

History of John Storer House

Extract from "John Storer House: A Short History" by Owen Brown

In 1713, John Storer, thought to have been a small-holder from Walton-on-the-Wolds, founded a charity conveying cottages and land in Loughborough to eleven trustees. The income was used to buy wheat to make bread, which was distributed to poor people living in the town, and coats for children in need aged between five and twelve years.

In 1891, the Charity Commissioners made a scheme for the charity; the general basis was that half the income should go to the relief of poverty and the other half, towards the advancement of education for children resident in the Parish.

In 1899 the distribution of bread and clothing ceased. The children, because of the stigma associated of being in receipt of charity, refused to wear the coats.

Originally the income cannot have been great; in 1785 it was £30 a year, but with the Charity Commissioners it was now, in 1960, £1,850. From time to time, the Trustees sold off parts of the land in Loughborough. In 1891, 14 lots off Ashby Road, where Storer Road runs, and in 1960 the remaining Ashby Road land was sold to Leicestershire County Council for educational purposes.

The Trustees invited suggestions as to how this extra income could benefit the town. Publicity was given to the offer and the Rotary Club called a meeting to gather opinion. The consensus from the meeting was what was needed first and foremost was a day centre for older people. In addition to this, some form of short-stay accommodation provided for older people was also required.

John Storer House Trustees agreed to support the project and contributed £10,000 over a five-year period. A public meeting was called to canvass support. It was held in the Town Hall and was presided over by the then Mayor, Councillor Eggington. Guy Moss, President of the Loughborough Rotary Club, reported on the previous meeting. The meeting concluded with an resolution of support. In the meantime, Arthur Usher, Town Clerk of Loughborough and the President of the Rotary Club, proposed the formation of a Council of Social Service to co-ordinate voluntary organisations in the Borough.

After a secretary, Mrs Brickwood of Hoton, had stepped forward to take on the task, a meeting was called on 16 January 1962, and the Council of Social Service was formed on 28 March 1962. The main objectives were:

- The assistance and co-ordination of the existing voluntary welfare and social services in the Borough.
- The expansion of these services and the initiation of new services when need arose.
- The provision of a social centre for the use of these services.

A base to promote these activities was needed. Loughborough Town Council gave £5,000 to develop the site where the condemned Emmanuel School had stood.

The cost of the building was estimated at £40,000, so the next task was to raise £15,000 to add to the £10,000 promised by John Storer Trustees and £10,000 from Leicestershire County Council. Due to the enthusiasm of Tom Fielding, from the Boy Scouts Association, and Owen Brown, President of Loughborough Rotary Club, a marquee was erected on the site, in April 1965. And a week of events was held, beginning with an auction sale, bingo session, floral exhibition, fashion show, a night of variety and dance; each event was organised by different organisations in the town. During the building work, a representative of Smith's Charities, who had made a donation of £500, suggested to Tom Fielding that an Abbeyfield Society was started in Loughborough and they would make a further grant of £500 towards it.

Short-stay accommodation would be provided by Abbeyfield Society, so there was no need to provide this at John Storer House, which had been the initial idea. An Abbeyfield Society was formed in Loughborough, which has gone from strength to strength. The money was raised by the fund-raising activities, detailed above, and by a generous legacy left by the late Mrs Dorothy Huston, and the building opened on 29 April 1966 by Princess Margaret.