

## Newsletter of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd

Spring 2024 Issue 62

### In this Issue

- 1 Highlights and Happenings: From the Chairman
- 2 Curator's Column:
- 2 Changes to Opening Arrangements
- 3 Natural Sciences: Sarah Kenyon
- 3 Natural Sciences: James Lombard
- 4 Human History & Archaeology: Jenny Oxley
- 5 Object of the Month
- 8 Learning at Saffron Walden Museum: Charlotte Pratt
- 9 Volunteer News: Wendy-Jo Atter
- 10 Museum Shop : Wendy-Jo Atter
- 10 The End of an Era: Wendy-Jo Atter
- 11 Monthly Museum News
- 12 Exhibitions:
- 12 Museum Society News
- 12 Membership
- 13 Social Media Administrator
- 14 Reports on Talks
- 16 Who to contact . . .



### Highlights and Happenings: From the Chairman

The first quarter of 2024 produced three excellent Zoom presented talks well illustrated, presented and of real interest.

Hertfordshire is one of our three “near counties” and Sarah Kerrison, our January speaker, of the Counties Archives and Local Studies team revealed the amazing “**Tudor Hertfordshire**” records it has amongst its collections. She also invited us to visit and see the much more she wasn’t able to cover in her fascinating 60 minutes.

In the absence of Richard Priestly our February speaker, John Vigar did a great job of being his own “Zoom Master”. John’s illustrated lecture “**Britain with Betjeman**” introduced us to the architectural writings and opinions of John Betjeman, discussing the history of the buildings he used as examples and exploring structures as diverse as churches, houses and pleasure piers.

The last of our winter Zoom speakers was Dr, Vivien Newman whose well-illustrated talk “**Nursing through shot and shell: medical women at the front**” was profound, absorbing and mostly new knowledge to her viewers. The courage, tenacity and compassion of these pioneering women is a story newer generations must never forget.

Come April we are back to live talks at the Parish rooms with warm balmy well-lit evenings, he optimistically says!

On a very different note you will be aware of 'Project Blueprint Uttlesford', the exercise being undertaken by Uttlesford District Council on its future structure for the provision of its services. The matter was discussed at the Museum Management Working Group on 20th March, which is the group that links Society directors and District Councillors.

I reported that the Society had agreed to jointly fund with the Council a consultant to address the issues that the impact of Blueprint Uttlesford might have. The selected consultant was agreed 3 weeks ago and has commenced meeting with Society Directors, District Councillors and senior Council Officers.

The Board is committed to involving the members of the Society as fully as possible and will look for opportunities to achieve this.

**Keith Eden**

## Curator's Column:

Since I took on the Interim Curator post at the beginning of November, in addition to my full-time Collections Officer role, the pace has been unrelenting. In the early weeks, it was preparing the museum's service plan and budget, whilst installing and promoting the temporary exhibition, *Evacuee: A Wartime Childhood*. I'm thrilled with how the exhibition has been received, and with Wendy-Jo Atter's help we have sold many copies of Brian Sanders 1<sup>st</sup> Evacuee book in the museum shop. Brian's artwork was also centre stage in the museum's Christmas card and festive promotional materials. In the New Year, my main focus became submitting the museum's accreditation renewal to the Arts Council.

We have continued in this period, to have a busy events programme and Charlotte Pratt, our Learning & Outreach Officer, has worked hard to increase the number of schools visiting and enabled us to accommodate larger school groups. Our target figure for our KPI (key performance indicator) no. of users for the Oct-Dec quarter was 2,800 users and we exceeded it to reach 4,200 users! February half-term was again lovely and buzzy in the museum. We are always grateful for all the positive feedback we receive online particularly on our social media channels, Tripadvisor and Google reviews.

We are now building up to the Easter Holiday activities and the opening of our new temporary exhibition, *Plants: The Struggle for Survival*, designed and installed by our Natural Sciences Officers, James Lumbard and Sarah Kenyon.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> April, in term times, our school day will switch from Tuesdays to Wednesdays, to capitalise on this busy market day, and we will work to attract more coach trip visits to the museum. From April onwards, expect to see improvements to the look of the museum, as we will be getting our paintbrushes out, improving the external signage and have planned improvements in place to rejuvenate a number of the museum's permanent displays.

In recent months, we've been working through the council's Blueprint Uttlesford review process, instigated across the council, in response to significant financial pressures. The new financial year will mean further reductions to budgets and staffing, which is clearly very challenging for all of us.

I'm passionate about what the museum has to offer as a community hub and resource for current and future generations to enjoy, and I am determined to keep it on track and continuously improving. Thank you to everyone who helps make this possible.

**Jenny Oxley**

## Changes to Opening Arrangements

The Museum is changing the day on which it is only open to schools and other pre-booked parties from 1<sup>st</sup> April. The current Tuesdays, will be replaced by Wednesdays, so the new opening arrangements for this year will be ;

Opening times this **March** are;

- ▶▶ Wednesday to Saturday 10:00am – 5:00pm, and Sundays & Bank Holidays 2:00pm - 5:00pm.
- ▶▶ Tuesdays are reserved for pre-booked group visits by schools and other parties
- ▶▶ Closed Monday

## Changes to Opening Days from April 2024

### April to October

- ▶ Tuesday, and Thursday to Saturday 10:00am – 5:00pm, and Sundays & Bank Holidays 2:00pm - 5:00pm.
- ▶ Wednesdays are now reserved for pre-booked group visits by schools and other parties
- ▶ Closed Monday

From **November-February** we close earlier at 4.30pm during these winter months.

## Natural Sciences: Sarah Kenyon

### Upcoming exhibition Plants : the Struggle for Survival

**S**igns of spring are all around. Plants are flowering in the Museum and Castle grounds and insects are busy feeding from flowers and pollinating them. We are working hard on the upcoming exhibition Plants : the Struggle for Survival which runs from Saturday 30 March to Sunday 7 July 2024. There is a Private View for Museum Society members on Friday 5 April 18.00-19.30. This is the perfect time to explore our relationship with plants that heal or harm, feed us or frustrate us, and uncover the secrets of their survival over hundreds of millions of years. From fossil fronds to Victorian collectors and modern roadsides - this is the story of plants and their struggle for survival.

### Stick Insects on the Move

The stick insects from the Museum Discovery Centre started their new life at Saffron Walden County High School in March. They are being looked after by pupils and staff in the Agricultural Science Unit. Eight baby stick insects hatched from eggs laid by the adult females. We had great fun spotting the well camouflaged babies in the cage and capturing them on leaves to put them safely into a baby creche box. The students will see them shed their skins several times, in a process called moulting, as they grow to become adults.

This space will be turned into a brand new Climate Information Hub sharing information and advice on the climate and ecological upheaval we are living through. We will also highlight relevant local groups who would love your help to boost environmental and community projects in Uttlesford.



*Well-camouflaged Stick Insects © Saffron Walden Museum*

## Natural Sciences: James Lumbard

### New digital microscope

**W**e are looking forward to installing a new digital microscope in the Discovery Centre - one which will magnify several hundred times, a marked improvement on the current camera. The current set-up requires the auto-focus to be reset quite frequently, whereas the new microscope will allow us to fix the magnification at a suitable power and keep a constant focal distance. It will also connect to the existing display screen and is small enough to sit within the current housing, so we are hoping for a smooth swap ready for the summer season.

## Lighting the Way

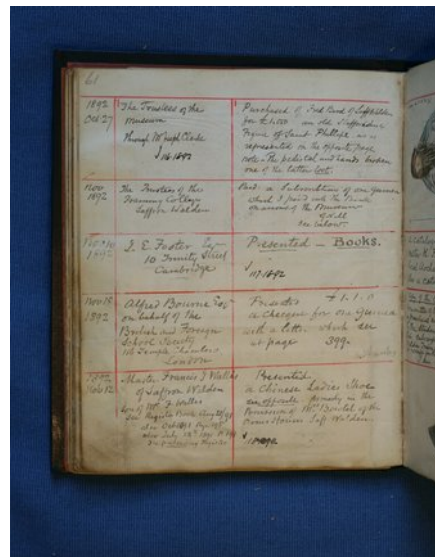
Following recommendations from our Collections Care Audit last summer, we have purchased two portable magnetic work lights to provide extra task lighting in the natural sciences store at the Museum. These conveniently magnetise to the underside of our metal shelves or onto uprights and can be angled to direct light into shadowy spots to help us handle the collections more confidently and carefully.

## Volunteer progress

Two collections volunteers are respectively making valuable progress on cataloguing the fossil collection at Shirehill and a large collection of moths and butterflies kept at the Museum. We will be several thousand high-quality records to the good when their work is complete!

## 19th-century documentation

Our weekend team are making early progress on creating a searchable record of our earliest accession registers dating from before 1897. This will greatly improve our ability to verify the oldest items in the collection and make historical research requests much simpler to carry out. Similar work very has been kindly started by a volunteer on an auction catalogue which records purchases made for the Museum in 1872 following the closure of the Sudbury Museum. This will let us cross-reference the accession registers and ensure the provenance of collection items is accurate.



*Accession Register from 1892*

## Human History & Archaeology: Jenny Oxley

**M**anaging the museum now absorbs the majority of my work time, but I'm just about managing to keep up with all the research enquiries and object identification queries related to my collections areas: archaeology, local and social history, costume and textiles, fine and decorative arts and world cultures, in a timely manner, as well as all the loans paperwork, and the accessioning and cataloguing of new accessions to the collections.

I'm working with archaeological units working district wide, on receiving their archaeological survey finds and with the Essex and Cambridge Finds Liaison Officers on treasure finds discovered by metal detectorists.

I've been updating our licensing arrangements for our firearms collection, as well as the controlled drugs in our pharmaceutical collection.

We are awaiting results on the carbon 14 dating of the Tudor bed on display in the museum.

We have been invited to take part in a research project with York University academics, which is expected to lead to the creation of a UK wide online resource of indigenous American collections material, in conjunction with source community groups.

Loans out of our collections, continue to be a busy area of our work, time consuming to achieve, but rewarding for sharing the collections and gaining additional collections knowledge and promotion for our museum. The abolitionist reticule (purse) is going on display at the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge, a flute on display in the world cultures gallery will be heading to Vanuatu for a commemorative Cook250 exhibition, the cat mummy has been requested for exhibition loan by MERL and items related to



*North American collections on display in the Museum, the subject of a research project with York University and indigenous community groups.*

plant based narcotics in the world cultures collections have been requested for loan by the Sainsbury Centre at UEA, Norwich for a temporary exhibition.

We are excited to be getting involved in the Sun Inn Project, we'll share more information on this shortly, but it's very satisfying that it will in part, build upon the work we did last year with pargeter Anna Kettle.

Weekly, volunteer Sarah is helping us with the costume and textile collections now stored at our Shire Hill store on Mondays, whilst on Thursdays, Tracey is helping us by auditing the world cultures collections. Updating our collections records means that we can make them more accessible as a resource to the general public and academic researchers, and make them more effective resources for in-house exhibitions, events and learning activities.

At the time of writing, we are currently recruiting a partial backfill of my Collections Officer role, a part-time temporary Collections Assistant. It will be great to have a new character on our team, who will bring new energy, skills and experience with them. We'll introduce them in the next newsletter!

**Jenny Oxley**



*A carved wooden boat model from China, donated to the museum in the 1920s. One of the items catalogued as part of the world cultures collection audit being done, with help from our new collections volunteer, Tracey.*

## Object of the Month

**December 2023**

**White Satin Slippers**

**Chosen by Sarah Copping**

**D**ecember's Object of the Month is a pair of white satin slippers decorated with silver braid and sequins, lined with white kid leather.

New collections volunteer Sarah Copping chose these shoes as a fascinating example from our textile and costume collections. These collections are currently being audited, as we moved them from a museum store cupboard to our external museum store on the Shire Hill Industrial estate last year.



These slippers are said to have been worn by Princess Charlotte (1796-1817), daughter of George IV in the early 1800s.

They have a handwritten inscription on the sole of one of the shoes, which tells her story:

Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales was the only child of George, Prince of Wales (later George IV), and his wife, Caroline of Brunswick. Her parents disliked each other instantly and soon separated. Charlotte was largely cared for by governesses and servants and only allowed limited contact with her mother, who eventually left the country.

Her father pressured her to marry William, Hereditary Prince of Orange (later King of the Netherlands), but she ultimately married



Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld (later King of the Belgians). Charlotte had been expected to ascend the British throne after the deaths of her mentally ill grandfather, George III, and her unpopular father (George IV), but she died in childbirth at the age of 21, predeceasing them both. The context of her death changed obstetrics and subsequently saved the lives of many babies and their mothers.

**January 2024**

**Liverworts from Wimbish  
Chosen By Sarah Kenyon**

January's Object of the Month is a collection of Greater Featherwort liverworts found at Wimbish Hall, Wimbish, Essex in 1874. They were collected 150 years ago by Frederick Yorke Brocas, a Naturalists' Agent from London. He described them as being "Abundant and fine at Wimbish Hall."

That year he collected six volumes of fungi, lichens, liverworts and mosses in Saffron Walden and the surrounding area. This unique collection of plants mounted on paper herbarium sheets is cared for by Saffron Walden Museum.

Liverworts are small plants with leaf lobes called a thallus which look like a liver. People once believed that they could cure diseases of the liver. There are two types, thallose and leafy. Greater Featherwort liverworts, *Plagiochila asplenioides*, are leafy and have small, thin leaves arranged in rows on the stems.

Thallose liverworts have a flattened, plate-like body called a thallus, the feature which gave these plants their common name because they were thought to look like a liver.

Liverworts colonise surfaces quickly and are found in a variety of habitats: bare soil, walls, tarmac, cracks in pavements, gaps in rocks and damp shady spots. They live everywhere from cities to wilderness areas. Liverworts belong to a group of plants called Bryophytes, that also include mosses and hornworts. There are 1,098 species of Bryophytes in Britain and Ireland. This is about 58 percent of the total Bryophyte flora in Europe. A huge percentage, when you consider that the UK has less than 20 percent of the European flowering plants. They do not produce flowers and make food by photosynthesis using the green chlorophyll in their leaves.

January is a good month to spot liverworts and mosses because they are not covered by other plants. To find out more visit the British Bryological Society website ; [www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk](http://www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk)



*Liverworts from Wimbish, Plagiochila asplenioides* © SAFWM : 2003.11.167



*A thallose liverwort, Conocephalum conicum. Photograph taken 17 years ago near to Renton, West Dumbartonshire, Scotland. © Copyright Lairich Rig and licensed for reuse under [creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0)*

**February 2024**  
**Blue Tit**

In celebration of LGBTQ+ History Month, February's object of the month looks into the queer aspects of the natural history collection. Same-sex pair bonding has been observed between individuals of two closely related species, such as different species of geese, and between members of the same species.

Same-sex courtship and mating behaviour also have been observed in many bird species including blue tits and pigeons. Female blue tits have also been recorded sharing a nest and co-operating to raise their chicks, without male input. Occasionally, both members of a female-female nesting pair will be supported and fed by the same male.

In general, same-sex reproductive behaviours are more common between males than females, and are seen more often in species where males mate with multiple females than in species that form breeding pairs. These behaviours are also more common when males are less involved in raising the chicks, both in species that pair-bond and species that don't. However, in species with breeding pairs and when males provide most parental care, same-sex behaviour is highest between females.



**March 2024**  
**Historic Photographs of Saffron Walden Station**  
**Chosen by Tony Morton**

In the Museum Society Winter 2023 newsletter an article drew attention to the former railway station in Saffron Walden, which has been featured on YouTube in the form of a working model railway, set in the 1940s.

The Museum's collection includes many historic photographs taken of locations in the district which document former times of places that, in many cases, have subsequently been redeveloped for other purposes. The former station is one such place, and since its closure in 1969 it has been redeveloped first as a petrol filling station and car repair business, and then again as a housing area. Possibly many people today do not even realise that there ever was a station here.



© Saffron Walden Museum ref 1991-18-4 Dating from circa 1939, a snowy winter view of the tracks, looking west with the old goods shed on the right.

Two photos that show the change over a period of time with a 2 coach train circa 1939, and from a similar viewpoint in 1980, with the old platform still in place when the site was used in connection with the garage ( the grey square building in the distance ) as a vehicle park.



© Saffron Walden Museum ref 1991 18-39



© Saffron Walden Museum ref 1991-18-40

Another view from the 1950's shows the railway service now provided by a diesel railbus, and also shows the industrial area that used to be on the south side of the station tracks, with sidings that enabled the delivery and collection of goods direct to site. This is now an area of houses.



Saffron Walden - 4

© Saffron Walden Museum ref 2017 – 103 – 5

Finally an older photo from circa 1900, a mounted sepia photograph of South Road, Saffron Walden, circa 1900. This features 30 South Road, just opposite Victoria Avenue, and its distinctive brickwork is shown. Four brick built houses in a row, built for the railway station managers around 1868. The railway is gone, but the houses remain.



© Saffron Walden Museum ref 1912 – 128 – 6

More photos and descriptive history can be found on the Disused Stations website on this link :

[http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/s/saffron\\_walden/index.shtml](http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/s/saffron_walden/index.shtml)

## Learning at Saffron Walden Museum: Charlotte Pratt

Things continue to be busy for learning and outreach at Saffron Walden Museum. End of year figures are showing that we have delivered taught lessons to over 1000 school children this financial year, either at their school, at our fantastic Museum or as part of their uniformed group activities (brownies, cubs etc.). A further 1000 have had access to hands on history through our loan box services, and 500 have attended our holiday craft activities this year.

Although there may be some duplications in those figures (children having accessed more than one of those services in a year) I think this is still something to be pleased about or even proud of, as bringing real, hands-on and screen-free history, art and science to our community is so important!

I am pleased to report that we are already receiving bookings for the next financial year and a new learning services leaflet is being mailed out to schools within Uttlesford and/or within 20 miles of the Museum as we speak. If you have any teacher friends, relatives or acquaintances please spread the word about what we offer and if you can help by sharing our learning services leaflet please let me know and I can send you a digital or printed copies.





Our February half term activities saw children making some super egg box animal portraits and rather charming wiggly caterpillars, I think you will all agree that the penguin is quite handsome.

Upcoming in April we have our Easter holiday crafts and the Museum will also be launching its Wheels of Time trail as part of the Wheels of Time project . Visitors will join Roamin' Rex, our time travelling character, as he discovers Essex's fantastic museums and heritage sites. This is a new initiative to Essex which has been very successful in Kent. Children will be encouraged to explore different Museums whilst collecting individual badges along the way when they complete an activity.

Later in April we are partnering with local artist Jessica Pearce for her "Here be Giants" project, a free immersive art exhibition at The Old Sun Inn exploring the folklore and history of the 17th Century. The museum Learning Team has put together a complementary walking art trail for children exploring the 17th century history of Saffron Walden finishing up at the Museum. The exhibition and trail will run from the 19th of April to 1st of May.

Finally to finish up April, something for the grown-ups; after the success of our Christmas printing workshop we are running another, this time focused on reduction Lino printing and inspired by the current temporary exhibition "Plants- The Struggle for Survival". The workshop is £50 per person, the group will be small so attendees get plenty of attention from the tutor and can hopefully leave with some beautiful botanic prints they are proud of. There's much more coming up in the year, with more workshops for adults and children so keep an eye out for our monthly newsletter to keep up to date with what's going on and where to book your tickets, it would be great to see some of you at our events.

## Volunteer News: Wendy-Jo Atter

**A** 'Warm Welcome' to our new volunteers:  
Thomas and Sue,

We bid a 'Fond Farewell' to Shamika, who has moved to another county,

We also bid farewell to Hamish who we knew, both as a volunteer and a friend; it is with great sadness that we announce he passed away in January.

Hamish volunteered with us, helping with the document archive, for many years up until 2019 and was an active member of both the Museum and Historical Societies.



## Museum Shop : Wendy-Jo Atter

### Butterfly Jigsaw

As early spring is a prime time for Butterflies, it seems topical to promote our Jig Saw Puzzle, which is on sale in the Museum Shop priced at just £10.

I worked with the designers to create this bespoke puzzle, which is one of the things I am most proud of, it is "Original and unique to Saffron Walden Museum" - the puzzle features an image from our British Butterfly Collection.

**Whimsy Shapes** - an Historical Link to Victorian Puzzle Making - Quirky and delightful, they're a twist to the usual jigsaw as they incorporate whimsy pieces. 'Whimsies', which are essentially a puzzle piece crafted into a recognisable shape (in the case of the Museum Puzzle these are 2 x Butterflies and 3 x Flowers), are an historical link to the Victorian puzzle-making past. As the name suggests, the original Victorian puzzle cutters added the individual pieces on a whim and so the term 'whimsy' was born.



**Irregular Puzzle Pieces** - the irregular pieces create a more dynamic and challenging puzzling experience. They have been cut by precision laser to ensure that these intricate puzzle pieces fit together perfectly.

**Elegantly Crafted British Classic** - made in the heart of the Wiltshire countryside they represent the very best of British materials and craftsmanship.

**Wooden Jigsaw Puzzles** - the wood used is derived from sustainable sources.

## The End of an Era: Wendy-Jo Atter

I have had the immense privilege of being the Front of House Officer at Saffron Walden Museum for almost 8 years; I am very proud of what I have achieved in that time, despite the frequent diversions caused by amongst other things the Covid pandemic, which was hugely disruptive to normal business but the way in which the Welcome Volunteers responded and adapted to using the new cashless payment facilities was nothing short of magnificent.

For personal reasons, I decided not to apply for a role in the Museum restructure and my last day will be 10 May. This will provide me with the timely opportunity to support my daughter, Anabelle, who starts her GCSE exams the following week. We are looking forward to taking some time off to rest and recover over the remaining summer months!

So, I leave with some sadness of course, but with a great deal of pride, as I have said. During my time I have delivered so much, way too many things to begin listing, and made such a positive difference to the Museum service.

I have had the great pleasure of working very closely with the Welcome Volunteers and have always enjoyed meeting up with members of the Museum Society and visitors to the Museum over the years. With sincere best wishes to you all for the future and kindest regards



**Wendy-Jo**

Wendy-Jo Atter being presented with her ILM certificate by Kathy Fawcett Relationship Manager Museums Arts Council England at the SHARE conference

## Monthly Museum News

*Sign up to the museum's own monthly Email Newsletter*

In addition to the Museum website and social media platforms, there is a free monthly email Newsletter with all the details of forthcoming events, and work behind the scenes at the Museum.



**SAFFRON WALDEN**  
**MUSEUM**

Would you like monthly Museum news?

**Keep me posted**  
News and alerts by email

Rolling programme of exhibitions, activities and special events

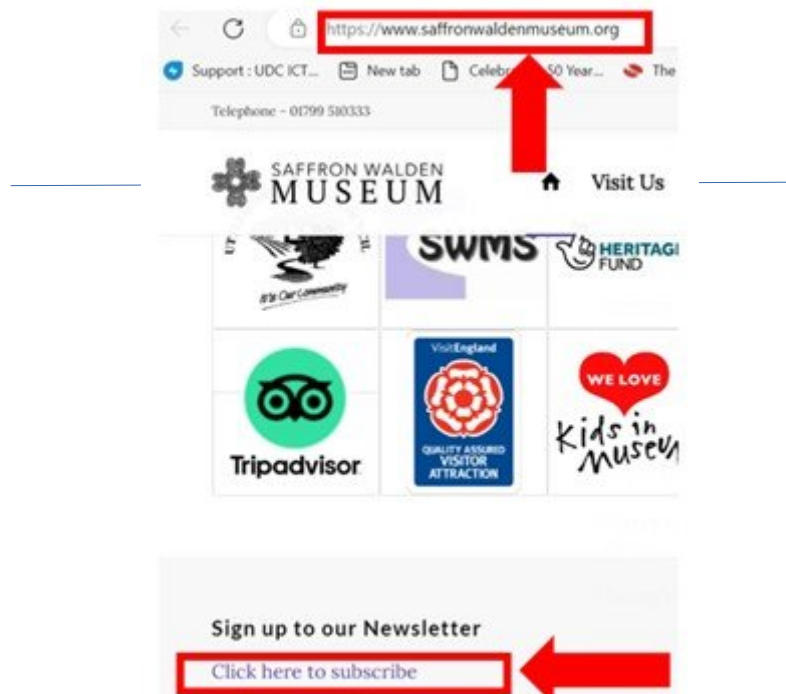
Please check website for current opening times and prices  
[www.saffronwaldenmuseum.org](http://www.saffronwaldenmuseum.org) | 01799 510333 | Museum Street, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1BN

The banner features a yellow header with the museum name, a central white box with a blue envelope icon and the text 'Keep me posted', and a photograph of an ancient Egyptian mummy on the right. Below the central box are social media icons for Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and others.

Subscribe to the newsletter:

[https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKUTTLESFORD/subscriber/new?category\\_id=UKUTTLESFORD\\_C11](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKUTTLESFORD/subscriber/new?category_id=UKUTTLESFORD_C11)

Or go to [Saffron Walden Museum](http://www.saffronwaldenmuseum.org) website and sign up using the link at the bottom of every page.



The screenshot shows the website <https://www.saffronwaldenmuseum.org> in a browser. A red box highlights the URL in the address bar, with a red arrow pointing to it. Below the header, there are logos for Saffron Walden Museum, SWMS, Heritagel Fund, TripAdvisor, Visit England, and Kids in Museum. At the bottom, a red box highlights the 'Click here to subscribe' link, with a red arrow pointing to it.

## Exhibitions:

### Plants: The Struggle for Survival March 30 - July 7

**E**xplore our relationship with plants that heal or harm, feed us or frustrate us, and uncover secrets of their survival over hundreds of millions of years.

Fossil fronds, Victorian collectors and modern roadsides - this is the story of Plants: The Struggle for Survival.



## Museum Society News

### Membership

#### Subscriptions and cards

**B**y now, you will have received the usual reminder that subscriptions for the year to 31 March 2025 are due on 1 April. The minimum subscription is £15 per person but any extra is very welcome and, as always, will be used very wisely.

Membership cards were sent out with these reminders. If you received notification by email, please remember to print and complete your own card to show when visiting the museum. In the absence of a membership card the desk volunteer may need to charge an entrance fee.

I keep a small stock of printed cards for members on email but without printers. If you would like one, please let me know.

#### Please keep in touch

The recent exercise to comply with Data Protection rules and ensure that our information is correct has thrown up several problems. In some cases where the email address had changed or ceased to be used, our emails were not 'bouncing back'. This meant that we had no means of knowing that information did not reach you. If you are one of the few who has not already done so please confirm your details, as requested.

Please also make sure that we are updated promptly when contact details have changed.

## New Membership Secretary

I am delighted that **Martin Dockrill** has volunteered to take over as Membership Secretary with effect from late April and has written the pen portrait below. I am sure that we all hope that he will enjoy being more involved in the Museum Society and meeting many members. It is good to know that I can leave Membership in a very capable pair of hands.

*Christine Sharpe*

Martin writes:-

**I** am an examiner in the financial services industry in which I have served in various positions within its professional bodies over the years, experience which I hope will benefit the society going forward. Thank you for the warm welcome.

My wife, Elaine, and I have lived in Saffron Walden for nearly thirty years and we have grown to love the area despite occasionally missing the mountains and refreshing spot of rain so prevalent in the North. To get over the lack of mountains, we therefore try to have as much time as we can in the Lake District, our favourite place for holidays, although recently we have found ourselves going there more for the restaurants, tea, cake and walks around the lake rather than climb the hill tops. To get over the absence of rain, well, I hope that you will agree that the recent winter's weather here in the East of England means that this is increasingly not been an issue.

This Easter, Elaine is finally retiring from being a Nurse so I am presently busy trying to arrange a party and trips with her and the boys, a task not helped by the fact Peter lives in Oxford while Adam lives in Manchester. Adam in particular has an interesting life working for a well known paint company. As part of his duties, however, involves helping arrange their adverts with an iconic sheep dog in family settings, I'm getting the feeling that he may be quickly be learning the meaning of the phrase "Never work with children and animals".

We plan this year to spend more helping the "Chatty Cafe" schemes as well as helping various cancer charities. Whatever happens though, we hope the reduction in work commitments will mean we can enjoy life and this great town we live in even more.

*Martin Dockrill*



## Membership

Membership subscription is a minimum of £15 a year and includes,

- Newsletters sent to members three times a year
- Unlimited free entry to the museum during opening hours – and children get in free, but Special Events may attract a charge
- A programme of evening talks with wide ranging subjects, currently delivered via Zoom during winter months and live during the other part of the year
- Private viewings before the opening of special exhibitions for you and your guest
- An Annual Winter Social Evening, with a museum quiz trail
- Annual General Meeting – Attend and vote; have your say in how the Museum Society is run.

## Social Media Administrator

**T**he Museum Society does have a Facebook page, and we would like to make more use of it to promote the Society and its activities, but we currently lack a dedicated administrator to keep it up to date. If you are a Facebook user and would like to help the Society by volunteering to take on this vital task, then please contact us by email at [SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com](mailto:SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com) and let us talk. In practice the number of updates will be fairly low, mainly aimed at the evening talks which are held through the year, and the occasional announcement.

## Reports on Talks

13 November 2023

**Slavery in Post-Roman Christian Gaul**

**A talk by James Burn**

**T**he end of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity transformed slavery, affecting practices of marriage and royal succession. James explained his PhD research into how, in Gaul, slaves became saints and queens.

15 January 2024, held on 'Zoom'

**Aspects of Tudor Hertfordshire,**

**A talk by Sarah Kerrison of Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies**

**T**he Hertfordshire Archives hold around 3 million records dating from the year 1060 onwards, and this uses about 7 miles of shelving. Sarah Kerrison used some of these records to cast light upon the life and times of Tudor Hertfordshire. This was a time of great change and upheaval, for example with religious conflict between protestant and catholic faiths, Also a time of increasing world exploration and trade, as well a golden age in art and literature. But frequent epidemics, and a background of tuberculosis and other diseases meant that the average life expectancy was only 35 years.

The records range from documents originating from the highest level, right through to the wills of individuals leaving practically nothing to beneficiaries. The Hertford Borough Charter dating from 1488 in the reign of Henry VII sets out the rights which the borough could claim in administration of its area, and affected people from the highest to the lowest in society. Later on in 1553 a charter of Edward VI to St Albans gave the right to elect a mayor and burgesses, and was the beginning of local government in the town. Other types of Royal Charter related to individuals and would in the reign of Henry VIII for example concern the grant of land, and in the reign of Queen Mary there is a record of Grant of Livery which conveyed holdings in property to a man upon the death of his father.

The 1577 Hertfordiae Comitatus is a map by Saxton, held in the archive, part of a mapping survey of all the English and Welsh Counties, in colour, and this shows the principal towns, villages and notable buildings, with the hills and river valleys, which set a standard for mapping that lasted until the mid eighteenth century. It shows 'Hartforde' and 'Strotforde' ; examples of many places whose spelling has changed.

Elizabeth I celebrated her accession at Hatfield House , and gave another Borough Charter to Hertford in 1588. Explorers brought wealth to the country in her reign, as evidenced by a commission granted to a George Clifford in 1597 to sail the Atlantic, privateering. He was born in 1558 and lived at Chenies near Rickmansworth, a very wealthy man but nonetheless his debts mounted and he turned to privateering to recoup his fortunes. He was not very successful, and lost ships to storms and disease.

The wills that people left cast light upon domestic life from the wealthy to the poor. William Cornard, who had been a Lord Mayor of London, left a will with an inventory in 1571 which lists all of his possessions and clothing, room by room in his house. But a John Jenkson, a poor cottager, left only a pair of stockings to his sister. Other surviving household records show the lifestyle of the wealthy, including accounts that show food consumption. Wills often left money to religious institutions, to nuns, to high altars of churches, to choirboys and even to hermits.

Pilgrimages were important to people in this age, and Hertford was on the pilgrim route from London to Walsingham. An inn at Ware had the famous Great Bed of Ware, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum which was so large it could sleep 12, and was probably designed as a curiosity to attract visitors.

Paris Registers began in this period as evidenced by the Stevenage register from 1538, and with more after the 1550's, which record baptisms and deaths showing population changes. Parishes had responsibility under the Poor Law Acts to provide a workhouse, and the accounts from Sandridge in 1602 show payments to the poor, and money left in wills to the poor

**5 February 2024, held on 'Zoom' –  
Britain with Betjeman,  
Speaker; John Vigar**

**J**ohn Betjeman was born in London in 1906, to a prosperous family, who ran a very successful business making the high quality small wooden boxes known as a 'Tantalus', to hold decanters of wine and spirits; very popular in that age. John Vigar recounted Betjeman's life, illustrated by reference to buildings that had been important to him, and had shaped his life and career. While studying at Oxford his love of architecture blossomed, in particular the Radcliffe Camera building of classical style which was disliked by many as it clashed with the medieval style of the colleges, but Betjeman championed that building and possibly saved it from being removed. He liked buildings that showed good design in the sense of being shaped by the way that they were used by the people who inhabited them. In contrast to the approach of Pevsner who viewed them from an artistic point of view, Betjeman was more interested in how they fitted into the landscape, and peoples' lives, for example churches and manor houses which were a key part of the community.

His most famous campaign was to save St.Pancras Station Hotel from demolition, and of course a statue to Betjeman can be seen there now, though his favourite station was London Liverpool Street, where he spent his honeymoon.

[ N.B. Betjeman's 1974 BBC TV programme, dating from the time when he was Poet Laureate, ' A Passion for Churches' can be viewed on You Tube here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkqY-MBPTR8> , Ed ]

He wrote the series of books, 'Shell Guides' for the Shell Oil company, to encourage car owners to drive and visit places, the Shell Guide to Cornwall was his first in the series which ran for 30 years.

Horrified by the abandonment of churches Betjeman founded the society, 'Friends of Friendless Churches', of which John Vigar is a Trustee, and this continues to support churches which have been deconsecrated. The church at Farnborough Berkshire, close to the house where Betjeman lived, has stained glass windows by Piper, which attract thousands of visitors each year and their donations maintain the building.

John Vigar encourages people to learn about the life of John Betjeman by visiting the buildings that he thought were important.

TM

**11 March 2024, held on 'Zoom'  
Nursing through shot and shell: medical women at the Front.  
Speaker; Dr. Vivien Newman**

**D**r. Newman began her talk by pointing out the current war in Ukraine and how that has drawn medical staff from many other countries to help with casualties, and the same thing happened in World War 1. Her researches have found written records from women who served in that war, leaving their diaries and letters to record their experiences. The first party of nurses were involved in the retreat from Mons on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1914 at the beginning of the war when wounded soldiers were evacuated in railway wagons, 9 soldiers and 2 nurses to each wagon, laying on straw with no dressings available. One woman recorded a 42 hour long journey, making tea in cans with hot water from the locomotive. In trains with non-corridor coaches nurses clambered from coach to coach along the outside running boards. Eventually proper ambulance trains were built with corridor connections and racking to support stretchers. There were also 7 hospital ships, which were used to evacuate the wounded back to the UK, and at the battle of Jutland in 1916 were placed offshore before the battle ready to receive casualties.

As well as nurses from official organisations there were also volunteers from Britain who formed their own organisations; many saw it as furthering the women's suffrage cause. Many of those volunteers went to Serbia, an ally of Britain, where they served in very primitive conditions rife with typhus, which killed nurses as well as the patients.

The Sydney Morning Herald reported in 1916 that 150 women volunteered to the Army Nursing Service, and in the period 1914-1919 a total of 2562 Australian nurses served in all theatres of the war.

The Scottish Women's Hospital Unit served in Russia, travelling there by sea, avoiding German submarines, and were welcomed at the Russian port. They then travelled on to Rumania, the headquarters of the Serbian Army ,

an 18 day trip from the Arctic Ocean by train. They were inundated by wounded soldiers, and there were only 7 doctors for 11,000 wounded. Air raids and bombs were a daily hazard. The diaries are often upbeat in tone, but there was also clearly an emotional effect upon them, due to the horror and trauma that they had experienced. Known as shell-shock in those times, today we would call it Post Traumatic Shock Syndrome. Throughout that war there were 24,000 organised serving nurses, together with many thousands of volunteers.

There is a website with further information at [firstworldwarwomen.co.uk](http://firstworldwarwomen.co.uk)

TM

## A Recorder for our Talks is still needed.

Whilst your Editor has gallantly stepped into the breach to provide some notes of the talks that the Society organises, we still lack a dedicated Recorder to provide this useful record of proceedings. It would be good if someone would step forward and take a few notes during the talks, so that your Editor's task of producing this Newsletter may be made a little easier.

Please email : [SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com](mailto:SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com)

**Tony Morton**

## Who to contact ...

### Museum Society

Donations/legacies: Christine Sharpe 01799 527546

Membership: Christine Sharpe 01799 527546

Newsletter: Tony Morton 01799 523489

Talks arranger: Paul Salvidge 01279 814153

General email contact address : [SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com](mailto:SaffronWaldenMS@gmail.com)

### Museum

Jenny Oxley, Interim Curator and Human History Collections ( [joxley@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:joxley@uttlesford.gov.uk) )

Wendy-Jo Atter, Museum Admin Officer ( [watter@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:watter@uttlesford.gov.uk) )

Sarah Kenyon, Natural Sciences ( [skenyon@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:skenyon@uttlesford.gov.uk) )

Charlotte Pratt, Education and Outreach Officer ( [cpratt@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:cpratt@uttlesford.gov.uk) )

James Lumbard, Natural Sciences ( [jlumbard@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:jlumbard@uttlesford.gov.uk) )

Stefan Shambrook, Security & Premises Officer ( [sshambrook@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:sshambrook@uttlesford.gov.uk) )

Telephone numbers:

Museum 01799 510333

Shirehill 01799 510631

General email contact : [museum@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:museum@uttlesford.gov.uk)

Saffron Walden Museum Society Limited

Museum Street

Saffron Walden, CB10 1JL

Telephone: 01799 510333

Company Registration no: 06469141 Charity no: 1123209



### Museum Society e-mail address

[saffronwaldenms@gmail.com](mailto:saffronwaldenms@gmail.com)

### Museum Society web site

[www.swmuseumsoc.org.uk](http://www.swmuseumsoc.org.uk)