



Museum atters

Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

Autumn/Winter 2016 Issue 40

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Dates of future Events - see Noticeboard enclosed

Highlights and Happenings

From the Chairman

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on the 26th August. My Chairman's Report recorded the opening of the Shirehill store and the partnership through the Museum Management Working Group with Uttlesford District Council.

In a supplementary verbal report, I thanked the Museum Staff for all the extra work that they had supervised during the transfer from Newport to Shirehill. I recorded the re-enactment of Waterloo, and two exhibitions 'The Ocean World' and 'Magna Carta'. I also referred to the very considerable support given by the volunteers. Two years of sweat and toil in packing, moving and unpacking thousands of artefacts into the new store. This was a good opportunity too to thank the Welcome Desk volunteers and others who helped with the summer holiday events for children.

The retirement of David Laing as a Director was noted by his appointment as an Honorary Vice-President in

recognition of his fifteen years' service. David played a major part in the abortive Heritage Quest Centre project and his professional expertise was valuable with the re-registration of the Society as a limited liability company. He was presented with a Certificate of Thanks recording his appointment as an Honorary Vice-President with warm approbation from all those present.

At the Board meeting in October, we recorded the passing of another of our Honorary Vice-Presidents Molly Glover on 27th September. Molly was appointed an Honorary Vice-President by the Board in October 2011 in recognition of her very long service to the Society, mainly as Membership Secretary. It was recorded at her Memorial Service on the 27th October that, in addition to her support of the Museum Society, Molly was also active with numerous charities in the Town. She will be deeply missed.

Volunteers were again very busy on the 10th September. Led by Sue Hollingworth, the Society had a stand in the 'Societies Showcase' in the Town Hall, when we welcomed Leah Mellor's assistance with the provision of a number of artefacts and descriptions from the handling collections. There was also the 'Battle of Assandun' held in Ashdon the same weekend. The Curator has played a major role in the planning and organisation of this event, and a number of Members were also able to give support to this.

The Curator and I have held meetings with the Fry Art Gallery, Castle Hill Tennis Club and the Saffron Walden Arts Trust to discuss the future development of the Heritage sites in the centre of the town. We have further meetings to arrange with Uttlesford District Council to discuss the future of the Castle site and also with the Parish Church. The Development Committee will then consider their report and determine how to progress the future development of the Museum.

As we approach the end of yet another active year for the Society we look forward to the Christmas Party and our winter talks, which you will find in the Noticeboard accompanying this newsletter.

Tony Watson

Curator's Column

Notes from the Store

Just as the collections displayed in the galleries are just the peak of a huge pyramid of collections and information, so the majority of the Curator's work takes place out of public sight. I hope this column provides occasional insights into what goes on behind-the-scenes.

We are still settling into a routine at the Shirehill store, while further improvements to the computer network are made there (wi-fi up and running, printer installed and extra laptops expected soon!). The big exercise for Leah, Sarah and me in October-November is an insurance valuation exercise for the collections. This is essential work and time-consuming, but also an interesting 'reality check' about how financial valuations on the commercial and insurance markets can differ considerably from how museums 'value' collections for their historic, scientific or cultural worth, or their significance to the local community.

For the archaeology collections there is a great deal of work to do and a modest start was made in August with a couple of willing students, Keeley-Jade Diggons and Tim Hurrell, undertaking three days work experience. Their main task was to transfer the early prehistoric flint tools to the metal cabinets brought from Newport. Instead of having to rummage through boxes and layers of tissue and bubble-wrap to inspect the Old Stone Age hand-axes, you can now pull out foam-lined drawers in which about 20-30 are instantly viewable, embedded safely in cut-out foam. This sort of simple improvement to storage allows you to locate, compare and catalogue objects so much more efficiently, and keeps the flints from chipping one another.



Archaeology student Keeley-Jade Diggons cuts inserts in a Plastazote foam sheet for Old Stone Age flint tools

Then there are many rolls of plans and drawings from excavations to sort and file in plan tanks and drawers, and a massive backlog of artefacts to get onto the computer database. Metal and some other special finds are still in a small store at the Museum until next year, while their new store-room at Shirehill is used as a 'holding bay' for potsherds and flints from other parts of Essex and the UK. These were randomly acquired decades ago but have no useful place in Saffron Walden Museum's collections, so they need to be offered to more relevant museums.

Conversely, I am getting emails from other museums keen to offer us small assemblages of archaeological finds from north-west Essex, all of which need looking into!



Some of the finished drawers in the cabinet - collections at-a-glance!

The biggest issue looming over the archaeology collections, however, is the expected intake over the next year of our 'backlog' of 195 excavation archives (finds and records) from digs which have taken place in Uttlesford over the last 15 years. That's right - 195 site archives! - and the number grows month by month, since these are nearly all caused by planning and development. Most are actually very small affairs, just evaluation exercises, typically just one box file of records and a couple of bags of potsherds. However there will be some seriously large archives, including all work at Stansted Airport since 2000, and all the sites excavated along the new A120, not to mention a gas pipeline, a medieval pottery kiln site and a small Roman cemetery or two; all part of the mosaic of information with which we gradually build and improve our understanding of our long and complex history.

So you will not be surprised to learn that I have been delighted to supplement our team of collections volunteers recently with three new archaeology recruits. and I will soon be getting a programme of archaeological work at Shirehill underway on Mondays. However, staffing constraints and other responsibilities make it very difficult for me and my colleagues to work at the store regularly on other days. So some of my time over the next few months will be spent on planning funding bids to help us in this work and further future developments at the Museum.

It would be wonderful if we could get a grant for an extra member of staff to be based at Shirehill to open up volunteering, learning and research opportunities throughout the week, as well as speeding up the digitisation of collections. All this could help open up all the collections to more people and uses: by enabling people to search the collections database via the galleries and exhibitions for the Museum. Ultimately, all this out-of-sight work is about improving the public benefit from the collections.

Carolyn Wingfield

From Assandun to Hastings – we 'battle on'!

Our big outreach project this year - commemorating the millennium of the battle of Assandun - came to a splendid climax at Waltons Park, Ashdon on Saturday, the 10th September. Around 1,200 people (undeterred by the rather damp weather) enjoyed a spectacular display by re-enactors from Regia Anglorum who set up a fascinating living history camp and provided demonstrations throughout the day of combat techniques, the use of horses in 11th Century warfare and even a Viking chieftain's pagan burial in his ship!



Two young visitors find out about daily life for Anglo-Saxons and Vikings

The finale was a representation of fighting on the battlefield as might have occurred at Assandun (Ashdon?) on 18th October 1016, between Edmund Ironside and his Anglo-Saxon forces and the ultimately victorious Cnut (Canute) and his Danish army.



Members of Regia Anglorum join battle in front of a crowd of hundreds

The Museum occupied part of the main marquee with family- dressing up as a Viking, or handling replica artefacts.



In the Marquee: 'Make a Helmet' at the museum activity tables. Part of the Battle of Assandun mural made at our August holiday activities is displayed on the wall

The whole project has been a rewarding collaboration between the Museum and the Ashdon and Hadstock communities, who came together under the umbrella of the Millennium Group to deliver a programme of events in both parishes. A big 'Thank You' to all the volunteers who helped with the Museum's side; to the Vestey family for use of the superb Waltons Park site; and to the many organisations and local businesses who supported the project, including Essex County Council whose grant helped pay Regia Anglorum's costs, and to Ashdon and Hadstock Parish Councils.

And now to Hastings 1066!

Meanwhile, national media attention has been focussed on the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. Harold II had special connections with Waltham Abbey in Essex, and was reputedly buried there. Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey has recently opened a special exhibition Harold II: The Life Legend and Legacy of England's last Anglo-Saxon king. Saffron Walden Museum has loaned a number of small Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Norman objects to this exhibition. To catch the exhibition, be sure to visit Epping Forest District Museum in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey before 21 st December.

Introducing Wendy-Jo Atter

In July a new member of staff joined our team - welcome Wendy-Jo Atter, Museum Admin Officer!



This is Wendy-Jo's first museum job but she brings to it extensive and very pertinent experience from her career in banking and latterly in the voluntary sector with the Police and Uttlesford Council for Voluntary Service. She has a great enthusiasm for all things to do with museums and heritage, and a dedication to giving our visitors and customers the best possible welcome and service.

Wendy-Jo's responsibilities focus on keeping the wheels of day-to-day finances and administration turning smoothly and supervising the Welcome Desk, the team of desk volunteers and managing stock for the shop. She also helps with publicity and a multitude of other tasks, and ensures that schools on self-guided visits get a warm welcome. All this and more has to be crammed into a 16-hour week, so you will find Wendy-Jo in the Museum between 10 am and 2 pm on Tuesdays to Fridays. This of course also helps to cover lunch-breaks for full-time staff.

Wendy-Jo has not so much 'hit the ground running' as 'hit the ground sprinting' since she started, with a formidable amount of information, procedures and tasks to tackle, and we wish her the very best in her new role. It is a welcome step forward, following the staff reductions of recent years, that we now have an Admin Officer as part of the

permanent staff establishment. In preparing the way, many thanks must go to the Museum Society, who originally funded a temporary admin post to help us through the 'store move' project, and to Hayley Wilson, a member of our casual-contract team of museum assistants, who pioneered the role up to May this year.

Carolyn Wingfield

The early records of the Museum

Len Pole has been unable to complete the preparation of his article for this issue because of pressure of other commitments, and we will look forward to his next foray into the archives in the Spring issue of 2017.

However, I would like to point out that the last two paragraphs of his article in the Summer issue of Museum Matters did not in fact belong to the article which he prepared, but came from his first article in the Spring issue. I offer apologies to Len for this occurrence and am blaming a glitch in the system for the repetition! Ed.

Natural Sciences Sarah Kenyon

This summer and autumn I have packed collections, done work for the verges project, displayed two Objects of the Month and helped to deliver family holiday activities at October half-term.

Three large wooden cabinets are to be moved from the Museum to Shirehill store by specialist company Schofield Removals. These are just too large and heavy even for the Store Move Team! However, the cabinet contents of bird's eggs and mollusc shells need to be packed first so that they are not damaged when they are moved. Nine drawers of bird's eggs have been taken to Shirehill and a further 27 drawers await transport. I am still working on the mollusc shell cabinet and 19 out of 28 drawers have been packed.



Sarah with mollusc shell cabinet partially packed

The volunteer verge survey team completed ecological surveys at 22 special roadside verges in Uttlesford and three potential new sites. I surveyed sites in Newport, Strethall and Widdington - where I was treated to wonderful displays of cowslips and sulphur clover plants.

After a two-week break in September, my first task was to finalise the 2016 annual reports for the project in time for the bi-annual Essex Verge Representatives meeting in October.

Sarah Kenyon

Human History Collections Leah Mellors

in the last newsletter, I mentioned that I had begun work on a new co-curated community display, which would build on the success of our 2015 community exhibition.

The display, entitled *Your Stories*, offers societies, charities, sports teams and other community groups to tell their story of our district in the Museum. The first community group to curate a display with my support is the Saffron Walden Cricket Club, who will share over 155 years of their club's history! The display is taking shape: the new bespoke display case has been delivered: the objects have been selected and the text panel is being printed. We hope that the display will be installed in mid-November, so please come by to have a look and let me know what you think.

At the end of the summer, we employed Arlie McCarthy, a digitisation specialist, to digitise our old and fragile accession registers. The registers contain lists of each and every object collected by the Museum over its 181-year history, making them incredibly important documents. The older registers date back as far as the 1880s and they have become fragile with use. To prevent further damage and to facilitate access to the information they contain, Arlie took high resolution photographs of each page in six registers (amounting to thousands of images!) which can be viewed easily on a computer. This project has been funded by the Museum Society.



We continue to welcome to the Museum researchers who now have full access to the collections once again. In September, Alistair Fraser visited the Museum all the way from New Zealand to view our Maori musical instruments. It is always exciting to welcome international visitors to the Museum and to be reminded of the wide appeal and significance of our collections. We have also recently provided two workshops for specialist groups: the Pacific Arts Association who viewed items from our Oceania collection, and the Uttlesford Local History Recorders who were given a tour of the Shirehill store and shown local objects from the social history and archaeology collections.



**Pacific Arts
Association visit**

Finally, I'd like to mention my wonderful volunteers who continue their hard work on the collections: cataloguing objects onto our database: transcribing early museum documentation and organising and listing our learning resources. In December, we will be holding a thank-you tea party for all our volunteers, whether they work behind-the-scenes on the collections or in the spotlight on the Welcome Desk, and we all look forward to recognising and celebrating their contribution then.

Leah Mellors

Object of the Month

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.

July 2016

Brown & Mawe Mineral tablet

July's *Object of the Month* was a mineral tablet created by Richard Brown, a marble merchant, and John Mawe, a dealer and expert in minerals. This tablet was made between 1790 and 1810 from sections of rock cemented to each side of a slab of marble. One side of the tablet is engraved Strata of Derbyshire; it shows the limestones, toadstones and millstone grit in the Peak District of Derbyshire, with a few rock faults and mineral veins.



Mineral Tablet side 1

The reverse side of the tablet is engraved Vein of Copper Ore. It is a black marble section of Ecton Hill and its copper mine in the Manifold Valley of Staffordshire. Originally the tablet was enclosed in a black marble frame. Only part of the frame survives; it was engraved "Brown, Son & Maw, London".

Mineral Tablet side 2

The Browns were marble merchants. Richard Brown and his family operated in Derby from 1760 onwards;

later he set up a business at Covent Garden, London. The shop was gradually taken over by Richard's apprentice, the mineralogist and dealer John Mawe around 1800; he had married Richard Brown's daughter Sarah in 1794, John



Mawe was born in Derby in 1766; he was a sailor who became a mineral and shell dealer with a shop and museum in Matlock Bath, Derbyshire. Mawe worked in the Brown and Mawe company and operated another shop at the Strand in London from 1793 until 1829. In 1804 he explored South America.

Both men knew White Watson who had a shop and museum in Bakewell, Derbyshire. They were all involved in producing collections and mineral tablets that showed the rocks of Derbyshire. These dealers provided specimens and objects for the collectors and scientists who were exploring the world at the beginning of the 19th century. Scientists would not have been able to document the geology, animals and plants in the natural world without dealers like these men and women.

Sarah Mawe was appointed mineralogist to Queen Victoria in 1837; she ran the mineral business in London after her husband died until 1840.

Sarah Kenyon

August 2016

Crested Cow-wheat

August's *Object of the Month* was a plant called Crested Cow-wheat, *Melampyrum cristatum*.

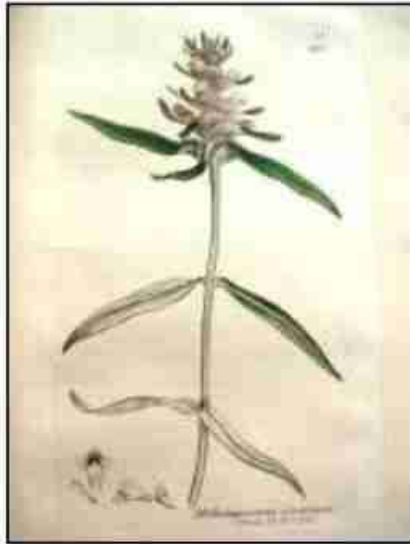


Herbarium sheet of crested cow-wheat

It was chosen because this once abundant plant is now very rare. The Special Roadside Verges Project and the Wildlife Sites Project try to preserve the sites where it still grows. It flowers from July to September and can be found at Special Roadside Verges in Langley, Duddenhoe End and Saffron Walden. It also grows at one place in Chrishall, in a woodland at Langley and in Ashdon at Shadwell Wood and Little Hales Wood. In Uttlesford district, the verges project is coordinated by the Natural Sciences Officer at Saffron Walden Museum.

A herbarium sheet of Crested Cow-wheat plants collected in Saffron Walden by George Stacey Gibson in 1840 was displayed. To preserve the plants they were pressed, dried and mounted on a paper herbarium sheet. The plant name, the location it was found, the name of the collector and the date were written on the sheet.

Each herbarium sheet represents a biological record of where a plant species was found at a particular time. The whole herbarium collection is an invaluable record of the plants found in this region. It has been used to produce volumes of Flora for Essex and Cambridgeshire. George



An illustration in the *Flora of Essex*, 1862

Stacey Gibson of Saffron Walden published the first *Flora of Essex* in 1862. A *Flora* is a book that describes the plants that grow in a geographical area and records where they are found at a certain time. Research has plotted how the number of plant species and the distribution of plants have changed over time because of habitat loss, changes in management of the countryside and pollution.

September 2016

September's *Object of the Month* was a fluting or goffering machine dating from the 1870s, which was chosen as *Object of the Month* by Emma Bastin, Collections Volunteer. The machine was donated to the Museum in 1969.

A fluting or goffering machine is a hand-cranked machine used for pressing pleats and frills into fabric. A hot rod would be inserted into each of the hollow rollers and the fabric would be slowly passed through the crimped rollers to create a crisp, even pleat.



Fluting or goffering machine

The Victorians used fashion as a way of demonstrating their social status, and the level of decoration on a woman's dress was a key part of this. By the 1860s and 1870s there was an abundance of 'frills and flounces, loops and draperies, of cascades and chutes and undulations' on women's dresses. Up to 80 yards of trimming could be used on a skirt so new methods were needed for looking after all this fabric. In the mid-to-late 1800s, fluting irons and machines were developed to speed up the process of creating pleats. The first patent for a fluting machine was granted in the United States to Henrietta H. Cole in 1861. Over the following two decades, further changes and improvements were patented by various individuals.

Wrestling an enormous Victorian dress, skirt or underskirt through this small machine would have been impossible so

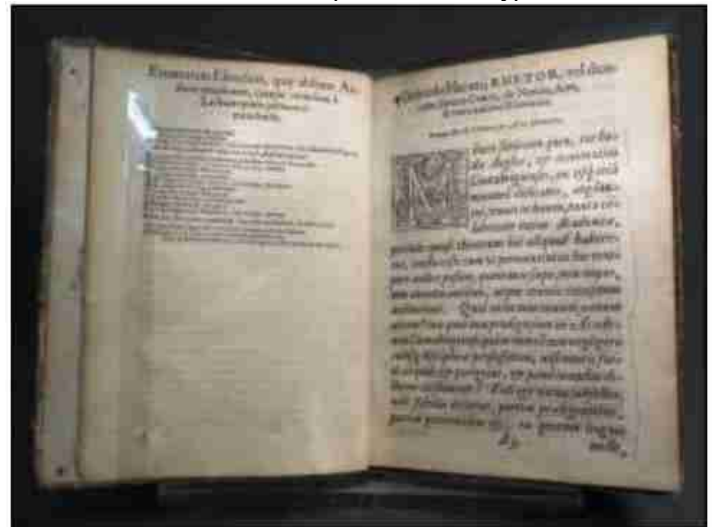
the ruffles and trimmings on dresses were all detachable. They would be washed in cold then hot water, starched, clapped or beaten to remove excess starch and then passed through the fluting iron. Finally, the trimmings would be re-attached to the clothing.

The trend for pleating and ruffling continued well into the 1880s. However, the manufacture of fluting machines ended some time in the 1920s, as technology and fashions moved on.

Leah Mellors

October 2016

October's *Object of the Month* was a book called *Rhetor*, written by Gabriel Harvey and published in November 1577. The book was chosen as *Object of the Month* by Leah Mellors, Collections Officer (Human History).



It contains two Latin speeches about nature, art and rhetoric and is one of two books of speeches written by Harvey; the other is called *Ciceronianus*, also published in 1577. The speeches in *Rhetor* and *Ciceronianus* had been delivered as lectures at Cambridge University in 1575 and 1576 to first-year students. In these speeches, Harvey aimed to teach his students how to move, motivate and persuade their audience through speech and text.

Gabriel Harvey was a writer, who was born in about 1552 and died in 1630. He was the eldest son of John Harvey, a farmer and master rope-maker from Saffron Walden, and his wife, Alice. Harvey's childhood home was on Market Street in Saffron Walden. He received his early education at Saffron Walden Grammar School before attending Christ's College, Cambridge in 1566. Harvey received his bachelor's degree in 1570 and became a Fellow of Pembroke College in the same year. He became Professor of Rhetoric at Cambridge in 1576; two years later, he was invited to meet Queen Elizabeth on her visit to Audley End.

Despite Harvey's academic achievements, he is better known for a literary dispute with Thomas Nashe, a pamphleteer, poet and dramatist from Lowestoft, Suffolk. Harvey and Nashe attacked one another through pamphlets and Harvey's reputation suffered badly. The dispute continued until 1599, when the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered each man's writings to be burned.

The dispute led to Harvey being represented as argumentative, pompous and foolish by other writers at the time. He was seen as an unfriendly character, proud of his own learning and of his humble origins. However, Harvey was a talented scholar; he published several writings and played an important part in transforming the position of the scholar.

A charismatic teacher at Cambridge University in Greek and Rhetoric, he encouraged his students to read widely and learn classical literature and modern foreign languages. When he died, he left behind a significant library of around 3,500 books that he had annotated; these reveal a great deal about the way Elizabethan scholars lived and worked.

Leah Mellors

Museum Outreach News

Spooky Animal Skeletons for October Half-Term

October half term was a particularly busy time at Saffron Walden Museum - with a number of special events attended by a total of 603 children and adults who took part in craft activities and explored the Museum!

On Wednesday, 26th October, 239 visitors made a flying bat out of black and white paper and used straws painted with glow-in-the-dark paint to represent bones in the wings. We had bat skeletons on display to show that bats have five bones in their wings. Visitors saw the skeleton of a Noctule Bat, prepared by Mr F. Doggett of Cambridge



in 1901, and bones from the wing of a large bat called a Fruit Bat. Bones from the leg of a cat were also on show so that younger visitors could colour in drawings of a bat wing skeleton or a cat skeleton.

Thursday, 27th October saw people making snake skeleton mobiles. Children (and adults) coloured in spiral snake skeletons and decorated them with glow-in-the-dark stickers. Our visitors, all 256 of them! could also look at the skeleton of a Garter Snake which is on display in the Discovery Centre gallery.



Museums at Night rounded off a successful week on Friday, 28th October. Children dressed up in Hallowe'en costumes and brought their relatives along to explore the Museum by torch light. Jenny Gibsone told bone-shaking stories about skeletons in the Great Hall, using a bear skull from 1906 to capture the attention of the 108 visitors. A Bone Chilling Museum Trail was available during all the activities, so that visitors could explore the Museum using clues to find bones and teeth on display and collect letters that spelt out the word 'skeleton'

Staff and volunteers were thanked for their efforts by visitors who said they had really enjoyed the activities and that Saffron Walden has a "marvellous" and "fantastic" Museum

Sarah Kenyon

And many thanks to Leah Mellors for the photographs of the children with their bat skeletons and snake skeleton mobiles. Ed. Museum.

Exhibitions

Completing the Look: 300 Years of Fashion Accessories

Our next exhibition, opening at the end of January, will explore the history of fashion accessories from the Georgian period up to the present day. Displaying beautiful hats, shoes, jewellery, scarves, gloves and much more, the exhibition will tell the story of how men and women have used accessories to show off their social status, attract a partner, make an artistic statement or, simply, complete their look.

Whilst we have lots of beautiful objects in the Museum's collections to display in the exhibition, we need your help to add the finishing touches. We especially need the following items:

Accessories dating from the 1960s until the present day (both male and female), which you would be happy to loan to the Museum for display in the exhibition.

Photographs of people wearing accessories, from any date or period, which you would be happy for us to scan for the exhibition.

Mrs French



Have a rummage around at home and ask your friends and families if they have any hidden gems in their wardrobes or jewellery boxes. The Museum would be so grateful for anything you might be able to lend to make this a visually stunning and interesting exhibition.

If you have any items that you think may be suitable, please contact Leah on lmellors@uttlesford.gov.uk or 01799 510645. It would be very helpful if you could include a photograph of any objects in your email.

Leah Mellors

From Wendy - Jo Atter Welcome Desk Volunteers

In September, one of our longest-serving desk volunteers, Joyce Bailey, 'retired' after around 25 years at the Museum.



Joyce manning the Welcome Desk on her last day

We also said a fond farewell to Diana Duke, another long-serving Welcome Desk volunteer.

Your Museum needs you - and your friends and acquaintances! With gaps in the regular rota, we now urgently need to recruit some new Welcome Desk volunteers to keep the Museum open. So put your thinking caps on and let me know of anyone who you think might be interested - or ask them to get in touch with me direct between 11 am and 2 pm Tuesdays to Fridays at the Museum.

Wendy-Jo Atter

**Help decorate the Museum Christmas Tree!
Saturday, 10th December**

Come and join us at the Museum to make festive decorations - one for our tree and one to take home! Drop in sessions will be held from 11 am - 1 pm and from 2 - 4 pm. But remember - all children must bring an adult!

Museum Society News

Membership

I am sure that you are already aware that your membership includes free admission to the Museum during normal opening hours. But please be certain to carry your membership card to show to the volunteer at the Welcome Desk as they do not have access to our membership list.

New cards are issued each spring with my reminder that subscriptions are due on 1 st April but, if you receive your information by email and have a problem printing the card, do please let me know as I can let you have one of the spare cards I keep tucked away!

Christine Sharpe

Could you look after the Society's second hand book selling at the Museum?

Our sales of second hand books at the Museum (just inside the entrance) bring in a useful income for us.

We are looking for someone who could manage the arrangements. It would involve liaising with potential donors of books, arranging the display of books for sale and deciding when books have come to the end of their shelf life.

It would involve perhaps one visit per week or fortnight,

whenever convenient. If you are interested or would like more details, please contact Paul Salvidge (01279 814153).

Talks and Events

Wednesday, 24th August

Visit to Paycocke's House and Grange Barns, Coggeshall and Cressing Temple Barns

24th August, 2016 turned out to be one of the hottest days of the year but our intrepid group of Museum Society members took the heat in their stride when they visited Coggeshall. One of England's prettiest historic market towns only thirty miles from Saffron Walden, Coggeshall has an attractive centre made up of nearly 200 listed buildings, many of which are timber-framed and dating as far back as the 14th century.

On arriving in Coggeshall, the Museum Society group first visited Grange Barn. This belonged to the Abbots of Coggeshall and it was where the tithes collected from the town, mainly sheaves of corn, were stored. The ancient lap-notched joints can still be seen within the Barn and indicate that the building is of 13th century origin. It underwent a major rebuilding around 1380 to include two very large doors and a porch to cater for the heavily laden carts that brought the corn sheaves to the Barn where threshing took place inside.



The Barn continued to be used by the Abbots until the abbey was dissolved by Henry V111 in 1583. Grange Barn continued to be used as a farm building but, by the 1970s, it began to decay rapidly and by 1980 it was a total ruin. A local Trust Fund was set up to save it and after a long process it was compulsorily purchased by the local District Council. Its restoration was completed in 1985 and it was given to the National Trust in 1989.

Today the Barn contains some fine old agricultural machines and carts from the Victorian period, and there is a remarkable collection of carpentry tools. The Barn is still very much part of Coggeshall life as lots of special events such as barn dances, weddings and craft fairs, are regularly held there.

The Museum Society group then visited Paycocke's, an exceptional example of a 16th century wealthy clothier's house close by. The House was built in 1509 by Thomas Paycocke, a cloth merchant who carried out his business there. Unfortunately he died without leaving a will which led to a long legal dispute. By the end of 16th century, the House had passed into the hands of the Buxton family, also Essex clothiers. By the Victorian period the House had fallen on hard times and, in 1891, it was saved from destruction by Charles Pudsey who repaired it and used it as his business premises. It was sold in 1904 to Noel Buxton, a descendant of the family who had owned the



House in previous centuries. He embarked on an aggressive restoration of the House to how he thought it would have looked in the past. Buxton's cousin, Conrad, Noel and his wife Miriam, lived in the House and it was Miriam who created the pretty cottage garden that is still there today. The House was given to the National Trust in 1924. It is one of the Trust's smaller properties but one of its prettiest and its small scale makes it easy to imagine what it would have been like to live there centuries ago.

In the afternoon the Museum Society group had a guided tour of Cressing Temple Barns which are four miles from Coggeshall. Cressing Temple was amongst the very earliest and largest of the possessions of the Knights Templar in England. It is the location of three Grade 1 listed Medieval barns, the Granary, the Wheat Barn and the Barley Barn which is the oldest standing timber-framed barn in the world.

The Knights Templar were a 12th century military order of monks whose stated purpose was to protect travellers to the Holy Land. The manor of Cressing was granted to them in 1136 and was one of the very earliest Templar estates in England. The manor had a mansion house, bakehouse, brewery, dairy, granary, smithy, gardens, a dovecote, watermill and windmill, with a chapel and cemetery dedicated to St Mary. The proceeds from Cressing Temple were used to fund Templar activities in the Crusades.

During the reign of King Edward II, the Templar order was suppressed in England with their estate at Cressing being handed over in 1309 to the Order of the Knights Hospitaller, who preserved the Templar documents and charters of Cressing amongst their own records. The Hospitaller manor of Cressing Temple was dissolved in 1540 and on 8 th July 1541, King Henry VIII granted the manor and lordship of Cressing to Sir William Huse and John Smyth, whose family held it until 1657. The mansion on the site was demolished in the 18th century and now only the farmhouse, granary, wagon lodge and stable yards remain.

The Tudor walled garden also remains and has been developed by Essex County Council who acquired the Barns for the people of Essex in



1987. Only plants available to Tudor gardeners are grown in the walled garden. The guided tour was extremely interesting with a most knowledgeable guide but, as the afternoon became hotter, the Museum Society group were glad to complete their tour by adjourning to the lovely tea room for a welcome cup of tea.

Carol Law

Monday, 12th September

The Global in the Local

Speaker: Len Pole, former Curator of Saffron Walden Museum

Len Pole, Curator of our Museum before moving on to Exeter, has spent some time over the last ten years investigating the multi-cultural ethnographic collections in other smaller, local museums to see what they house as opposed to the collections held in larger or national museums.

These smaller collections form a very important part of what we have in this country and what we have come to know about world cultures. Indeed our Museum receives overseas academic visitors from time to time and another two groups are scheduled to visit soon. Len's talk was illustrated by an admirable series of slides of the objects he discussed. He also related how and why some of the objects came to be lodged in their present homes.

The objects he talked about originated in places as far apart as the Americas, west and southern Africa, Burma, East Asia, Australia, Melanesia, New Zealand, Hawaii and Central Polynesia. The museums where they are now found are scattered over *this* country - ours for a start, Exeter, the Horniman in south London, Wisbech, Warrington, the Powell-Cotton Collection near Margate, Horsham, Nuneaton, the Hancock in Newcastle, Brighton and Torquay.

The objects covered an extraordinarily wide range of uses, for example a child's dress made out of beaten lace-bark from Jamaica and donated by the Marchioness Cornwallis (the third Lady Braybrooke) whose family had extensive plantations there.

Dress made of lacebark from Jamaica given to the Saffron Walden Natural History Society by Marchioness Cornwallis in 1833



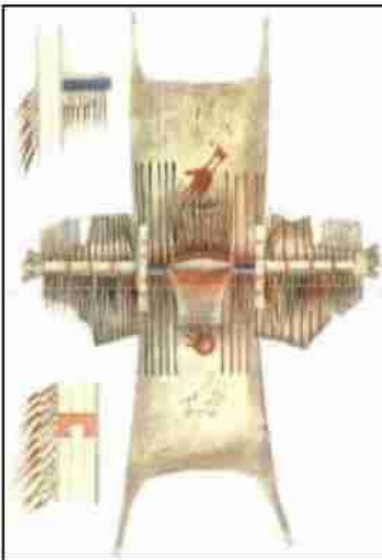
Other provenance issues were trickier. A musical instrument, a kind of harp, often associated with West Africa, was acquired in the 1850s but from South America. So how did it get there? Possibly taken on board ship from Africa by an African sold into slavery, or made in South America by an African recently enslaved there?



Harp-lute of West African style and origin, obtained in Cartagena, Colombia in 1850s, given to Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter

The sand painting now preserved in the Horniman was created by a Navaho priest; it is a ritual object. When not created for a museum collection, the sand painted a spiritual map which was then danced over by the priest who ingested the spirits of the painting. On this occasion the painting, about 12 ft x 12 ft, was made permanent and conserved as a display item.

Another ritual object was the scalp shirt from the north Dakota plains; this was worn by a hunter and embellished with tufts of hair from other hunters.



Warrior shirt of deerskin decorated with hair fringes, Dakota Sioux, collected before 1835, given to Saffron Walden Museum in 1874

Wisbech holds George Clarkson's chest which contains objects that were designed to support his anti-slavery lectures as they demonstrated the creativity of a variety of African cultures including a loom to produce narrow-strip cloth - probably the oldest known loom in the world.



Chest of items from West Africa, collected in 1780s by Thomas Clarkson for his anti-slave trade lectures

Against this rarity are the bronze manilla 'bracelets' which were a form of currency in West Africa whose shapes varied somewhat in different regions. Some are now in the Warrington museum where they arrived courtesy of boxes of bananas. They were a major trading currency until post-World War II when the currencies were 'modernised' and at least 31 million were repatriated to the U.K. I say 'repatriated' because moulds for these twisted bars were found during a 20th century excavation in the River Exe and were donated to Exeter Museum. They were also made in U.K. towns and other European countries.

More ways in which these items found their way to the U.K. were through trade: the activities of the London Missionary Society: the army: seafarers and rich people on world tours such as the Hendersons of Horsham. Other examples included some of the soldiers who fought in the Zulu Wars who returned with 'trophyies', individual sailors traded items as did the crew on at least one of Captain Cook's expeditions. John Helder Wedge's trip to Tasmania as a land surveyor yielded Aboriginal items which he sent to his father in Saffron Walden for the new Museum. The global Quaker missionary network provided more objects, and there are some whose arrival route remains a mystery. Just how did the recorder made of slate from a specific north Vancouver island come to be in Merthyr Tydfil?

Thus if you visit the right museum, you can find shell belts: Benin bronzes: a Chinese sword: a carved wooden stool showing the figure of a leopard (see below): various

Stool with carved leopard support, from the Akanspeaking peoples of southern Ghana, acquired by the Nuneaton Museum.



shields: garments made of feathers for ritual purposes: manuscripts: various musical instruments: weights for gold dust, and an intricately carved funnel used by the Maori for feeding high status men when undergoing facial tattooing.

So thank you Len, for a fascinating and detailed discussion of the wonderful range of peoples' cultures and a whole new list of local museums to visit!

Heather Salvidge

Monday, 10th October

The Battle of Assandun - where was it?

Speaker: Patricia Croxton-Smith

The Battle of Assandun took place on 18 th October, 1016 and was the last of five battles in the Viking campaign to

take over England. The Anglo-Saxons, led by Edmund Ironside, cut off the Vikings returning to their ships after they had been raiding in Mercia (the Midlands). They fought from nine in the morning until it was too dark to see clearly and 'all the flower of the Angle kin were slain'. It ended in victory for the Vikings led by Cnut who shortly afterwards became King of all England.

For many years the argument has raged among historians over where the Battle took place. Our October speaker, Patricia Croxton-Smith argued that it did not take place in Ashingdon in south east Essex as has been posited, and presented evidence that the Battle of Assandun took place in the area of the present-day parishes of Ashdon and Hadstock.

Patricia began by referring to the St. Botolph's Church in Hadstock, a late Anglo-Saxon Church built on the remains of an earlier church, possibly belonging to the monastery founded by Abbot Botolph in 654. The living of the Church was initially granted by the Bishops of Ely but it is now a royal church. After the Battle of Assandun, Cnut built a Minster to honour the dead on both sides of the Battle. The speaker asked why such a grand church was built in Hadstock, which in the early 11th century was just an area of poor farming? She presented a strong case for St. Botolph's Church being Cnut's Minster.

There is little documentary evidence about the Battle of Assandun but Patricia Croxton-Smith referred to several sources that name the Battle. John of Worcester's account uses the spelling "Assandun" translated as 'the hill of the asses' while *The Ecomiast*, written by a priest in the household of King Cnut, uses the spelling 'Aescendunum' translated as 'the hill of the Ash trees'. Our speaker pointed out that ash trees are not native to the area around Ashingdon in south east Essex, but they *are* native to the area around Hadstock and Ashdon. Hadstock's name in the Domesday Book is 'Cadenhou'. Our Speaker's suggestion was that there is a link to an old church Latin word 'cadent' meaning 'the fallen'.

The *Liber Eliensis* describes how the monks of Ely carried holy relics into battle but are then recorded as carrying back to Ely that night the bodies of both the Abbot of Thorney and the Bishop of Lincoln who had been killed during the Battle. Ely is 25 miles away from Hadstock and such an endeavour is feasible in one day, while Ashingdon is a further 40 miles away and such a journey would not have been possible in one day.

Patricia Croxton-Smith then showed a map of the track ways existing in England in the 11th century. After the Battle, the Saxons fled pursued by Cnut and his men who caught up with them at Deerhurst in Gloucestershire. On the old track ways, there is a simple route from Hadstock that leads to Gloucestershire. From Ashingdon in south east Essex, the route was not straightforward as London gets in the way.

The speaker suggests a possible site for the Battle is the Red Field at Hadstock. Although a geophysical survey of the Red Field has been carried out, it yielded very little information. It is hoped that there will be the possibility of an excavation at the Red Field next year that may provide archaeological evidence that could provide more proof that the Battle of Assandun took place in the area of the parishes of Hadstock and Ashdon.

Carol Law

Legacies

Christmas is very much a time to think about our families and provision for them. If you are 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. - legacies to charities are not subject to Inheritance Tax.

Peter Walker

New media for communication and information

If you have an email address and would like the Society to communicate with you by email, please send an email to Paul Salvidge at SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com and he will add you to the database on the Society's laptop.

This would not only assist our administration greatly but also helps us in containing costs particularly of postage. We assure members that their details will not be made available to any other organisation. Many thanks for your understanding and co-operation.

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