

**ELSENHAM VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY**

**MINUTES OF MEETING 9<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2016**

**MEMORIAL HALL ELSENHAM**

**Those Present:**

Ray Franklin Chairman	Paul Salvidge	David Verlander
Heather Salvidge	Mike Rea	Chris Bush
Gordon Fulton	Ruth Fulton	Diane Bush
Campbell Dunn	Valerie Austin	Sue Johnson
Carol Wylde	Tim Snow	Margaret Rea
Jean Beeston	Ian Beeston	Colin Smith
Christine Hall	Caryl Benner	Vic Dowsett
John Segar	Moyra Jackson	Ian Jackson
Jean Platt	Teri Williams	Peter Clear
Roger Clark	Phyllis Clark	Tony Eatson
Gloria Eatson		

**Apologies:**

Brian Tulley	Janet Tulley	Kevin Wood
Lynda Dunn	Ray Gaubert	Nina Gaubert

Secretary's Note: We had a very good turnout for this meeting and I believe I may have left a few people off the attendance list who didn't sign in. If you let me know who you are I will add you to the register. Please try and remember to sign in so that we may keep a proper record of the meeting.

1. The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present and Mr Bill Hardy, our guest speaker for the evening.

**2. Minutes of the Last Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

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

**3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **4. Annual General Meeting**

The Secretary opened the Annual General Meeting.

- I. Invitations were extended for nominations for the posts of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

There were no nominations for these posts so the incumbents agreed to serve for another year

- II. Invitations were extended for nominations for Committee members.

Again, there being no nominations, the existing members agreed to serve for another year.

- III. The Chairman presented a review of the Society's activities over the past year.

- IV. The Treasurer presented the Society accounts for the last year.

Secretary's Note: Copies of the Annual Review and the Society Accounts are distributed with these minutes.

There being no other matters raised by the membership present the Annual General Meeting segment was closed and business reverted to the main agenda.

#### **5. Guest Speaker Mr Bill Hardy**

The Chairman introduced Mr Bill Hardy who presented his talk on "Carpenters Marks in Wood Framed buildings".

He introduced his talk by explaining that he got interested in carpenter's marks about twenty years or so ago when the friends of St James' Church in Thorley bought the St Barnabas barn to refurbish for use as Parish offices and somewhere to hold services for a growing congregation. As the local archivist and church historian, he set out to learn as much as possible about the barn, originally built in 1552/3 and wood framed buildings in general. At this time he met Adrian Gibson, a well-known expert on these buildings and a pioneer of dendrochronology, the dating of early buildings from the timber used to build them. Adrian pointed out various features of the barn including some strange scratchings at the ends of the timbers where they met others. These he explained were carpenter's marks and were used by the builders to identify individual sections of timber and where they should be placed within the building.

These marks fired Bill's interest and he started to learn as much as he could about them. He recorded all the marks within the St Barnabas barn and set them down on a plan and together with other information such as how they were made, build dates and photos produced a data sheet. Since then, Bill has collected data on some fifty buildings and produced data sheets for all of them. He has also found marks on the treadwheel at Berden Priory, one sequence for the rim joints and another for the spokes.

The marks could take several forms, most generally a sort of hybrid Roman numeral that was chiselled into the timbers. Other marks were circular or "S" shaped cut with some precision by a special tool called a Race knife or just scratched into the wood with a nail. Invited to look at the marks in Hampton Court Palace, Bill found some marks that were just shallow saw cuts across the width of the timbers! Every carpenter had his own system of marks used to cut and fit the timbers on the ground before they were finally erected in the correct place as designated by the marks. In larger buildings and barns it wasn't unusual to find several systems of marking in use where a number of carpenters had been employed on the one building. A medium sized building would take about a year to complete depending on availability of labour and suitable timber in the area. No plans were used, the carpenter came along to site, pegged out the basic size and shape of the building on the ground and then acquire and cut suitable timber.

As well as carpenters marks there were also Baltic marks. These were marks found on timber imported from the Scandinavian countries and gave details of where the wood was grown and where it was shipped from and to, some of these were also found in Hampton Court Palace.

A third type of mark were Apotropaic or Witches Marks used to avert evil in those highly superstitious times. These could take form of a stylised W formed of interlocking Vs or Virgin of Virgins referring to Mary, Mother of Jesus or a representation of a pair of eyes saying we're watching you, go elsewhere to cause mischief. This latter sign was popular in dairies to stop the witches curdling the milk. Finally, as witches were known to burn down buildings, a burn mark would be left in the wood to say we've already burned, go away. Unlike Carpenters Marks that tended to be hidden up in the rafters, these marks were placed by the door where they could be readily seen by the witch.

## **6. Open Forum and Any Other Business**

### **6.1 Appeals For Information**

The Secretary explained that the next addition to the website was the story of the Robin Hood pub which when it was built was on the main road to London before the coming of the railway. Whilst a fair bit is known about the pub, we don't have a lot of photographs so if

anyone has any photographs of the pub they could loan us or any stories or information please would they pass them along to Chris Bush.

Secretary's Note: Following the meeting Caryl Benner gave is contact information for the daughter of the relief manager; thank you Caryl.

A copy of Elsenham's Rolls of Honour have just been added to the website. If you have more information, materials or photographs on any of those recorded on the Rolls, or in our book "For the Duration", please let us know.

Heather Salvidge appealed for any information on the naming of Ridley Gardens. Who or what Ridley is or may have been is a frustrating mystery and one that Heather would very much like to solve.

## **6.2 New Road Names**

We have been asked to propose new street names for the various developments that are taking place around the village. We are going to put forward names taken from the War Memorial and it is intended that these will be published in the village magazine inviting any objections to their use.

## **6.3 Elsenham Community Association**

It was noted that our representative on the ECA was David Verlander. John Segar pointed out that the ECA AGM was on 11<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30PM in the Memorial Hall.

## **6.4 Thorley Village**

Bill Hardy, our speaker is the archivist and historian for Thorley village. They have recently put on their website a short history of each of the 103 Thorley men who served their country in the Great war together with a number of photographs. This was derived from a record kept by the Rev, John Procter, Rector of St James' Thorley 1909 1937. Their website may be found at [http://www.friends-stjames.org/Procter\\_Photos.htm](http://www.friends-stjames.org/Procter_Photos.htm).

Bill also invited members to visit the barn and it was agreed that we would arrange a group visit in the Summer. Meanwhile more information on the barn can be found on their website at <http://www.stbarnabasbarn.co.uk/>

## **6.5 Newport Local History Group Meeting**

The next meeting of the Newport LHG will be held on March 17, 2016 at 8:00 p.m. in the Church House Newport. Gordon Cummings will be speaking about the The Fry Art Gallery and its collections. Tickets £2.00.

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday June 8<sup>th</sup> at 8pm when Mr Peter Turrall will give a talk on the "History of Marconi 1874 – 1937".

Later meetings in 2016 are, 7<sup>th</sup> September; Herbert Eiden on The Peasants Revolt in Essex and 9<sup>th</sup> November when Moyra Jackson and Avril Braidwood will present a talk on the "History of the Elsenham Women's Institute"

**ENDS**

## **Elsenham Report for 2016**

Firstly I would like to begin by thanking our Secretary Mike for his work during the past twelve months. In addition to fulfilling all the usual duties he has secured many interesting and informative speakers.

Our Treasurer Paul has maintained our finances in his usual efficient way. I thank him for his hard work.

The entire Committee have devoted many hours to our projects. The society is indeed lucky to have a group who have worked with enthusiasm and vigour over time.

### **War memorial Project**

Slate Tablets were installed on the Memorial in time for the Remembrance Day Service on 8<sup>th</sup> November. The new tablets approximately A3 size are affixed over the existing carved names. The names appear on the tablets in the order of death PLUS the additional names recently identified. Much research went into finding these "lost" soldiers. Thought is being given to possibly replacing the cross with something which is similar to the original.

### **Sir Walter Gilbey's Cottages**

Assistance was given to English Heritage seeking old photographs of cottages erected by Sir Walter Gilbey to house his staff. Both photos and much information were obtained.

### **Recordings of Village Residents**

The number of recordings and transcripts of the interviews continues to grow. The club has sent copies of some to the "Essex Oral History Project." As of January 2016 some 16 recordings are available on the Elsenham Village web Site.

### **Web Site**

The E.V.H.S. web site [www.elsenham-history.co.uk](http://www.elsenham-history.co.uk) continues to attract interest and is currently recording around ninety hits a week. As of February 2016 the total number of visitors exceeded 10,600! Recently added is a photo gallery of the steam rallies that were held by Elsenham Station in the nineties to celebrate the coming of the railway one hundred and fifty years ago. Plus photos of the construction of "The Orchards," together with transcripts from the previous owners of the site. Chris Bush has devoted countless hours. I would like to personally thank him for his work on the site which considerably has raised the profile of our Society.

### **Village Fete**

Once more the Society will have a presence at the Elsenham Fete. Since the stand seems to be able to secure a sheltered site things have improved. We no longer fear that our Treasurer and members of the Committee may become airborne!

### **Ugley Hall Farm**

Jean Reay donated a 8mm film to the society. With much help from Jean the commentary was updated. The film showed agricultural work on the farm. It was recorded over fifty years ago. It has already been viewed by others and much interest has been shown. I understand it may well get a screening at the "Saffron Screen," the cinema in Saffron Walden.

### **Memorial Chapel**

Work continues on the refurbishment of the Memorial Chapel. Repairs to the gutters and drainage and edging boards provided to the French drains have been completed.

The extremely old Stove within the Chapel has been repaired and enamelled. That work being financed by E.V.H.S. A list of jobs to complete the internal refurbishments has been compiled. Internal work will include rearrangement of the pews, tiling of the floor and provision of electric light and power. The long term aim is to bring the building back into usage. Then it can become a village resource a "History Centre" is envisaged. Also on the Cemetery site following the extensive repairs to the Lych Gate more has been done. The "Children must be accompanied by Adults" sign has been repainted by a sign writer. The "Elsenham Cemetery" sign has been redone in gold.

#### **Speakers to come**

I began by complimenting and thanking Mike for securing the speakers who have visited us over the past year. I am pleased to tell you that further speakers have been secured by him for the next twelve months. Through 2016 and into 2017 I am confident that the Club will continue to grow in numbers and go from strength to strength.

Ray Franklin – Chairman E.V.H.S.