

## Can you help with Church House School?

From time to time the Society is approached by someone who is interested in finding out about something to do with Bishop's Waltham's past. Sometimes we can help – either through the Museum, Hampshire Record Office or through personal knowledge and simple research.

In early 2017 we received a request for information about a school in Bank Street, Bishop's Waltham that had been called Church House School. The inquirer knew that it had catered for children with learning disabilities and that it had closed some time ago.

The information we have been able to put together is sketchy and so we thought would we turn to the "wisdom of the crowd" and ask our members to tell us what they know.

We know that the school was based in a house called Holmoak – at one time owned by the Gunner family (the owners of Gunner's Bank) and then by a Major Cartwright, before becoming a school. It was a fine old house that was demolished to make way for Roman Row – the 22-flat retirement housing built on the land in 1987.



*Holmoak and Bank Street in 1973*

Holmoak is the white-shuttered house on the left in the photograph – opposite the entrance to Malvern Close. Gunner's Bank was run from the buildings next door to it. Its demolition was a final prompt for the formation of the Bishop's Waltham Society. John Bosworth captured its elegance and age in photographs even as it was being demolished.







### **The school**

We know it was an independent school run by Helen and Laurence Oldfield and that it was inspected by HM Inspectors and registered under the Education Act 1944 in 1976.

It appears that Laurence Oldfield, described as a Private School Proprietor of Church House, Bishop's Waltham, was declared bankrupt at Winchester Law Courts in 1981. So it may be that the school was not open for very long.

It also seems that in 1985 Federated Homes arranged a loan from Chartered Trust plc who took a legal charge on Church House. It seems therefore that Laurence Oldfield sold Holmoak/Church House to Federated Homes in order to clear his debts. He was discharged from bankruptcy at Winchester in December 1986.



*1984 view from Malvern Close*

The photograph above shows Holmoak/Church House on the left (by then painted white and without shutters) for sale in 1984.

Sadly Laurence Oldfield died just 15 months after his bankruptcy discharge, in March 1988, aged only 60. He is buried in Hoe Road Cemetery.

Just as a historical footnote, Federated Homes, who were the developers for Roman Row, had themselves gone into receivership by 1988. This may have been the result of the US stock market collapse in October 1987 and the subsequent last great global financial crisis before 2007/8.

Be that as it may, whilst all this is more or less interesting, it tells us little about the school, Helen and Laurence Oldfield and whether and where any records or details might still exist.

If you have any memories or knowledge of Church School or any records PLEASE let us know – no detail too small!

Just email [info@bishopswalthamsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@bishopswalthamsociety.org.uk) with anything you know or think might help. Please also let us know if you want your information to remain confidential. The person asking for information is a private individual and we have not asked why they are seeking information.