



malthouse news

St Matthew Housing -
Housing and support for people in need

Issue 4 - September 2006

A day with workmen at Elsey's Yard



Some of the workmen at the site

When sitting in the St Matthew Housing office in Bury St Edmunds it is sometimes easy to forget who is actually doing the day-in-day-out hard graft on restoring and restructuring the Malthouse, so I thought it would be a good idea to spend some time at Elsey's Yard with workmen from Cocksedge Building Contractors to find out their views, opinions and experiences on the restoration project.



Ken Hatchett and Fred Mayhew (shown left) are two of the carpenters who have been working on site since the start of the project. The carpenters are responsible for

ensuring that the timber frame structure is sound. This involves checking the oak beams to see if they can be salvaged. If they cannot be re-used the carpenters replace the old oak with new oak beams. They have also been measuring and cutting new wood to insert between the old beams to strengthen the roof rafters. Fred Mayhew said, "Working on a historic restoration project is very different from that of a modern building. It is more complicated – nothing is level and everything leans this way and that, so you have to work around this."

Ken Hatchett informed me that they had managed to salvage some of the old timber frame structure but due to health and safety restrictions some sections had had to be replaced. Ken said, "I think even though we have had to replace some of the old oak with new oak it is

still in keeping with how it would have looked hundreds of years ago. It is very rewarding seeing the project come together."

I asked Ken what his views were on the planned use of the Malthouse by St Matthew Housing and he replied, "It is good that someone can come in and restore this building, otherwise it would be lost forever." The Site Manager, Ken Dobinson (shown below) expressed a similar view: "It is putting an old building that was falling to the ground into good use."



As Site Manager, Ken's role is to manage the labour, sort out technical problems, solve day-to-day issues, work closely with the tradesmen

and liaise with the architect and project management team. Ken says that working on a restoration project you do tend to come across the unexpected. "This can make the job slightly more difficult but it is a lot more interesting than working on a modern building".

Ken's most rewarding part of the project so far was seeing the roof go on and the external rendering nearing completion. Ken said, "Nothing had seemed to change for a while but now you can see the building taking shape and you feel like you are getting something in return for your efforts."

John Stirges, the brickies Labourer (shown right) said, "It is all rewarding to me." John has been working with two other brickies repairing the flint work and building new walls on the Malthouse. They have cleaned the old stones to reuse and patched up walls and window surrounds with old fashioned red bricks so it is in keeping with the property. John said, "It is challenging, particularly the old part of the site. You do not know what you are going to dig up. We have come across old tiles, bones and even an animal's skull!"



Interview by Sarah Yarrow, Funding and Marketing Assistant

Malthouse project captures imagination of school children



Last month school children from Westley Middle School in Bury St Edmunds revealed their artwork that captures the life and times of the Malthouse in years past. It now proudly hangs on the exterior of the project.

The pupils' efforts, marshalled by lead art teacher Mrs Jill Anderson, portray the activities of the Malthouse in its operational days, showing the characters in their period clothes, and the tasks that they would have performed, using their knowledge of the malting process.

The art boards are still on display at the project site so go and take a look. St Matthew Housing will be working with Westley Middle School again on more art projects for the Malthouse later this year.

Come along for a guided tour of the Malthouse project

On Sunday 10th September 2006, the Malthouse will be playing its part in the Heritage Open Days 2006, a national celebration of England's cultural and architectural heritage coordinated by the Civic Trust. The Old Malthouse which has been abandoned since the 1980s will be open to the public for guided tours given by the Heritage Centre Project Manager, offering an insight of the £2.2 million restoration and new build project.

The tours will run every 30 minutes starting at 10.30am until 3pm. If you are interested, then pre-book a **free** ticket by ringing the Tourist Information Centre on 01284 764667. Donations welcomed.

Former life of the Malthouse

What was the Malthouse used for before the St Matthew Housing (SMH) project? Who owned the building and for how long? When did the building's role as a malthouse end and why was this? If you can answer any of these questions or know of anyone who can, then SMH would like to hear from you.

A reminiscence project is being carried out to help SMH gain more knowledge of the building and the sites former life. As part of the project, a book about the history of the building is to be produced and you could help contribute towards its content. If you have memories of the Malthouse before the SMH project, whether it is photographs, artefacts or writings, then please contact the Heritage Centre Project Manager at SMH on 01284 732573.

Doesn't time fly when you are making a difference...?

Look how quickly work on the Malthouse Project has progressed in just six months...



Front of Malthouse

March 2006



September 2006



Rear of Malthouse



Look out for more photographs and news on the Malthouse Project on our new Malthouse website...more information to follow in the next issue of the newsletter. **Watch this space!**



Heritage Lottery Fund

St Matthew Housing
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For more information or to become a 'Malthouse Friend' contact St Matthew Housing on telephone: 01284 732574 or email: allan.scott-davies@stmatthewhousing.org