



# Museum matters

Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

Spring 2016 Issue 38

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

## **Highlights and Happenings**

### *From the Chairman*

On 27<sup>th</sup> November 2015, a Members' Private Preview evening was held for the second part of the 'Collectors' exhibition, This time there were collections of dolls & teddy bears, pestles & mortars, textiles 3: needlework, pomanders. model pigs and walking sticks, again with strong support from Members, collectors and their guests, These collections have proved very popular and you may be aware the Society has agreed to fund a new display cabinet so that ongoing displays will become possible,

Our Christmas party was held on 14<sup>th</sup> December with the quiz replaced by a display of items provided by all of the Society's Directors, It seems that Directors must have kept their tastes or interests very much to themselves as no one was able to guess the origins of all the items on display! The excellence of the Collectors exhibition was what motivated this particular format - but perhaps it was just a little too difficult. The party was well attended but we were disappointed that Carolyn, Sarah and Leah were unable to join us; however I understand that they enjoyed the usual refreshments the following week,

A further Private Preview for Members and their guests was held For the latest exhibition 'The Ocean World' on 19<sup>th</sup> February, This is well worth a visit if you have not yet been - and I think it's the first time we've had an acoustic accompaniment. The Fossils are most interesting, particularly the crab - just see how old this is!

Our store volunteers were very busy in the period up to Christmas and all but a few large items are now safely in residence in the new Shirehill store, You are well aware what a large on-going project this has been and I am pleased that you will now be able to see what has been achieved, The Society and Museum have been fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and hard working group of people both packing and moving and then unpacking hundreds, or rather thousands, of items, The new store is most impressive and many items have seen the light of day for the first time in many years - quite a number have found their way into displays. The formal opening of the new store will take place early evening on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> April, Members will be able to visit during the afternoon of 11<sup>th</sup> April and also during the day of 18<sup>th</sup> April,

Because there is little room for very many visitors at any one time, Members will be asked to identify the time/s when they would like to visit the store: full details will be included in the invitations being sent out, if you want to come, I would encourage you to get your application in as quickly as you can!

The Development Committee is now considering a further draft of a Design Brief for the re-development of the museum buildings, Details of our proposals will be made available for your comments later this year, It is also good to see that the hedge around the Castle has now gone; hopefully it will not be long before we can get inside the Keep again.

The Spring series of talks began in January with a talk by Terry Ward on the Saffron Walden Photographic Archive (see report). While it was unfortunate that the Speaker for the talk on 8<sup>th</sup> February fell ill and the talk on Oliver Cromwell had to be cancelled. I am sure an opportunity will be found to re-schedule this interesting topic in due course.

**Tony Watson**

## Curator's Column

### Cipriani Frieze returns to Audley End

As if moving collections between stores were not enough, in early March we also moved some important paintings out of the Museum's Ceramics Gallery! This exercise was planned and executed in collaboration with English Heritage staff and their removers. Fine Art Services Ltd., with special thanks to Mia Jackson, curator of collections for Audley End House and Wrest Park.

The story begins in 1771 when the eminent Italian artist Giovanni Battista Cipriani was commissioned to produce a set of six oil paintings as a frieze to decorate the new library designed by Robert Adam For Audley End House. The six paintings, executed in grey tones, were all of classical and allegorical figures, such as Apollo, Vulcan with Cyclops or Cybèle [sic] accompanied by the Four Seasons,

Alterations to the House and décor in the early nineteenth century led to the removal of the Cipriani Friezes. In the early 1840s Lady Braybrooke gave them to the new Museum in Saffron Walden and they have remained in the collections ever since. However, all the drawings, accounts and documents relating to the Cipriani frieze and Adam library were retained at Audley End and in the Essex Record Office,

Since English Heritage took over Audley End House, the link between the Frieze and the House has been renewed. In the early 1970s, English Heritage conserved and framed all six paintings; four were hung high on the walls of the Museum's Ceramics Gallery, and two were placed on loan at Audley End House so visitors could see something from the Robert Adam phase. By 2015 both the Museum and Audley End House had reached a point where the future of the whole set needed reviewing. The Museum needed to remove the four paintings from the Ceramics Gallery to allow for re-decoration of the gallery walls, but there were also questions about the long-term display of the paintings because they were of limited relevance to the Museum's other collections. Meanwhile Mia Jackson, Curator for Audley End, was keen to re-display the remaining artefacts from the Adam Library. It was therefore fitting that the four Cipriani paintings from the Ceramics Gallery should be loaned to Audley End, where they could be re-united with the two already on loan, and re-hung in the room for which they were intended.

The images show the sequence for the delicate operation of removing the Cipriani paintings from the Ceramics Gallery. where they were supported on horizontal wooden ledges high on the walls above cases of ceramic exhibits. The specialist removers worked with great care and dexterity to manoeuvre the long framed paintings through awkward turns and tight spaces, and safely into their transport. The whole operation provided a memorable and useful experience for Museum staff and volunteers, and we look forward to an announcement from English Heritage when all six Cipriani paintings are once more on public view. this time in their original setting.

Removers unscrew and prepare to lift a painting down from the wall onto boards and pads on top of the emptied showcases



The painting is gently lowered from the top of the cases to floor level



Thick polythene sheeting is used to wrap and protect the paintings. The deep recessed frames prevent the wrapping from coming into contact with the painted surface



The paintings are carefully manoeuvred out of the gallery and through the Museum

The 'long way round' through the Great Hall is easier than the tight stairwell to the Foyer



Safely secured for the short ride to Audley End House

*Carolyn Wingfield*

## Some early records of the Museum

### *Len Pole*

For some time after I had put together a summary history of the Museum 'Stand Awhile and Admire'. I had been keen to re-examine the first minutes of the initial meetings of the Saffron Walden Natural History Society which established the Museum in the 1850s.

This was partly to note any details about the earliest acquisitions of objects and specimens recorded in them that may not have been transferred to more recent records. But I was also interested in the possibility of being an early 19th century 'Fly on the wall', imbibing the tenor of their discussions about their new project. in the days before theyoung Victoria acceded to the throne. For me these notes are at their most interesting when they throw light on how these pillars of Saffron Walden society performed and expressed themselves, and the circles in which they moved in the 1830s.

The earliest recorded meeting of representatives of the organisation that became the Saffron Walden Natural History Society was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 1832 in a house in King Street belonging to Jabez Gibson, This was the first meeting minuted in the Minutes book no. 1 in the archives of the Museum, but it was not apparently the first meeting of the Founders of the Institution. as the initial sentence of these Minutes states "After several previous Meetings....". However, it seems to have been the first formal meeting of the Founders, at which an initial statement of the Institution's Rules and Regulations were resolved upon, Given the import of this meeting. and the care with which other meetings were recorded, it is curious that there is no list of the members attending this meeting, The only names mentioned were the members of the Committee itself, but no indication of the method by which they were chosen, The Rules state "That a Committee of not less than five Individuals be appointed to carry the object into effect", but no indication of who were the appointees, The individuals appointed were:

Jabez Gibson. Chairman  
John Player  
Thomas Spurgin, Joint Secretary  
Joshua Clarke, Joint Secretary  
William Ward

In the absence of any other information about who the Founders were, it remains an assumption that these were they. How did other individuals join the Society? This is somewhat unclear, The last sentence of the Rules and Regulations states "Lastly, that an annual meeting of the Friends and Supporters be held, and that no Rule be altered but at one of these meetings", 'Friends and Supporters' appears to have consisted of "Any Individual subscribing \_\_\_ Annually, or giving a Donation at one time of \_\_\_ Pounds" as stated in Rule 3. They had free admission at the appointed Hours. But it does not state these individuals become members on the receipt of such payment, Rule 4 states "That the Museum be accessible to the Members of the Horticultural Society and of the Institution on such days as the Committee fix. Provided those Societies contribute £\_ Annually towards its maintenance and support", It is not clear which 'Institution' is being referred to

here, but the only one mentioned up to this point in these minutes is The Saffron Walden Natural History Society, so it must be this memberless body, It is interesting to realise how tentative these initial steps were in the foundation of such a long-lasting institution, The formal agreement of the Committee to adopt the name "Saffron Walden Natural History Society" was not even made until the meeting of the 28<sup>th</sup> March. 1833, The Rules and Regulations were later made much more comprehensive in February, 1834.

What was the object of this Institution? Rule 1 of the initial Rules and Regulations states: "That a Museum be formed to include Specimens in the several Departments of Natural History, with Antiquarian remains, and other such Articles as may be of local or general interest", So that means effectively more or less everything that takes the fancy of the Founders.

Rule 10 states that "Mr Spurgin and Mr Clarke be Secretaries; that they be requested to enter into a Book the Several Donations, in order that it maybe handed down as a Register of this Institution". Sadly this Book was never handed down — in fact G N Maynard, the First paid Curator. bemoaned the lack of such a Register "if it existed" as he acidly remarked, when he began in the 1890s to try to recreate a list of the initial additions to the Museum.

No mention is made in this first set of minutes of where the Museum that is to be brought into being by the Institution. was to be situated, The present museum building was not in existence at this time, The first meeting of the Committee, held on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1833, was held "at the Museum House", In the absence of any other indication of its location, it must be assumed to be the "House belonging to Jabez Gibson Esqr adjoining the new Cattle-Market", as mentioned in the minutes of the November 1832 meeting.

In the intervening period the members of the Committee got busy, for in the minutes at this January meeting it is reported that a letter had been received from Alexander Baring Esqr MP, expressing support and "a desire to contribute specimens should opportunity occur", It was agreed that Professors Henslow. Sedgwick and Parish, be written to, also Messrs Doubleday of Epping. Revd Bree, Mr Loudon of Bayswater, (the famous botanist, author "The Encyclopaedia of Plants", and "The Encyclopaedia of Gardening") and Lt Fabian. RN "who, being on the eve of visiting Devonshire and Cornwall, had kindly undertaken a Commission to endeavour to procure Specimens from the Mines and other Localities in that District", Thereafter meetings were held weekly, and reported monetary donations and intentions to supply cases, eg for Zoological Specimens, The Zoological Society (Regents Park) was also to be written to. On 30th January. the Chairman reported that Mr Dunn, at Algoa Bay, Cape of Good Hope, had been written to, to collect some specimens for the Museum, These initiatives give an intimation of the national and international scope of the Committee's ambitions. which were to have such a long-lasting influence on the scope and nature of the collections.

The first entry in Maynard's recreated Register, the only one dated 1832. is a small urn found in the Almshouse Meadow; but this was a mistake, based on the fact that the object was dug up in 1832. not because it was added to the museum collections at that date. The earliest documented additions to the collections were from the Zoological Society, as indicated in the Committee Minutes of 12th March. 1833 "30 birds and a deer. as under mentioned".

My particular academic interest being with the history of the ethnographic accessions, I was pleased to re-acquaint myself with the first mention of artefacts from other parts of the world, At the meeting of 12th April 1833, the Chairman reported "having received some Botanical specimens, and a Dress made From the Bark of a Tree, from the Marchioness Cornwallis."

What almost immediately confirmed my concern about mislaid details about some accessions was a reference in the minutes of the meeting of 31st July 1834, to the mummy of a cat - but this was no exotic animal from Ancient Egypt, It was from much closer to home, as this carefully recorded minute makes clear: "S. W, Clarence. Esq of Thaxted presented the Skeleton of a cat. with the following note: 'This cat was lost for some years, and upon repairing the house was found pressed between the Wall and a joist exactly in the state it now is' But in the Register made out at the end of the century by G N Maynard, the entry reads "1 dried mummy of a cat" without the local connection, It is a moot point whether such an item should be considered as a natural history specimen or a piece of social history.

At this meeting, it was also mentioned that an instruction had been made by the Committee to "our Correspondent at Algoa Bay" to procure for them "Any Animals they may desire to obtain from that locality", As the members of the committee were soon to learn, this sowed the seeds of an event which had enormous consequences for the future of the Museum, which we can report in more detail at a future date.

**Len Pole**

## Natural Sciences

**Sarah Kenyon**

Since the last newsletter I with Madeleine, the Store Team volunteers and the Van Driving team have been very busy moving the natural science collections into the new store at Shirehill, This involved moving the packed boxes, drawers, individual specimens and historic cabinets out of Newport store and the first floor natural history store at Saffron Walden Museum: transporting the collections by road to Shirehill store, and then housing them in the new Natural Sciences store on the first floor.

This could not have been done without the volunteers and I am so grateful for their help and cheerful support during this nail -biting process, Moving objects displayed in Victorian glass domes was especially hair-raising.



New large specimen rack

New Mineral storage



New Herbarium storage



New Fossil storage



The old dark and inaccessible store

Together we packed and moved 49,451 specimens in nearly 1,000 containers. The biology collections included amphibians, reptiles, birds' eggs and nests, fish, invertebrates and mollusc shells. osteology (bones and teeth) and the dried plant herbarium, The whole geology collection of rocks, minerals and fossils was moved to the new store, I am sure you will agree this is a fantastic achievement!

Sarah puts the last box on a shelf!



Saffron Walden Museum now has a Licence from Natural England to possess and transport dead specimens of wild plant and animal species listed on Annex IV and II(b) of the Habitats Directive for scientific and education purposes.

So what does this mean? This Licence means it is legal for the Museum to store and move specimens of species that are protected by wildlife legislation when preserving collections for future generations and making objects available for research and education, This is what all accredited museums with biology collections are working to achieve, It involves making sure that all Museum specimens of protected animals and plants are catalogued on the computer database, and that an electronic register is kept and updated on an annual basis to show that new specimens have been collected without breaking any wildlife laws- this was quite a lot of documentation work! In January and February 2016, I was also working on the new special exhibition, Ocean World, which opened with a Private Preview For Museum Society Members on Friday 19th February- of which more anon!

And the Malaysian stick insects? They are new full sized adults and the females have laid their first eggs.

## Human History Collections

*Leah Mellors*

In November, I took on some new responsibilities within the museum, including the line management of our team of 15 Museum Assistants and the management of our social media and website, I am thoroughly enjoying managing our Museum Assistants, who provide a vital role in helping core staff to keep the museum open throughout the year, I am keen to get the team of Museum Assistants more involved in projects such as documentation of the collections, development of our holiday activity programme and organisation of the education and handling resources.

In February, we welcomed 750 visitors to the Museum over three days of half-term holiday activities, This was a new project for me, as I haven't been involved in family activities before, but it was fantastic to see the Museum so busy and vibrant, The sessions helped to engage visitors of all ages, but in particular children, with our ancient collections as they made Egyptian cartouche door hangers, Roman cone people and Greek Olympic medals.



**Holiday activities**

At the beginning of March, along with volunteers and colleagues, I took on the (frankly quite terrifying) job of emptying part of the Ceramics gallery to enable the removal of the four Cipriani paintings. These paintings have been loaned to English Heritage For display at Audley End House (see Carolyn's article), In just under a day, we wrapped, packed and moved over 275 fragile objects into the Worlds of Man gallery, so that the paintings could be removed without risking the collections Once the paintings had been removed, we unwrapped and re—installed the objects, This was a big project to

complete in a short amount of time but we are delighted that the Cipriani paintings are back in their rightful environment. Of course, despite these new responsibilities and projects, I still needed to make time for work on the store move! Having moved everything I could manage from the Newport store. I set to work on the 2D store at the Museum (which is now completely empty) and the Organics store in the schoolroom (which is getting emptier). There is a great deal of work to do at the Shirehill store to get the collections unwrapped and the database updated with new locations and I hope to start this work, with my team of wonderful volunteers, very soon, One of the highlights of this project has been hanging up our beautiful collection of carvings and panels on pegboard in the store, where they can be easily accessed and admired.

**Carvings and panels**



Finally, on a more personal note, I was thrilled to be nominated for and accepted onto a leadership development programme called *Changemakers*, which is being run by SHARE Museums East, The programme will run for two years and aims to help me develop both personally and professionally as a leader within the museum sector. I have now attended two sessions which have been incredibly useful in helping me to focus on the challenges I face in my role and how I might overcome them. I hope that this programme will benefit the Museum as much as it benefits me.

## Object of the Month

*Leah Mellors*

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

### January 2016 Viking Ring

January's *Object of the Month* was the gold Viking finger-ring, which was selected by Carolyn Wingfield, our Curator. The ring was found by a metal-detectorist near Thaxted in 2013 and reported under the Treasure Act (1996). The ring is made in a style associated with Viking jewellery and dates from the tenth to twelfth centuries (around AD 900 -1200). It was made by twisting two strands of gold wire, and then twisting these with two tapering gold rods, and forming a hoop. The thin ends of the rods and wires were joined at the back of the hoop by beating them together into a flat, diamond-shaped plate. The plate is decorated with tiny punched circles.

This style of ring is associated with the Vikings, people from Scandinavian countries (Denmark Norway, Sweden) who raided, traded and settled across northern Europe and beyond from the ninth



to twelfth centuries, Many such rings have been found across the Viking world. The diamond-shaped plate on the back of our Thaxted ring is thought to be a Scandinavian feature, because it is also found on rings from the Viking homelands: in other words, it was probably made by a Viking goldsmith in Denmark Norway or southern Sweden, rather than an Anglo-Saxon smith working for Vikings in eastern England.

We cannot tell who lost the ring, or why, Such objects could easily be traded or passed from one person to another, To the Vikings. such jewellery acted as portable currency and a sign of status, Arm-rings and neck-rings made of gold and silver in the same style are also known.

You can see the ring on display in our *Treasure* case, in the *Ages of Man* gallery.

## February Magneto-Electric Machine

February's *Object of the Month* was The Improved Magneto-Electric Machine for Nervous Diseases which I chose. The machine dates from about 1880 and it was donated to the Museum in 1968.



In the 1800s. many people were fascinated by electricity and the possibility of using it in their own homes for medicinal or therapeutic purposes, 'Electrotherapy', or the use of mild electric shocks, became a popular treatment for a range of diseases and ailments, especially those associated with the nerves, Thousands of machines, including this one made by S, Maw, Son & Thompson. were made and sold between about 1850 and 1900, The machine generated an electric current from two rotating magnets, The operator of the machine would place the two handles in the patient's hands, or elsewhere on the patient's body, and then turn the crank to deliver an electric current, The faster the crank was turned, the stronger the current.

Patients would feel electric shocks running through their body and they were left with a buzzing sensation, which some said relieved their symptoms, The makers of the machine claimed that using the machine could relieve pain and cure a number of diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis, diabetes, gangrene. heart disease. tetanus and spinal deformities.

## March Reform flask

March's *Object of the Month* is a flask or bottle made from salt-glazed stoneware, It is shaped in the form of Henry Peter Brougham, who was Lord Chancellor of Britain between 1830 and 1834. The inscription on the front of the flask reads: "*The Second Magna Charta/ Brougham 's Reform Cordial*" The flask was made by Belper and Denby Bournes Potteries, Derbyshire,



in 1832 and it is marked on the back with their maker's mark, It was donated to the Museum in 1897 by Edward Taylor of Saffron Walden.

The flask commemorates the role that Henry Peter Brougham played in helping to pass the 1832 Reform Act. Brougham was a British politician and statesman, He was the Attorney-General of Caroline of Brunswick, the estranged wife of the future George IV, and a Member of Parliament for Winchelsea. In 1830, he was appointed Lord Chancellor of Britain by Prime Minister Charles Grey, a post that he held for four years, During this time, he helped to pass the Slavery Abolition Act and the 1832 Reform Act, which was an Act of Parliament which introduced changes to the voting system in England and Wales.

Traditionally, Members of Parliament represented boroughs and the choice of Members was often controlled by one wealthy and powerful patron. The number of voters in each borough varied widely, as did the criteria for voting, Boroughs with a small number of voters that were controlled by a wealthy patron were known as 'rotten boroughs'. The Act removed seats from these 'rotten boroughs' and created 67 new constituencies, many in the large cities that had sprung up during the Industrial Revolution. It also broadened the criteria for voting, giving the vote to all householders who paid a yearly rental of £10 or more, This increased the electorate to about one in five adult males, The 1832 Reform Act did little to appease the working classes or women, who were still unable to vote, but it did prove that change was possible and over the next decades. the call for further parliamentary reform continued. You can see the flask on display in the Museum until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

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 Ocean World Exhibition Opened Saturday 20th February

A Private Preview for Museum Society Members was held For 'Ocean World' on Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> February, This exhibition is a joint project with Peter Ta'Bois of the Travelling Natural History Museum.

Peter supplied models of sharks, a giant seahorse, a Pacific octopus together with Siebe Gorman, the father of diving, Pictures of sharks and spectacular fossils are also included with examples of ancient fossil algae and trilobites, a huge ammonite, crinoids, shark and Mosasaur teeth and a remarkable crab — it may be 55 million years old but it looks just like the crabs of today! A Mosasaur tooth was found in a quarry at Elsenham so we know that these huge aquatic reptiles were swimming in the sea covering this area of Essex 65-70 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous period.





**Fossil Ammonite**

A range of sea creatures from the Saffron Walden Museum collections - from the tiny to the large - are also on show. The smaller examples include corals, crabs, barnacles, sea urchins, starfish, a life size seahorse, a pufferfish and seaweeds from Jersey. Among the



larger specimens are a framed sea whip, seabirds, a seal, green turtle shell and the antenna of a very large lobster, though we need a marine expert to identify which species of lobster it belonged to. There is a case of beautiful

**Pufferfish**

seashells from around the world. And you can find fossils from the Red Crag sands and gravels collected at the coast by George Stacey Gibson of Saffron Walden during the 19th century. Photographs of seabirds and coastal landscapes taken by local wildlife expert Barry Kaufmann-Wright are also on display.



**Fossilised marine growth**



**Fossilised Crab, 55 million years old**

Younger visitors really enjoy seeing the large models. Children can colour in pictures of sea creatures or do their own drawings for display on the art wall. and where they can find all the five oceans on a globe of the earth, 'Ocean World' also has as an accompaniment the songs of humpback whales and sounds of the sea,

A little challenge For Members: how many specimens From whales can you find in the exhibition? A clue — one is on display upstairs in the Museum (see end page for the answer).

**Sarah Kenyon**

*Many thanks to Lesley Green for contributing some of the photographs of exhibition artefacts. Ed.*

**Museum Society News**

**Christmas Social Evening**

It seems a long time since last year's Christmas Social Evening was held on Monday, 14th December, when some 80 Members, guests and Museum volunteers enjoyed the attractive buffet-style refreshments. Very many thanks to all those who contributed the delicious variety of food available.



**The fox casts a covetous eye on the refreshments in the natural History gallery**

We were delighted to be joined by Mayor Heather Asker with her consort, Stephen. This is an opportunity too for the Society to invite a number of people who have helped in one way or another during the year. During the evening, Chairman Tony Watson presented a Christmas gift for the staff and volunteers to Samantha, one of the Museum's Casual Assistants (right).



As the new-style quiz, stimulated by the 'Uttlesford Collectors' exhibition, was thought rather difficult, a quiz with a more general theme will be arranged For next year's event. But the raffle proved popular with Barbara Light winning the star prize of a modern sculpture.



**The Mayor draws the raffle**

It has been a tradition some years that many Members have made or provided refreshment items and we are most grateful for their contributions. If you would like to be part of the team For our next Christmas Social Evening, please contact Sue Hollingworth ( 01799 550220 ).

*And again we would like to thank Lesley Green for her photographs, only a few of which we are able to use. Our gratitude too goes to June Baker who provided prizes for the quiz, Ed.*

**Membership**

It is subscription time again and most of you will have heard From me already. Please try to pay the new amount promptly (a minimum of £15 per person); it will save us much time and the expense of sending reminders - it would be wonderful if none were needed!

Last year several members, who had not previously done so, signed Gift Aid declarations. and the Treasurer was able to claim tax refunds from HM Revenue & Customs For up to four years. This is a great help with the Museum Society finances. If you pay UK income tax or capital gains tax and have not already made a declaration, please consider doing so this year. This applies to the individual member, which means that if both husband and wife are members and tax payers, I would like each to complete a form please. The Gift Aid form was included with your mailing but if you would like more information. please contact me.

The Special Membership Offer is still open. Anyone joining the Museum Society in March 2016 will have the rest of the month free as a renewal subscription will not be required until 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2017. I will be delighted to send details by post or email to anyone interested in becoming a member. My contact details are: telephone 01799 527546 or email [s.christinesharpe@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:s.christinesharpe@hotmail.co.uk)

**Christine Sharpe**

## Talks and Events

**11th January**

**Saffron Walden Photographic Archive**

**Speaker: Terry Ward**

By way of introduction, Terry explained that he was brought up in Hackney, moved to Newport in 1979 and then, only in 1994, to Saffron Walden knowing at that time little about the town.

Terry then asked the audience which sites in the town typified Saffron Walden to us: the general consensus was the castle, the church, Audley End and the Common, Terry continued his talk by explaining that his archive was not going to feature the well-known sights and aspects of the town and environs, but rather the photographs would be about places and happenings that he considered were worthy of record and important, but which he felt had been overlooked. In many cases some of the aspects he had recorded only a few years ago were no longer in existence whereas others were images of the moment.

Having been drawn to the town's history initially by documents and by coming across a 1605 field map of the locality (being fascinated that the rent for one field was a red rose), Terry wondered what story lay behind it, He had looked at other photographic records including David Campbell's, but the idea of creating an archive of his own did not become concrete until 2008. A chance remark from his brother that Saffron Walden had once had its own railway station aroused his curiosity and sent him to the Town Library in search of information, Aided by Martyn and Zofia Everett he found the right source and started what was, at first, a Sunday afternoon project with his young son.

Following up the idea of the railway, he chose to photograph parts of the Acrow spur and Acrow Halt and told us that, unlike the photograph, the shelter was now boarded up, Another railway-associated image was the signal box at Bartlow junction, And so his quest continued, seeking out places and buildings which were important in their time but no longer needed. such as buildings on local airfields and wartime leftovers.

Turning his lens on nearby villages and onto the town itself. he captured unaltered styles and designs of the 1930s, 40s and 50s already by now modernised, and the quirky follies built by earlier householders, He moved on to the idea of taking pictures of local residents as they went about their business in the town to illustrate the 'soul' of the place, Another run of photographs was devoted to the various styles of Council houses recording the changes over the years, Then there were the shots of 'vistas', long views into the rolling countryside and the chalk pit, then the town's football club and the interior of the director's office in the Ridgeons building and one or two 'local traditions, Did you know that Balsham marked Plough Monday with a Molly and some mummers and that each year the Bishop of Chelmsford re-consecrated the Saxon chapel of St.Helen in Wicken Bonhunt?So, very much an alternative view of people and places in or around Walden. showing some of the less 'glamorous' aspects of what

makes Walden the town it now is, But an interesting viewpoint nevertheless as it raises the question of the need to record some things of the recent past which we tend to take for granted so that they are there for the future. Terry is now putting together some ideas for a publication which he hopes to issue soon.

Heather Salvidge

**8th February**

**Oliver Cromwell: Myth, Mystery and Mirth**

*We much regret that it was necessary to cancel this talk because of the indisposition of the speaker, and do hope the measures taken to advise Members prevented anyone being inconvenienced, We will endeavour to re-arrange this talk in due course.*

### Memory Bench

John Ready of Saffron Walden Initiative has contacted us about the project they are working on with the Essex Records Office to select oral history recordings for installation into a 'Listening Bench'. This will be sited close to the museum building and the target date for installation is 30th June, 2016, Approximately 16 minutes of edited recordings will be powered by an integrated solar-powered unit.

Anyone who would like to participate in this process is asked to make contact with John Ready at The Coach House, Myddylton Place, Saffron Walden, CB10 1BB, Telephone: 01799 528149, Mobile: 07813 591148, Email: john.readyr569@btinternet.com

**Sarah's challenge** (page 7) How many specimens from whales in the Exhibition? The answer – 3.

**Museum Society e-mail address**

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**www.swmuseumsoc.org.uk**

**Who to contact . . .**

#### Museum Society

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