

## HERITAGE CIRCLE

### **Christine Adams, Miss Savidge moves her house**

*the story of the ultimate house move when Miss Savidge moved her house to save it from demolition*

Miss May Savidge was Mrs. Adams' Aunt-in-Law and lived at Ware in Hertfordshire. She lost both her parents at 21 years old, and decided she wanted to find out more about her family history. She discovered family in Holland. Her great grandfather lived on Texell, and was trying to build a lighthouse to stop the wrecking of ships for which the area was famous. In 1939 Miss Savidge bought a bike and cycled through Holland taking photos which she used to raise money from ship owners to build a lighthouse. She later received a call for help from the lighthouse keeper on Texell, and she sent parcels of food and clothes to help them through the war. She then became a cartographer and studied secret German maps. Miss Savidge wanted to help the war effort so became a draughtsman, previously unheard of for a woman, and worked for De Havilland designing aircraft. She also joined the St. John Ambulance and trained girls in First Aid.

She wanted somewhere to live, and decided to restore an old Thames river barge, from which she was later rescued by the R.N.L.I. Her family bought her a car, but she preferred her motorbike. She then bought a house which was part of a bakery, and she lived in the back part on a lane called Monkey Row. The Ware Council placed a compulsory purchase order on the property in the 1950's. Miss Savidge contested this order, and suspecting that the house was very old, removed plaster etc. to reveal parts of the timber frame. The local Historical Society researched the property and discovered that it dated back to 1415, and the lane was originally used by monks, and called Monke Road.

Miss Savidge and her battle to save the house made national news in 1960 when she decided that she would move the house to a plot of land at Wells-next-the-Sea. She wrote to the R.A.F. asking if they could lift the house with a helicopter and move it for her. They replied that it was too big. Miss Savidge then decided to move the house herself, she had a year to do it. Being a draughtsman she drew up plans, she numbered all the timbers which were pegged together, also the roof tiles, and removed fireplaces, all the time refusing help. Three men and a lorry moved the house to Wells, she then proceeded to re-build the house while she lived in a caravan. Only once did she ask for help from some local fishermen, the rest she did unaided. She was then nearly 60 years old, and the project would take her to the end of her life, 23 years. She could be seen in all weathers climbing scaffolding when she was well into her eighties. She became ill, but when the doctor called would only communicate with him through the letter box.

She died peacefully in Wells Cottage Hospital, and Mrs. Adams had the task of sorting out Miss Savidge's house and possessions. She had been a hoarder, and had over the years saved every note, wrapper, letter, etc. carefully filed in copies of The Radio Times. She also left 900 diaries, and everything was recorded in duplicate. Her will was 9 pages long, leaving the house to Mrs. Adams' teenaged children, but leaving the task of finishing the house to their parents. The house appeared on the Antique Road Show, and as well as the book about Miss Savidge, a film is also to be made. Mrs. Adams lives in the house and over the years has restored it, and shows people round by appointment.