

Museum Matters

Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

Autumn 2019 Issue 49

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Dates of future Events - see Noticeboard attached

Highlights and Happenings; From the Chairman

During the last month the scaffolding around the Museum has at last come down. It has revealed a very impressive upgrade to the condition of the exterior frontage. Excellent paint on repaired windows and a re-pointed brickwork. Well done to both Council officers and contractors for a job well done.

During August I was in St.Ives, Cornwall. The Tate is an example of a modern museum, but I am not a fan of modern painting! However the Crab sandwich in the Café was good! Then a visit to the village Museum. What a contrast. A visit to the 1920's but full of local history and very interesting. We are lucky to have a Museum that at present is somewhere between these two. Much food for thought now we are looking towards the future.

The Museum and the Society held its second "Bake Off" on the 9th August. Its main object was to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Wallace the Lion. Owing to the weather this event took place in the Great Hall and elsewhere in the Museum. Wallace received a deep clean. There were numerous cake submitted to the Judges which had to take place in full view of the visitors! The Judges were able to survive the samples of some 20 cakes before providing the results of the two classes for Adults and Children. I even managed to win one of these in the draw which followed.

Following the changes in Councillors at Uttlesford District Council Society in May the Directors were pleased to join Council officers and staff to meet new councillors at the Museum on the 23rd August. Richard Auty and I presented details of the running of the museum jointly by the Society and the Council, and also a brief history of the Museum and in particular the arrangements for its joint management since 1974. Councillors visited and received an update of the developments at the Castle prior to the Museum presentations.

The Development Committee met on the 2nd October to receive information relating to the current consultations and to receive details of the first workshop meeting on the 21st October. Four Directors and the Chairman of the Museum Management Working Group met the consultants over a long lunch time meeting and had a preliminary look at the future development. We look forward to receiving a first report before Xmas. Meanwhile Volunteers have also met with the Consultants. The next stage will be to share our first thoughts with members in the Spring. A busy time, especially for the staff.

I have mentioned the excellent support for donations to our recent request for funds to acquire further treasure. I am pleased to say we have raised the £10,000 required and that all these items have now been received and are on display in the treasure cabinet in the Great Hall.

The Annual General meeting has come and gone and I am pleased to report that Keith Eden has replaced Paul Salvidge on the Museum Management Working Group (MMWG). He has also agreed to take over from me as Chairman of the Development Committee although I remain on the Committee with Richard Priestly and Peter Walker.

Our winter series of talks commenced on the 9th September. I have missed the first two but look forward to the talk on Rorke's Drift in November. Then it will be the Xmas party on the 9th December. Hope to see you there.

Tony Watson

Curators Column;

Museum Development Update

This will be a regular feature from now on, as our plans for the Museum's development take shape. Our first big step this summer has been to appoint consultants Julia Holberry Associates and Fourth Street to work with us and produce the Audience Development Study and the Options Appraisal & Feasibility Study by this time next year. At the start of any project like this, there has been a lot of information to organise and exchange with the consultants, but the main event was our start-up day at the Museum on 21st October. After a tour of the site and whole Museum building, there was a long mid-day meeting with our Development Committee (Museum Society and Council representatives) followed by an afternoon session with the Museum team of staff and volunteers' representatives. Questions and exercises were designed to get us all thinking about what we needed to improve the Museum and some of the options to be considered, and the consultants were impressed by the enthusiasm of all involved!



While the consultants work on options for developing the Museum building, there will be a round of discussions in the autumn with other local organisations with whom the Museum has worked, or could work more closely. At the AGM in August some of you provided ideas on our 'audience development' plans (attracting more and different groups of people to the Museum) and these have now been added to the contributions from staff and volunteers, and passed to our consultants to mull over. If any Society members would like to be more involved with the debate please contact Jenny or myself.

The project runs until June next year, by which time we will have a definite 'forward plan' for developing the Museum, and can move on to the fund-raising and implementation from late 2020 onwards. Definitely a feeling of excitement now that we have got the process underway!

Great Stones! A Wessex - Essex link

In September I spent a breezy and not entirely rainless week walking the Great Stones Way, over 50 miles of beautiful landscapes and prehistoric sites through Wiltshire from north to south. Using parts of the Ridgeway and other established public rights-of-way, the GSW passes close to the World Heritage Sites of Avebury and Stonehenge and many other fine monuments en route. The official starting point is Marbury Camp, a splendidly-sited Iron Age hillfort on the Ridgeway south of Swindon. It finishes at Old Sarum, another impressive Iron Age fort which was re-used by the Normans for a palatial castle and cathedral, until re-located to a more convenient site (Salisbury) by the River Avon in the early 13th century.

Travelling on foot, as our ancient ancestors would have done, made me acutely aware of the position in the landscape occupied by many of these monuments, such as their relationships with rivers or visibility on the skyline. As I absorbed the changes in the topography and natural environment along the way, I also wondered how the prehistoric landscape of north Essex would have looked before intensive agriculture ploughed out so many of our barrows and earthworks.

Struggling southwards through persistent rain on the windswept Ridgeway that first afternoon, I made a brief detour eastwards into Fyfield Nature Reserve, a couple of miles east of Avebury, to see a natural phenomenon which also attracted Neolithic people: the 'Grey Wethers', naturally-occurring blocks of sarsen stone which are strewn around the downland like a flock of grey sheep. I would have explored the sarsen fields further, but the driving rain and increasing amount of water penetrating my 'waterproof' clothing and boots, drove me off the open downs to seek the shelter of a warm and dry B&B in East Kennet.

Sarsens are a type of hard sandstone, and are best known as the stones from which the iconic Stonehenge trilithons were built – the pairs of massive vertical uprights, each pair topped by a horizontal block. They were also used at Avebury and other sites, such as stone 'avenues' and chambered tombs in long barrows. But their occurrence is not confined to Wessex; sarsen blocks turn up regularly in other parts of southern England including north-west Essex. Here they occur as 'glacial erratics', part of the mix of rocks which Ice Age glaciers and rivers have broken up, swept along and dumped. Buried sarsens can still present a plough-breaking obstacle to farmers today.

For an excellent 2-page introduction to Sarsen stones in Essex, see the GeoEssex website Fact Sheet No 1 Sarsen stones, by Gerald Lucy http://www.geoessex.org.uk/files/geoessex_factsheet_1_-_sarsen_stones.pdf

Sarsens attracted the attention of the prehistoric people here in Essex too. There is evidence of some stones being set up and one suspects that more would be added to the list save for the difficulty of dating them and the habit of some 19th century antiquarians of removing some to their private collections and gardens!

This one-ton sarsen was excavated by Framework Archaeology on the site of the Mid Term Car Park at Stansted Airport, and is now displayed on a plinth at Takeley on the green opposite the Four Ashes pub. It was once set up in the centre of a small Bronze Age community who clearly invested significance in this stone. When they abandoned their village at the end of the Bronze Age, the sarsen was deliberately buried, then partially uncovered and finally reburied, possibly with some ceremony. Now it has been 'adopted' by the nearest present-day community to the Bronze Age village, a very satisfactory solution for an object which would have been very difficult to store or display in the conventional museum manner!



Massive sarsen stones at Avebury, this pair are known as 'The Cove'





The so-called Leper Stone at Newport is another example of a prehistoric 'standing stone', marking a site or route of importance to late Neolithic or Bronze Age people, or perhaps embodying some important statement about their community or beliefs..

Sarsens continue to come to light; some years ago, I went to see a magnificent block which had been dragged out of a ploughed field near Tye Green in Elsenham parish. All the markings on it were caused by natural processes and there was no evidence of prehistoric activity in the immediate area, so it had probably lain buried and undisturbed since the last glacier left it there.



Carolyn Wingfield

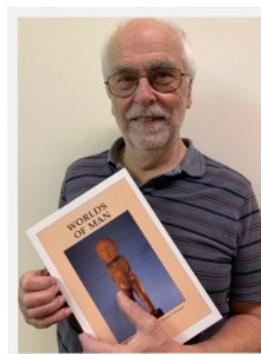
SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

MUSEUM SHOP
SUNDAY
Sunday 1 December 2019

Museum Shop Sunday
1 December 2019
2.00 - 4.30pm

Original Gifts

Our Museum Shop offers bespoke ranges, stocking fillers and unique gifts such as Annual Season Tickets. All your Christmas shopping dilemmas solved in one go!



Shop with a Conscience

By shopping here you are actively contributing to Saffron Walden Museum's future sustainability and success. What better way to give back at Christmas?

Meet the Author

Come and meet our former Curator and author, Len Pole, who will be answering your questions and signing copies of his book *Worlds of Man*, highlighting our international and historically significant world cultures collection.



Meet the Author Event

Admissions: Adults £2.50; Concessions £1.25; Under 18s Free.
Website: www.saffronwaldenmuseum.org Tel: 01799 510333

Human History Collections: Jenny Oxley

I'm really passionate about access to collections, so it's always great to be able to answer someone's enquiry whether it is a student doing a school project, a member of the public just wanting to know more about an item on display or an academic researcher. Recent enquiries have unsurprisingly focussed on witchcraft and autumnal themes, as well as the upcoming Second World War anniversaries.

Sometimes these enquiries develop into more in-depth research visits or even print and online publications. I enjoy regularly helping to source images and information for the Saffron Walden Historical Journal. Recently I have written an article for the Newport News, to be published in December, about the Newport Gaol (Bridewell/ House of Correction), and the associated pillory which is on display in the Museum's local history gallery.

Having been working on auditing the museum's collections of prints, watercolours and drawings, it was good to meet with Martin Rose, who is writing a book about Henry Winstanley. His knowledge about Winstanley's prints is really helpful and the added information and digital images collected will be incorporated into our collections records, helping us greatly with future enquiries.

At the tail end of the Summer The Great Hall temporarily became a photographic studio as Kevin Lovelock, a collections photographer based at the British Museum came to take photographs of two of the early aboriginal items in our world cultures collections, for Gaye Sculthorpe's (Curator & Section Head of Oceania, British Museum) upcoming publication which will chart early aboriginal collections held by UK museums.

Even in the last few days, I've had enquiries for images of Guy Nathan Maynard (Curator, 1880-1904) to illustrate a Royal Horticultural Society publication about the County Flora of Cambridgeshire. I've been looking into the names on the Saffron Walden Roll of Honour for the Second World War, as we hold the original paper copy which was formerly on display in St. Mary's Church, to assist Malcolm Smith with a possible future local history publication.

In terms of donations, we've just had a lovely donation of scrapbooks from one of my previous Royston contacts, Neville Chuck, former Chair of Royston & District Local History Society. Who as a former photographer at the Dunmow Broadcast and the Saffron Reporter from the 1980s-2004, has been able to donate to the Museum over 50 scrapbooks of clippings of photographs he took for the papers during his work for them. As a Social History curator, I'm most excited that they have been indexed too, which will make responding to research enquiries far easier. It was lovely to see a familiar face and be able to show him around the Museum.

Another exciting donation recently has been a set of snazzy suits and associated photographs of the town's former barbershop group, Saffron Sound. More information about the group, and contacts with former members were made after sharing one of the 1980's pictures on social media.

One of my key interests in Museum work is in Community Engagement and Audience Development, and I like uncovering hidden history stories. So I was thrilled in September when I was lucky enough to be accepted onto a 2-day project at the Cambridge University Museums called Museum Remix, a pilot project focussed on broadening representations of gender and sexuality in the interpretation of all its collections. The project was supported by the University's Change Makers group. It was an amazing experience and I felt really proud presenting our finished display at the private view, explaining the intense but really exciting 2-day process of creating the exhibition to the University's Museum Directors and invited guests.

I'm excited that the audience development stage of the Resilient Heritage project is now beginning and we can work on broadening the museum's audience.



Neville Chuck and the scrapbook

Behind the scenes, I've been recruiting additional casual museum assistants to help out on the rota for weekends and in the school holidays. I've also begun researching for the 2020 exhibitions: All Fired Up (co-curated with Essex Fire Museum) and STEAM 2020 (a science and technology themed exhibition, to tie in with 2020, being celebrated regionally as a year of Science and Creativity).

If you want to keep up to date with day-to-day activities at the Museum, you can find out more information by following us on social media – we are now on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and/or sign up for the museum's monthly e-news (there is a link to sign up from the museum's website).

Object of the Month

August 2019

Victorian Ice Cream maker and decorative moulds

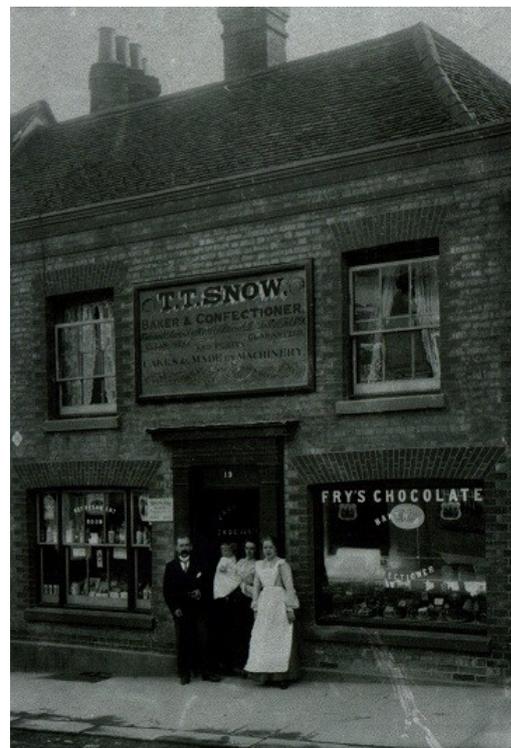
Chosen by Jenny Oxley

Inspired by the Summer sunshine Jenny Oxley, Collections Officer (Human History) has picked a Victorian Ice Cream maker and decorative moulds. They were used at G.E. Read's shop on Saffron Walden High Street in the 19th century. This photograph shows the same shop (the High Street Bakery) in 1903, when it was then run by Thomas and Ellen Thurgood Snow.

G.E. Read's shop was on the High Street in Saffron Walden in the 19th century, and by the early 20th century had been taken over by T.T. Snow (Thomas Thurgood Snow and his wife, Ellen Snow). It was known as the High Street Bakery.

The Victorian pewter Ice cream maker or sorbetiere and accompanying moulds on display in the Museum this month would have been used at Read's Shop in the late 19th century. They have recently been donated to the Museum by Read / Thurgood family members.

There are also some step-by-step picture instructions showing how ice cream was made using the sorbetiere. The moulds on display are particularly elaborate in design and in the shape of a traditional jelly moulds, as well as quinnelle and fruit shapes.



In the Georgian and Victorian periods ice cream desserts could be decorated with saffron, cochineal, spinach, or some other natural colouring to add visual flair, a treat for the eyes as well as for the taste buds.

A Visit to the Museum in August enabled one also to see adverts and photographs, and extracts of account books, related to both the Read and Snow shops which were in the High Street.

September 2019

Pestle Puffball fungus

Chosen By Sarah Kenyon

September's 'Object of the Month' is a model of a Pestle Puffball fungus, *Handkea exculpiforme*, chosen by Sarah Kenyon Natural Sciences Officer. They were found growing under Scots pine trees beside a road to Newport, Essex by Mr Maynard between 1880 and 1904. George Nathan Maynard was the first curator of Saffron Walden Museum. He made a collection of models in wax, modelled from fungus specimens collected in Saffron Walden, Newport, Debden and Little Chesterford.



This common fungus can be seen from August to November. It grows in woods, grassland, heaths and on waste ground. The fungus is 8 to 20 cm tall. It is white at first and turns brown as it ages. Initially it is covered in soft,

pointed warts which all fall off to leave a smooth surface. The upper, rounded section, 3 to 12 cm across, is the head which contains the spores. The lower, straight section is the stem which soon develops a wrinkled skin.

This puffball is edible when it is young and white, if the tough outer skin is removed. However, the older yellow, olive and brown fungi and stems can still be found in winter and summer and should not be eaten. You need an expert to identify edible fungi as mistakes can easily be made.

George Nathan Maynard

George Nathan Maynard was the first curator of Saffron Walden Museum. He was born in 1829 in the village of Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire. From a young age he showed a great interest in natural sciences, including botany, entomology and geology. George inherited his father's shop but had to sell it in 1873. The family moved to Lambeth in London where he worked as a printer and his wife Elizabeth was a dressmaker. In 1880 he was employed as the first paid curator of Saffron Walden Museum.



As curator he reorganised the museum displays, recorded objects in accession registers and carried out conservation work to preserve the collections. During this time he made a collection of models in wax, modelled from fungus specimens collected in Saffron Walden, Newport, Debden and Little Chesterford.

In 1904 George died of respiratory problems at the age of 75. His son Guy took over as curator until 1920 when he left to become curator of Ipswich Museum.

October 2019

**A collection of butterfly specimens,
chosen by James Lombard, Natural Sciences Officer.**

The case that was on display is arranged to show which butterflies live in the Saffron Walden area today (left), and which are extinct (right).



These butterflies died off mainly because of changing land use in the 19th & 20th centuries. Butterflies such as the Adonis blue (1) and chalk-hill blue (2) prefer large areas of chalk wildflower meadow, grazed by sheep and cattle. However, much of this land was converted to crop farming in the 1800s and these specialist insects died off. Other changes, such as the end of coppicing in woodlands, removed the open wooded habitat that butterflies such as the grizzled skipper (3) thrive in.

Species like the purple emperor (4) and white admiral (5) feed on the sugary waste products from aphids (honeydew). Pollution from coal burning may have contributed to these butterflies' extinction as the toxins could dissolve into the honeydew on the leaf surface.



However, 2019 has been a very good year for some impressive larger butterflies, with lots of painted ladies (6) arriving in Britain from the Mediterranean as they migrate north.

When this butterfly case was put together the Purple Emperor, Marbled White and Silver-washed Fritillery had become extinct in our area. However, excitingly, they have all made a re-appearance in the last few years. The Silver-washed re-appeared about 5 years ago in Shadwell Wood, West Wood and Hatfield Forest, and the Purple Emperor in West Wood and Rowney Wood about 2 years ago. The Marbled White has been seen over the last two summers at the Harrison Sayer nature reserve, at Noakes Grove nature reserve, and along some roadside verges.

The Protected Roadside verges in Uttlesford also provide good chalk grassland habitat for species such as the small copper (7).

It was possible to learn more about how humans have affected local environments and wildlife, for bad and for good, in the Take Away the Walls exhibition which ran through the summer and closed on 3 November.

November 2019

**Medieval reliquary pendant,
chosen by Carolyn Wingfield, Curator.**

This pendant was part of the recent treasure acquisition which was funded by a crowd-funding campaign with our supporters, as well as grants secured from 3 national organisations (the Art Fund, the Arts Council England / V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Museums Archaeological Acquisition Fund), and is on display in the Treasure Case in the Great Hall.

Probably 14th - 15th century, found in the Farnham area. The faces are decorated with engraved patterns and black letter script. The back-plate is still secured in place, so a tiny relic may survive inside. Length with suspension loop 29mm.



December 2019

**Christmas Doll's House
Chosen By Jenny Oxley**

December's Object of the Month has been chosen by Jenny Oxley, Collections Officer (Human History), it's a very seasonal Christmas doll's house room setting, which was donated to the Museum in 1990 by Mrs E V Watt, it was a bequest, and was originally intended to replicate one of the rooms at the original owner's home, the grade II listed property, Watts Folly in Arkesden.



Events: Charlotte Pratt

After a really busy summer holiday, where the activities team made magnificent craft creations with over 300 children and celebrated Wallace's 200th birthday, there didn't seem like much of a break before the October half term activities came around.

There were 3 activities over the week. Wednesday our young visitors (with much help from parents, grandparents and guardians) made spooky forest mobiles using wire, felt and paper. Thursday's activity required 60 glass jars; many thanks to all who donated these; children used the jars to create a "ghost in a jar" that although simple, were very effective and the children seemed very pleased with what they had made.

Friday night was our biannual Museums at Night. Staff and volunteers dressed as friendly ghosts to guide visitors around the dark museum to answer the questions on the trail. A great time was had by all - including the ghosts! It was a really busy and successful night and I am already starting to plan next year's spooky extravaganza.



Volunteer News: Wendy-Jo Atter

Welcome Desk Volunteers

Grateful Thanks

The Welcome Desk volunteers are the 'Face of the Museum' they provide a friendly welcome for visitors; sell tickets and merchandise; provide information about the museum and direct enquiries to members of staff. They also assist at evening functions and events, special thanks to June Baker for dressing the part at our Museums at Night event in October

Our grateful thanks also go to:

- June Baker for conducting the Induction Training for our new recruits, Bridie, Sue and Jo



Barbara with her flowers

- Jeanette Flucher who provided much needed Welcome Desk shift cover and Museums at Night event over the Heritage Open Day weekend

- Angela Jones who covered the Welcome Desk over the August Bank Holiday



Jo with June

- Barbara Mensforth who retired from her regular shift but we are grateful to say, has kindly offered to remain 'on call' should we need Welcome Desk cover.

- Mary Adams and all the volunteers who have kindly agreed to the Museum taking a cast of their fingers for the Death Masks to Diaries exhibition



Warm Welcome

We extend a warm welcome to our new Welcome Desk volunteers: Sue Donelan, Jane Hook and Jo Crabb.

Fond Farewell

We bid a fond farewell to:

- Jean Peat who has retired from her Welcome Desk duties
- Bridie Heath, who joined us as a Welcome Desk Volunteer for the summer period, prior to taking up permanent employment.

Collections Volunteers

Thanks go to Sean Todd for his help documenting the Museum's archive collections over the summer. He has now left us to return to the University of Warwick to continue studying politics. Considerable progress is being made in cataloguing and auditing the Museum's photograph, document and art collections. We also have several new additions to the human history collections volunteer team: Lillie Weston, Charles Welham and Graham White.

Wildlife Garden Volunteers

Welcome to Issa Cochran who is helping with watering and general upkeep of the new planters and sunflower beds. Thanks to Ann Bannister, an existing Learning & Outreach volunteer, who has also taken on these garden duties. Issa and Ann are also contributing ideas for improvement and expansion to the wildlife areas.

Learning and Outreach Volunteers

Jane Evans, Chris Phillips, Jeanette Fulcher, Ann Banister and Sue Cockerell helped to deliver a very full program of summer activities

Volunteering Opportunities

Our Welcome Desk is run entirely by dedicated volunteers. They provide a friendly welcome for visitors, sell tickets and merchandise, provide information about the museum, and direct enquiries to members of staff. They usually volunteer for a 2.5 hour shift, every day except Monday and Saturday. We are currently looking for new Welcome Desk volunteers – if you are interested, please contact the Museum on 01799 510333 or email museum@uttlesford.gov.uk

Please consider doing your Christmas Shopping at Saffron Walden Museum

Original Christmas Gifts

Our Museum Shop offers bespoke ranges, stocking fillers and unique gifts such as our Annual Season Tickets.

All your Christmas shopping dilemmas solved in one go!

Shop with a Conscience

By shopping here you are actively contributing to Saffron Walden Museum's future sustainability and success.

What better way to give back at Christmas?

Annual Season Tickets

Our convenient, money-saving Annual Season ticket offers you the best value at just £8 for Adult tickets and £4 for Concessions; it includes a monthly e-newsletter highlighting Museum news and events.



Exhibitions and Upcoming Events: Charlotte Pratt

"From Death Masks to Diaries – The Many Faces of Portraiture"
opens Saturday November 16 at Saffron Walden Museum.

What is a portrait, a painting or photograph, a film, a representation? Portraits are more than just images.

Portraits are everywhere, on the money in our wallets, the letters we write and the records we buy. They transmit the power of important people, decorate our homes and help us remember loved ones. There are more portraits taken today than in any other point in history and more ways than ever to identify an individual; our image, our words, our signature, our fingerprints, our D.N.A. In a world obsessed by images of self, this exhibition explores what can be meant by the word portrait.

From conventional examples such as paintings, photographs and busts; to diaries, death masks and fingerprints, explore Saffron Walden Museum's varied collections and discover how portraits have been used throughout the centuries, from Ancient Egypt to today. The exhibition will also bring together new material as part of a project to create a portrait of Uttlesford now reflecting the diverse lives of the people that call the district home.

A poster for the exhibition "FROM DEATH MASKS TO DIARIES". The title is in large, bold, black capital letters. To the right of the title is a close-up photograph of a death mask. Below the title, there are two horizontal yellow lines. Between the lines, the text reads "An exhibition exploring the many faces of portraiture." Below that, another horizontal yellow line is followed by the dates "Nov 16 2019 - 22 Mar 2020". At the bottom, there is contact information for Saffron Walden Museum, including the address, phone number, website, and email. Below the contact information are icons for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, and two logos for partner organizations.

Your Stories: Jenny Oxley

In August, Saffron Players installed a display in the Museum about the history of their theatre company which was established in the 1980's. Their co-curated display is bright and colourful and features props from their previous productions such as their popular pantomimes, accompanied by programmes charting their productions over the years. It is lovely to work with active local community groups, and have their involvement in the Museum's displays.

Museum Society News

Special Offer for new members

This year the special offer for new members is starting early. Thus for anyone who joins the society now, the next subscription will not be due until 2021. As the subscription year runs from 1 April to 31 March this means up to 17 months membership for the price of 12

Tell your friends!

'Come and Join Us' leaflets are in the museum, at the talks or are available from me at any time.

Christine Sharpe

Reports on Talks and Events

**Taking Away the Walls - Speaker: James Lombard
Natural Sciences Officer, Saffron Walden Museum
9th September 2019**

James explained how he interpreted Erin Kenny's saying that 'Children cannot bounce off the walls if you take away the walls'. The idea is, he said, that if you confine children they become frustrated and vent their frustration by 'bouncing off the walls'. If, however you take away the walls and let children/people have greater life experiences, the frustration diminishes and people/children become more widely involved and act across supposed barriers. So he had arranged a selection of projects which helped people to do this and led to the improvement of their physical, mental and social life.

Some earlier studies following up various similar group activities elsewhere had shown reduction in N.H.S. A&E out-patient attendance and also in-patient admissions. Putting these ideas into practice costs money and funding from government Department of Health and Social Care has made £4.5 million available to cultural organisations to help build relationships with health and wellbeing organisations, including GP surgeries.

Locally we have Uttlesford Frontline, which is an organisation that hosts information on different services across the district to make it easy for people to find information about local health and wellbeing services, and get in touch with these services and organisations. It can also be used for secure referrals by medical professionals, social services, etc., for people in their care to use these services. Uttlesford Frontline is jointly funded by Essex County Council, NHS West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, and Uttlesford District Council.

James then gave us some examples of how these 'supposed' barriers were broken down. The Saffron Walden Community Shed meets in an equipped shed and has trained leaders who help those who come along and may need support in various ways. Much of the work is to do with making things with tools, so James asked Ridgeons if they could help, and they donated a lot of timber, which Saffron Walden Community Shed and Bishops Stortford Men's Shed (both part of the Essex Shed Network) used to make planters, bird boxes and insect houses. People who joined the group and were at first reticent grew in confidence and skills. Some of the things made were 'finished' by people with more limited mobilities working either from UDC premises, at Thaxted Centre for the Disabled or from a developing "Shed Inside" scheme at Stanley Wilson Lodge. The Saffron Walden Shed have also developed a longer-term relationship with Thaxted Centre to produce items which the Centre can finish and sell on to help meet their running costs as a charity. The birdboxes and bug hotels were put up in

various places in Uttlesford, e.g. in Molehill Green, Takeley, Thaxted Centre and the plot held by Jubilee Allotment Group for people living with dementia, at Jubilee Allotments in Great Dunmow.

The Gardens of Easton Lodge hosted a visiting group on one of their regular volunteer open days, and on one evening in May at the Museum there was a Wildlife at Night Event aimed at surveying Swan Meadow, the castle and Museum grounds for species. Participants made 'seed bombs' using seed suitable for the local soil in the hope that the resulting flora would help to redress the reduction in butterflies. Inside the Museum there were stalls provided by Saffron Walden Community Shed, RSPB Hope Farm, the local branch of the Essex Wildlife Trust. Outside, Essex Amphibian and Reptile Group led the survey around Swan Meadow, and Essex Bat Group led a bat walk with their bat detector to hear how bats use echo location to find their prey. Some bats were found, and amphibians including common newts. No great-crested newts were spotted.

The Community Shed made three large wooden planters which were filled and planted during a separate event day at the Museum in May, with help from Dig It community allotment from Saffron Walden and plenty of Museum visitor enthusiasm. The planters now contain among others, edible plants, herbs and insect-attracting plants, which people could replicate at home. The tubs will also be used in Learning and Outreach activities at the Museum. The Essex Field Club put reptile mats around the perimeter of the Museum's grounds to see if any snakes or other reptiles might be present, and a 6ft wide mowing-free zone was established for the benefit of wildflowers and insects such as crickets, moths and butterflies.

In June at the 'Thank you' party for Museum volunteers, we were split into groups and sent off around the grounds with differing target groups of wildlife to identify. Between us we recorded 80 different species of plants, trees, birds and insects.

Participants in all these schemes, brief or long term, in some way or another, got something new, learnt new skills or improved existing ones, learnt more about the countryside that they lived in, met new people, and/or were less socially isolated. James hopes to create an area of wildflower meadow on the right hand side of the Museum's drive, following up a Buglife project to create a "Beeline (B-Line)", areas which connect nectar hotspots.

These are just some of the well illustrated examples that James described – the lecture itself was part of the idea. He presented us with the United Nations's 17 Sustainable Development Goals starting with "No poverty, zero hunger" up to "partnerships for the goals". Museums, he said, preserve cultural national knowledge and promote cross-sectional partnerships and therefore have an important role to play.

Heather Salvidge

14 October 2019

Historic Graffiti in Essex Churches

Speaker: Anthea Hawdon - an Enthusiast

Anthea began by saying that it seemed that, down through the ages, given a blank wall, people would make marks on it - names, symbols or crude drawings. In the district of Lot in southern France there were caves famous for their antique wall decorations; two dappled ponies and someone's hand! This latter was depicted in outline, the hand laid flat against the surface and the dark pigment sprayed around it, probably by mouth, leaving a clear picture of it. These pictures have been dated to BC 25,000. Anthea explained that her talk was focussed on churches in NW Essex and if you wondered whether the making of marks in them was frowned upon, the answer appears to be "Well, no". There is a message engraved in Alphamstone church 'signed' by Nicholas de Gryce – the Vicar. Also, as churches in medieval times were painted, much graffiti would have been scratched through paint. She has classified the graffiti into two broad groups; the Mundane and the Magical and within these were several different groups.

Names and initials were popular, STEPHEN SKYnnER found it a bit tricky though, he reversed the capital N in his Christian name (I can't, computer won't let me) so settled for lower case in his surname. These appear on memorials too, often enclosed in a box outline with some sort of criss-cross drawn on the top and a date. The one in Chrishall is dated 1605, the year of the gunpowder plot, when Shakespeare was still alive and before the St. James' Bible. All Saints in Rickling has a very elegant written "Isabel" plus a decorative heart – done by whom? The lady herself, an admirer or someone else doing it for either of them?. St. Mary's, Saffron Walden has a William. Masons and Merchants marks are there, masons tend to be simple and well done, merchants were more elaborate – for advertising? - often designed round the sign of '4' sometimes reversed. Hands, shoes and feet

appear, usually drawn around the outline of the feature. One or two inexpert drawings of figures are there but there is one exquisite 'portrait' of a monk's head in St. Mary's Little Dunmow. As well as the obvious surfaces used for graffiti there are messages written on the backs behind organs by the people who pumped them e.g. "George VI died in 1952" to which had been added "and he died in his sleep".

Here are a few more of Anthea's illustrated examples, Ridgewell has a complaints poem on the wall and Steeple Bumpstead a plaintive "God help me" possibly from the time of a plague outbreak. Animals are represented by hounds in St. Mary's Elsenham, a dog in Steeple Bumpstead, a weird, angular fish in Birdbrook and a dragon in Finchingfield. The heraldic emblems include shields, lacking in their original colours so cannot be specifically identified, family badges such as the de Vere star and the de Bouchier knot. In Finchingfield there is an elaborate tilting helmet fashioned like a dog's head and Clavering has one of the examples of a key. Many churches have crosses as religious symbols and in Wendens Ambo an 'INRI'. 'Dot' patterns often crop up, usually fairly low down. They are small holes in a wall and some some look rather like a gaming board but another explanation is that stone was drilled out and taken and, being holy material, was used in healing medicines. There are other objects, e.g. Clavering has a harp, elsewhere a six-bar stave, making it old enough to pre-date the regular five-bar stave, a lamp and a penny farthing bicycle!

Apotropaic graffiti was believed to ward off evil and usually appears on door thresholds and frames and inside windows but sometimes in the porch outside as in Henham. Common symbols are ladders, Solomon's knots and meshes, these two because once the evil spirit got into one, it was trapped – no way out. Merels, or nine-men's morris occur too, in one slide Anthea showed us it was carved on the inside shelf of a window and rather looked as though it had been played on. Pentagrams, or 5-pointed stars, are fairly common for instance they are in both Castle and Sible Hedingham churches, St. Mary's Elsenham and in the porch of St Mary's Henham. Tear-shaped burn marks in wood are not nearly so usual and it is difficult to work out how or what they protected. Marian marks are common though and seek the power and protection of the BVM. Clavering has the 'upright' version of the interlocking capital MMs and others have the interlocking VV's for virgo virginium. Compass drawn circles are interpreted as protective as they are endless loops. Some are formed of concentric ones. The six 'petal' version is well known but in some simpler versions the 'petals' form a cross. Then there is the SATOR square, one of which was excavated at Pompeii: if you take these five words in capitals – SATOR AREPO TENET OPERA ROTAS – and line them up precisely above each other – see what you get.

Anthea's talk was beautifully illustrated and she gave many more examples than those I have used as I don't have the IT to replicate them; so see what you can find by using the "raking light" technique. Visit a church, with permission if needed, take a good torch and shine it parallel to the walls or other surfaces. This should show up the graffiti. So who made the marks? It was, on the whole, not those who are commemorated by elegant tombs or in brass or stone but just the very ordinary people, some who could scarcely write – see STEPHEN SKINNER – and so that is why we know something about them today. To know more, Anthea suggested reading Matthew Champion's book 'Medieval Graffiti: The Lost Voices of England's Churches.'

Heather Salvidge

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