

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF MEETING 14th June 2017

MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Ray Franklin Chairman | Paul Salvidge | David Verlander |
| Heather Salvidge | Mike Rea | Margaret Rea |
| Roger Clark | Phyllis Clark | Valerie Austin |
| Campbell Dunn | Teri Williams | Tricia Holyomes |
| Kevin Wood | Tim Snow | Margaret Shaw |
| Jean Beeston | Ian Beeston | Colin Smith |
| Jean Platt | Vic Dowsett | Anthony White |
| Anne White | | |

Apologies:

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Ray Gaubert | Nina Gaubert | Keith Merrifield |
| Pam Merrifield | Moyra Jackson | Ian Jackson |
| Caryl Benner | Carol Wylde | Sue Johnson |
| Chris Bush | Diane Bush | Avril Braidwood |
| Lynda Dunn | Brian Tulley | Janet Tulley |
| Ann Player | | |

We welcome Anthony and Anne White as new members.

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present and Ms Carolyn Wingfield, our guest speaker for the evening.

2. **Minutes of the Last Meeting 9th March 2017**

The Secretary apologised for a faux pas dating the last set of minutes. The meeting was held on 9th March **2017**, not 2016 as stated; and the previous meeting referenced in Para. 2 was held on 9th November **2016**, not 2015.

3. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

4. Guest Speaker Ms Carolyn Wingfield

The Chairman welcomed Carolyn Wingfield, Curator of the Saffron Walden Museum our speaker for the evening. Carolyn commenced her talk by explaining that despite its name, the Museum covers finds throughout North West Essex or Uttlesford as it is now known. The Museum was founded by the Saffron Walden Natural History Society and opened its doors in 1835 in a building leased from the then Lord Braybrooke at a peppercorn rent, and is situated within the bailey of Saffron Walden Castle.

Prominent families associated with the Museum in the early days were the Gibsons of Gibson, Tuke and Gibson Bank, a forerunner of Barclays, and John Player of the cigarette family, indeed in 1945 the then John Player donated the building to the Museum. The first catalogue of 1845 showed that the Museum was keen to bring in objects from all over the world as well as those more local. There were very many stuffed animals particularly from Africa but by the 1960s much of this taxidermy was beyond its best and had to be disposed of.

Today the collection covers six main areas as follows:

Minerals, Rocks and Fossils

Natural History

Archaeology (currently 45,000 items and growing – rapidly)

Local & Social History

Decorative Arts

World Cultures.

The collection totals some 155,000 items

The unofficial mascot of the Museum is Wallace the Lion. Born in 1812 in Edinburgh, Wallace was the first African lion to be bred in the UK and was a star of George Wombwell's nineteenth-century travelling menagerie of exotic beasts and birds. In 1825, for a bet, Wallace was matched against six dogs in a fight. The dogs were set on the lion in pairs however, each dog lasted less than a minute before being killed. Wallace toured the country until his death in 1838 when his skin was sent to the Museum by stagecoach. Mr Wombwell had been born near Saffron Walden and wanted Wallace to go to the Museum for stuffing and display

Carolyn showed some slides of some of the more notable and interesting objects in the collection including a damask travelling cloak made for a high born Chinese lady in 1880. In the 1920s further decoration was added to the cloak to turn it into party wear.

She also showed some slides of the extensive collection of 17th century English, Dutch and Venetian glassware as well as modern Polish.

Carolyn then showed some items with an Elsenham connection. The first of these was a sampler stitched by Eleanor Mascall part of the extensive Victorian textiles collection. Eleanor lived at the Crown Inn (where Thomas Mascall (her father?) was the landlord from 1874 to 1908). The second item was the first television set in Elsenham bought by Gordon Barker's Father in 1948 and donated by Gordon. Carolyn also drew our attention to the wedding dress worn by Mary Whitley in 1950. Married in Whittlesford, she then moved to Elsenham with her new husband.

Over the last twenty years since the advent of the Treasure Act, Carolyn explained how the Museum had been able to acquire a number of "antiquities" – gold or silver items more than three hundred years old. These have been found by field walkers and detectorists having been exposed by modern intensive ploughing. The most famous of these are the North West Essex Signet Ring and the Finglesham Buckle.

As an aside Carolyn noted that boxes and boxes of archaeology were coming to the Museum from archaeological surveys carried out prior to building works starting on the many new developments in the area.

The Museum can only display a small part of its collection at any one time and has many artefacts kept off-site store. They are fortunate to have just moved into a new store where items can be kept in much better conditions and can be more easily available to researchers.

Looking to the future, the museum wants to make its collections more accessible so the plan is to catalogue everything on computer and make it searchable on line. This will allow the main galleries to be better arranged and individual items better displayed. In the longer term, the ambition is to extend the building with a new entrance and a 'special exhibitions' area.

Allied to the Museum is Saffron Walden Castle which has recently seen a major conservation effort that it is hoped will allow it to be opened to the public by the end of the year.

Carolyn concluded her talk by taking questions from the floor.

5. Open Forum and Any Other Business

5.1 Gardens of Easton Lodge Open Day

Easton Lodge will be holding an open day on July 23rd dedicated to celebrating and remembering their WWII history. The gardens lie in the heart of the estate where there was an airfield in WWII. Built in 1942/3 it hosted the USAAF 386th Bomber Group and latterly 190 and 620 squadrons RAF. Entrance is £4 per adult but no charge for children.

5.2 Robin Hood PH Elsenham

Mike Rea reminded those present that we have recently published a short history of the Robin Hood Public House. Costing just three pounds, copies were on sale at the meeting and may be ordered from the website.

5.3 Essex Records Office

The Essex Records office has recently changed the pattern of it's opening hours and the large car park nearby is now a building site. Heather Salvidge has very kindly translated these changes and the parking arrangements into a very useful document which your Secretary will distribute with these minutes. [\(See Below\)](#)

6. Date of Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday September 13th at 8pm when Roger Clark will be telling the 900 year story of St Mary's, Elsenham.

The meeting concluded at this point to allow members and visitors to inspect the display of local finds that Ms Wingfield had bought along to illustrate her talk.

ENDS

Essex Record Office Changes to Visiting Hours & Parking

Opening Hours for the search room have changed and the car park is closed for development. There are 3 parking spaces for people with disabilities at the front of the building. Parking is on a 'first come first served' basis. Next door to the building there is a car park with additional spaces for users with disabilities. For other parking, see below.

Opening hours are now somewhat irregular with one 'long week' per calendar month (approximately) having longer hours than others, see below.

| <u>Long Week</u> | | <u>Shorter Weeks</u> | |
|------------------|------------|----------------------|--------|
| Mon | Closed | Mon | Closed |
| Tues | 10am – 8pm | Tuesday |) |
| Wed | 10am – 5pm | Wed |) |
| Thur | 10am – 5pm | Thurs |) |
| Fri | 9am – 4pm | Fri | Closed |
| Sat | 9am – 4pm | Sat | Closed |

Long weeks are -

June 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 27,28,29,30.

July 1st and 27, 28,29,30

Aug 22,23,24,25 26

Sept 19,20,21,22,23

Oct 17,18,19,20,21

Nov 14,15,16,17,18

Dec 12, 13,14,15,16

Jan 2018: 9,10,11,12,13

Feb 18: 6,7,8,9,10

Mar 18: 6,7,8,9,10

Getting there.

There are park & display car parks at The Meadows shopping centre & at High Chelmer shopping centre - but these are both very expensive. From these facilities you walk to the ERO via the riverside path. Nearer is Baddow Road CM2 7PJ car park WHICH is cheaper at 'only' £4:80 for over 3 hours. Again access via Riverside Walk. If you use the Chelmer Valley Park and Ride get off at stop F on parkway near W.H. Smith & walk thro' the shop & then turn right in the direction of 'Lakeland'. Follow the Riverside Walk & cross via the footbridge (near where BHS used to be) & continue. Returning, walk thro' The Market, cross over to the stop opposite The Library. Fares, concessions with passes, no charge; Adults £3, ; 5 -15's £1.

By all means check this when you get to the ERO or before!

ERO, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, CM2 6YT 03330 132500 essexrecordoffice/co.uk