



HELPING OUT: volunteer Tracey Webb with friends at the temporary pensioners' club at the Mile Cross Road Baptist church. While the Norman Centre is being refurbished, clubs that used to meet there have had to find new homes for the time being; inset, former Norwich mayor John Norman.

Photo: EN LIBRARY

'WE MUST KEEP IT NORMAN'

WHAT'S in a name?

A huge amount, according to one Old Catton man and ancestor of former 18th-century Norwich mayor John Norman, who wants to see the Norman Centre keep its name.

Earlier this month we reported how plans by the centre's managers to rename the building the Mile Cross Community Centre had provoked angry protests.

And, following complaints by community leaders, how the public was to have a hand in deciding its future name.

But 69-year-old Richard Jackson, of Old Catton, who is related to the Norman family, has made his mind up.

He said: "I believe that Alderman John Norman was a considerable philanthropist, and a very far-sighted one, who left a legacy to benefit generations of local people."

The Norman Centre name dates back to the building's use as the Norman School for Boys, built following the death of John Norman in 1724.

Born in 1657, Mr Norman was mayor of the city in 1714 and, according to Mr Jackson,

had no children of his own despite two marriages.

Under the terms of his will, the trustees were given the job of building and giving a permanent income to a school in Catton for all the male descendants of his family.

But it was more than 100 years later that a school was built and it was not built in Catton but in Cowgate, near to St Saviour's Church.

Mr Jackson said: "The time lapse between John Norman's death and the introduction of the 1870 Education Act demonstrates the far sightedness of our one-time mayor."

"As far as I'm aware, the educational grant system, which has survived John Norman's death by 274 years, is still alive and kicking and I am rather proud to be part of this tradition."

"For this reason I hope that the name of the ancestor of so many of us will be kept for the Norman Centre."

See tomorrow's Evening News for results of the survey

School's new era dawns

THE wait for new classrooms is nearly over for pupils and teachers at one of Norfolk's most dilapidated village schools.

Work has begun on a new £2 million school building to replace outdated and inadequate mobile classrooms at Weeting Primary School, near Thetford.

Freezing cold in winter and sweltering in summer, the old classrooms should have been demolished in the 1970s, according to headteacher Andrea Colley.

And after a 30-year, high-profile campaign by generations of parents and teachers the first bricks of what will be a completely new school have been laid.

The building, being built on the existing playing field, should be ready for opening in July when the old classrooms will be demolished to make way for a new playing field.

The school's 112 pupils will also have the use of a gym and proper library for the first time.