

HOUGHTON REGIS HERITAGE SOCIETY

THE RED HOUSE PROPOSAL



hrhs HOUGHTON REGIS
HERITAGE SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Heritage Society was formed in 2012, it started with just nine individuals who were passionate about Houghton Regis Heritage and wanted to preserve and record the history of the town for the benefit of the local community and its future generations.

Heritage is a small word covering a multitude of different subjects and areas. One of these areas is the category of Old Buildings. Houghton Regis and Sewell have a number of old buildings, which are registered with English Heritage.

The town has seen many changes over the years; in fact it is forever evolving sometimes for the good and sometimes for the not so good. We have lost over the years many buildings either through decay or for the sake of progress.

Houghton Regis still has buildings of note in the way of heritage, you can find them listed on another page of this booklet in the English Heritage listing. To the Society three buildings are of particular interest namely ALL SAINTS CHURCH, THE RED HOUSE and HOUGHTON HALL that is under private ownership.

The Red House has a history closely linked to the community and that is why the Society is working closely with Central Bedfordshire Council through the refurbishment programme and beyond.

The Society put forward ideas of use in their first proposal in April 2016, a copy of these can be seen on other pages in this booklet. Our idea is to use the Red House as a HERITAGE CENTRE either on a peppercorn rent funded by grants or to purchase the property by the same method. We are now a registered Trust, which will enable us to apply for grants more easily.

David Hill
Chairman HRHS

THE WHITEHEAD FAMILY AND THE RED HOUSE

The Whitehead family had a house on the green called "Strangers" known today as The Red House. Thomas Whitehead claims in his Will to have been born there, but no baptismal entry can be traced for him.

He is probably the Thomas who studied for Matric at Magdelene College, 1635, and studied for his degree between 1638-1639.

A 'relative' (probably his father) had been headmaster at Repton School, Derbyshire, where Thomas became First Usher (senior master) from 1642 until he died in 1654.

At the age of 43, Thomas became seriously ill. He returned to Houghton Regis, but by the time he made his Will, he was so weak he could only scratch his mark; however, he was perfectly clear in his mind as to what to do with the family property.

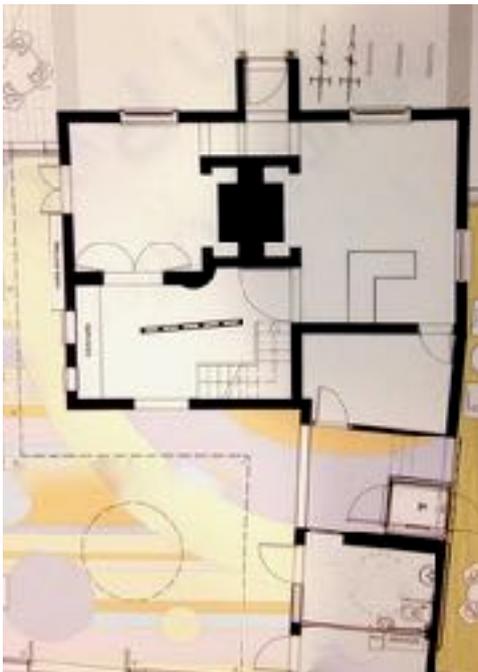
'Strangers', the house which Thomas Whitehead had inherited, faced the village Green; it had various outbuildings and $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of land. He instructed that either it should be converted into a school or be pulled down and the materials used to build a new specially designed school.

The first two schoolmasters were local vicars who did not need a school house and it is likely that the first group of boys were taught in the church while a new building was being erected. Later documents describe a school house and classroom which suggests that the premises were purpose built.

In addition to the house and garden, Thomas Whitehead left the large sum of £250, and when the expenses of setting up the school were complete, the remainder was invested in 15 acres in England's Field (the 'inlands' behind Station Road) in Dunstable.

In his Will Thomas Whitehead stipulated that the school would be made up of 15 boys from poor families in Houghton and five boys from poor families in the hamlets (probably Thorn, Calcott and Sewell).

THE RED HOUSE - INTERIOR & EXTERIOR



THE RED HOUSE
One of the oldest houses in Houghton Regis. It was built in the 17th century and is a Grade II listed building.



A Picture of the Red House Garden Orchard how it used to look in days gone by.

ROOM IDEAS

These are ideas from the Heritage Society for possible use of the building when refurbished.

THE BRANDRETH STORY



A room telling the story of the Brandreth family, with large size documents and pictures. The room could also be used by local artists exhibiting their work or craft demonstrations.

RESEARCH ROOM



A room in which pupils and students can undertake research and look at the picture archive together with various books and documents available.

OLD SCHOOL ROOM



A Classroom from the past where schools can visit and experience what it was like to be at school in the old days.

INFORMATION POINT



Tourist information
Bus time tables
Council information leaflets
Leaflets/ flyers from local
voluntary groups
General 'Whats on leaflets'
Ticket sales for local events
Historic Town Walks information

SMALL CONCESSION SHOP



A small area for selling fresh garden produce from the Kitchen Garden of Houghton Hall Park or other local producers.

OFFICE AREA FOR THE SOCIETY



The Heritage Society need space for an office and storage area. Consideration needs to be given for users who have difficulty using stairs.

EXTERIOR



The garden at the rear of the property could be turned into a fragrance garden with a small Lilly pond with seats around.

SOME of these ideas might be viewed as expensive to do or not suitable for such a property as this. The Heritage Society are open to ideas from townspeople. Bear in mind that we can only put these ideas forward to Central Bedfordshire Council who own the property.

**ENGLISH HERITAGE LISTING OF PROPERTIES
IN HOUGHTON REGIS AND SEWELL**

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| HOUGHTON HALL | GRADE II |
| HOUGHTON COURT | GRADE II |
| LODGE TO HOUGHTON HALL | GRADE II |
| WALL AND GATE PIERS OF HOUGHTON HALL | GRADE II |
| RANGE OF OUT BUILDINGS HOUGHTON HALL | GRADE II |
| THE RED HOUSE THE GREEN | GRADE II |
| 21,22,23 EAST END | GRADE II |
| THE CROWN PUBLIC HOUSE | GRADE II |
| ALL SAINTS CHURCH | GRADE I |
| DENE HOLLOW | GRADE II |
| VANE COTTAGE PARK ROAD NORTH | GRADE II |
| EAST HILL FARMHOUSE | GRADE II |
| MANOR FARM HOUSE SEWELL | GRADE II |
| BODGERS BARN & REAR BARN SEWELL | GRADE II |
| LANE FARMHOUSE SEWELL | GRADE II |
| SUNDIAL COTTAGE SEWELL | GRADE II |
| SEWELL FARM HOUSE SEWELL | GRADE II |
| THE RED LION PUBLIC HOUSE BIDWELL | GRADE II |
| SPRINGWELL COTTAGE SEWELL LANE H.R | GRADE II |
| BARN TO NORTH EAST OF SPRINGWELL COTTAGE SEWELL | GRADE II |
| OAKWELL PARK THORN | GRADE II |
| REDCOW FARM COTTAGE | GRADE II |
| THORN SPRING MOATED SITE | SCHEDULING |
| MAIDEN BOWER HILL FORT | NOT APPLICABLE TO LIST |

THE DEEDS OF THE RED HOUSE

LEASE AND RELEASE (Part 1 only)

- I. Ric Buckingham late of Houghton Regis, now of Chadwell, Essex, yeoman
II. Jas Large of Houghton Regis, wheelwright

Consid: £450

- 3 bays of building and 2 "leaneroes" adjoining the same at S.E end and N.E and said 3 bays.
- One other lean-to called the "Brickseller" or Drinkhouse, being built up with a brick case standing next to the street of Houghton Regis extending so far W as the bricksellar or drinkhouse goes and adjoining the N of the 3 bays of building...which said 3 bays and lean-tos adjoin the cottage where Mary Hogg widow now dwells on W, and are remaining part of Jenkins Farmhouse where Thos Halsey late did dwell and where Widow Wells now dwells in Houghton Regis.
the ground and soil whereon the said buildings stand
bit or slipe of land, cont. 1 pole adjoining and belonging to the 3 bays of building so far W as the brickcellar or drinkhouse goes, being next the street of Houghton Regis on the N.
garden plot or piece of ground between the said 3 bays of building and the gatehouse
2 yards are now paled, bounded and set out, adjoining and belonging to the 3 bays of buildings, well yard and ground of Mary Hogg on W, and are remaining parts of the yard belonging to the said messuage called Jenkins parcel of ground cont. 10 poles in Houghton Regis on S of the said barns, bounded N. partly by Mary Hogg
partly by orchard and ground in occ of John Swannell
S. partly by ground belonging to the free school of Houghton Regis in occ of Fra. Paddon
E. by Common Green of Houghton Regis
W. by a back lane belonging to Houghton Regis
Liberty to draw, fetch and carry water from well in well yard of Mary Hogg, being W of said yard, and II paying a third of all charges towards repairing the well and maintaining the well bucket, rope, chain and "curbe", and other things belonging when and so often as need shall require.
Reservation of right of passage for Mary Hogg and Wm Norman, labourer, of Houghton Regis, by the usual way through the yards, gateway and gatehouse from the street of Houghton Regis to their cottages at the Wellside at there own free will.

Wit. Dan Hawkins
Hanna Hawkins

6-7 July 1714.

OLD NEWSPAPER REPORTS ABOUT THE RED HOUSE

The articles shown below give an insight into the feelings of towns people and Councillors alike about The Red House and the area surrounding it. For the first time we hear the words in print of John Freeman the owner of the Red House and Peter and Walter Pratt managers of the oldest butcher shop that was in the town at the time. The articles show that through local people support the Red House has fought off having a compulsory purchase order placed on it and demolition, good reasons for the Heritage Society to work with Central Bedfordshire Council on there drive to Restore the property for the residents of Houghton Regis and beyond.

David Hill Houghton Regis Heritage Society

DUNSTABLE GAZETTE MARCH 2nd 1973

A REPRIEVE FOR THE RED HOUSE

A REPRIEVE for the Red House, threatened by a compulsory purchase order by Luton Rural Council, could be on the way.

The future of the Red House, one of Houghton's oldest buildings has become one of the biggest talking points in the village since the council placed a CPO on the property after planning a housing estate in that area.

Owner Mr George Freeman has managed to get his home listed as a building of special architectural or historic interest.

Mr Freeman said that he has received support from the South Bedfordshire Preservation Society and the County Society.

Designation of the Red House as a protected building now means that any moves to pull it down will be fully investigated..

A spokesman for the council said:" The building was formaly on the supplementary or provisional lists but now that it has been upgraded to the formal lists it will afford the property more protection. This does not effect the CPO itself but it does mean there is more protection for the Red House.

"The RDC has not yet decided how this site would be developed. Just because a CPO is placed on the property does not mean it will be demolished."

Mr Freeman said: "I am very pleased with this latest piece of news, and I am sure it will please the hundreds of people who seem interested in the house's future. If it is demolished it will also mean the end of my welding business at the back of the house.

David Orr Dunstable Gazette

OLD NEWSPAPER REPORTS (Continued)

DEMOLITION THREAT TO RED HOUSE

ONE OF THE OLDEST and best known houses in Houghton, "The Red House, on the village green, may be pulled down, if a compulsory purchase order which has been placed on the property is enforced.

And several other Houghton buildings are likely to come under the hammer if the CPO, authorised by Luton Rural Council, is implemented.

The village's oldest school, Whitehead, on the green will go along with Houghton's oldest shop, Pratt's the butchers, in the High Street and other houses including the Red House.

But already, local property owners have objected to the moves. Mr George Freeman, of The Red House, has written to the Department of the Environment in the hope of saving his home. "If I lose it I also lose my business which I operate from the yard at the back," he said. "I will only move if I am forced to, and that will be a very sad day for me," said Mr Freeman.

At present the house is listed as a class 3 in the Department of the Environment's historical building section, but he hopes to have his house upgraded to a higher class and to save it from the CPO.

Mr Freeman told me this week: "The front of the house is Georgian and other parts have been added on later. Although it is difficult to say how old the house is exactly, I think 300 years would be a fair guess." The ministry has asked for photographs and a sketch plan of the house.

The proprietor of Houghton's longest running business, Mr Peter Pratt, the local butcher and former RDC councillor, has also objected to the scheme. Mr Pratt is the third generation to run the small shop, which still has the old slaughterhouse and stable intact. Mr Pratt commented: "If the council offers a fair price we may well withdraw our objection. "If I did not have another shop to operate from then I would probably be fighting this CPO with great vigour." Mr Pratt runs a second butchers store in Hillborough Crescent.

Mr Walter Pratt the previous manager, added "I will be very sorry to see the old place go. It has a lot of history to it, but it seems it has to be demolished." The RDC requires the land for housing development.

Paper & Writer not identified

OLD NEWSPAPER REPORTS (Continued)

RED HOUSE FUTURE UNDECIDED

Dunstable Gazette July 23rd 1976

A 17th CENTURY building called The Red House on the green at Houghton Regis, will “stick out like a sore thumb “ in a new housing development and should be demolished, a councillor claimed last week.

But the knock-it-down call from Cllr Phillip Jones met with a quick response from fellow Labour Houghton Regis councillor Sidney Clarke who said: “ I feel we have destroyed far too much in Houghton Regis, and I would like to see this house kept.” Councillor Jones speaking at a meeting of South Beds Council last week said: “ I am appalled that we are messing about with this house. It’s a planner’s dream that we retain listed buildings. When I hear the sum of £20,000 being handed out to turn it in to two flats surely it would be better to demolish it. “ It will stick out like a sore thumb right in the middle of a new estate when it’s built. If it was a building in a pretty village I would be the first to defend it, But when one building is going to be surrounded by new buildings it can have no architectural merit.”

But Councillor Angus Brewer disagreed: “it is easy to destroy a building like this but it’s impossible to recreate it. Just because it’s surrounded by new buildings is not an argument to knock it down, anyway.”

The council voted against Councillor Jones proposal that the matter be referred back to the housing committee to discuss demolition, after Councillor Mrs Ann Lockhart, chairman of the committee said that it was felt the house should be converted into two flats at a cost of £16,000 as quickly as possible.

The house she said, was included in the second stage of the Clarke’s Way housing development and would later be used by wardens employed for the elderly persons accommodation.

Dunstable Gazette

