

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF MEETING 11th JUNE 2014

MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	Paul Salvidge	Chris Bush
Heather Salvidge	Jean Beeston	David Verlander
Valerie Austin	Carol Benner	John Segar
Ian Beeston	Dorothy Dorman	Avril Braidwood
Christine Hall	Colin Smith	Vic Dowsett
Brian Tulley	Janet Tulley	Tony Eatson
Jean Platt	Moyra Jackson	

Apologies:

Eileen Kay	Mike Rea	Margaret Rea
Gordon Fulton	Ruth Fulton	Tim Snow
Keith Merrifield	Pam Merrifield	Kevin Wood
Sue Johnson		

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present as well as Ms Sarah Doig, our guest speaker for the evening.

It was reported that Jan Westcott had resigned from the Society.

The Chairman continued by asking for a minutes silence to remember Colin Clarke who passed away in April

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2. **Minutes of the Last Meeting 5th March 2014**

Your Secretary apologised in absentia for mistaking Roger Clarke for Roger Taylor under item 6.5. It was of course, Roger Clarke who asked the question.

The minutes were then signed by the Chairman.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. Guest Speaker Ms Sarah Doig

The chairman introduced Ms Sarah Doig who gave a very interesting and informative illustrated talk. Although having a degree in Music and also having worked in the Foreign Office, Sarah as well as giving talks now spends most of her time as a researcher into family history.

The title of the talk "There is no such thing as a good tax" is a quote from Winston Churchill. Sarah spoke about taxes that were levied from the 11th Century until the 18th Century and said that taxes were mostly levied when the country or King at the time was in need of money. The Domesday Book in 1086 although not a tax but a census, gave William the Conqueror a detailed account of spread of the wealth within the country. Throughout the Middle Ages various taxes were imposed, perhaps the most well-known and notorious was the Poll Tax introduced in 1377 by Richard II that led to the Peasants Revolt.

Sarah then went on to speak about other well-known taxes, such as the Hearth Tax when people were taxed on the number of Hearths in the home, this tax and a tax on Chimneys did not last long. Probably even more well-known and the one that lasted far longer was the Window Tax. It was unpopular not only because people were taxed on the number of windows in their home but because it cut out the light and air. Apparently it was not unusual for the windows to be blocked up for the inspectors and unblocked after they had left.

One of the shortest lived taxes was the "Sheep Tax" 1549-1550 when all the sheep had to be counted. Perhaps too many people fell asleep!. A Brick Tax was introduced in order to help pay for the army during the American War of Independence. However, once again people found a way to avoid paying too much in taxes by making bricks larger and, if you look carefully at some older buildings, you may notice a difference in brick sizes. Another example showing how paying too much tax was avoided was when the "Glass Tax" was introduced. Glass was taxed on weight and therefore much finer glass began to be made. These glasses were known as "Excise Glasses" and led to the Waterford Glass Company being established in Ireland.

Although the whole population were taxed, the poor would always find it hardest to survive but for obvious reasons it was the wealthy who were most heavily taxed. Taxes such as the Game Tax, The Horse Tax, The Wallpaper Tax, and perhaps the strangest of all, the Hair Powder Tax were all introduced. Hair Powder Tax a particularly expensive tax lasted from 1795 until 1869. The fashionable powdered hairstyles at that time soon went out of fashion. The longest lasting tax was the Land Tax which was only abolished in 1963 after 300 years. Sometimes taxes discriminated against certain groups, for instance Catholics may have been charged double.

Sarah told us that many of these records are to be found at various record offices throughout the country as well as at Kew. She herself concentrated on Suffolk where she now lives. These records will often give details of families or an individual living in a particular area, and can be a valuable source of information for people researching their family history as it is difficult to find information before the 1841 census.

5. Open Forum and Any Other Business

5.1 “For the Duration – Elsenham in Conflict”

A mock-up of the book has been produced and Avril Braidwood said that the book “For the Duration-Elsenham in Conflict” although ready for publication in August, was still work in progress.. The cost will be eight pounds and anyone who wants to pre-order a copy can put their name down tonight or order via the website.

5.2 Clavering Day School 2014

This year’s Clavering Day School will take place on Saturday 25th October 2014. Always an interesting and informative day, this year’s subject is Designed Landscapes and several speakers have agreed to present including Dr Tom Williamson, Anne Rowe and Alison Moller. The cost will be around £10 and anyone wishing to go please contact the EVHS Secretary who will arrange a group booking.

5.3 Village Fete

We will have a stand at the Fete this year situated in the Marquee where we will have what we hope is an interesting display including a working demonstration of the Society Website.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 10th September at 8pm when Mr Tony Kirby will present Railways in the Essex Landscape, a talk about how the coming of the railways affected the Essex landscape and something of their architecture.

Looking further ahead to 4th March next year, Dr Richard Nunn, late of Elsenham Surgery, has agreed to give a talk about the story of General Practice entitled It’s A Doc’s Life!

ENDS