

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF MEETING 09th SEPTEMBER 2015
MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	David Verlander Deputy Chairman	Paul Salvidge
Heather Salvidge Godfrey Hall	Mike Rea Campbell Dunn	Margaret Rea Lynda Dunn
Jean Beeston Christine Hall	Ian Beeston Valerie Austin	Colin Smith Caryl Benner
Brian Tulley Roger Clark	Janet Tulley Phyllis Clark	Kevin Wood Dorothy Dorman
Stuart Pimblett	Graham Morland	

Apologies:

Chris Bush	Sue Johnson	Jean Platt
Trevor Hackett	Do Hackett	Margaret Shaw
John Segar		

It was noted that John Segar has suffered a small stroke and is recovering in hospital where Lyn reported that he was making very good progress. All of us in the Society send our best wishes to John for a speedy recovery.

The Society welcomes our new member Godfrey Hall.

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present and our special guest for the evening Jean Reay.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 10th June 2015

Valerie Austin noted that the photo album she was credited with donating had in fact come from Elizabeth Barker, Valerie was just acting as postman!

The minutes were then signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

There were no other matters arising from the minutes.

4. Ugley Hall Farm in the 1950's

Some while ago the society was donated a DVD of 8mm cine film shot on Ugley Hall Farm in the 1950's. The film was made by Jean Reay's Mother and depicts a year in the life of the farm and all the activities that involves. We are very grateful to Jean for the gift of this valuable archive material and are very pleased to welcome her here this evening.

Unfortunately it is not possible to date the film any better but it does give a vivid portrait of the farming year at that time. Whilst primarily agricultural, the Reays milked 80 – 100 cows until 1977. Nowadays they keep store cattle giving an income from beef and manure for crops. The Reay family came originally from Cumberland and arrived at Ugley Hall Farm in 1935 via living in Warwickshire. They could not afford to buy the Hall itself but lived in the "cottage" in the yard.

The film commenced with a general view of the Farmhouse and yard before moving on to show fields being ploughed before harrowing and planting the seed. It was noted that many of the tractors seen in the film were still in the "shed" mostly non-working but one, the small John Deere had recently been restored to working order. The farm was mainly agricultural but dairy cattle were kept for milking so there are scenes of silage being made for feed and also haymaking.

Hedley Reay, the farm owner and Jean's Father was always very go ahead in his outlook and he was one of the first to adopt the Combine Harvester. An early machine, a Massey-Harris is seen on the film. With special permission of the War Office, this machine was bought from Canada around 1944 and shipped to the farm as a kit of parts where it was assembled on site. About the same time the farm acquired a corn drier which paid for itself in the first year because as well as drying their own corn, the Hedley's dried corn for all the surrounding farmers.

One thing that is evident from the film is how labour intensive farming was then. The farm employed around twenty men full time but seasonal labour was also bought in when required. Amongst these were the potato pickers – the farm was nothing if not diverse! After the lifter had been through the pickers moved in. It was said that a very good picker could earn £100 in a week, a great deal of money then. Given that a picker was paid a shilling (5p) a bag, that was 2000 bags filled in a week and at 28lbs a bag that added up to an awful lot of hard work. The "champion" picker at the time was Norah Cowell, now in her nineties and still living in the neighbourhood.

The film concludes with scenes of snow clearing. On this occasion, the snow had been cleared from around the Hillman motor car belonging to a Mr Samuelson leaving it high and dry on an island of snow. Mr Samuelson had to wait for the thaw before he could rescue his car.

5. Open Forum and Any Other Business

5.1 Clavering Study Day

This year's Study day takes place on 14th November and has the subject "Churches and Chapels – A Thousand Years of History". As usual, there are two very good speakers and it promises to be another worthwhile day. If you would like to come along, please let your Secretary know and I will add you to the list.

5.2 Newport Local History Group

On Thursday 17th September, Newport LHG will be hosting a talk by Peter Turrall on "The History of Marconi".

5.3 St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival 2015

We have been asked to provide a tree for this year's festival, so if anyone would like to volunteer to give me a hand preparing same I would be pleased to hear from you.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday November 11th. Mr Richard Priestley, former Headmaster of Newport School will be here to give a talk about the School and its history.

ENDS