05. While the group itself was hard working and cohesive it became increasingly clear that tensions between the project group and the committee of the Community Council made the extensive and hard work necessary by the project leader to complete the project intolerable. Matters were further complicated by the possibility of Cullum House being used as an alternative to building a hall.

By March 06 the village was presented with three alternatives and through a postal vote under the auspices of the Parish Council to choose a meeting place/village hall from

- 1) The original hall proposed by the project
- 2) Cullum House adapted for public use
- 3) A 'revised smaller oak framed hall'

The details and costings for the three alternatives were set out in the March edition of the Hawstead Journal.*

The village voted decisively in favour of the cheapest option the reproduction oak framed hall.

Elsewhere in the Parish a large new house has been erected on the site of Hammonds Farmhouse. The original 16th century timber framed house having been removed to Clacton on Sea at the beginning of the 20th century. While other applications to build new houses have been rejected by the St. Edmundsbury planning Dept. large two storey garages have been permitted. The Church Commissioners in 2005 sold 'The New Rectory' in Church Road for a sum believed to be in the region of £300,000. Extensive alterations have been undertaken and the existing garage incorporated into the body of the main house. Established mixed hedges have been grubbed out and replaced on the frontage by beech and on the boundary with the Metcalfe Almshouses' field with mixed hedging plants.

In 1504 Joan Cowper gave an acre of land to the Church, the rent of which was to maintain the 'lamp before the Rood'. The land donated became known as 'Lamp Land' and this little field, running down to the Whepstead Road, lies behind the property of Sylvia and Simon Miller who have taken over the tenancy of the field from Angela and Terry Rushen. Until last autumn it was cropped but Simon is a beekeeper and is beginning the long process of turning the field back into a wild flower meadow. This spring his green house has been filled with the seedlings of wild flowers. The long, cold spring has held the blooming of the spring flowers back but has not diminished their quantity and as I write the hedgerows and pastures are filled with cowslips and on a verge on the Bury Road the Suffolk emblem the rare Oxslip nods its pale petals in the May sunshine.

Although not resident in the parish the Rev. Martin Thrower was installed as the Rector of Hawstead, in the Benefice of St. Edmundsbury Way in July 04 just a year after being inducted as the priest of the Benefice.

A vacancy in the Metcalfe alms houses was filled by Mr Victor King who took up residency in No. 1 during August 2005.

The tenancy of the Metcalfe Public House remains unchanged with the Landlady, Wendy introducing successful evenings devoted to the cuisine of other countries. So far the village has had a French, Mexican and Italian evening.

This is the final report that I shall prepare as the History Recorder of Hawstead. I have held the post since 1998 and wish to relinquish the post as from September 2006 I will take over from Mr Robin Whitfield the responsibilities of Clerk to the Parish Council.

Joan Cook
Cook's Farm House
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* These journals are available at the County record Office, Bury St. Edmunds