



## **BUILDERS OF THE MAGDALEN ESTATE**

Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre was developed by Great Yarmouth Borough Council as a community facility for the expanding estate of Council housing providing homes for the fast growing population of the Borough. Together with the 711 Shrublands Prefabs the Magdalen Estate grew until it became the largest council estate in the United Kingdom. It was named after Magdalen College from whom the land was acquired. Roads were named after the various colleges.

When Mr. Macey was first appointed as Resident Warden of the Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre in 1949, only the first few council houses had been built on the newly named Magdalen Way, opposite the Gorleston Cemetery. The Magdalen Arms Public House was not built until 1954. Shields of the coat of arms of various colleges were displayed within the public house.

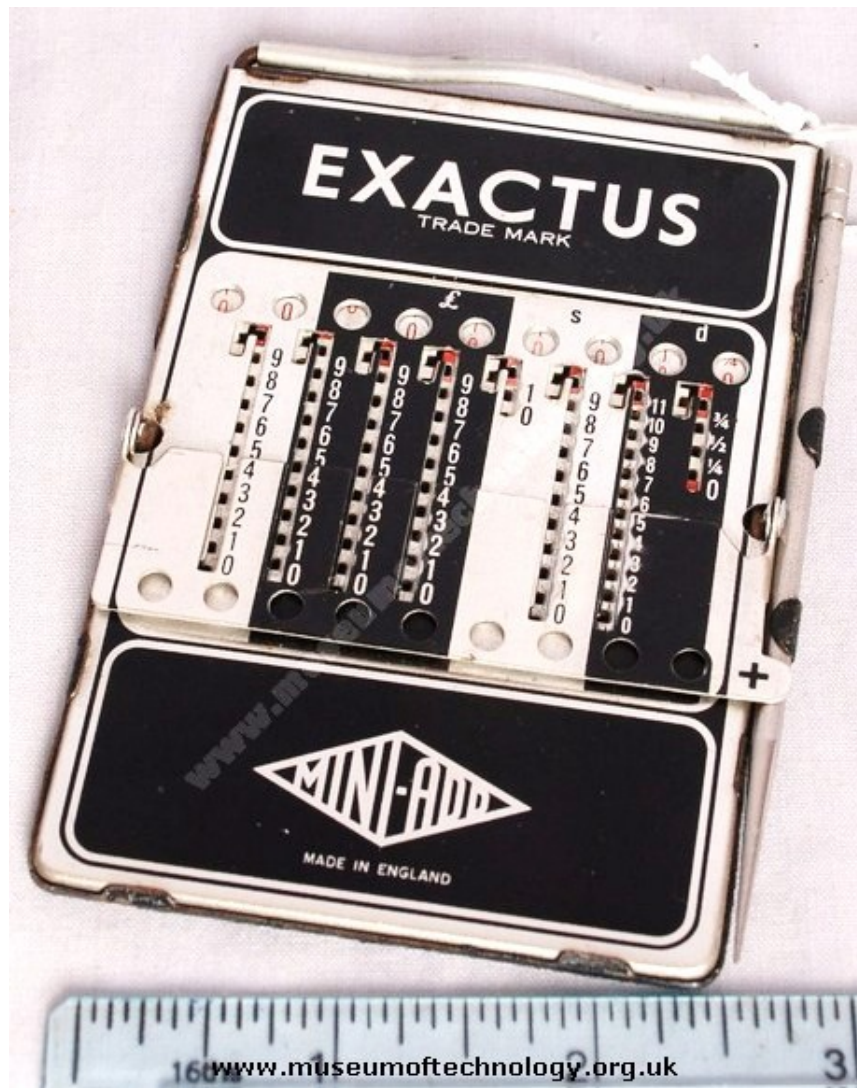
During the 1950's there were a number of established building firms who competed for contracts to build Council Properties. Among them were H.A. Holmes, T. V. Palmer, Cadmore and Peacock, J. H. Cooper, Millieamps and Middletons. The Borough Architect was Frank Jackson.

Two more of the local builders were Jubby Brothers on Southtown Road and Robert Chaston of Cross Road, Gorleston. Rob Burrage, one of the present Shrublands archive group, recalls that in the late 1940's and early 1950's his father competing for building work.

To arrive at a competitive price the costings of all materials were estimated by carefully working through a bill of quantities, about three or four inches thick. This was long before the days of electronic calculators. Rob

remembers his father, Cyril Burrage, spending long evenings and weekends in his calculations in order to submit an estimate to secure the work.

Cyril used an ancient mechanical calculator. It was about 5 by 3 inches comprising of columns of slides and gates operated with a stylus, calculating pre decimal pounds shillings and pence. With so many builders desperate for work, every calculation was vital.



In addition to being part of the community helping to develop the Magdalen Estate, his two small companies also built the Magdalen Methodist Church, St. Lukes Church in Cobholm, the Lawns Retirement home in Great Yarmouth as well as much construction work for the local breweries, Lacons and Steward and Pattersons.

At the time of Cyril s retirement there was a huge slump in the construction industry. The premises of Robert Chaston Ltd., were subsequently demolished and made way for a car park for the new Fine

Fare Supermarket which itself has also disappeared from the High Street.

Cyril had followed his father who was a carpenter/builder. In 1896 at the age of sixteen, Charles Henry Burrage first entered an apprenticeship with William Henry Wiseman in the art of a mast and blockmaker for five shillings a week.

He never finished that apprenticeship. In 1901 he entered a new apprenticeship with Kate Emma Fuller, a small local builders yard and carpenters work shop, Ernest J. Fuller at 4 Baker Street, Gorleston.

When his son Cyril followed his father as an apprentice with the same firm in 1928, for some reason, possibly reflecting the state of the construction industry, his weekly wage was only five shillings a week for the first year, rising to twenty shillings a week for the fifth and final year of the contract.

There were many connections between the building industry and Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre.

Bert Holmes became chairman of the Shrublands Management Committee. He was a good friend of the centre and contributed building materials to members who were converting barns and outbuildings into the Centre's Theatre, dressing rooms and gymnasium. Whenever possible he used his influence in support of Shrublands.

One of Bert's associates from H.A. Holmes was Jack Dunning who was a brilliant pianist. He devoted time for the Drama Groups pantomime rehearsals and led the orchestra for the final productions.

Biddy Jackson, an ex Tiller Girl whose husband was employed in the Borough Architects Department, coached girls in dancing and devised routines for the chorus of pantomimes. She worked hand in glove with Phyl Farrow, wife of the Boroughs Chief Education Officer, who produced some of the shows.

All of these people and hundreds of other local residents made valuable contributions to Shrublands which for many years became a centre for all ages, thereby demonstrating the true meaning of "community spirit" at the hub of the Magdalen Estate within the Borough of Great Yarmouth, when

it was administered by the Great Yarmouth Education Committee.

It is sad that today youngsters do not now have this facility. Many have nowhere to meet their friends and left to loiter in such places as bus shelters and resort to public houses.

16<sup>th</sup> November 2012