

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF MEETING 9th November 2016

MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	Paul Salvidge	Heather Salvidge
Dave Verlander	Mike Rea	Margaret Rea
Chris Bush	Diane Bush	Moyra Jackson
Ian Jackson	Keith Merrifield	Pamela Merrifield
Sue Tyler	Mike Tyler	Tony Eatson
Gloria Eatson	Valerie Austin	Kevin Wood
Jean Beeston	Penny Lee	B Pether
Brian Tulley	Janet Tulley	Vic Dowsett
Verity Ladds	Tim Snow	Avril Braidwood
Campbell Dunn	Lynda Dunn	Norma Eardley
Anne Player	Patricia Holyomes	Teri Williams
Christine Hall	Allan Hathaway	Gill Hathaway
Carol Wylde	Caryl Benner	Jan Rickwood
Roger Clark	Phyllis Clark	Sue Beeston
John Beeston	Kate Hilditch	

Apologies:

Margaret Shaw	Colin Smith	Jean Platt
Ian Beeston	Gordon Fulton	Ruth Fulton

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present and Moyra Jackson and Avril Braidwood, our guest speakers for the evening.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 7th September 2016

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Election For Committee vacancy

MR advised the audience that Gordon Fulton had resigned from the Committee leaving a vacancy. Gordon has been on the Committee since 2012 and as well as his work for the Society had been one of the principal researchers and authors of For The Duration, the story of Elsenham's War Dead.

Invitations were extended to fill the vacant committee post. After only a little persuasion, Avril Braidwood volunteered and was formally proposed by Chris Bush. Carol Wylde seconded and Avril was unanimously elected to the Committee.

5. Guest Speakers Moyra Jackson and Avril Braidwood

The Chairman introduced Moyra and Avril who proceeded to tell the tale of the Elsenham WI and the wider organisation.

Avril introduced the talk by telling how the WI was started in Stoney Creek Ontario, Canada by Adelaide Hoodless as a self-help group to educate and support women. The WI came to the UK during WW1 and the first meeting was held in December 1915 at Llanfair PG (the unpronounceable one) on the Isle of Anglesey with the aim to revitalise the rural community and encourage women to become more involved in the production of food to support the war effort.

The WI came to Elsenham in 1921 and the first meeting was held on 9th November in the School, exactly 95 years ago today. Attended by 37 members, Miss L. Orpen was elected President and Secretary was Miss Graham. Subscription for a year was 2 shillings (10p) and a cup of tea at Refreshment time was 2 pennies (less than 1p). At that time Elsenham was a small village of some 400 residents. The Reverend Sant presided solely, at St Marys and there were around 115 pupils in the School, although in the early 1920s 75 children were ill with Scarlet Fever and the School had to be shut for a week. There was no electricity and roads were very poor or unmade.

In 1926, the Elsenham WI was asked to provide tea and cakes for the Village Flower show, again, starting a tradition that is unbroken to this day.

Over the years, WI meetings moved from the Old Village Hall long demolished, then to the Village Hall attached to the school and finally to the Memorial Hall about 2005/6.

Avril then concluded her part of the talk by recreating, with the help of a number of WI members, a typical meeting from those early days using information from old minutes. The playlet was very entertaining but served to bring home the priorities of that time. It was illuminating to note that the best use of £3.19s at that time was to buy a chimney sweeping brush!

Moyra took over at this point to bring the story up to date explaining that many branches formed choirs and it was usual to start a meeting in the early days by singing Oh God Our Help in Ages Past concluding with the National Anthem.

In 1924 a special arrangement for the WI of Hubert Parry's setting of Jerusalem was prepared by Sir Walter Davies as this hymn, with its association with the fight for women's suffrage, was considered appropriate for the emerging movement. It is sung regularly at WI meetings including Elsenham's but has never been officially adopted.

The WI has been involved in many campaigns over the years, some that have been adopted nationally have led to changes in the law of the land. Much local campaigning has also gone on, better roads and better lighting are recurring themes but bus timetables, telephone boxes and crossing patrols have also featured.

Membership is now approaching seventy a near record and the branch has a regular programme of speakers on a wide variety of subjects and is proud to say that it has never closed in its 95 years.

Moyra illustrated her talk with contemporary photographs which she has kindly agreed to share with us for the Society archive.

After a question and answer session the ladies of the WI provided tea, coffee and cakes for which EVHS members were most grateful.

6. Open Forum and Any Other Business

6.1 Clavering Study Day

Five members of the Society are going to this year's Study day on 19th November that will feature the Landscape Art of East Anglia. Anyone else who wanted to go was asked to let the Secretary know so he could make the arrangements.

6.2 Memorial Chapel Update

The first stage application had been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund and an acknowledgement received. We were now waiting to see whether we would get approval to go forward to the next stage.

6.3 Broom Farm Book

The book on Broom farm has proved very successful and we have sold around forty copies. Copies were on sale if anyone had not yet got their copy.

6.4 Christmas Tree Festival

The Society will again be entering a tree for the St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival. This year's theme is to be finalised but Jean Beeston will be leading the effort so if anyone wants to help please let Jean or your Secretary know.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting and AGM will be on Wednesday 8th March 2017 when Richard Priestley will return to present his talk "The Last Days of Pompeii".

ENDS