

Forge House, Coddanham, Suffolk IP69PS
19 September 2007

COPY

Dear Donald,

COMMUNITY CENTRE TRUST

At the meeting on Saturday 15 September, that you were unable to attend, Andrew reviewed with me the position regarding the new Trust Deed and I undertook to drop you this note. Please accept my apologies for the length to which it grew, as my thoughts, (as the reviewed position flowed from my pen), extended to consider what might reasonably be expected from all concerned, and best for Coddanham.

The Trust Deed document now in Andrew's possession, which he and the trustees-elect stand ready to sign (a "slight modification" of an earlier version) is marked "LEASEHOLD" — by whom, we know not.

As you know, the parish council still awaits a Charity Commission response to the proposition that the Gardeman (Church) Trust sell the Community Centre land to the parish council, in which circumstance, any Deed would be in a Freehold context.

Although we await the Commission, the present Gardeman Trust chairman, referred to the land sale proposition as "a breakthrough" and it found favour with yourself and others.

In the context of the already-notorious "valuation" postulated for the land, it seems timely to reflect upon what may be "reasonable and best for Coddanham", since such sale would break the parochial land link with our ancient trust, affording the opportunity for the generous bequest of a resident, for the benefit of the community in Coddanham, to be wholly floated off to the benefit of others, elsewhere?

The Church, for instance, has already profitted greatly by the sale of two rectories in Coddanham, yet the beggins-bowl goes round for a W.C..

The very modest product of the remarkable bequest to Coddanham of Jack Day and his sisters should have been built for less than a third of the sum available (at the most!) Was it? And where is the balance (for instance)?

That the present Day Trust chairman presses for return of a bridging loan (that his Trust may or may not have been empowered to grant) does add an element of grim humour, as the parish council continues to await release of the sale proceeds of the old village - five years, and counting: proceeds offered by the Gardemann (Village Hall) Trust chairman in 1990, to the parish council led by Bernard Baker (and evidently "approved for transfer," by the Charity Commission, in 1998).

Reading in the press of the Framlingham fiasco, it is worth noting that the Church had apparently proposed to gift church land on which the new Community Centre was to be built.

It should be recalled that when, nearly twenty years ago, Rev. David Cuthbert sought to remedy a decade's ail return from the Gardemann land and the replacement of a hall not capable of improvement and neglected as to its maintenance, he offered to the parish council both the proceeds of sale of the old hall and the proceeds of sale of residential plots opposite the Rec. (the Community Centre site) to pay for a new hall.

But for the obduracy of MSDC's Bernard Horstead, Coddesham would have gained a new hall, at no cost, ten years' earlier.

The gratitude of parishioners to the Church - ancient and modern - could and should have been unbounded! Then.

Whilst the startling and wholly inept intervention of the Day Trust's ludicrous proposal (doomed to failure) further delayed and added hugely to the contract cost of the Community Centre, saddling the parish council with an unlooked-for and undeserved debt, it now appears that the Gardemann Trust seeks to add to that burden.

Poor recompense for my personal determination to secure a substantial annual ground rent income (to a Trust that had received none for 20 years) while achieving the Trust Chairman's "vision", in spite of everything, of a new hall!

Should the Gardemann trustees be reminded of the duty to Coldenham, it being beyond the imagining of their founding benefactor that no rector would, one day, be found resident in the parish?

Be that as it may, there is unmistakable irony in awaiting response from a civil servant in Liverpool to a proposition of doubtful benefit and moral propriety, while the parish council "sit upon" the most recent letter from the Charity Commission which threatens to take everything out of local hands unless a response is received by next month (October).

No wonder the Princess Royal expressed amazement that we had been "at it fifteen years" to open our new hall: one can but wonder what might be made of the unending saga since the gracious Royal visit.

The position of the Trustees-elect is that the new Deed will be signed just as soon as we can know it is the appropriate document, legally advised in London. Such advice may be secured pro bono, but otherwise in my own cognisance, as were the fees in excess of £30,000 to my own office, over the years back to 1990: entirely waived.

Please particularly note that the patience, forbearance and sustained enthusiasm of the volunteer Trustees-elect, still presently ready to sign the Deed, may not be limitless.

Yours sincerely,

Michael.

copies: Andrew MacPherson
Ray Collins
Sylvia Harris
Debbie McDannell
Rev. Tim Hall
Sue Groome