

OAPs celebrate — thanks to mystery donation

THE 43 pensioners who sat down to a free slap-up tea in Cuddesdon village hall on Saturday will probably never know the identity of their benefactor (or was it benefactress?).

It's a closely guarded secret as to just who splashed out an estimated £100 to pay for the villagers' treat — already being called Cuddesdon's Great Mystery Tea — which was organised jointly

by the village hall committee and the Salvation Army.

Only one man knows the name of the donor; and he wasn't giving anything away — especially to me!

When I called in for a cuppa, I was introduced to the man in the know, Salvation Army bandmaster Harold Boyce, and immediately set about trying to extract his secret. I might as well have saved my time.

Was there anything he could tell me about the mystery woman? I asked.

Lived here

"Not woman," he replied cleverly . . . "person. I am not saying if it's a man or a woman."

I tried again, this time more successfully. Did the "person" live in the village? "This person was brought up in the village and lived here for a number of years."

And that was all that Harold would say about the donor's identity; but he did go on to tell me a little about the party's organisation.

Apparently this wasn't the first time that Mr, Mrs or Miss X had worked with the Salvation Army on projects of this kind: there had been others — again with anonymity insisted upon.

On this occasion, Harold

said, he had been asked to arranged the party and send on the bill to the donor. he had approached the village hall committee and its chairman, Aubrey Washington, and plans had been made.

"It's nice to know that people are prepared to do things like this without wanting praise or glory," he added.

Aubrey told me he had personally invited the 60 pensioners from the village to the tea. All those who were well enough had come.

He added that it was the first time such an event had been held in the hall since the village's harvest suppers more than 10 years ago.

But did Aubrey, a Cuddesdon resident for 20 years, have any idea who the donor was?

"I haven't got a clue," he said. "And I don't think any of the old folks do either; though they are all having great fun guessing."

No idea

I asked 91-year-old Mrs Florence Hicks, the oldest person there, if she had any theories about it.

"I haven't got any idea who it is," she said.

"I have tried to work it

but, but I haven't had any luck. But I have enjoyed the party just the same," she said.

Mrs Hicks' son Joseph — a sprightly 70 — was similarly in the dark. "I don't know who it is," he confessed. "All I can find out is that it's someone who lived in the village."

Eighty-six-year-old Harry Saunders, a former superintendent at Oxford Post Office seemed pretty certain he knew the answer, however. But I think it would be unsporting of me to tell you what he said. In any case, nobody seemed to agree with him.

Still, what does it really matter. As Aubrey said, the donor wasn't after glory. He or she will be getting a thank-you card signed by all the old folks, and will also be given some photographs which Au-

brey had taken of most of the guests.

The smiles on their faces should be thanks enough!



Ninety-one-year-old Florence Hicks receives her tea from Rosella West, one of the helpers

Anthony Wood

Oxford Mail
early 1970's?