



Museum Matters

Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Limited

Summer 2014 Issue 33

In this issue

Highlights and Happenings	1/2
Handover of the new store	1/2
Museum Re-development	2
Curator's Column: Flossie Gedney's Chairs	2
Carts & Horses	2/3
Roman potter update	3
Article: Tales from the Arctic, by Jenny Gibbsone	3/4
Hello from Amy Glover!	4
Natural Sciences: Work goes on!	4/5
Exhibitions	5
Pen portrait of Leah Mellors	5
Human History Collections	5/6
Museum Outreach Activities	6
Museum Society News	6
From the Treasurer	7
Reports on Talks and Events	7/9
Who to contact . . .	9

Dates of future Events on the Noticeboard enclosed

Highlights and Happenings

From the Chairman

The highlights of Spring have been the events that have brought new visitors to the Museum. In March we had publicity for the presentation of funds for the 'Flossie Gedney Chairs'. Keith Eden as Mayor and I received a substantial cheque for the funds raised for the provision of new chairs for visitors. These have now been delivered and installed in the Galleries with an inscription woven into the back. In April the Society hosted a 'Finders and Funders' evening to show the treasure items in their new display, which had been purchased using funds raised from institutions, Members and supporters of the Museum. At least one landowner said to me that this was the first occasion he had been into the Museum since he visited as a child! The Treasure, including the North Essex Ring, was also on display for our Members' private view on the following Friday.



Meanwhile work on the new store has progressed well and we now have handover! I hasten to assure Members that I was not threatening Cllr Jim Ketteridge with the giant bone I'm holding! (For a fuller description of the items in the picture, see the end of my article).



Museum receives Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence!

We are clearly doing a great job in terms of displays and visitor services at the Museum. We have just received a 2014 Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence rating the Museum 4½ out of 5 stars by visitors writing reviews online. This was a lovely surprise and a real achievement as Trip Advisor is often more of a source for complaint than praise.



Thanks goes to all Museum staff and volunteers for creating a great visiting environment and fascinating displays!

Specifications for the specialist racking will shortly go out to tender before an order can be placed. So it appears that the move of the contents of Newport into the new store is unlikely to take place for some months. We have a number of volunteers who have offered to help with the move. This will be led by Richard Priestley – if you can contribute some assistance, please contact him direct on (01799 513120)



Aspect of the new store

The staff roll has, at last, increased with Leah Mellors joining in April in the new role of Collections Officer (Human History). Stefan Shambrook (Security) is also working increased hours. These changes are helping to cover the loss of previous members of staff as reported last spring.

Following the receipt of a report on the condition of 40 Castle Street, the Curator's house, the Board had to make a quick decision. in the light of the report's contents, the Board decided to bring forward the sale of the house. The property was therefore put on the market and a large amount of interest was created. We have accepted an offer subject to Contract; the sale is currently being handled by our Agents and Solicitors.

The Board and its Committees have been busy with many meetings, and I am especially pleased at the progress being made in the development of both the Society's website and with improvements to the Museum web site.

Tony Watson

(I'm holding the leg bone of a Moa, an extinct gigantic bird from New Zealand which was given to the Museum in 1910 by the Rev. J W Kenworthy of Braintree. Cllr Jim Ketteridge is brandishing two polished flint axe heads dating from the New Stone Age (Neolithic) around 5,000 years ago, one from Place Farm, Elsenham and the other from Martel's Farm near Great Dunmow. The implement standing between us is a barley hummeller, a once-common tool used for cutting the long whiskers from the ears of barley before threshing and processing the grain. It was purchased at a sale in 1909 for 6d)

Museum re-development

No further work has been possible in the last three months on planning for the new building. The Board and its two Committees have been very busy during this period with pressing matters. The sale of 40 Castle Street will assist in providing us with a budget for the redevelopment and in the planning process.

Tony Watson

Curator's Column

Pull up a Chair in Memory of Flossie Gedney Many members will remember Flossie Gedney, who was Saffron Walden's oldest resident when she died in January 2013 at the age of 109. A well-known and active figure around the town, Flossie loved helping people and now a set of smart new visitor chairs with armrests are helping Museum visitors in her memory. This fulfills a recommendation made in a recent 'access audit' of the Museum to improve our service and facilities for people with special needs, and indeed all visitors.

The stylish set of eight chairs were provided by W Hart & Son (Saffron Walden) Limited and funded by local

David Holmes, Saturday Assistant, takes a break from the Welcome Desk to relax in one of the new chairs in memory of Flossie Gedney



residents through appeals. Waitrose featured 'Pull Up a Chair for Flossie Gedney' as one of their local charity appeals earlier this year, and you may have seen the photo in the local press earlier this year of the Museum receiving a cheque for £321 from Waitrose manager Malcolm Domb. This was topped up with additional funds raised locally with special thanks to Saffron Walden Town Council and to Jacqui Portway who put this all in motion. We will use the remaining funds to purchase a standalone bike-rack for use on the Museum forecourt, while cyclists arriving via Church Street will be able to use the new fixed racks provided inside the Church Street gate by Uttlesford District Council's recent refurbishment.

Carts and Horses

Collecting is a defining activity of museums, but occasionally items need to be removed from collections for a variety of reasons. For public museums like Saffron Walden which are accredited under the government's Accreditation Scheme, there are formal procedures to follow to ensure minimum standards of ethics and good practice.

Every five years or so, we have to undergo a rigorous accreditation assessment and 13th June, 2014 was the deadline for our latest accreditation review to check that all aspects of our governance, collections care and services are 'fit for purpose'. So this spring, while staff and members of the Museum Management Working Group have spent much time revising policies and plans for the accreditation review, staff have also been working with the Museum Society's Board of Directors on 'disposal' of several horse-drawn vehicles which no longer fit with the Museum's collecting policy and cannot be adequately cared for or displayed in the longer term.

Back in the 1960s and 70s, when collecting policies were not so clearly defined and space was available in the Stables at Audley End, the Museum acquired a number of horse-drawn vehicles, mostly from donors in Cambridgeshire. Since 1995, when the Stables had to be cleared, these have been squeezed into storage at various off-site locations with no foreseeable prospect of making them available to the public again. Also, the Museum's collecting policy for local history is more strictly concerned with north-west Essex (Uttlesford District). Pressures on space and resources have made us take a long, hard look at which vehicles we can and should retain, and which vehicles we should release to alternative homes which can accommodate and use them to better effect than we can.

First of all, we identified the two vehicles which the Museum will definitely be keeping, as they are local and could be displayed in a suitable 'cart shed' on the museum site one day as part of the story of rural life in north-west Essex. One of these is a magnificent though slightly damaged Essex Hay Wagon. The other is a small but beautifully crafted hand-drawn hearse which once carried parishioners of Langley to their last resting place. The new store at Shirehill will provide enough floor standing space for these until future display plans can be realised. However this left us with four vehicles of non-local origin, for which we would have no storage after the end of September 2014, with potentially serious consequences for their care.

The next stage was the formal process of 'advertising' these vehicles — two tip-carts, a brougham and a jobmaster's wagon — to the museum community through the Museums Association's journal and website, as well as informal emails to museums around the region with rural life collections. The guiding principle is to dispose of items by gift to another accredited museum wherever possible, keeping them in the public domain. Through

this process, we have managed to place two vehicles with new homes.

First, the passenger wagon "Morning Star", built at Soham for jobmaster (or carrier) J Carter of Burwell, has been given to Burwell Museum, a thriving volunteer-run, accredited museum which already has a gallery for its collection of local vehicles. It has been on display there since Easter and they have found a local resident whose family once owned the wagon, and who remembers climbing on it as a little girl.

All Aboard! Manchetts of Burwell collect the Jobmaster's Wagon for its ride 'home' to Burwell Museum where it has been on display since Easter



Secondly, the Museum is giving a blue and red-painted tip cart, originally used at Foxton in Cambridgeshire, to English Heritage for Audley End Stables. The cart will be used with Bob, the Stables' resident draught horse, for light work around the grounds, as a living demonstration of horse-powered transport on a working 19th century estate. Vyvyan Veal, who is a volunteer and Bob's keeper at Audley End, has been training Bob and has measured up the cart to make sure that it fits the horse. We wish him and Bob well and look forward to seeing them round the organic garden and grounds in the future.



The tip cart made in 19th C and used at a farm in Foxton, Cambs, now destined for Audley End

This leaves us with a second tip cart, made by F Diver of Isleham, and a small enclosed carriage or brougham once used at Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire. As no museums or other public heritage organisations want to take them on, we are putting them to public auction through Cheffins, at their Sutton sale ground near Ely on 19 July. All proceeds of sale received by the Museum Society will go into the purchase fund to buy other items for the collections eventually: in this way the public interest is maintained through re-investment when objects pass into the private sector.

Brougham



Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to many people who have helped with the horse-drawn vehicles over the years, including David Haylock and Thurlow Estates for assisting with accommodation for the vehicles at times when the Museum had insufficient storage, and to Charlie Baker of Linton for transport, expert advice and repairs to the hay wagon. Lynn Morrison, former Conservation Officer at the Museum, spent many dusty hours cleaning, assessing and photographing the vehicles.

News of the Roman potter.

The former resident of the archaeology gallery has applied for a new position as Schoolmaster at Thaxted Guildhall. Subject to interview and re-training, we hope that he will be able to take up his new post there soon!

Carolyn Wingfield

Occasional Article

Tales from the Arctic by Jenny Gibbsone

Inuit Snow Visor 1820s

Imagine setting out to cross a landscape of pristine, white snow, lit by dazzling sunlight. The purpose of your journey is to search for the subtle traces left by birds and animals in the snow and to hunt them. If you fail in this purpose, your family will go hungry. There are no paths or roads on the snowfield and few landmarks to guide you. How can you succeed with the glare of the sun blinding you?

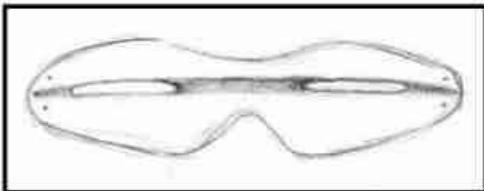
The solution to this problem can be found on display in the Ethnography gallery in Saffron Walden Museum. I should add that you are living thousands of miles from any shop and the only materials available to you come from the carcasses of the creatures that you hunt. There is plant material to be gathered in the short summer season and you occasionally travel to the far south to obtain small supplies of wood. Everything that you own or eat has to be made or caught by you and your family. You are unaware of any other way of life. You live during the 1820s in the northernmost territories of what is now known as Canada.

Your resources, however, are truly amazing, especially to us, living a life today in which we are completely dependent on the products of commerce. Firstly, you understand the natural world around you and feel intimately connected to it, believing that all things in your environment have a soul. Your existence depends on the respect that you have for the whole of nature. You possess great physical strength and qualities of endurance, together with optimism, humour and courage.

Lastly, you are the inheritor of a vast body of knowledge verbally handed down to you from your earliest days, from hundreds of generations of ancestors. This is the crucial factor that enables you to thrive in this harsh place.

So - you have used your skilled hands to carve a precious piece of wood into an elegant, light, curve to fit over your eyes. In a central groove are two slits, to cut out most of the dazzling rays from your eyes to help you to see in the white wastes. Two holes on each side of the wooden visor presumably must have held strips of hide or sinews, to hold the sun goggles on your head. Although supremely practical, this object is enigmatic and beautiful.

It was obtained by an unknown member of a Royal Naval Expedition led by Captain Frederick Beechey during the years 1825-31 so it opens up a fascinating part of British history for us. After the final end of the Napoleonic Wars, the Royal Navy had swollen to a great number of ships,



Inuit Snow Visor, c. 1820

men and officers. The ships could be 'laid up', the seamen could be demobbed but the thousands of officers could not be dismissed. They had to linger at home on half pay, with no prospect of employment - there were no wars on the horizon.

John Barrow, Second Secretary to the Admiralty came up with a plan of breath taking ambition. The blank spaces in the atlas - where was Timbuctoo? Was there a continent of Antarctica? Where was the source of the Niger? Was there a North West passage to the Orient through the Arctic? - could be filled in by the men and ships of the Royal Navy, to ensure the dominance of Great Britain in the fields of commerce, scientific knowledge and the growth of Empire.

Expeditions were sent out more or less continuously from 1816 to 1857. It should be noted that John Player, one of the founding fathers of the Saffron Walden Museum, worked at the Admiralty during the early part of this period and the inspiration which fired the creation of the Museum came directly from this spirit of exploration. Beechey's expedition was part of the drive to find a North West passage which would ultimately see the loss of Sir John Franklin's two ships and crews in the 1840s. The first encounters between the Inuit and the Royal Navy almost read like science fiction. The Inuit assumed that the naval vessels were living beings as they saw the sails moving in the wind like wings. They could not understand why the strangers had no women on board or what kind of ice the ships' skylights could be made from.



First encounter between the Navy and the Inuits. 1818

The snow goggles give us an opportunity to explore the lives lived by people with a very different view of the world to us and also illuminate the origins of the Museum.

News from Amy Glover

Members of the Museum Society may not have seen me around the Museum recently - but this is a good thing for me as, back in March this year, I began working at The Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Abbey, as their Bookings and Visitor Services Assistant.

Working as part of the small team of staff, I take bookings and handle enquiries for schools, groups and birthday parties. Then, during the weekends, I put on my green polo shirt and embrace the visitor services; helping activity staff, supervising birthday parties and generally being an extra pair of hands for other jobs that may need doing.



Amy Glover

The Royal Gunpowder Mills is a big site, stretching a mile tip to tip and encompassing 170 acres. You can therefore imagine that I do a lot of walking whilst working at the weekends, good for the exercise regime! The site is over 300 years old, with its own heritage and plenty of stories to tell. It is an interesting place to work and well worth a visit if you haven't already been.

But don't worry: I haven't left completely! I am still on the Casuals list and always willing to lend a hand whenever Saffron Walden Museum needs it.

Natural Sciences

Sarah Kenyon

It has been very busy in the Museum since the spring. The flooded store continues to absorb time. It was so damp that blooms of mould grew over the breeze blocks that were used to raise cabinets of natural sciences specimens off the floor and above flood level.



L: White mould growth



R: Sarah in her PPE (personal protective equipment)

I had a delightful afternoon spraying the mould and took a selfie to record the event! The store still has high humidity due to damp from the flood in February and a leaking roof. Staff have to visit regularly to empty the two extra Council dehumidifiers that we are using to try and control the environmental conditions.

'Secrets from the Stores' opened on 8th March with two cases of biology and geology specimens and a wolf, giant clam shell and giant fossil antler on display. The antler is from an extinct Irish Giant Deer, *Megaloceros giganteus*, previously called the Irish Elk. It was stored in the natural history store, tied to hooks high up on the wall. It took quite some planning and three people to get it down safely. In future it will be in more accessible storage, and is NOT going back on a wall.

So roll on to the new store . . . I have been refining racking plans for the Natural Sciences store in the new building - rearranging the draft racking layouts, checking whether all the boxes will fit onto shelves, and making sure that there is enough storage space to house the collections. These include the geology collection of rocks, minerals and fossils, and the following biology collections: amphibians, reptiles, fish, birds' eggs and

nests, herbarium (dried, pressed plants), mollusc shells, other invertebrates such as crustaceans, and osteology (bones and teeth).

The application to reapply for Saffron Walden Museum's accredited museum status was submitted on 11th June. All our policies needed to be reviewed and many new ones had to be written, so it has been a huge amount of work for all museum staff.

Natural sciences teaching specimens have been well used over the last couple of months. Rickling and Farnham Primary Schools used a Rock loan box for their geology topic this term: the female Snowy Owl came out for Museums at Night, and the drawing group used five Birds and Mammals from the loan collection for their drawings.

Exhibitions

Saturday, 8th March - Sunday, 20th July, 2014

'Secrets from the Stores'

Artefacts from the Museum's collections rarely displayed before in the Museum.

Saturday, 2nd August

'North-West Essex at War' opens.

Pen Portrait of Leah Mellors Collections Officer (Human History)



Since moving to Saffron Walden, a lot of people have asked me if this is my first job since leaving university. Flattered as I am that people think I still look 22, I have to be honest and admit that it has been five years since I left the University of St Andrews with a Master of Arts degree in Mediaeval History and Mathematics.

in that time, I have spent two years working as a Community Fundraiser for a disability charity: gained a Master of Letters degree in Mediaeval History from the University of St Andrews - but, before you ask, no, I never met Prince William! I also volunteered and interned in four heritage organisations, and (almost) completed a curatorial traineeship at the Herbert Museum & Art Gallery.

It was my internship at Leeds Museums & Galleries that convinced me that curatorship was the career for me. I spent three fantastic months interning in the Community History department, learning about community outreach and documentation. This internship led to a curatorial traineeship at the Herbert, in Coventry. Here, amongst other things, I co-curated a costume exhibition, created cross-collection displays, completed a collections review, worked on documentation and collections care projects.

I led talks and tours, and spent six weeks on placement at other museums. I enjoyed every minute of my traineeship and learnt more than I ever expected. Eight months into my year-long traineeship, whilst on placement at the Museum of London, I got an interview in a little place called Saffron Walden - a place I'd never even heard of and the rest, as they say, is history!

I love working in museums. I love the variety, I love the objects, I love the creativity involved in engaging people with those objects and I love the fact that I can keep learning about history, a subject I have always been passionate about. I am excited to have joined Saffron Walden Museum at a time of such great change. In my role as Collections Officer (Human History) I am responsible for caring for, documenting, displaying and developing the human history collections. Currently I am curating our new exhibition on the world wars, helping to plan the move to our new store, creating new displays, re-examining some aspects of our collections care, and getting to grips with the day-to-day life of the Museum. If my first three months is anything to go by, there will never be a quiet moment in this job!

I am always keen to hear any thoughts, ideas or questions that members of the Museum Society might have so please feel free to contact me on lmellors@uttlesford.gov.uk or 01799 510 645, or pop by for a chat.

Human History Collections

Leah Mellors

In just over five weeks' time, our new exhibition, North-West Essex at War, will open to the public so I have been busy deciding on themes, drawing up an object list and researching local stories. The exhibition will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War and the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, by exploring the impact of the two world wars on people in Uttlesford.

My first task was to compile a list of potential objects and this has really helped me to get to grips with our collections. We have a huge number of objects that could be used in the exhibition - from gas masks to ration books, sculptures to letters, uniforms to memoriam cards — so the hardest part has been trying to narrow it down! The exhibition will be based around six themes, including the Home Front, the role of women, the presence of soldiers in the District and remembrance. Within each theme, there will be personal stories and photographs to highlight the impact of the war on individual lives.



Gas mask: one of the items in the upcoming exhibition

The preview evening for Museum Society members will be on 15th August with the exhibition opening to the general public the following day.

Alongside the development of this exhibition, I have been dealing with enquiries relating to the human history collections. One such



enquiry came from a family who wished to see a collection of saddlery tools in the Museum. These tools belonged to Teddy Worley, who owned a saddlery business in Saffron Walden

from 1923 to 1949. It was a bigger-than-expected job to locate the tools in the Newport store and lay them out in the schoolroom, but the effort was worth it when three generations of the family came to the schoolroom to see the tools and reminisce. Whilst the tools are out of storage, I have taken the opportunity to photograph them, improve their documentation and display a selection in our Secrets from the Stores exhibition.

Other projects I have been working on include reviewing some of the environmental monitoring in the museum stores and creating a new method for logging environmental data: accessioning newly acquired objects, including Akan gold weights from Ghana and lists of Special Constables from Uttlesford; creating a new cycling display to tie in with the Tour de France in Essex; and getting up-to-date with paperwork relating to loaned objects. It is a pleasure to have such a varied and busy job!

Museum Outreach News

Gemma Tully

It has been a very busy Spring with lots of happy families taking part in our various activities. In April we went 'Back to the Stone



Age' with a 'real live caveman' who set up his camp in the museum grounds and enthralled visitors as he recalled tales of Stone Age life while making flint axes and arrow heads. May was even busier! First

we had Museums by Night, when families came armed with torches and lots of courage to explore the Museum with the lights out. Over 100 visitors came through the door. Only one child was scared of the dark but many were disappointed not to see Wallace prowling around or our Samurai warrior getting up and having a stretch - perhaps we need some serious animatronics installed for next time (maybe the Society can fund this!).

During half term we had a huge turnout for our cracking codes, Morse Code - spectacular. Stefan, the Museum's Security Officer, did us proud by creating homemade Morse Code machines (see right), which the children used to send messages to each other. It was such a success, with nearly 200 visitors coming along on both days of the event, that I think more science-based activities will be planned in the future (suggestions welcome!).

We also had a Tudor Charter event and encouraged children to make their own rules for life in the town. Needless to say, they produced some corkers! How about some of these: 'Adults are not to be allowed wine or treats EVER!' (a little cruel perhaps):



'School is for meeting up and chatting with friends - not doing lessons': 'Sweets can be eaten any time': 'Bedtime cannot be before 10 pm'. We also received support from Essex County Council this quarter. They sent an artist to the

Museum to help local families get ready for the Tour de France by making bicycle masks and flags to wave. If they don't get on the telly with those additions, no one will!

I've also had lots of schools and Home Education groups in this term studying a whole range of topics from the 'Ancient Egyptians' to 'How Museums work'. We've also had our monthly adult art group which takes place the second Saturday of every month from 10:30. During the last session, Jenny Gibbsone kindly got out some of our amazing Chinese Imperial textiles for people to draw. It really is a great opportunity to see items from the Museum's collection often in storage and to dust off your drawing skills. It isn't too late to join! If you are interested, please just give me a call or drop me an email at the Museum (01799 510333 gtully@uttlesford.gov.uk).



There is no rest for the wicked, however, and this Summer will see a whole host of exhibitions and events for adults and children. Open to the public, with free entry on Monday, 7th July when the Tour de France passes through, there will be a display of some of the Museum's bicycle related paraphernalia in the Great Hall and a special 'Get Moving' trail to take families round the Museum. 30th July, 6th and 13th of August are the dates for our family holiday events this year. Each week we will be making different things inspired by our archaeology, natural history and social history collections. The plan is to make historical hats one week, to launch rockets the next and then finally produce coil pots. Events will take place in the Museum and museum grounds between 11 am-1 pm and 2 pm-4 pm on each day: usual entry fees apply.

Our new exhibition, *North West Essex at War*, opens on Saturday, 2nd August and will explore life in the District during both the First and Second World Wars. To mark the opening, we are hosting a Music and Memories afternoon, from 2 pm -4:30 pm on Friday, 8th August. The event will be in remembrance of WWI and WWII and aims to bring people from north-west Essex together to share their memories of life in the area during both wars. We hope to collect these memories and add them to the Museum's archive. There will also be a singer who will perform popular tunes from WWI and WWII, dancing, as well as a pop-up tea room and games from the period for people to play. Do please put 8th August in your diary and come along with your stories and old photographs or copies if you have them (the car park will need to be reserved for staff and performers only). We would also really appreciate any offers of cakes to sell or help with the tea room (see YOUR MUSEUM NEEDS YOU! for details).

Museum Society News

From the Treasurer

I am glad to advise that the Report of the Directors and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2014 have been accepted by the Examiner and signed both by him and the Chairman. These will shortly be available on the Society's website and, of course copies will be available at the Annual General Meeting of the company which has been arranged for Friday, 15th August. I do hope that as many members as possible will attend - it is your company!

If you have not already paid your subscription for this year, I urge you to do so without delay as the Membership Officer and I will be reviewing any outstanding subscriptions early in July. If you have paid, thank you! It is always helpful for subscriptions to be paid promptly so as to ease the administrative burden, and to save the cost of sending out reminders.

In the last month or two I have received a number of Gift Aid Declarations from members who have not previously signed one, and this will enable me to claim this refund from HM Revenue & Customs for a maximum of four years' previous subscriptions/donations; please consider whether you could help the Society in this way.

Have a good summer and I look forward to seeing you at the AGM.

David Laing

Store Move Volunteers

Now the new store on Shirehill has been handed over, we have a better idea about the tendering process for the racking, ordering and installation are expected to take place towards the end of the year. So this gives us more time to plan for the move from Newport - and when the time comes, we shall need all the help we can get!

Assistance will be needed not just in moving weighty articles or packing cases, but also on lighter tasks such as packing, recording, etc. We've already got the names of some potential volunteers - many thanks to those who have put their names forward - but more are needed. Training will be arranged and we will be contacting volunteers nearer the time with details.

If you feel that you may be able to assist with the move and would like to join in the training and subsequent move, then please email your name to me at richardpriestley3@gmail.com. I'll look forward to hearing from you. Many thanks - and here's to a great team get together!

Richard Priestley
Chairman, Museum Support Committee

Talks and Events

10th March: Zeppelins over Essex

Speaker: Martyn Lockwood, Essex Police Museum

It was Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin who designed the first zeppelin as a commercial airliner in 1900. They were patented in

Germany in 1895 and in America in 1899. The zeppelins were first flown commercially in 1910 and were very successful.

The German military adapted the use of the zeppelins as bombers and scouts during World War I, killing 500 people in bombing raids over Britain - Hartlepool and Scarborough were attacked with loss of civilian life. Such actions in war were unheard of and created much anti-German feeling in the country; many recruitment posters showed zeppelins and scenes of damaged homes. People found that their house insurance did not cover bomb damage and the Daily Mail set up a Zeppelin Fund of £10,000.

There were no air raid precautions - policemen cycled around on their bikes holding "Take Cover" notices! Zeppelins could carry five tons of bombs; as weapons of mass destruction they were effective but not very accurate. The first raids began in 1915 with many over Essex and around London, but these ceased after 1917 when planes were used for bombing raids. The zeppelins were almost immune from attack - some anti-aircraft guns and searchlights were set up but to little effect. It was the Royal Navy and the Royal Flying Corps that eventually took over Home Defence and Winston Churchill who did much to improve it. Single-seater planes equipped with a single machine gun were used to bring them down.

On 31st March, 1916 zeppelin L15 was brought down off Purfleet, but sank before it could be recovered. It was the Army which shot it down and Sir Charles Wakefield, Lord Mayor of London, personally issued gold medals to all those involved in bringing it down (around 300 people!). Lieutenant Robinson, a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps, brought down zeppelin L11 and was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was later captured by the Germans over the Western Front and died in 1919. When L11 was shot down, the flames could be seen all over London and thousands of people went to see its remains; many postcards were issued about the event.

In September, 1916 zeppelin L32 was brought down by pilot Frederick Sowrey who was later awarded the DSO. L32, one of the largest zeppelins at 650 feet long and 70 feet in diameter, burst into flames over Great Burstead. The German crew were given a military funeral and buried in the local churchyard. They were later reburied in a German military cemetery.

Zeppelin L33 was attacked by anti-aircraft guns in September, 1916 and crash landed at Little Wigborough. The crew survived, the captain setting fire to the airship and the marching his men towards Colchester. Along the way the German crew asked for directions, arousing suspicion and eventually being arrested by a special constable. Special constable, Dr. John Salter, delivered a baby girl later that night; she was named Zeppelinina.

The defeat of Germany in 1918 brought a temporary halt to the airship business. In 1926, however, the restriction on their construction was lifted and the airships Graf Zeppelin and the

Hindenburg operated regular transatlantic flights. The demise of airship travel was hastened by the Hindenburg disaster in 1937.

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14th April: Welwyn Roman Baths

Speaker: Tony Rook

Tony Rook's engaging account of the discovery of a Roman villa and its bath also embraced the story of the start of 'rescue archaeology'. The area around Welwyn had been settled for some time before this villa was built: there is evidence of an Iron Age farmstead and an oppidum (a large defended Iron Age settlement) at local Wheathampstead.

Excavations at the beginning of the last century led to the discovery of burials of well-off Iron Age Chieftains. These burials contained Roman amphorae indicating trading links with the Empire. A Roman road links Welwyn with St Albans, the Roman Verulamium where in the 1930s the excavations were carried out by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and his wife. Verulamium itself lay on the route of Watling Street. Later in the 1930s John Ward-Perkins excavated the Roman villa at Lockleys, originally an Iron Age site. So there was evidence that much had been going on with many objects etc. scattered around in local museums - but no professional archaeologist was attached to Hertfordshire County or to one of these museums.

Tony Rook's background is also interesting and relevant: his initial degree was in the sciences followed by a career in building research and teachings Running alongside all this since his boyhood had been an interest in archaeology which led to his taking his M.Phil - in, guess what? researching Roman baths.

Shortly after moving to Welwyn in 1960, assisted by other enthusiastic amateurs, he found some Iron Age farmsteads and the oppidum and another chieftain's burial also with amphorae. Then one day he set out with his wife 'to find a Roman villa', and he did. For, walking along a river bordering a school playing field, lo - there was a Roman tile sticking out. Further investigations with 'his team' followed revealed a variety of finds, coins, small metal objects and the letters 'A P U T'. Then he found a corner of a building with a courtyard with a Roman canal running by, suggestions of a bath suite and eventually evidence that the original building had been an Iron Age one. All this by digging trenches in a manner that did not disrupt school sports or drive the groundsmen insane!

This being the 1960s the A1(M) was being planned and Tony, having been told that he would be given notice of the start so that work on the bath suite could continue, wasn't, so rescue work started in earnest. The route of the A1(M) went directly over the dig site - this is where Tony's experience in building research and chemistry came in. It resulted in a steel-framed vault constructed under the road containing the entire bath site, so protecting it for posterity. Really astonishing!

Tony's talk was both well illustrated with photographs which added greatly to one's grasp of the problems faced and overcome and enlivened by his anecdotes. To find out more about the whole story of the villa at Dicket Mead then Tony's book 'The Story of

Welwyn Roman Baths' is still available, as is his 'Roman Baths in Britain' which gives a general overview of construction methods and a gazetteer of sites. Oh - and we are planning a site visit to be hosted by Tony. Altogether an enjoyable and informative evening.

HS

12th May: Ancient Woodland in Uttlesford

Speaker: Tony Morton

Tony Morton is Chair of the Uttlesford Local Group, Essex Wildlife Trust and began his talk by giving his audience some facts about the Essex Wildlife Trust. It is the county's leading conservation charity with more than 33,000 members and manages and protects over 7,250 acres of land on 87 nature reserves and 2 nature parks. It runs 9 visitor centres and educates some 58,000 children and adults across Essex each year.

Tony Morton's talk focussed on the ancient woodland in Uttlesford, in particular Shadwell Wood, Ashdon and the West Wood, Great Sampford. He referred to Oliver Rackham's book 'Ancient Woodland: its History, Vegetation and Uses in England' which covers how woodland has been lost in Uttlesford - since World War II, 50% of our ancient woodland has been lost.

The legal definition of ancient woodland is that there has been continuity of woodland existence since 1600 AD.

In ecological terms this also means continuity of habitat for this period of time. There are three types of evidence available to identify ancient woodland: documentary, topographical and biological evidence. In the case of Shadwell Wood there is documentary and topographical evidence in the form of a sales document from 1529 and, in 1581, a reference to the Wood in the report of a murder. A key source of information regarding ancient woodland in Uttlesford is the Chapman and Andre map of 1777. Unfortunately Shadwell Wood is not seen on this map but it is found on later maps; there is later documentary evidence in the early 1800s in estate management records and bills of sale for the woodland.

The biological evidence at Shadwell Wood is strong. Violets are found there along with other ancient woodland species such as wood anemone, the greater butterfly orchid and oxlips. Oxlips are distributed only in East Anglia. and the Essex Wildlife Trust has done an Oxlip Woods Survey; there is a true species of oxlip, while the false oxlip is a hybrid. Tony Morton pointed out that Uttlesford was special because it has a treasury of wildlife.

The West Wood at Great Sampford also has significant documentary evidence to justify its status as ancient woodland going back to the 13th century. It appears on the Chapman and Andre map of 1777 and also on 19th century ordnance survey maps. Biological evidence includes ancient woodland species such as the common spotted orchid. There is also evidence of long term coppicing a woodland management practice with its roots in prehistoric times.

Of the ancient woodland in Uttlesford, there is none of the original wildwood thought to cover the whole of Britain as the climate warmed at the end of the last Ice Age. Tony referred to Franz Vera's Four Stage Cycle that describes the stages of woodland succession from trees to scrub to grassland and back to woodland brought about mainly through the impact of large grazing herbivores. It is now considered likely that, as the ice sheets retreated, Britain was not entirely covered by dense forest but there was a mosaic of woodland, clearings and woodland edge where a wide range of plant species flourished.

CL

9th June: Hadrian's Wall Speaker: Dr Peter Spence

Peter Spence's talk about Hadrian's Wall came about when he walked along the Wall as part of a holiday in the Border Country. The Wall is eighty Roman miles long (73 miles) and could be covered over three days, but Peter visited the mile castles and forts along its way.

The Wall extends from Segedunum at Wallsend on the River Tyne to the shore of the Solway Firth. It was the largest stone structure in the Roman Empire and is now a World Heritage Site as a significant portion of the Wall still exists. There is a well-maintained footpath that runs alongside it. Construction of the Wall began in 122 AD on the orders of the Emperor Hadrian. While the exact purpose the Wall is still debated, unlike previous Roman emperors who wanted to expand the Empire and build up trade, Hadrian took a different view and wished to consolidate his Empire as expansion put enormous demands on the Roman Army. At this time Hadrian had been experiencing rebellion in Roman Britain and in other conquered lands of the Empire including Egypt.

There had been previous defensive boundaries across Northern Britain. The Emperor Domitian (81-96AD) built the Gask Ridge frontier, a series of forts and lookouts in Perthshire. The Emperor Trajan (97-117 AD) built a more southerly line at Stanegate that stretched from coast to coast. While the Emperor Antonius (138-161 AD) built a later turf wall to the north of Hadrian's Wall called the Antonine Wall.

Historians disagree over how much of a threat the tribes of Caledonia actually presented to the Roman Empire, and whether the Wall was not just a defensive fortification but there were more economic advantages in defending and garrisoning such a fixed line of defence. Providing significant control over immigration, smuggling and customs, people inside and beyond the Wall travelled through its checkpoints every day. It provided opportunities for taxation, while patrolling legionaries could keep track of all activities, legal or otherwise.

Hadrian's Wall was built over a period of six years with possibly 1,500 people involved in its construction at any one time. The Roman Army was made up of legionary and auxiliary (non-Roman citizens) units. The legionaries built the Wall while auxiliary units garrisoned it. The Wall is predominantly made of limestone; in

some sections where limestone was not available, turf was used. The Wall was six metres wide with a ditch on the Scottish side and to a height estimated at around 12 feet. The top of the Wall was crenellated for lookout and protection purposes. At approximately every mile along the Wall, milecastles were constructed out of stone; each could house 32 men. Now just the foundations of these milecastles can be seen. Two turrets were constructed between every milecastle that could house ten men - each man being able to run one third of a mile in two and a half minutes so messages could be sent at along the Wall within ten hours.

CL

There were sixteen forts along the length of the Wall that would each have housed between 500-1,000 soldiers. Only five of these forts can now be seen including Vindolanda. This is not directly on the Wall but was the largest: it has undergone significant reconstruction and today is a major tourist attraction.

Much of the Wall has now disappeared Long sections of it were used for road building the 18th century, especially by General Wade in the construction of a military road for the purpose of moving troops to crush the Jacobite rebellion.

HS

REMINDER FOR YOUR DIARY

Details for the Annual General Meeting

This meeting will be held at 8.00 pm on Friday, 15th August, 2014 in the Museum. Light refreshments available before the meeting at 7.30 pm. After the formal business is concluded, there will be a presentation by Leah Mellors, Collections Officer (Human History).

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