

The Bendall Trust legacy

St Mary's benefits from an annual donation from Alice Winifred Bendall. Alice was wife to one of the original Bendall family solicitors in Mildenhall. She allegedly fell out with the vicar of St. Mary's Church and left 12,140 shares and about £1,400 to the Trust for the benefit of the Church of England School in Mildenhall – rather than the Church itself. Ever since, the school has enjoyed considerable financial help.

A brief history of Bendalls Solicitors. Thomas Partridge Bendall established his legal practice in Rous Road, Newmarket in 1880, joined some twenty years later by his sons Reginald and Archie. Between 1910-12 the firm expanded with new offices in Soham, Ely and Mildenhall. When Archie died in 1935 the firm was bought by the Morgan & Nicholls partnership, neither of whom survived much beyond WWII. Geoff Roberts bought into the practice in 1947, gradually buying out his partners to become sole principal in 1955. By the end of the 1970s Geoff had been joined by four partners, including Andrew Geddes. In 1983 the partners decided to go their separate ways and the Ely and Soham offices became independent practices. Geoff continued in the practice with Andrew until 2000. Today, Andrew together with his partner Jacqueline Spencer and a qualified team of solicitors and legal executives work from both offices offering a broad range of services with particular expertise in domestic and commercial conveyancing, family law and wills and probate.

The Trust has been in existence since 1952 since when there has only been 3 clerks (including the present – Richard Alecock). From 1952-1977 Arthur Oldman (then head of Beck Row School and father of Mrs Jean Oldman – a Riverside school teacher) was Clerk. Subsequently, Alan Palmer - Mildenhall Accountant replaced him until 2013 when Richard Alecock took on the role.

Typically, the Trust makes an annual donation from fund profits to the school (for the direct benefits of the pupils). In recent years, the money has been spend on a range of new computer and IT equipment for the children, as well as direct welfare support when needed.



Mill Street with Bendall premises on the right. The date of the photograph is not known but is probably soon after the office was established in Mildenhall around 1912.



The building more recently.