

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF MEETING 12th JUNE 2013

MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	Chris Bush	Mike Rea
David Verlander	Vic Dowsett	Jan Wescott
Valerie Austin	Tim Snow	Margaret Rea
Avril Braidwood	Janet Tulley	Brian Tulley
Christine Hall	Colin Smith	Caryl Benner
Keith Merrifield	Pam Merrifield	Dorothy Dorman
Jean Platt	Joan Beeston	Margaret Shaw
Moyra Jackson	Roger Clark	Phyllis Clark
Ian Jackson	D. Hackett	

Apologies:

Gordon Barker	Paul & Heather Salvidge	Gordon & Ruth Fulton
Lillian Adams	Carol Wylde	Eileen Kay
Kevin Wood		

1. The Deputy Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present as well as Mr Fred Feather, our guest speaker for the evening.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 6th March 2013

No amendments were offered so the minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Guest Speaker – Mr Fred Feather

Fred Feather, a founder curator of the Essex Police Museum came along to give a talk entitled “Arsenic and Olde Essex”. This proved to be an amusing and interesting talk about poisonings in the Victorian era after the formation of the Essex Constabulary in 1840. Fred told us that the first head of the Essex Police was an ex Coastguard officer known as Captain McHardy. As he was promoted, he kept his nautical ranking finally leaving the force forty years later as an Admiral.

Fred's account focussed on the doings of one Arsenic Sally from Clavering. Sarah Chesham was tried for poisoning a child and later, her own two children; she was acquitted both times. The story however spread and Mary May of Wix near Harwich was "inspired" to poison her husband. She was not so lucky however. The court found her guilty and she was executed at the hand of William Calcraft, the then hangman.

A year or so later, Sarah's husband died of what was shown to be slow poisoning by arsenic. Although it couldn't be proved she had murdered her husband, she was tried for attempted murder and found guilty and executed by the same William Calcraft.

Among other snippets, we learnt that originally, uniforms could be any colour at the whim of the force commander. It was only some years later that all uniforms became blue after the public complained that some policemen could be mistaken for soldiers. Also, we learnt that the 1824 Vagrancy Act still has its uses today.

5. Open Forum and Any Other Business

5.1 Visits

Having spoken to the Chelmsford Police Museum, it is proposed that we visit on Saturday 22nd June. The Museum is open from 10am to 4pm and entrance is free. Would anyone who would like to visit on that day please let the Secretary know so that the museum can be advised of numbers

5.2 A Short History of Elsenham School

Mike Rea advised that this month celebrates the 150th Anniversary of Elsenham School on its present site and to mark the occasion, the School will be having a day of celebration on 12th July. To coincide with these celebrations, the Society has produced a Short History of Elsenham School that will be published on the same day. It will cost five pounds and members are invited to add their names to the reservation list if they would like a copy fresh from the press.

The bulk of the book has been written by Heather Salvidge with contributions from several old pupils and staff. Although absent this evening, the Society would like to offer a vote of thanks to Heather for the hard work she has put in over the last six months.

5.3 Gordon Barker Slide Show

Gordon is intending to present a slide show on 18th October in the Village Hall. Covering the history of Elsenham in 100 slides, many of which have never been seen before, Gordon promises a show full of interest with much to be learned. Tickets will be available in September from Robin Barker, the Post Office and Poppins.

5.4 Memorial Chapel

Mike Rea reported that work has started on the Chapel and is expected to take two to three weeks.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday September 11th at 8pm when there will be a talk by Peter Paye on the history of the Saffron Walden Branch Railway.

Speakers have just been booked for our November 6th meeting. Pat & Steve Schorah from the Dunmow Maltings and Museum will be here to talk about the Dunmow Flich.

ENDS