



# Museum matters

Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

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**Dates of future Events — see Noticeboard enclosed**

## Highlights and Happenings

### From the Chairman

The delayed Annual General Meeting was held on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September, A major proposal regarding Subscriptions was made by the Treasurer following his report, David Laing explained that Members of the Society had enjoyed eleven years without a change to the minimum subscription and had been able to enjoy all the facilities the Society offers for less than 20p a week,

This has been achieved by careful control of funds by the Board and the use of technology wherever this is appropriate, Gift Aid Declarations enabled the Society to recoup an average of over £500 a year in income tax from HMRC, However in order to continue to provide the facilities that the Society offers and meet the minimum cost increases that can be foreseen. he proposed that the minimum subscription should be raised to SIS per member with effect from 1st April 2016, His proposal, after some questions. was agreed.

I am pleased that the Annual General Meeting appointed Peter Walker as a Director and Treasurer of the Society, The AGM also expressed its gratitude to David Laing for stepping in and resuming the post of Treasurer following Andrew Penman's

resignation, Christine Sharpe, our Membership Officer, was also elected a Director and Keith Eden, in recognition of his support during his eight-year term as a Director. was elected an Honorary Vice-President. Following her appointment by Uttlesford District Council, we welcomed Councillor Barbara Light to the Board in June, The Annual General Meeting acknowledged the passing of Honorary Vice President Edwin Planterose in July; his involvement with the Museum Society dated back very many years.

Meanwhile work on the packing at the Newport has been continuing, but delays in the installation of alarm and communication services at the new store have delayed the move from Newport until October. However this is now well in progress, The Development Committee has now met three times and is making progress in setting up the framework for the plans for the re-development of the museum buildings. The Committee has visited Chelmsford Museum to view their recent extension and also the Guildhall at Finchingfield, We have discussed a draft Design Brief prepared by Douglas Kent and will consider the updated draft in November,

The new websites — For the Society and the Museum — have been very successful with visits to both having substantially increased, A big 'Thank you' to Tony Morton for his hard work with these.

The autumn series of talks began in September with a talk on Wellington and Waterloo which was very well attended The October talk by Hugh Edwards, the Chief Executive of Moorcroft. on Moorcroft pottery and its history - where it was just about standing room only— will be Followed in November by a presentation on Ugley Hall Farm in the 1950s. The visit to Hill Hall, Theydon Mount was enjoyed by those who went and a report on the trip appears later in the newsletter.

The preview of the latest Exhibition 'Uttlesford - A Community of Collectors on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> August, was attended by over eighty members and guests including number of Councillors, The exhibits are the result of volunteer collectors who have been mentored by the Museum staff to display their personal collections ranging from Royal tankards and mugs, via military badges, model airplanes and tokens to a selection of cats. The collectors themselves range from a retired Member of the Society to

a local pupil just starting senior school, and we congratulate Leah Mellors and Gemma Tully who have led this exhibition, A further six collectors will exhibit their collections in November - so lookout for the invitation to Members' Private Preview on Friday, 27th November.

I am sorry to report that Gemma Tully is leaving her role at the Museum to take up an appointment at Durham University. Gemma has been with us For about five years and has transformed the Museum service for the young, both school children and toddlers. Her enthusiasm and work in both teaching and exhibitions have been an example to us all, We wish her well in her new role.

**Tony Watson**

## Curator's Column

### Notes from Shirehill

As Richard Priestley describes (see 'the Great Move') the removal of collections from the Newport store to the new Shirehill store got off to a flying start on 20<sup>th</sup> October. Curatorial staff (Sarah, Leah and Carolyn) will be working in a rota with store volunteers and Council staff (volunteer van drivers: Richard Auty, Daniel Barden, Paul Morrison and Bruce Tice) from now until Christmas. We aim to clear the Newport store. and move further collections from the Museum site, although some of this may have to be completed in early 2016.

All the careful preparation is now paying off, as clean and numbered boxes and packages slot into place in their destined shelf locations - thanks to the many hours put in by volunteers wiping down and packing objects and specimens securely. We look forward to organising a private viewing for Society members of the new store in 2016 when all is in place.

Of course all this has repercussions on other work and puts a great deal of pressure on the entire Museum team, including the staff and volunteers 'holding the fort' at the Museum while curatorial staff are working so much off-site. There will be a collective sigh of relief when we can return to something like 'normal service' next year.

However, the relocation of the collections is only the first phase of our plans at the Shire hill store, As soon as the store is fully operational, there will be a flurry of deliveries from archaeological contractors of the finds and records from all the recent excavations in the district which we have been holding off for lack of space, I am keeping my fingers crossed that we will have space to accommodate them all, especially the large archives anticipated from Stansted Airport (fieldwork 2000 — 2015) and the new A120. Then there will be another mountain to climb, this time a digital one, to update all the location records for the collections moved to Shirehill and catalogue thousands of objects and specimens on our computer database, All this is not just sound collections management, it is also the foundation for planning and researching the new displays, exhibitions and other projects in the Museum's long-term improvement plan.

The Shirehill store project marks a milestone in the Museum's development, and is a project of which the

Museum Society and Uttlesford District Council can be thoroughly proud. A big 'thank you' to all Society members who have supported this in all sorts of ways; through donations. volunteering, fund-raising and the hours of committee work and meetings put in by Society officers and directors, Last but not least, thanks to those of you who have kindly donated appliances. crockery and cutlery for the store kitchen, allowing volunteers and staff to enjoy well-earned tea—breaks between bouts of shifting boxes.

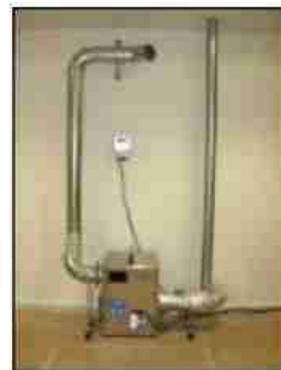
**Carolyn Wingfield**

## Natural Sciences

**Sarah Kenyon**

In July, a new dehumidifier system was installed in the natural sciences store at Shirehill to control the relative humidity at appropriate levels for the collections that will be housed there.

This summer. the store team volunteers also completed the packaging of the biology and geology collections - they have packed up no fewer than 994 boxes, drawers and individual specimens! On 20<sup>th</sup> October we'll finally start to move objects into the new store.



**The dehumidifier system**



**The wolf in residence in Sarah's office**

The fire alarm system in the Museum was upgraded recently, This involved protecting and moving objects in stores and galleries - including moving the Tudor bed! The wolf had to come and stay in my office whilst contractors were working on the smoke alarms in the natural sciences store.

Do you remember the Malaysian stick insects? Well, here are two of them now they have become adults— and we can also now tell which sex they are. There are five bright green Females and just one brown and cream male.

## Human History Collections

**Leah Mellors**

Many of you will have attended the private View of *Uttlesford; A Community of Collectors* at the end of August. which saw the grand unveiling of our newest exhibition, This exhibition explores the collections of people in the local community, and the development and installation of this exhibition has taken up much of my time over the past three months,

After running workshops with the participants, I guided them through the stages of curating an exhibition — From writing their text panels and labels to installing their displays, This was, at times. a challenging experience but

one that was made especially enjoyable by the participants, who were all very enthusiastic and hardworking. I have now begun the same process with the second round of collectors, who will install their displays at the end of November.



The store move project is also progressing and I have continued to pack up the collections ready for moving. A big job for the past few months has been to narrow down where the human history collections will be housed in the new store, and to label up 1,050 individual shelves with their shelf numbers! I am looking forward to starting 'the big move', which will lead to a large documentation project to update the location of each and every object on our collections database — a daunting task!

I believe that one of the most important aspects of my job is to provide access to the human history collections. And I have found it very difficult to say no to researchers and enquirers whilst our services have been suspended. As such, I have said yes to quite a few that I perhaps shouldn't have! The most interesting of these has been



Deidre Brown, a Professor and historian at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, who visited the Museum to see our 'patu one wa', or Maori stone clubs. We have three Maori clubs in the collection, one of which is associated with the 'Boyd Massacre' of 1809, during which Maori residents of Whangaroa Harbour in northern New Zealand killed and cannibalised around 70 Europeans on board the ship *Boyd*. Deidre is researching how this club came to travel to England and to Saffron Walden Museum. Although she has identified four possible explanations, she has yet definitively to prove one, but she has promised to let us know if and when she does!

**Maori Stone Club**

Finally, I have been trying to spread the word about the amazing collections and projects that we work on at the Museum by writing articles for various newsletters and journals. Look out for my article on the lock of Napoleon's hair that we have at the Museum in the next issue of the Saffron Walden Historical Journal.

## Object of the Month

**Leah Mellors**

The *Object of the Month* is a project that aims to highlight objects rarely seen by the public. It's going from strength to strength with staff, interns and volunteers all choosing objects to display in the museum and share online on our blog.

**The Object of the Month for July** was a late pre-Roman Iron Age vessel, dated to approximately 50 BC - AD 50. It was chosen by Dorian Knight, Archaeology Collections Review Intern. The vessel was excavated in Chesterton, Cambridgeshire and donated to the Museum in 1904. It is very likely that the vessel was used for feasting and would have contained both food and drink. It was conserved and restored to

its original shape by a museum conservator in the twentieth century using cork, over 1000 years after it was originally made,

Sarah, our Natural Sciences Officer, chose a swallow's nest as **August's Object of the Month**, because it is a record of the wildlife that lives in this area. It was found at Great Sampford, Essex, in 2013 when wood on the outside of a house was being painted. The nest is cup shaped and made from mud and grass. This nest did not have any eggs in it so it was probably built the year before it was found.



**Swallow's nest**

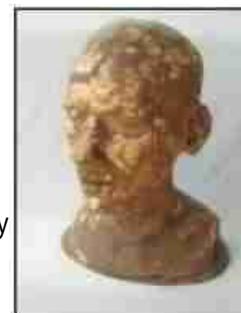
It has been illegal to collect the nests and eggs of wild birds since 1954. Nests are protected while they are being built or used by birds, which means it is illegal to disturb a nesting bird or to destroy its nest. Old nests can be removed after the last brood has fledged and breeding has finished for the year. The sale or exchange of birds' eggs is banned and they can only be given away or destroyed. Possession of birds' eggs collected before 1954 is legal, but keeping eggs obtained after 1954 is illegal unless the possessor can show that the eggs have been taken lawfully. One problem for museums concerns the donation of old or confiscated egg collections. Museums are often offered egg collections and it can be difficult to know whether such collections have been legally obtained. Museums are expected to prove that the eggs were collected before 1954, so information about when and where each egg was collected is essential.

In **September, the Object of the Month** was chosen by Carolyn, our Curator, and John Ready, one of the volunteers on our store move project. The object is a plaster bust of Dr George Eachus, an apothecary and surgeon in Saffron Walden.

George Eachus was born in Cheshire in 1759 but moved to Saffron Walden before 1784. He worked in partnership with another apothecary and surgeon, Thomas Spurgin, from premises in Church Street, treating patients and dispensing medicines. The *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1834 described Dr Eachus as 'a respectable medical practitioner'.

The selection of this bust as Object of the Month gave museum staff an opportunity to re-examine our collection of plaster heads, which have not been looked at in many years.

Plaster casts such as this were very fashionable in the early nineteenth century and the Museum's collection is probably typical of its time. The collection includes classical or historical figures; famous



**Plaster Head of Dr George Eachus**

men of the day: several notorious criminals. and only one (anonymous) female. There are also plaster skulls, showing examples of different peoples around the world. Many of these heads and skulls were listed in the Museum catalogue of 1845 as the 'phrenology' collection. Phrenology was a fashionable theory in the early nineteenth century which proposed that a person's character could be discerned by examining the shape of their head; Although later discredited as a scientific theory, phrenology remained popular through the Victorian period, Ceramic 'phrenological heads' were made with different areas of the skull marked out; antique examples and modern replicas can be bought today as household ornaments.

The **Object of the Month or October** is a boy's flat cap from the 19th century- do come into the Museum to have a look. If you have a favourite object in the Museum's collections you would like to see featured as *Object of the Month*, please get in touch with Leah on 01799 510645.

### Exhibition

29<sup>th</sup> August — 7<sup>th</sup> February, 2016

**Uttlesford: A Community of Collectors**

28<sup>th</sup> November Opening of the second display from local collectors.

### Museum Outreach News

#### *Gamma Tully*

The schools are back and I've been absolutely inundated with requests for learning sessions from schools from Essex and the surrounding counties, It is good to be working with children in a more formal setting after a very successful but somewhat chaotic summer of events, If you didn't keep up with what we were doing in the local press, the summer saw three very popular family holiday events take place at the Museum over the month of August.

The First event was rather messy as participants made day models inspired by the Museum's collection, We had some fantastic lions, mummies and even a Viking longboat and many parents, grandparents and carers also got stuck in.

Modellers of mummy (right)  
and  
Viking longboat (below)



### Making and flying hoop gliders



During the second week, we learnt about aerodynamics and made hoop gliders. We even had a competition on our outdoor runway for children of different age groups to see whose glider would fly the furthest. and we had prizes for the best design and the greatest distance travelled in all age groups.

The final summer activity was, unsurprisingly, the most popular. We made our own dinosaur feet with inspiration from a real dinosaur footprint, which was kindly loaned to us for the day by local Fossil expert Gerald Lucy. Almost 700 visitors came through the doors on those three activity days alone. and we were busy almost every other day of the summer with visitors from all over the globe!

Dinosaur feet



Still to come this year, we have a real treat with two performances of Oscar Wilde's famous story of the Canterville Ghost, taking place in the Museum on 29<sup>th</sup> October for Hallowe'en. and then our annual Christmas decoration-making event on 5<sup>th</sup> December.

The 29<sup>th</sup> October will also sadly be my last day at the Museum as I am leaving to take up a new job at Durham University, I have loved every moment of my time at Saffron Walden Museum, It has been a real pleasure getting to know Members of the Society and working with the local community, I have no doubt that I will miss the work and the people and will certainly pop back when I can (hopefully I can come to a Private View or two ). My new job will be as a Post-Doctoral Research Associate, co-ordinating a public engagement project on Iron Age oppida sites between the UK, France and Spain, It will be an amazing opportunity to work with local communities living near archaeological sites across Europe, and will allow me to take part in excavations and conferences as well as write academic papers.

So, I'm signing off for the last time as Visitor Services and Learning Officer- it has been a wonderful few years. Thank you to everyone I've met and to those of you who have helped me along the way Adieu!

*Our thoughts and very best wishes go with you, Gemma, with our thanks for all you have done while you have been at the Museum, Ed.*

## The Great Move

Date: Tuesday 20th October 2015 — 'Forward to the Future', The Great Move has started!

On Tuesday, 20th October, a team of curatorial staff, volunteers and officers of Uttlesford District Council began moving exhibits from the Newport store into the new store on Shirehill. Last December, when we began the packing for the move, seems so far away now, and at last the great moment has arrived.

Sarah Kenyon and her team of volunteers had pride of place in putting the first objects from the old store onto the pristine new shelves in the Natural Science store, closely followed by the Curator herself, accompanied by numerous boxes of human bones for the Archaeology section of the store.



Carolyn Wingfield commented at the end of the day: "The first day has surpassed my wildest expectations, Not only have we moved a vast amount from Newport in one day, but the objects are stored in their correct places on the shelves as well. There is still a long way to go. but it has been a very positive start. It is a Curator's dream to have a new, purpose—built store, and my dream has come true!"

It is expected that it will take ten weeks to complete the move. But at last the Great Move is underway!

**Richard Priestley**  
*Chair, Museum Support Committee*

### Museum Society News

*Peter Walker was appointed a Director and Treasurer of the Museum Society at the Annual General Meeting held on 25th September, We have asked him to let us have a pen portrait of himself, Ed.*

We moved to Saffron Walden in 1981. where our two daughters grew up, and I commuted to London or Watford for decades as a Chartered Accountant whilst my wife taught in several local primary schools.

I retired from one of the very large accounting firms in 2013, and since then I have been able to devote most of my time to my passionate love of maps- preferably printed ones of Essex. This all started at a reception at the Museum about 10 years ago when, gazing up at the Chapman & Andre 2" to the mile wall map by the entrance hall stairs. noticed that the road going past Audley End House up to Littlebury was wrong! It curves around the hillside too much, and then strikes north across the Fields to come out opposite Peggy's Walk. This seemed an odd mistake to make, as surely the tower of Littlebury Church would be such an obvious landmark when surveying. They were definitely marking this as the main road, complete with a milestone, as that was the Turnpike road.

I turned to my wife and said that if this famously accurate map could have errors like that, what are other olden maps like? "I know, I'll collect all the antique county maps of Essex: there can't be that many of them". Well, the answers are — there are a lot of them, and the Chapman & Andre map was right, The Turnpike road did have that course, only changing by a Highway Diversion in 1811 to its present line - complete with moving the milestone, So wrong over the road. and very wrong over the numbers of maps that exist: I now have about three hundred of them pre—1900.

So, a definite connection with the Museum (that and being one of the cataloguers and movers for the great Store move, and last year's Independent Examiner). I am also Treasurer of the Town Library Society and Financial Secretary of the International Map Collectors Society, whilst my wife Hilary is a volunteer in the 2D store of the Museum, Having wrapped up so many items in tissue and bubble wrap, I look forward to unwrapping it all on Shirehill - plus also now continuing the great work of David Laing.

**Peter Walker**

### Membership

*The Society also welcomes Christine Sharpe as a Director following her appointment at the Annual General Meeting on 25th September, 2015, Christine became Membership Officer in the autumn of 2013 and her pen portrait appeared in issue 31 of the Newsletter, Ed.*

Members who attended the Annual General Meeting will be aware that the meeting agreed that the annual subscription per person should be increased with effect from 1st April, 2016 to a minimum of £15. Within the next few weeks, I will be contacting all Members who already pay by direct payment/standing order with details of how best to proceed. I will also contact the other Members who have already indicated that they would prefer this method of payment.

If you have not already done so, please consider paying your subscription by direct payment as it saves reminders (and possible embarrassment if forgotten). This may be done on line or I can supply you with a form, whichever is more

convenient for you. All I ask, if the change is made online, is that it is dated for 1st April each year and please could you let me know that it has been done, If you would like more information or need the bank account details. do please get in touch. My contact details are - telephone 01799 527546 or email : christinesharpe@hotmail.co.uk

**Christine Sharpe**

## Talks and Events

**7th July**

**Visit to Fingringhoe Wick**



Eight of us arranged ourselves into two cars and set off for 'The Wick' along the A 120 and, winding through Colchester, emerging suddenly into the lanes beyond. It was breezy, cloudy but getting warmer and having picnicked in the visitor centre, we began to decide where to go first. For two of us it was the hide that overlooks 'The Scrape' on the east salt marsh, most of which is an army firing range, On the little island in The Scrape itself, there were black headed gulls, some nesting, and a lone oyster catcher while on the marsh were starlings, curlews, more gulls- black headed, greater black backs and one Mediterranean gull spotted by a very good 'birder' in the group.

From other hides overlooking the Colne estuary, we saw curlews again, more gulls, little egrets (also later on the salt marsh), a dunlin flock, carrion crows, swallows in flight and an overhead buzzard, For me, the stars on the Colne were the shelduck family, swimming in line astern, the male leading five ducklings, shepherded at the rear by the female.

Further on at Kit's Pond, sheltered from the inland salt marsh by a bank, we were buzzed by several sorts of damsel and dragonflies, saw moorhens and chicks and our 'best birder' glimpsed a reed warbler as it flitted through the reeds. Over the bank we heard the grating song of sedge warblers singing in competition with the earthmoving equipment preparing the newly-acquired extension to the salt marsh there, It is soon to be open to the public but the seawall has to be breached first to let the tides in.

A very pleasant walk, affording opportunities for caterpillar and butterfly spotting, took us back to the main lake where there were families of tufted ducks, Mallards, moorhens and coots, a mute swan and four more little egrets vaguely perching in the willows, There was also a 'teenage' great crested grebe, a little grebe and tufted duck drakes looking decidedly tatty 'in eclipse', Flowers of interest included the nodding musk thistle, welshed thistle, musk

mallow, common centaury and some lesser calamint just coming into flower.

So while not peak time for waders - that comes later - but plenty of things of interest about and we only took in about half the reserve. Altogether a pleasant afternoon, complemented by the service in the café in the visitor centre which offered good coffee, tea and nice things to eat.

**Heather Salvidge**

**14<sup>th</sup> September**

**Wellington and Waterloo — a close run thing**

**Speaker: Jef Page**

Jef Page set the scene by relating that France had been at war with many European countries including Prussia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Russia, America (!) and, time and again, Austria. On 1st February 1793, however, the French revolutionary government declared war on Britain as well. This state of war lasted, on and off, For 22 years until Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. Jef's talk was helpfully illustrated with maps and pictures of significant buildings and some of the *dramatis personae*.

In 1814 Napoleon, who had been declared Emperor in 1804, abdicated a few days before Wellington defeated French forces in the south, Louis XVIII was proclaimed king and Napoleon was exiled to Elba. Early in 1815 he escaped from Elba arriving back in southern France on 1<sup>st</sup> March. Gathering support and soldiers on the way, he marched north getting to Paris after about 3 weeks- the day after the king had fled. So, who had joined Napoleon as he gathered forces about him? The British had not left an occupying force after the triumph of 1814 and France still had armies stationed in various parts of the country. Many old soldiers flocked to his cause and, by June, he had amassed a significant force and several notable generals e.g. Marshals Ney and Grouchy,

Many of the senior officers, Wellington included, attended the famous ball on 15<sup>th</sup> June given by the Duchess of Richmond - our Museum has in its collection a beautiful blue and white dress said to have been worn on that occasion.

Jef Page then focussed in on several of the individuals who fought on the day. The Earl of Uxbridge, when seriously wounded, exclaimed "By God, Sir, I've lost my leg!". To which Wellington replied, "By God, Sir, I believe you have". There was General Rowland 'Daddy' Hill of the Infantry: Mercer and Kincaid of the 1<sup>st</sup> / 95<sup>th</sup> Rifle Corps, 'The Green Jackets': the only General killed at Waterloo, Lieutenant-General Sir William Picton and, of course, the Prussian Blucher or-- to give him his full title, Prince Gebhard von Blucher, aged 74: then the tragic story of Colonel Sir William de Lancey and his wife of just two months Magdalene who nursed him For the six days till his death.

On the day itself, Napoleon was aiming to prevent the amalgamation of the Anglo-Allied and Blucher's Prussian

forces and to attack the latter at Ligny but, instead of retreating east, the Prussians moved north to Wavre and Grouchy followed them. Meanwhile, Wellington's forces were drawn up, facing the main force of Napoleon's troops, across the road leading north to the village of Waterloo (near which Wellington established his HQ) and on towards the Belgian capital, Brussels. For warfare of the time. the main engagement started relatively late, at 11:30 am; there were first battles for example at Quatre Bras and La Haye Sainte. Napoleon first attacked Wellington's right and then had a go at his centre. Fighting was fierce and bloody and at times no quarter given. Napoleon used little horse artillery and the British 'squares' held firm until, between 6 and 7 pm, Blucher and his Prussians arrived. The French sent in The Imperial Guard but the Allies inflicted defeat and the day ended.

Many men and horses were killed and many army surgeons performed amputations on the field - without anaesthetics of course, Napoleon had lost the most men to add to the 1,000s who had died under his command in Russia, Austria and Spain. Major Henry Percy left for London on 19<sup>th</sup> June with the news of the victory, and arrived in the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> breaking the glad tidings to the Prince Regent who was attending a ball and who rewarded him by immediately raising him to the rank of Colonel.

The significance of Waterloo? Well, after that there was a period of European peace until the outbreak of WWI nearly a hundred years later in 1914.

**Heather Salvidge**

### 23rd September

#### Visit to Hill Hall. Theydon Mount

On 23<sup>rd</sup> September, twenty Museum Society members visited Hill Hall located near Epping. Travelling out of Epping to the house, the Essex countryside is remarkably pretty, given that the M11 and M25 are close by. We had all had the benefit of attending Jeremy Collingwood's talk in June about Sir Thomas Smith, statesman and scholar who became one of Elizabeth I's most trusted



counsellors. It was he who was responsible for rebuilding and remodelling the house in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, He travelled in Europe and was Ambassador to France, and was greatly influenced by the classical architecture he saw in Europe.

Although Hill Hall is owned by English Heritage, it consists of many private apartments so we had to wait by the entrance gate for our guide to take us to View those parts of the building that are open to the public. Unfortunately there was a great deal of scaffolding around the exterior of the building but we were still able to see how unusually ambitious the architecture of the building was and way ahead of its time by several decades.

Sir Thomas superimposed Doric, Ionic and some Corinthian columns on the courtyard elevations with later terracotta



mouldings, The south elevation of the building, from which the M25 can be seen, has three orders of columns - Doric on the ground floor, Ionic on the First Floor and Corinthian on the attic dormers. Here could also be seen columns the height of two storeys, an exceptional occurrence at the time. Inside the building Sir Thomas had murals painted on lime plaster and some



still survive and we were able to view them. They are among the finest of their kind in the country and depict biblical and mythical scenes.

We also had time to visit Mount Theydon Church which is close by. There has been a church here since the Middle Ages, but it was rebuilt in 1612 after it was burned down, Most of the cost was borne by the Smith family and the church was dedicated to Saint Michael, The interior is a fine example of early seventeenth century craftsmanship, retaining its original oak pews and panelling, To the left of the altar is a statue of Sir Thomas Smith,



The church also contains a Maiden's Garland, preserved in a glass case and probably over three hundred years old, It is the only surviving example in Essex. The garland would have been carried on the coffin of a virtuous maiden who was betrothed but died before the marriage. It is shaped like a crown and decorated with box sprigs, paper tassels and ribbons. During our visit to the church we were provided with tea and cakes which were much appreciated.

*And very many thanks to Lesley Green for providing the photographs, Ed,*

### 12<sup>th</sup> October

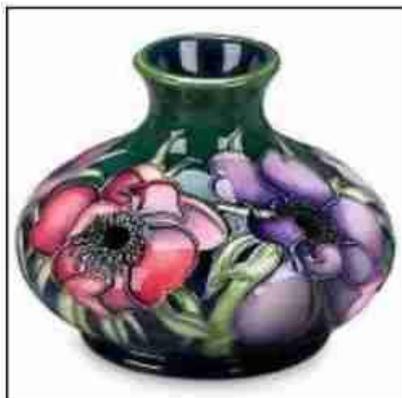
#### Moorcroft Pottery and its history

**Speaker: Hugh Edwards. Chairman of Moorcroft Pottery**

Our speaker for the evening, Hugh Edwards. is the Chairman of Moorcroft Ltd who has been collecting Moorcroft pottery since his 20s. His wife Maureen was with him, performing the invaluable role of carefully taking round to the audience the collection

of pots that Hugh had brought along as illustrations so much better than pictures!

Hugh set the scene by telling us about Moorcroft's past history, what had happened and why, and gave us an understanding of his ideas for the factory's future.



William Moorcroft, the founding father, was born into poverty and lost both parents at an early age. Supported by the Methodist movement, he was able to go to school and thence to the then Kensington College of Art. William was influenced by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement in general and, in 1897, set up his own studio and produced the first pots of the Moorcroft name. He developed eight 'design windows' or themes which were landscapes, feathers, broad floral, Butterflies, fish, floral, mushrooms and toadstools, and fruits of the earth. He used tube-lining as a decoration technique which is still at the heart of Moorcroft design and working initially with cobalt oxide as his only colour, he developed 'blue on blue' ware producing the designs by varying the intensity of the pigment. He then managed to add yellow and green in the early 1900s.

The first major crisis came when the landlords of his studio withdrew the lease, William had been selling through Liberty's of London and went to them for financial backing which was forthcoming. The new factory was built in Cobridge and the staff collected the contents from the old place and marched them round to the new. His son Walter took over just before William died in 1945.

Relations between father and son had been acrimonious to say the least and Walter ditched seven of the eight windows and worked solely with the broad floral. Not surprisingly, with this narrow design profile, interest in Moorcroft waned and, in 1986, Hugh and Maureen Edwards, known as long known as serious collectors, were contacted and told that the firm was about to go bankrupt. Two other partners were found: Hugh sold his entire collection of Moorcroft to help fund the rescue and, keeping on his other role as a senior partner in a London law firm, went up to Sandbach Road, Burslem on a part-time basis to get things going again. This also started the important link between Stoke and Thaxted where the Edwards family have lived for many years.



The design range was broadened adding, for example, architecture, animals, human beings, birds and middle eastern patterns until there are now 17 windows. New design staff were recruited, especially after the other two partners left in 1991.

Rachel Bishop, now the senior designer and head of the design studio, was the first young talent to be called in. The colour range was extended and now stands at 83 oxides, giving the designers much greater freedom. The clay comes from Cornwall.

Hugh acknowledged some of his mistakes - very openly; for example, for the 2013 centenary, reproducing exact copies of William's pots upset collectors of the originals as it felt that it undermined their value: now he feels it better to produce 'tribute' ware. Charity partnerships have grown; for example RSPB, RBL, NSPCC and, more recently, the National Autistic Society. Moorcroft pottery is now sold in places all over the world from Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and now even in China. The Queen is also known to have some pieces.

There was much more to Hugh's talk (Google William Moorcroft if you wish) which was beautifully illustrated by the real Moorcroft pots, and it was great to have it delivered by a man who is not so much interested in making pots of money but ensuring the continuation of the creation of lots of lovely pots!

**Heather Salvidge**

### Legacies

Are you making or revising your Will? Could we ask you please to consider a legacy to the Saffron Walden Museum Society. Any special wishes regarding the bequest will be carried out, enabling you to designate your gift for a particular purpose if you wish. And don't forget - legacies to charities are not subject to Inheritance Tax,

**Peter Walker**

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