



The Growth of Hemingford Grey
by
Elizabeth Butterfield

Addenda

At last year's AGM, Hemlocs published 'The Growth of Hemingford Grey', a book I had written and which Stuart Harrison had shaped and edited for me. The moment one publishes anything, it becomes out of date, so this document is a short summary of what has happened since the original publication.

To date, we have received one correction. Not all the houses in De Vere Close were built in the 1970s; most were but numbers 11, 15 and 26 were built later, circa 1984. It was at number 6 De Vere Close that John Major, now Sir John, who was our member of Parliament and later Prime Minister, lived when he was first adopted as Conservative candidate for Huntingdon; he did not move to Great Stukeley until 1984.

In the book, I mention that the Giddins family built their new house, called Oakfield, on what is now Manor Road in the late 1880s. The house was pulled down many years ago but its summer house still stands in the garden of one of the houses in the close called Oakfields off Manor Road.

Several new houses have been built or are under construction: one at the corner of Marsh Lane and Pound Road and three at the eastern end of Hemingford Road where it meets London Road. Plans were submitted to build a new house in the garden of one of the houses in De Vere Close but I understand that these plans have now been withdrawn.

Numerous street lamps have been replaced with new ones and some potholes have been repaired.

There have been significant improvements to some of the village's public amenities. The Reading Room committee has replaced the old stone plaque showing the name and foundation date with a new one in Stoke Ground stone, refurbished the bench outside and commissioned the redecoration of the main hall. The old photos of the Reading Room's founding fathers have been removed but will shortly be replaced with boards providing a potted history of the Room and incorporating the photos. Without these venerable gentlemen, we would not have a Reading Room!

The Pavilion now has a stairlift to enable those who have trouble climbing stairs to reach the Chris Page Room, lounge and bar on the first floor. The defibrillator, funded by donations from various village sources, is now housed on the outside wall of the Pavilion by the main entrance. A monthly lunch has been reinstated on the fourth Friday of each month; all are welcome!

The Parish Centre continues to operate the Community Cafe and, from Summer 2017, there is now a Village Market on the second Saturday of most months, featuring various stalls (breads, jams, toys, flowers, cards, crafts etc). Parish Councillors are on hand here to chat and answer queries. This has proved to be a popular and welcome innovation.

Alongside the good things, there have been some disasters. The worst of these for villagers who have no car has been the almost total withdrawal of the Whippet bus service. Up to September 2017, the two Hemingford villages had about four buses each way to and from St Ives every day Monday to Saturday. Whippet Bus Company gave three months' notice of its intention to remove all of them, together with all other village routes. Thanks to valiant efforts by our Parish Councillors and Ian Bates, our County Councillor, we now have a bus each way on Mondays and Fridays, provided by Dews Coaches and paid for by the County Council. Those of us who use public transport hope that at least these buses will continue.

Another setback is the loss of the November Fireworks Display. The Committee had kept it going for many years but, with increasing age, decided quite rightly that they had done enough. One hopes that another field and another committee can rekindle it!

Looming over us is the continuing spectre of Mick George and his proposed waste recycling plant on the site of the old Hemingford Abbots Golf Course. Although it is located in our neighbouring parish, when the prevailing south-westerly wind blows much of the dust and noise will come to us.

A few more pieces of information about the village have come to light since the original publication. It seems that at the western end of Victoria Terrace, in a building alongside the larger house, there was for many years a bakery that served that end of the village.

On a lighter note, it has emerged that the village is renowned in American popular literature. Batman first appeared as a character in Detective Comics in March 1939 and was so popular that he merited his own comic in 1940. He mastered the art of disguise and used many aliases to infiltrate the underworld or just go undercover in public situations. One of his alter egos was as an English aristocrat, masquerading under the name of Sir Hemingford Grey!

The book 'The Growth of Hemingford Grey' has now sold some 250 copies and the text can be downloaded from the Hemlocs website at www.hemlocs.co.uk. In addition, a one sheet pamphlet 'A Village Walk' offers a self-guided route round places of interest in the centre of the village. It is available in the Village Store, the Community Cafe, the Manor House, St James's Church and the Cock public house.

Elizabeth Butterfield
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