

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF MEETING 08th November 2017

MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	Paul Salvidge	David Verlander
Heather Salvidge	Mike Rea	Margaret Rea
Chris Bush	Diane Bush	Avril Braidwood
Roger Clark	Phyllis Clark	Valerie Austin
Campbell Dunn	Lynda Dunn	Jean Platt
Anne White	Tony White	Carol Wylde
Jean Beeston	Ian Beeston	Vic Dowsett
Ray Gaubert	Nina Gaubert	Tricia Holyomes
Ann Player	Tony Bailey	Jackie Bailey
Christine Hall	Sue Beeston	Teri Williams
Jan Rickwood	Mike Tyler	Sue Tyler
Darren Stone	Trevor Hackett	Do Hackett

Apologies:

Caryl Benner	Sue Johnson	Kevin Wood
Tim Snow	Margaret Shaw	Colin Smith
Keith Merrifield	Pam Merrifield	Graham Morland
Moyra Jackson	Gloria Eatson	

It is with sadness we report that Janet Tulley has passed away. Our condolences go to Brian and the Family

We welcome Mike & Sue Tyler and Jan Rickwood as new members.

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present and Bill Hardy, our guest speaker for the evening.
2. **Minutes of the Last Meeting 13th September 2017**

The Secretary noted that the date of the last meeting in para. 2 was incorrect and should have read 14th June 2017. The minutes were corrected and then accepted and signed off by the Chairman.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Guest Speaker Mr Bill Hardy

The Chairman introduced Bill Hardy who was returning to give his talk about the Bishops Stortford Union. Before starting Bill took a few minutes to thank those who had passed on information about the location of Carpenter's marks in local buildings and a very brief overview of where his latest researches had taken him.

So, the Bishops Stortford Workhouse Union. In 1601 the Elizabethan Poor Law bought workhouses into being by levying a rate on every Parish who were required in return to provide a workhouse where the poor could be set to work in exchange for board and lodging. In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed that sought to consolidate the somewhat piecemeal delivery of the original law. Parishes were grouped together to form a Union which was financed by selling all the existing workhouses within the group. The Bishops Stortford Union covered the area from Brent Pelham in the North to Sawbridgeworth in the South. The Eastern boundary was Braughing and Elsenham formed the Western side.

The Bishops Stortford Workhouse was built in Haymeads Lane in 1836/37 based on the Hexagonal Plan workhouse developed by W T Nash. As well as dormitories for the inmates, within its walls were housed the workrooms, kitchen, dining room and chapel, laundry, hospital ward, a piggery and attendant slaughterhouse together with accommodation for the Master and staff. The idea was that the workhouse should be self-sufficient. The cost was £9137.00s .00d with an additional £23:5s:00d added for a bell tower "to summon the paupers to their meals".

As well as the Master, there was a Chaplain, Medical Officer, Matron and her assistant, a Nurse, Schoolmaster and Schoolmistress as well as a School Attendance Officer. To finance their wages and ongoing running costs the Union was allowed to levy a rate on the Parish and in 1841 this was set at 9d rising to a shilling (5p) in 1848.

The daily routine started at 6am and ended at 6pm. During the day time was allotted for Prayers, Bible reading, Religious Instruction, Reading, writing and Arithmetic, Singing, Recreation and of course work all slotted around three meals a day.

The workhouse became an infirmary in 1900 when the Poor Law was repealed and during the first World War was used as a troop hospital. Across the road was the infectious diseases annex. In 1926 it became a Public Assistance Institution and was enlarged during the Second World War.

In recent times the workhouse has been sold and turned into luxury flats although the original architecture is still very evident.

Most of the information we have about the Union is due to a National Lottery funded project that was the brainchild of Dr Paul Carter at the National Archives. In 2008 he initiated a project to digitise and edit local workhouses correspondence. Bishops Stortford was one of a sample of twenty workhouses that were chosen for research. Four thousand documents were scanned and edited and put on the National archives website where they can be accessed.

The majority of the documents were mundane office documents, routine reports and accounts however there were a few other, more interesting papers detailing such things as arguments with the local Vicar and complaints regarding late payments. Other interesting documents gave details of those who were transported for wrongdoings to such places as Van Diemens Land (Tasmania), Australia, Bermuda and the Americas.

There were a very few documents relating to the Elsenham Poorhouse. Situated in Robin Hood Road, the poorhouse was built on a parcel of land left by John Wells in 1656 together with 'certain cottages' which today are known as Wells Cottages. It was subsequently sold in 1836/37 to finance the Bishops Stortford Union as dictated by the act of 1834. What letters there are mainly concern queries from George Rush, the then Lord of the Manor, about the cost of chancel repairs to the Church that were paid from a tithe on the workhouse.

That concluded the talk and was followed by a question and answer session.

5. Open Forum and Any Other Business

5.1 Clavering Art History Day

This is the last call for anyone who would like to attend the Art History Day as bookings close on Friday 10th. Members wishing to attend should let the Secretary know this evening if they would like to go.

5.2 St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival

We will be providing a tree for the Festival again this year and our thanks go to Jean and Ian Beeston who are doing the decoration. It is believed that this year the tree will be illuminated!

5.3 The Local Heritage List

The Local Heritage List is being compiled to recognise and celebrate important buildings and structures that make a contribution to the District, which will include those within and outside of the Conservation Areas. This list will inform future planning applications and ensure such assets are given due regard in the planning process. Though local listing does not prevent change or development, it can be viewed as a material consideration in planning applications. It is administered by the Conservation Office at Uttlesford District Council.

We would suggest that the Memorial Chapel, Lychgate and Pump House would be suitable candidates as well as the original School building and Old Post Office.

If members have any ideas for other buildings in the Village that should be included please get in touch.

5.4 General Records Office

It was noted that the General Records Office is again piloting a scheme whereby researchers can order birth and death records as a PDF file. The digital records are available to order via the GRO website from 12 October for period of three months at a cost of £6 each. This compares to £9.25 for a print certificate or £23.40 for a priority order. The scheme applies to birth certificates from 1837 to 1916 and death certificates from 1837 to 1957.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday March 14th at 8pm when Dr Herbert Eiden will be speaking about "Holidaying At The Seaside".

ENDS