

Susan Hughes

New Trimley St. Martin Resident and Library and Information Adviser



*Susan Hughes, August 2018*

Should you examine the handsome and finely drawn 1807 Enclosure Award Map for Trimley St. Martin, you will observe a survey of extensive farm lands, dotted with small farming settlements and dominated by a closely-knit village centre. The complete population for our village at that time was about 256 people, according to the 1801 census. Opposite the entrance to the road now called Old Kirton Road, three strip-like plots are defined. Two are Glebe lands, belonging to the Church, whilst the land in the middle has been defined as belonging to the Rector of St. Martin's. In other words, these three pieces of lands were for the benefit of the Rector. Some eighty odd years later in 1885, the Ordnance Survey published the 6" to the mile map of approximately the same area. The extensive Rectory building known as Longford House is clearly visible, with every coniferous and deciduous tree surrounding it carefully delineated; the property embraces the two glebe land plots as well as the one belonging to the Rector. The census summary of 1881 provides clear evidence of population growth in St. Martins: 605 males and females, adults and children. In eighty years, the population had grown by approximately 136%. The Rectory in 1881 was occupied by Reverend Thomas Palmer and his nieces, Sarah and Alexandra Brodie. They were served by a Cook, Mary Haylock and two servants, Kate Bebbam and Henry Took. I suspect life was gracious for the master of this household.

Time inexorably moves on. Slow, gradual growth has been sustained since then, reaching 1,002 people in 1961 and 1,942 in 2011, according to data taken from the censuses for those respective years. A rough guesstimate of the population of St. Martin's now, suggests the village has approximately 2,000 residents. We are still a comparatively small village.

The building of Cavendish Grove was completed in the last year, including a play area. This has led to at least a hundred new residents joining our village. I've watched the erection of the buildings with interest, walking the two new roads during their construction and imagined the people who would occupy the new homes. Would any new home occupiers be existing villagers? Would new settlers like living here and would they enjoy our semi-rural village? As newcomers to the community, they would surely wish to be welcomed and absorbed. Earlier in the year a brief, casual conversation with a

house guest of one the properties, intimated that the owner of the property was very happy with her house and garden. In fact, it was described as the best place they had ever lived. The transient nature of the conversation with an unknown casual passer-by allowed no time to scribble down specific details. Nevertheless, I hoped for a proper interview with someone who would provide a more detailed explanation about their new dwelling place.



*Cavendish Grove under development, 2017*

Unexpectedly the perfect person appeared, not in Cavendish Grove but in the stronghold of civilisation known as Felixstowe Library. I've known Susan Hughes for several years in her work capacity and we usually exchange book ideas and library thoughts whenever I see her. During a brief business-like chat on one of the airless days of August, Susan dropped a piece of information into the conversation; she had recently moved into Cavendish Grove. I received this news with unseemly enthusiasm. Would she allow me to interview her, I asked? Followed by a rapid explanation of the role of the Village Recorder to her, as well as the role of the Blog and with modesty and fleeting hesitation, she agreed to my request.

A week or so later, Cavendish Grove was quiet as I walked through it to find Susan's house; a calm and slightly drowsy atmosphere prevailed as the end of a hot afternoon and working day approached. The brightness of the new bricks added to the dazzling light on the streets. I could see the large field opposite the Hand in Hand in the distance and hear distant noises from the work being done on the railway line but for the most part it was peaceful. Susan opened the door to her house with smiles and a warm welcome. The open plan downstairs room is both a Kitchen and a Living area, combining the best facilities when cooking for hungry guests by allowing you to cook and talk at the same time.

Susan explained she has moved around during her life.

*"My father was in the Services and I'm from Belfast but because of his work, we moved around. I've lived in Inverness, Arbroath, Morecombe, Southampton and other places. As an adult I lived for 27 years in Saskatchewan, Canada. The winters were very harsh.... My family is quite far-flung. I have a sister in Ireland and brother in Ireland, while my son lives in Banff in Canada."*

In her gently burred accent, she began to explain to me how she came to be in her new house. For many years, Susan had lived in Stennett's Close in St. Mary's occupying a two bed-roomed bungalow with a large garden but when her daughter left home, the necessity for down-sizing seemed obvious. Plus, as many tenants can tell you, it costs more to retain an unoccupied bedroom than an occupied one. In common with all requests for a change in Social Housing, Susan was placed on a waiting list. The waiting time is variable but rarely instantaneous. When an appropriate property is available, the onus is upon the Client to make a swift decision. An unexpected phone call came through to Susan last November, inviting her to evaluate a one-bedroomed property. She had the viewing on a Friday night and was given a few hours grace to make her choice. It wasn't difficult for her to accept the property and within a fortnight, Susan moved into her new home. Everything was and is, fresh and shiny; the insulation and double glazing are effective in keeping out the cold and draughts; housework, the bane of many, has been cut down to an hour and a half a week. The convenience of the layout makes for easy and comfortable living, an important factor when you are working full-time.

Such a situation creates a feeling of well-being and pleasure but unfortunately, a slight hiccup occurred about a fortnight after Susan moved into the house. Maybe as a result of many years with bungalow legs, Susan misjudged her steps coming down stairs, resulting in a shock to her body and a broken wrist. And that was it for two months. Susan was effectively confined to Trimley quarters and thrown upon village resources to provide her daily requirements. When asked how she managed, it is fair to say, she became a walking advertisement for the amenities of St. Martin's.

*"It was alright because I could use the shops in the village and I managed to stay fairly self-sufficient. The Sausage Shop is only five minutes away and the Post Office has the basics. It's an easy walk along the High Road to Goslings. The people there were friendly and helpful. Jane especially was very kind to me. They offered to deliver things to my door."*

Friends and work colleagues tipped up to help her and Susan was helped at Christmas by her daughter. Although circumstances could have been better, Susan became familiar with the amenities very quickly. Since then she has returned to work Susan's explained the nature of her work in the Library.

*"I've worked in Felixstowe Library for 19 years. I started off as a Relief assistant, then became part-time, then full-time and now I work Sundays as well. I'm involved in the annual Reading Game."*

All of this means Susan has a broad overview of the breadth of the role of the Library in the community. Libraries are for everyone and as Council Tax payers, we have all contributed to the services they provide for the benefit of the many.

Other positives about the village emerged as Susan continued to talk. The close proximity to the Bus Stop allows quick access to work but one of her true pleasures is being on the periphery of the open countryside, viewing the bird life and the opportunity to see the changing of the seasons. Close to Susan's house runs a hedge and ditch, part of an earlier field division and at this time of year it is possible for her to hear families discovering the pleasures of the countryside as they gather in this

year's blackberries. Her hope is that any future developments will not impinge on these simple pleasures. Susan struggled to find a downside for her new home. The noise from the work on the Railway, has impacted on her but as Susan acknowledges, this is only temporary. After some reflection, only one came to mind: the sound of the Bands who play with great gusto and vigour at the Social Club. Although the club always keeps within the acceptable decibel levels, the sound reverberates around the open field, which acts as a natural amphitheatre. But other than that, her delight is unconfined.

Before I left, Susan gave me a tour of her house. A well-disguised, neat cupboard hides the household equipment, including the washing machine downstairs. Upstairs includes a bathroom and bedroom and sports another tidy room which is the width of the house. Too small for a regular bedroom, it can be used for office space, a put-me up and all the other impedimenta modern living embraces. Outside, Susan has begun work on the garden, re-seeding the lawn, planting shrubs and generally creating a green space to please the eye and rest the spirits.

The land once occupied by the Rector has been re-defined and distributed to accommodate new households. Susan is one new resident who is happy to be in Trimley and her new home and I wish her many years of contentment. Welcome, Susan.



The new playing area in Cavendish Grove.

If you have any comments or observations, you may contact me at:

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Citations:

<http://Visionofbritain.org.uk> Trimley St Martin CP/AP through time | Population Statistics | Males and Females.

<https://maps.nls.uk/view/101578736> : Maps.nls.uk |Suffolk LXXXIII.SE (includes: Kirton; Stratton Hall; Trimley St Martin; Trimley ... -  
Ordnance Survey Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952