

ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF MEETING 08th November 2023
MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM

Those Present:

Ray Franklin Chairman	Paul Salvidge	Heather Salvidge
Dave Verlander	Chris Bush	Diane Bush
Mike Rea	Margaret Rea	Frances Lambert
Keith Hunt	Jill Hunt	Vic Dowsett
Carol Wylde	Tim Snow	Lynda Jolly
Sue Waite	Chris Waite	Sue Beeston
Tricia Holyomes	Anne Player	Therese Clear
S Bragger	Kevin Wood	Lynda Bowcock

Apologies:

Ian Jackson	Moyra Jackson	Tony Bailey
Ian Beeston	Jean Beeston	Campbell Dunn
Lynda Dunn	Roger Kendrick	

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present to the meeting and our speaker for the evening, Mr John Rhodes.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 13th September 2023

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

3. Matters Arising

The Secretary offered his apologies to Tricia Holyomes and Anne Player for missing them from the list of those present at the September meeting.

4. Speaker, Roger Barrett

The Chairman introduced Roger Barrett from the Stansted Mountfitchet Local History Society. Roger started his talk by introducing himself saying that he had lived in Stansted for 42 years and when early retirement came along, that gave him time for other things like local history.

Stansted means Place of Stone or Stone Place because of the deposits left behind by the last ice age. Anyone digging more than a few inches below ground level today will soon come across this stony gravel. The Mountfitchet part of the name came from Richard de Monfiquet, the first Norman Lord of the Manor who was also Lord of the Manor of Elsenham. Mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 it then had a population of around 260. Around this time Stansted Castle was built on the Motte & Bailey pattern.

It should be noted that at this time French was the first language spoken in England. It was not until the reign of Henry IV 300 years later that English was adopted as the first language.

The church of St Mary the Virgin was built in 1124 near Stansted Hall and retains several features from this time. It was replaced by a Chapel of Ease dedicated to St John built in 1889 nearer the village centre on Chapel Hill. Although now classified as redundant, St Mary's still hosts the occasional service.

The Tudor period lasted from 1485 to 1603 and several buildings survive from this time. The building where Dorrington's are now dates from 1559 a year after Elizabeth I came to the throne and there are several more examples of Tudor buildings that can be found along Lower Street. At the top of Chapel Hill was the De Vere Chapel built in 1490. It survived until 1870 when it was demolished.

Speaking of Lower Street, there was actually no village centre as such. To the east. Lower Street connected Church Lane to the London Road north of Stansted. On the north side, the main road (High Road or London Road) ran along the top of Chapel Hill.

The next building of note to be built was Stansted Hall. Built in 1700 it was probably the largest building ever in Stansted and was reputed to have as many chimneys as weeks in the year and as many windows as days in the year. By 1870, only one tower remained and the remains were demolished and the present Stansted Hall was built. : For more information on Stansted Hall please see the EVHS minutes from 13th March 2019*.

A survivor of this period is the Stansted Windmill built in 1787 and more information on the mill can be found in the EVHS minutes of 14th June 2023*.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, many wealthy families of note moved to Stansted including the Fuller-Maitlands (of Stansted Hall), Blyths, Gilbeys, Golds, Poultnes and Croasdailes.

Greens Stores were built in 1840 at the top of Chapel Hill and the buildings survive to this day pretty much unaltered. Greens sold a wide range of items and in later years were referred to as a mini-Gamages.

The railway arrived in 1845 which fuelled faster growth as more and more people came to live in Stansted. The station was originally named Stansted and remained so until the Stansted Airport branch was opened in 1991 and Stansted was renamed Stansted Mountfitchet.

The biggest employers were Rochford's Nurseries whose extensive glasshouses covered the area now known as the Foresthall Estate. Such was the volume of their produce that a narrow gauge railway was built to take it down to Stansted Station.

The last major development was the building of the Stansted Airfield in 1943 that went on to become London Stansted Airport. For more information on Stansted Airport, please see the EVHS minutes from 5th March 2014*.

This concluded the talk that was then followed by a question and answer session.

*Previous EVHS minutes may be found on our website at:
<http://www.elsenhams-history.co.uk/>

5. Open Forum and Any Other Business

5.1 St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival

We will once more be entering a tree in St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival. Our thanks go to Heather Salvidge who is again organising this year's entry. If there is anyone who would like to help Heather please let Heather or the Secretary know.

5.2 Elsenham Croake

Following the decision to allow the development of 130 new houses on the Croake we agreed to send a letter to the planning authorities asking for a thorough, best-practice archaeological survey. This letter has now been sent to the Uttlesford Planning Department., we await developments!

Our thanks go to Elsenham Parish Council for their help.

5.3 Society Visits

Anyone who would like to visit Saffron Walden Museum or the Stansted Windmill is invited to put their name down on the sheets at the back of the hall.

5.4 Teas and Coffees

Our thanks go to Sue Waite and helpers who kindly brewed this evening's teas and coffees.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 13th March 2024. This meeting will also include the Society AGM Our speaker will be our very own Chairman, Ray Franklin who will be presenting "A Potted History of Elsenham", 2000 years in 45 minutes!

ENDS

Minutes Agreed: March 2024
Ray Franklin - Chairman