

Representation of Bob Jellicoe, Trustee of the Southwold Museum,
Regarding Museum Archival Material on Southwold Hospital

I was asked to undertake research on the history of the hospital for a public meeting scheduled for 9 May 2016 at St Edmunds Hall. I am providing this information to the Town Council to support its submission at the Listing Hearing on the hospital's designation as an Asset of Community Value.

By way of background, I was born and raised in Southwold; my family has lived in the town since 1811. I am a retired secondary school teacher, formerly Head of English at Thomas Mills High School, Framlingham.

What became clear during my research was how closely the community in Southwold and the surrounding district supported the hospital, regularly and generously, and there is no doubt that it could not have survived without their contributions.

I found that before the hospital was built, there were two small cottage hospitals also supported by charitable donations. So generous were the contributions that it was possible to acquire and build on the current site, whose foundation stone was laid in 1901. Thereafter, Southwold Hospital expanded and grew, serving not just Southwold but the local community in the District. Monies were raised by fetes, bazaars, entertainments, collecting boxes, subscriptions, donations, from employees of local firms, etc. Gifts of as little as three old pennies are recorded in the Archive's records. One document records at least 450 subscribers and donators over a particular year.

One of the most touching contributions was from a Mr. Harry Stannard, a fisherman who exhibited a porpoise he caught at his premises in Trinity Street and raised 8 shillings. This was in the very early years of the hospital, at the beginning of the 20th century.

After the hospital had become an NHS facility, George Bumstead set up the League of Friends. George was a local grocer, Justice of the Peace, and very community minded. In a 10 year period, the League of Friends raised over £250,000 for the hospital and George battled long and hard against the NHS to maintain the hospital as a local concern. I have provided the Town Clerk with copy of a note from the Museum's Hospital Archive about George's contribution. The Reydon Home Guard donated £37, having had the money in the bank for over 20 years, waiting for a worthy local cause to give it to.

Employees of the many local firms who raised money for the hospital over the years included Adnams, Four Ducks (which made mattresses), Denny and Jones (a High Street supermarket), Denny the Builders, the Electric White Company, the Gas Company, etc.

Money was also raised through collections in all the local parish churches.

It is absolutely clear looking at the documents how much the community gave continued support to the hospital even when it belonged to the NHS, reflecting its respect and admiration for this small institution which served its local people so well, and which saved so many frail and elderly people from having to travel to larger, more impersonal hospitals elsewhere.

3 May 2016

Bob Jellicoe

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