

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF MEETING 13th September 2023
MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	Paul Salvidge	Heather Salvidge
Dave Verlander	Chris Bush	Diane Bush
Mike Rea	Margaret Rea	Ian Laird
Keith Hunt	Jill Hunt	Eileen Kay
Roger Clark	Phyllis Clark	Tony Bailey
Sue Waite	Tim Snow	Sue Beeston
Carol Wylde	Sue Johnson	Peter Johnson

Apologies:

Ian Jackson	Moyra Jackson	Therese Clear
Brenda Davidson	Roger Kendrick	Valerie Austin
Marco Newton	Lorraine Newton	Kevin Wood
Keith Merrifield	Do Hackett	Trevor Hackett
Margaret Shaw		

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present to the meeting and our speaker for the evening, Mr John Rhodes.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 14th June 2023

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

Apologies for the numbering Gremlins that infected the circulated copy of the last minutes. This has now been corrected.

4. Speaker, John Rhodes

John introduced himself and started his talk about Warwick Road by explaining that it is a private road and that part of the maintenance levy is still paid for by the current Sir Walter Gilbey.

The first Sir Walter Gilbey was the second son of a coachman who reputedly drove the fastest coach between Saffron Walden and London until the railway arrived in 1842. The father died shortly after when Sir Walter was eleven years old and he was looked after by the Drapers Society until he was nineteen. He went on to join the Pay Office with his brother Alfred to support the Crimean War effort. As a sideline, he and his brother imported wine that they sold on. After the war they went into business full time bringing wine in from South Africa that at that time had a cheaper duty levied.

In 1862, the Chancellor reduced the duty on all imported wines and passed laws allowing for the opening of off-licences. At this point the brothers switched to importing French wines which they sold through a network of agents. Their headquarters was in the Pantheon in Oxford St now the HQ of Marks and Spencer. By the end of the 19th century, Sir Walter was the biggest wine importer in the UK with a business worth around £100,000 per annum, about £15 million in today's money.

In 1865, Sir Walter moved to Elsenham Hall becoming Lord of the Manor. A very rich man, he spent a lot of money on improving the lot of the people and when he died in 1914 his estate was worth around £485,000 (£69million today).

One of his many works was the Hockerill Park Estate in Bishop's Stortford. In 1892, the Herts & Essex Observer noted that Sir Walter had acquired a number of plots of land eastwards from Bishop's Stortford Station that would become the Crescent and Warwick Road. Acquisitions continued until 1902 when the last parcel of land was acquired.

Some of these transactions were quite interesting. The Workhouse Board of Guardians wanted to extend the workhouse westwards while Sir Walter was keen to extend Warwick Road through to the Nag's Head. The plot in the middle was owned by Sir Walter's solicitor Mr Gee. This resulted in a three way transaction that saw all party's needs being satisfied.

Once the land had been acquired permission had to be sought from the Board of Health to lay out the estate. Once gained, the plans were presented in September 1891 and permission to go ahead was given in October 1891. Detailed planning took another two years and approval to lay water supplies and build the first houses was granted at the end of 1893. Once the Estate had been laid out it was divided into plots for sale. The sales particulars for the plots specified the minimum cost for any house to be built as well as the more usual things like fencing and building lines. One site was sold in 1905 that said that houses should have a

minimum construction value of £350 for a detached house and £600 for two semi-detached houses.

Warwick Road was largely occupied by the end of WW1 when the Gilbey family were selling off their remaining interest in it following Sir Walter's death. This inspired the formation of the Warwick Road Maintenance Association which continues to this day to look after the maintenance of the road.

Interestingly, as an added inducement, some plots were sold off free of any road charges, the expectation being that the local authority would adopt the road and charge the property frontages to make the road up to their standards and this is what happened to Grange Road in the 1890s and explains why the Gilbey estate still pays part of the maintenance levy.

There then followed a question and answer session to wrap up the talk.

5. Open Forum and Any Other Business

5.1 Society Visits

Anyone who would like to visit Saffron Walden Museum or the Stansted Windmill is invited to put their name down on the sheets at the back of the hall.

5.2 Elsenham Croake

You will be aware that the planners have decided to allow the development of 130 new houses on the Croake. Over the years several finds of Anglo Saxon artefacts have come to light in the area and it is believed that there is likely more to be found. Therefore the Society is writing to the Planning Inspectorate and Uttlesford DC to request a thorough archaeological investigation of the area.

5.3 Teas and Coffees

Our thanks go to Sue Waite, Lynda Jolly and Lynda Bowcock who kindly brewed this evening's teas and coffees.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 08th November 2023. Our speaker is Roger Barrett from the Stansted Local History Society who will be telling us the story of Stansted Mountfitchet.

ENDS

Minutes Agreed: November 2023
Ray Franklin - Chairman